

Live Life, Not Just Survive

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Recently I met one of my MBBS batchmates (MBBS admission batch to be precise, since departure batches differ!). I casually asked him – *How are you doing ?* He said – *“I am living on one capsule of Dhaklamycin per day.”* When I asked him about this new medicine, he said – *“Zindagi Dhakel raha hoon (I am simply pushing my life). My children are abroad; they are not in medical profession... Lot of money lying idle in the bank and cupboard... I have no interest whatsoever, neither in practice nor in life.”* Another friend said: *“All throughout the life, I have been listening to only ten complaints – cold, cough, fever, vomiting, loose motions, abdominal pain, constipation, itching, breathlessness and febrile convulsions. Why won't I get bored by listening to the same complaints over and over again?”* Sensing frustration from these talks, I started introspecting. Like the layers of an onion, we get surrounded by ‘d’ layers of degrees, dear ones and dollars, and the central doctor starts behaving like a diplomat presenting different faces to different groups of people. The child-like qualities of the ‘child’ specialist start dwindling over time! High fives start taking an upper hand ...High BMI, hypertension, high blood sugar, high lipid levels and the better half start creeping in and becoming difficult to handle!

APGAR score, as applied to a pediatrician, starts getting a new meaning with Accumulation of wealth, Pretention to be happy, Grunt against colleagues, Absence of academic pulse, and Repentance for choosing this branch! Many of us get perpetually bogged down by heavy work and go to bed without speaking a single word with family members. Some of us continue to attend emergencies and caesarean calls during night and survive with a lifetime sleep deficit! Having got entangled in the wpw (work-pillow-work) cycle, the days continue without any physical exercise with irregular eating (but regular drinking!) habits only to realize that we didn't live but only survived all those years. A pediatrician, who is happy, content and knows the art of living, alone can

eliver goods properly. ‘Practice Beyond Pediatrics’ is an important IAP Action Plan designed to deal with different aspects of practice, and also to help our colleagues to pause, introspect and guide their lives properly.

It is better to start the day with deep breathing exercise. In the morning before arising from your bed, lie on your back and relax with your hands at your sides. Inhale deeply through your nostrils and imagine that you are enriching your entire body with oxygen right down to your toes. Literally, let yourself expand. Once you can inhale no farther, hold for a count of 7 seconds, while pulling in your abdominal muscles, and then begin to exhale. During the exhalation, squeeze your abdominal muscles as though you are wringing water from a wet towel. When you have achieved peak intensity or contraction of the abdominal muscles, hold for 7 or more seconds, squeezing until your exhale is completely finished. Perform this exercise 10 times in succession before getting out of the bed and anytime throughout the day – to release mental stress and to recharge and energize yourself. Be breathoholic. Deep breathing calms and focuses the mind. Okay, great! Once you have completed your set of 10 power breaths, you should feel *good* all over. That *good feeling* is the *golden key* to success in life.

The first morning *mantra* is **DNR** – De-addict from Newspaper Reading! Newspapers, filled with negative news, will corrupt your hard disc right from the morning. Come what may, the breaking news is bound to reach you! It's better to carry the newspaper in your bag and read it when there are no patients in the OPD or when you reach before time for a caesarean call. Next is to follow the 1,3,8 principle – 1 hour of exercise, 3 good meals and 8 hours of sleep. Any exercise is good provided it keeps you fit. The exercise should be **F**requent, **I**ntense and **T**ime-bound to keep you **FIT** (to determine whether you are fit or not, apply Jog's Fitness Test. If the blazer stitched at the time of marriage fits you even today, be

sure that you are fit!). Exercise releases beta endorphins – many times more than smoking or drinking – and you remain fresh all throughout the day. A daily brisk walk of 40 minutes, preferably with a non-medical friend, is all that you need. Non-medical friends would update us with information from all walks of life – may it be commerce, real estate, investment options, law, politics or sports (areas in which we are usually weak!). Consider yourself really fortunate if you get a real **FRIEND** who is **Frank, Rational, Intelligent, Enthusiastic and Non-drinker.**

