



Editorial

I Am Sorry I Did Not Spend More Time at Work!

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It is no secret that there is a nursing shortage and, often, working nurses are left putting in more time than they want (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2024; Scott-Marshall, 2024). How often have you chosen or felt forced to work and compromise your personal life? In the Fall 2024 editorial, I focused on the importance of learning to *let things go* (Fay-Hillier, 2024). For this editorial, I want to explore taking that proactive, self-care approach one step further: specifically, addressing the balance of your professional and personal lives.

Using the same approach that I did with my Fall 2024 editorial, I asked my grandson, and this time, added one of my granddaughters, to share their thoughts and sage childhood wisdom, on the following statement: *I am sorry I did not spend more time at work*. My six-year-old grandson's response to the statement was, "That's awful, people should spend more time with their children." And my three-year-old granddaughter chirped in, "People should have more fun." Somehow as we get more entrenched in our forensic nursing careers, we often forget how important it is to spend time with family and the people we love; in all fairness, have we lost our ability to have fun on a regular (and healthy) basis? For example, included in the overarching definition of having fun is to laugh. Yet, somehow as we age, we seem to laugh less and, sadly, lose the healing power of laughter (Heggie, 2019). We need to re-learn that having fun and developing a healthy personal life result in making us better employees (and, happier people) (Arruda, 2024).

In addition to dealing with the general stress encountered by many nurses, a systematic review conducted by Lombardo et al. (2024) found that forensic professionals are at greater risk for burnout and stress. In this issue there is a qualitative study by Bevilacqua and Copeman that

explores and describes the challenges and stigma surrounding forensic and mental health nurses that further supports the identified challenges forensic nurses encounter in their profession. As addressed in another article in this issue, by Clements and Matthews, forensic nurses engage in leadership and advocacy roles when providing trauma-informed care to their patients. The challenges many encounter with both uninformed healthcare providers and lack of resources in their attempts to support their patients can require significant effort, and result in impacting the forensic nurse at the physical, emotional, and spiritual levels. Ultimately, working in the field of forensic healthcare is stressful and can easily consume time away from family and friends.

Although the *AACN Essentials* (2021) document includes self-care as an essential core competency for professional nurses, it is often not addressed in either our education or professional practice. Self-care is the foundation for developing a healthy professional and personal life (Torres-Soto et al, 2022). Work-life balance is not always addressed in our profession but can easily shift toward work much more than one intends if it is not consciously managed. Our profession provides us with the opportunity to make a positive difference in other people's lives, but how often does that time invested negatively impact our personal lives? Gragnano et al. (2020) identified that balancing family life and health with work can improve overall job satisfaction. Additionally, hospitals that specifically include policies that support a healthy work and life balance are associated with enhancing healthcare-provided services (Widayana et al., 2025).

As we approach the end of one year and the start of a new one, it is a perfect time to reflect on the following question: ***Are you living to work or working to live?*** It sounds simple, but it can support your approach to how you decide to proceed in addressing your work and life balance (Bhattarai et al., 2024). I often hear people say that they are irreplaceable, and they do not have time to take care of themselves or spend time with family. Although it may feel noble to consistently sacrifice your personal life for work, the reality is that as the market changes so can any position. Being irreplaceable means that your work is not sustainable for the targeted population in your care, which although may seem flattering is not the best for the people in your care (Grensing-Prophal, 2019). Always waiting until you finish a project to spend time with your personal endeavors can be a slippery slope where the time taken from your personal life is never replaced. There will always be another project, so please do not forget the importance of carving out time to take care of yourself and your personal life.

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