

NURSE LEADER TRAINING THAT CAN TRANSFORM YOUR CAREER AND YOUR LIFE

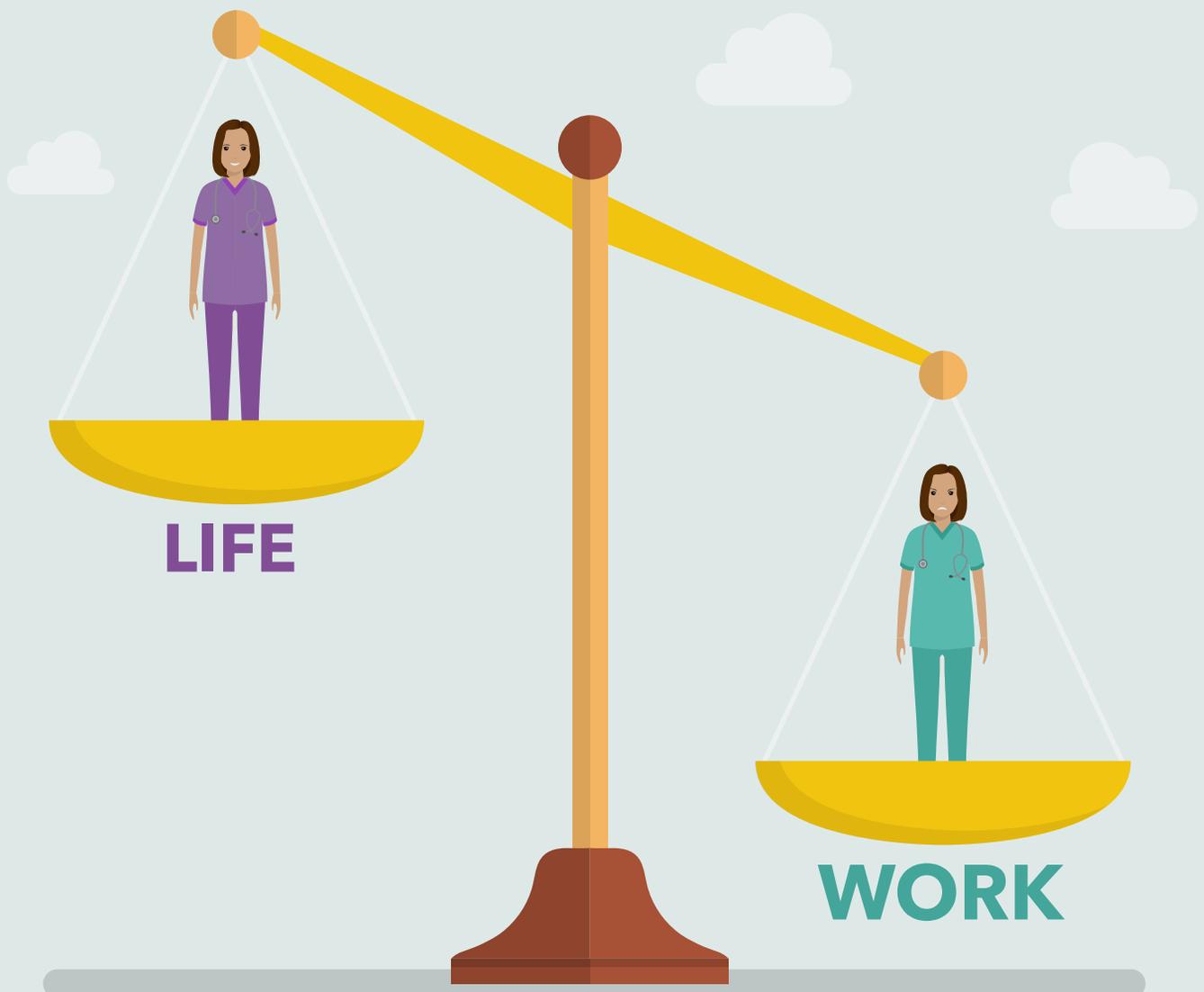
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As a Director of Nursing, the risk of burnout is ever present, but it's not inevitable – especially if you enroll in the NADONA Executive Fellows Program (EFP). This 10-month training program, which covers 12 modules, focuses on self-leadership as well as professional and organizational leadership.

Many DONs are givers—“that’s a beautiful thing about

them”—but if they don’t set boundaries, they run the risk of exhaustion, says EFP facilitator Heather Clarke-Peckerman. For many DONs “it’s not [just] their job – it’s their passion – and that could be a double-edged sword,” she notes.