Back home is the breakfast time. A healthy breakfast with **Iron, Antioxidants and Proportionate carbohydrates-proteins-fats (IAP)** is important. The amount of oil in the food should be inversely proportional to the love for your partner! One should avoid getting distracted by phone calls during Peak Energy Time (PET). PET differs from person to person. For some, it could be 5 am to 10 am, while for some it could be 7 am to 11 am. One phone call distracts you from thoughts for 15 minutes. Look at the statistics: 50% phone calls are to ask for favors, 40% are to deliver bad news, 5% for gossip, and 5% for good news. If someone calls you for a chit chat, ask him/her to come for the morning walk. You can club things together and save your time.

Now you are all set to leave for the clinic. It's good to pedal down the way to the clinic, provided the clinic is at a reasonable distance, so that you burn few extra calories (Some of my colleagues keep the photograph of their partner in the wallet. Whenever under tension, they simply look at the photograph and get reassured that as they can handle their partner, they can handle any stress!).

No doubt it's a good habit to enter your workplace in time. But it is equally important to exit in time. Many of us continue to work till late night with an ambition to die as the richest persons in the graveyard! Do not overwork for earning more and more vitamin M (Money). Accumulated vitamin M is toxic! Always enter well-dressed. Dressing up well is for *you* to feel confident, not for others. It's important to have a neat and clean atmosphere around. One should *feel* like working in such an atmosphere. And always be cocooned by PGs (Positive and Good) people around. It's a fun to work if there is a team to work with. This is true everywhere; may it be the clinic, hospital, institute or conference. The quality of work improves and outcomes are much better when we work together. And remember, there is no 'I' in the word team.

In your cabin, the table has to be clutter-free. A clutter-free table reflects clutter-free mind. When you feel tired, shut the door of your cabin, put your mobile on silent mode, close your eyes and count back from 100 to 1 along

with deep breathing. This *karodpati* (millionaire) break will freshen you up and make you a mental millionaire for the next 2 hours. You won't need intermittent cups of coffee to freshen you up. Remember, coffee is habit-forming; it does not reduce stress.

After clinic hours, follow two principles. First is DTH – Direct To Home! Remember, your parents, partner and children are waiting for you. And when you reach home, always say three words: 'I have enough' – I have enough money, enough time and enough energy for me and my family. We must handle the family front with great competence. Every one of us has to balance the time between practice/institutional work, family and society/IAP. Individual priorities may differ but family should not suffer. We need to give quality time to family. Recently, one of my pediatrician friend's son offered him a five hundred rupees note as 'consulting fee' and requested him to talk for 30 minutes! Family needs love and respect. What is LOVE? Listen, Overlook, Vibe and Encourage! And on the occasion of your partner's **Happy Birth Day**, do not forget to check for **Hypertension, Blood sugar and Dyslipidemia!**

Dinnertime is a mini-conference. Try to attend as many of these 365 mini conferences! We spend lot of time in our weekend medical conferences and tend to neglect our daily, free but rich family conferences. Dialogue with parents is the real appetiser for kids. This is the time when everyone speaks out *mann ki baat*. Parenting with **Unconditioned Love, Support and Encouragement (PULSE)** is what our children need. And do have a break once or twice a year. Plan and book your vacation well in advance. Entire family looks forward to it!

As the head of IAP family, it won't be out of place to administer a vaccine called PRAMOD! *Pramod* means happiness. All the 6 components of this vaccine are important in life:

P – Positive attitude. You will always remain positive if you avoid speaking about A, B and C (A – Age; B – *Beemari* (illness); and C – Climate). Do not allow anyone to make you aware of your age. Remove zero from the age 60, 70, 80, 90 and remain mentally young like a 6, 7, 8 or 9 year-old. Never crib about your ill health in front of others and enjoy life even with anti-diabetics and anti-hypertensives. And what's the point in discussing about the climate when none of us has any control on the weather! Negative people always have wrinkles on their forehead. I call them '*Wrinku*.' They are like open cases of tuberculosis, constantly throwing acid-fast bacilli in the form of negative thoughts! Try and keep away from them.

