

Monday Message, Monday, July 7, 2025

Sometimes doom scrolling on my phone yields something positive. This week I read an article by Dr Marina Cooley who is a professor at Emory University business school. She was teaching a course in Denmark and identified Denmark's #1 secret to happiness: hobbies!

Denmark is always top of the list for happiness. Of course, Denmark has a fantastic social safety net and high taxes. There is low rate of crime-- perhaps related to the aforementioned!

But hobbies appear to be the secret sauce! Dr Cooley decided to give it a try. In order to find time for hobbies, she had to kick her doomscrolling habit-- both phone and TV. I think that would make anyone happier! The endless barrage of bad news and terrible world events is draining and depressing. Lack of awareness of all of that horrible stuff is bound to make us happier!! Ignorance is Bliss!

All that stuff about self-care? Re-evaluate. Maybe it isn't as good as you think. Added stress from scheduling more activities may not be contributing to your wellness! Not that you shouldn't do those things-- just make sure they bring you joy not stress.

The part I liked the best was her comment: " All too often, I hear from my former students that they are experiencing [burnout](#). They tell me that as soon as they find balance at work, they will get into a hobby. Unfortunately, balance doesn't work like that. It's not a shiny pebble you find on your way to work. If you want balance, the secret is to get a hobby. You'll naturally be forced to define your boundaries: as a worker, as a parent, and as an individual. "

One of the keys to preventing or managing burnout is establishing boundaries. Establish time for yourself and your hobbies!

And don't wait until you retire- Do it now!!

Have a great week
gail

Monday Message, Monday, July 14, 2025

What are you going to do when you retire?

For many surgeons, the answer doesn't readily come to mind. For us senior surgeons, we have spent our lives focussed on our work. We didn't know about work life balance and "burnout" was just our normal state of existence. Of course we didn't call it burnout. We were just tired because we worked so hard. For many of us the first day of vacation was spent sleeping!

Along come the "new" generation: they are like "Whoa! I love my job but I want to have a life outside of work. I want to take my kid to their soccer match; I want to have dinner with my spouse" etc. " I want work life balance!!

Of course, the "new" generation is smarter than us old folks. They won't be scratching their heads wondering what they will do in retirement. First of all, they won't have delayed their life until retirement. They will have gone on that trip of a lifetime already. Second, they will have interests outside of surgery like sports or hobbies that they can continue to enjoy after retirement. Third, (hopefully) they will have planned for retirement so that they are not compelled to continue working just because they don't have enough money in their retirement fund. Because of all of this, they may retire earlier than us old folks.

We hear stories of people who worked hard all their life, retired and then died. Sometimes they die from a medical condition that is more common as we get older - heart disease, cancer etc.; sometimes they just seem to wither away-- sit in chair and watch TV — they die from lack of engagement-- nothing to do, no friends to hang out with etc.

My message for this week is to make time for your friends and family, make time for activities that you enjoy and take up a hobby if you don't have one-- or take up a second one! You give a lot of yourself to your patients as you should. But make sure to schedule time for yourself.

Have a great week

gail

Monday Message, Monday, July 21, 2025

What are you doing this weekend I asked my daughter : "Hanging out!" she said.
What are you doing this weekend I asked a friend: "Hanging out!" they said.

Hanging out! Doing nothing in particular. Relaxing, no agenda, no to do list, doing whatever you feel like doing or not doing.

A lost art! My memories of this kind of thing go back to my teenage years! Since then, it has been go go go. What is the plan? What is on the agenda?

One of the best things my husband Geoffrey did for me was give me permission to stop. "You have done enough work for today. Stop". Crazy you say — but this was Toronto, U of T, UHN , work all day doing your clinical work and then come home and work on journal reviews, manuscripts, or prepare talks for international meetings. Of course you are all much more sensible! Work life integration is part of the culture here. You notice I didn't say work life balance. That would imply a 50:50 distribution. However, work life integration is a functional description- where you have spend time doing your fulfilling work providing care to patients, but you have time for yourself to renew, refresh, sleep. Hang out!

Hanging out, doing nothing in particular, is an essential component in our wellness armamentarium. Just like we have a tendency to over program our kids with various activities, I think we can do the same for ourselves scheduling too many wellness activities.
I vote for Hanging out!

Have a great week

Gail

Monday Message, Monday, July 28, 2025

I have been trying to focus on positive topics. There is so much negativity in our media- it leads one to believe there is nothing worthwhile in the world! I have also been avoiding topics that may be controversial, but I am going out on a limb this week to comment on the Hockey Canada trial verdict that was delivered last Thursday.

Not guilty.

Not guilty but immoral. Did those 5 young men think that what they were doing or did was Okay? Would their mothers be proud of their behaviour? I don't think so. Of course, EM's mother might not be proud of her daughter's behaviour either.

It is an interesting situation. Innocent until proven guilty. It is the Crown's job to prove guilt. The judge decided that the Crown did not prove guilt. Unfortunately, the judge went further and stated that she found the complainant- the woman - not to be credible-- ie believable. There was no need to add this statement.

I am not arguing with the legal arguments of this case. I am certain that the parents of those young men were relieved by the verdict, but I doubt any of them were proud of their sons. What bothers me is that we are back to discounting the victim's testimony, " she was not credible", ie the judge didn't believe what the woman said.

There is so much history here of women who were assaulted not being believed. The whole "He said, she said" era. I thought we had gotten past that.

So what about morals? It is challenging in our secular society, where young people see images on the internet of behaviours and think these are normal, acceptable, desirable, that this is how they should behave. Maybe those young men and that young woman thought all this stuff they did was okay?

Will this verdict lead victims of sexual assault to keep quiet? Maybe. But I hope the resources that now exist to support victims of sexual assault will continue to provide support despite what the courts decide. And I hope that coaches and sports organizations will continue to educate young men about acceptable behaviour even if you just won the World Juniors.

Gail