“You have to put yourself in the equation, because if you give and give and give and give, and there’s nothing left for you, you’re going to get burnt out.” On the other hand, “when we start with ourselves and our needs, everything



else comes together.”

In fact, work-life balance, which is a consistent concern of participants, is addressed in the self-leadership phase of the program. By building your emotional bank account, you build emotional resiliency, which ultimately leads to more work-life balance, says Clarke-Peckerman, who is also the CEO and founder of **Stratagy** consulting firm. “The more you address your needs, the more fulfilled you feel, and the more resiliency you’re going to have. When we care for ourselves, we create emotional bandwidth that allows us to experience less stress and a healthier perspective. When we’re exhausted, and not taking care of ourselves (sleep, exercise, eating well), we tend to have less patience, and consequently, we experience more stress in our working relationships.”

Also in this phase, participants identify values, which can ultimately help them live a congruent life, says Clarke-Peckerman. “We make different decisions when we’re aware of what’s important to us.” Although family may be at the top of the list, many participants realize they are often too drained to spend quality time with their loved ones. “You absolutely can still be a phenomenal DON and take care of yourself and your family,” says Clarke-Peckerman. “It’s just going to require different choices, and it’s going to require a different level of intentionality.”

Learning How to Manage Emotions and Motivate Others

In a module dealing with emotional intelligence, participants identify emotional triggers and learn how to manage their emotions in challenging situations, says Clarke-Peckerman. She adds that when leaders become more self-aware and conscious, they become more intentional about the message they want to communicate.

In addition, this phase delves into the DiSC leadership style, a simple approach that leaders can use to better interact with employees and others. Effective communication decreases re-work, frustration and loss of time, says Clarke-Peckerman. When you understand and implement the learnings of DiSC, you know how to effectively relate to people, you know how to motivate them, and, most importantly, you can connect and build trust, she adds. “I’m all about transformation....and that’s what DiSC is.”

In the professional leadership section of this intensive program (participants must complete 75 continuing education units) topics include creating “Disney-like” customer service experiences, developing teams and understanding the power of validation. Staff turnover is typically a huge concern of participants, she says, noting that in most cases paying employees an extra dollar or two per hour is going to be meaningless if they don’t feel valued or acknowledged. Participants are asked to read *Patients Come Second*, in which Britt Berrett and Paul Spiegelman argue that to effectively care for patients, healthcare leaders must first find ways to engage staff. Taking care of your staff and giving them the resources and the tools to be

successful will spill over to the care of the residents, she explains.

Applying Learning to Real-Life Situations

In the monthly webinars, program participants are encouraged to talk about workplace challenges, which often evolve into a round robin of information and experience sharing. These case scenarios allow participants undergoing similar challenges to apply the learnings to their own work environment.

Another way participants apply their learning to their workplace is by engaging in a Capstone Project. In fact, during the last training, one participant, Mindi Estes, who was concerned about employee retention, focused her Capstone Project on creating a work environment that would be more attractive to staff. She was so successful in motivating staff that she reduced a staff turnover rate of almost 80 per cent by about 30 per cent. (Read about Estes’ Capstone Project in the last issue of *The Director*.)

Along with a monthly webinar and individual coaching sessions, participants work with an accountability partner. “I think that’s what the power of the program is – there’s accountability,” says Clarke-Peckerman. “It’s like anything else, when you’re supported and you are actively caring about your own growth and development and you have that accountability, you’re going to make the changes.”

The entire program is built on making incremental changes each month, which leads to their leadership success, says Clarke-Peckerman, who notes that simply changing a few little things can lead to a completely different outcome. This training gives participants the tools to help them reclaim their relationships and their health, she says, adding that some participants went on to change their diet and/or adopt exercise routines. “A success story for me is when these women and men can walk away and have reclaimed their life – to me that that’s why I do it – because they deserve it, and a lot of times they don’t get the recognition and the support that they need and their facility [needs].” 🍷

The next start date for the EFP, which is geared for DONS and other nurse leaders is September, 2021.

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Katherine O'Brien is a freelance writer/editor/ghost-writer in the B2B/B2C health, aging and non-profit sectors who creates content that engages and educates target audiences and sells brands. She has written about advanced health and medical topics like dementia, cancer and aging for both general audiences as well as healthcare professionals and administrators.