R – Rationality. If you practice rationally, you will get the

mental satisfaction. We can form an informal group like *Sat-Sun-G (Saturday-Sunday-Group)* with a senior pediatrician as our *Guru*. Meet periodically and introspect whether we are practicing rationally.

A – Academic updating. After we pass our MD exams, we get divided into 2 types of cells: T cells (Teachers) and B cells (Business). I request our B cell colleagues to get attachment with some T cell (Teaching institute) so that they remain academically updated and the quality of their practice improves. Attending all possible academic programs keeps our grey cells firing! Graying of our grey matter, matters more than graying of hair! We can accept any **CHALLENGE** in life, provided we add **LLE (Life Long Education)** to the **CHANGE** which we want to bring about.

M – Maintaining child-like qualities. A child is same inside out. Whatever is in mind, reflects on the face. A child who is happy, will smile... and a child who is unhappy will cry. An average child smiles 500 times a day, while an adult smiles only 15 times a day. God knows where the 485 smiles disappear! The most important thing to maintain throughout the day is a smiling face. Smile increases our face value, is the cooling system of the head, and enlightening system of the heart. Remember, we are never fully dressed until we wear a smile! A child also teaches us to keep away from enemies of mind, particularly ego. With seniority and position, some start developing ego. But remember, **EGO Erases the God Out**. Jealousy is another enemy. Never be jealous of your colleagues' practice, wealth, status, achievements, *etc.* Everyone has a different virtue which makes him/her great. Anger is the next enemy. If you get angry, the patient is likely to get angry. An angry patient is like an inflated balloon. It won't take time for this inflated balloon to fly off and reach neighbouring pediatrician's chamber!

O – Nurturing One extra quality in addition to academics and practice. There are many who maintain some hobby in life. Please nurture some hobby like singing, dancing, painting or sports. It keeps us fresh and rejuvenated. Five things starting with S act as stress busters – Social work, *Sangeet* (music), *Shero-shayari*, Sports and Spirituality. Remember, it's the life beyond practice that keeps you fresh in life during practice. Each one of us has

multiple intelligences – linguistic, kinaesthetic, logical, mathematical, spatial, visual, musical, naturalistic, interpersonal and intrapersonal. One needs to discover his/her extra talent, nurture it, and use it to add flavour to life.

D – Discarding the bad memories. Let us reflect on the story of A and B. Both were travelling in a desert. A was supposed to guide the path to B. Somehow A committed a mistake and B slapped him on the face. A wrote on the sand that B slapped him on the face. They continued the journey. At the end of the journey, A got tired. B carried him on the shoulders and completed the journey. At the end of the journey, there is a hard rock, on which A wrote: "*when I was tired, B took me on the shoulders and completed the journey.*" Let us remember the moral of the story. Bad memories, like someone slapping you on the face, should be written on the sand, so that they are washed away and forgotten. Good memories – like someone helping you – should be written on the hard rock so that they are remembered forever!

Let me conclude with the story of a person drinking coffee on a pleasant Sunday morning. He continued to curse his wife with every sip as she had forgotten to add sugar. He finished the last sip only to realize that there was lot of sugar at the bottom of the cup! This is exactly what happens with most of us. We forget to stir the coffee of life. We keep postponing happiness thinking that we would go for a tour when the loan is repaid and pursue hobbies when practice settles. Moments pass on, illnesses catch on, and children grow into adults. We forget to enjoy the precious moments of life. Let this not happen to our lives. Let's take out time to stir the coffee well so that it's uniformly tasty through all the sips. Do not keep happiness in 'fixed deposit.' Do not postpone your travel plans and pursuit of hobbies – reading favourite books, listening to music, watching movies, painting, playing tennis and going for a long drive. Past is history, future is mystery, present is a gift. Unwrap every moment of this 'gift' and enjoy life moment-by-moment.

The month of October heralds the arrival of festivals like Dussehra and Diwali. Let's start celebrating the festival called life. Let's plan to live with the moment with a goal of perpetual happiness. Plan to live, not just survive. And you will celebrate this festive season like never before.