**Work-Life Balance (WLB) Discussion**

**Overview**: This is one of three lightly-scripted discussion sessions on topics related to success in life, but don’t usually fall under the academic umbrella.

During a first-day charrette on the topic, students listed issues they are interested in discussing that are related to WLB: Staying sane; Making and maintaining boundaries between work and personal life; Gap year – what are the possibilities, how to make it work; Avoiding burnout; Compassion fatigue.

**Overall Class plan**: list these topics on the board; organize students into groups of 2-4 around topics they are particularly interested in (these can include new topics, and may/may not include topics listed on the board); then students have 20 min to work loosely in class to find good info on these topics; then the rest of time sharing from the groups and discussing. The discussion should take place after the JC presentations.

**Discussion plan**:

* 5 min getting organized
* 20 min research
* 35 min sharing

**Context for discussion**: Use this to preface the discussion

* Struggle to balance competing demands:
* Many priorities: Academics, Athletics, Social (boy/girlfriend; friends), Job, Later: Family
* Competing demands lead to stress. Stress is a physiological phenomenon. It’s known to reduce our productivity in the workplace, make concentration difficult, can lead to irritability, depression, and hurt our relationships, both personal and professional (mentalhealthamerica.net); immune systems weaken and can increase our risk of heart attack.

**Tips on research**:

* Avoid blogs for today; they are time consuming to read (and we don’t have much time today), and are often idiosyncratic, poorly-informed opinion pieces.
* Look for websites run by professionals in the field (e.g, mental health) or reported on by news organizations that are trusted names (e.g, Forbes)

Haphazard notes the SD found when looking into these topics:

* **Solutions at work**: set manageable goals; be efficient; ask for flexibility; take small breaks; listen to music; communicate with boss/colleagues when you don’t know the next steps, but also see it from their POV; defuse tense situations, remain calm and rational, find compromise. And realize that you will make mistakes, so forgive yourself and learn from your mistakes. (mentalhealthamerica.net);
* **Solutions at Home**: “unplug” so you have time just for yourself/family; divvy up responsibilities; don’t over commit; regular exercise – reduces stress and boosts immunity, levitates mood; Eat well; avoid relying on drugs, alcohol or cigarettes to cope; be ready to ask for help if you need it. (mentalhealthamerica.net);
* From Forbes article: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/deborahlee/2014/10/20/6-tips-for-better-work-life-balance/#1332008c29ff>
  + Let go of perfectionism; Unplug, exercise and meditate; limit time-wasting activities and people (focus on what is most important to you); change your life structure (think about the big parts of your life or schedule, and reconsider options); change habits incrementally (baby steps), build from there.

**Students were interested in Gap Year:**

Heres some of what I found on gap years: <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/taking-a-gap-year-after-graduation-1986832>

* Don’t judge: Some say to be mindful and nonjudgmental that different people have different life experiences and are at different stages of readiness to commit to a next step.
* Tips on doing a Gap year: don’t stagnate. volunteer; internship; take a job abroad; build your skills and experiences; Don’t let a “missing year” on your resume raise red flags later.
* Be wary: "A year off to play is most likely to be construed by an employer as the applicant's lack of discipline, lack of commitment to their course of study/profession, as well as a high need for recognition and reward for accomplishments. Those perceptions serve as 'red flags' in the hiring process and can overshadow even the strongest academic and employment achievements of any applicant." <https://www.chicagotribune.com/business/careers/sns-201805301040--tms--careercarer-a20180606-20180606-story.html> You lose momentum.
* Resources:
  + There’s a “gap year association” which targets high school graduates, but parallels what college students could consider: <https://www.chicagotribune.com/business/careers/sns-201805301040--tms--careercarer-a20180606-20180606-story.html>
  + Some organizations/companies specialize in promoting gap year experiences, and they are very biased in favor: <https://www.goabroad.com/articles/gap-year/gap-year-after-college>