

27. Living a Life of Intention and Balance (Part 2) -
with Dr. Arpita Gupta DePalma



FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

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Michael: Hey everyone, and welcome to another episode of Doctors Living Deliberately. We're so happy to have you back with us here today, and of course, welcome back to my co-host Arpita. How are you?

Arpita: I'm doing well, Michael. How are you doing?

Michael: Doing great. Yes, as always, excited to be here chatting with you. And you know, back in episode 19, we started talking about living life with intention and balance, and we kind of just started to scratch the surface of this vast topic. And in that last episode, which by the way, if you haven't listened to, highly encourage you to go back and listen to it, it's great and lots of important stuff in there, but we in that episode, we were kind of more focused on identifying where are you focusing your efforts and energy, and where are you getting tripped up in preventing you from living the life that you want to be living. And so I think in this episode we wanna go a little bit deeper and talk a little bit more, because this is such a big topic and something I know when I am coaching physicians, we talk about all the time. You have a similar experience, I'm assuming.

Arpita: Yes. I think I just actually spoke to a client about it today. You know how we can really make sure that we are building a life where we are intentionally showing up the way we want. And what I think I find commonly happens is that, and this happens to me too, I'm not immune to this, is that we get stuck in the rat race or things come up, fires come up, life gets really, really busy in certain phases and we forget to do the things that we have put in place. And I think one of the keys there is to not beat ourselves up when that happens. Not to think that we are failures or suck, but to recognize that there is a reason why that happened and that's okay. We've become aware of it now and we're going to work to re-implement the things that we had put in place before. And that's it. So that part of it is really simple, I think, but I think it all starts first with, and we touched on this in episode 19 too. We talked about the calendaring part of it, and I would say the very first thing, the very first strategy I really think all people need to do first is really building in that time for self-care, for self-development, for whatever it takes that truly brings you joy and refills your reservoir. And it sounds silly. It sounds like, okay, well I can do that. I'll just go for a walk and I'm good. Or I, I It's more than that. It's really being intentional with figuring out for yourself, what can you do that allows you to have a true mental reset or refill so that you can show up with all of your powers, all of your abilities, to their fullest potentials?

And so, part of this is, it's different for everybody, right? For some people it might be that run. I've had people say, I can't do meditation. It really doesn't do anything for me, but I need to run, and that's essentially my meditation because I'm able to like physically get out the wiggles, as I would say to my son in kindergarten or just get out the extra energies, the embodiment of the negative energy that we've put in ourselves that we wanna eliminate, and at the same time, allow your mind to kind of be present and think. So for me personally, it's walking and getting outside. I can walk on the treadmill in the basement, but it's not the same as when I get to go and take a walk to the river or just go out with the dogs. And just breathing that fresh air, that really helps me. And being intentional about setting time aside to not do anything else, just be able to relax. And that doesn't happen very often and we have to be intentional about putting it in.

Michael: Yeah, so I wanna kind of pause here, right, because there were, I think that this is, a big topic. So you started off by saying that, that this can be very challenging and it's challenging for you, and it is a hundred percent challenging for me. And so we're talking about being intentional with the things that fill your cup, that kind of make you better able to navigate the stresses of life. But how do you really stay on top of this? Because I know, like you and I, we do this work all the time, right? We help other people to do this work. And I get

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sucked into this vortex all the time where I will have in my mind like, okay, this is my calendar. This is what I'm gonna be doing. And you know, we'll be having people over for a barbecue and my wife will be like, oh, the grill doesn't work, remember we talked about this. And then I just kind of, all of these kind of mindfulness techniques and intentional living, it just goes straight out the door. So what do you recommend to people, right? Like, yes, doing the things that fill the cup so that you have more bandwidth, but for people like me and you who are in the moment, like what do you tell people? How do you stay on the track of living that life with intention and balance?

Arpita: We're not gonna stay on the track. Right? I think that's part of the problem, is that you can't have this expectation that once you start doing this work, that you're always gonna stay on the track because you're setting yourself up for failure there. I mean, I just spent yesterday, honestly, yelling at my husband because the Tupperware lids were in the wrong cabinet, and I cannot figure out why in God's name somebody would put them in the wrong cabinet. Right? So this was an opportunity for me to reflect on why am I so pissed off? I'm pissed off because of other things that had happened where there was clutter in my home and I'm not a clutter fan, and it just went on and on and on, and I reached my breaking point. So each time we fall off the track, it's an opportunity for us to build awareness around why, so that we can make those things better. So you're not going to be perfect at this. We build it in our calendar. My tips are you put it in your calendar in a time where you are being realistic with yourself that it likely will happen. Like don't set it up on a day where you know it's not gonna happen. And give yourself the buffer for travel time. Give yourself the buffer if your kids are home, give yourself grace if they're sick and you're not gonna be able to do it and they're home. So you have to be flexible. There's a fluidity to this, right?

That being said, The first thing to make it actually happen is actually putting it on the calendar. Like if you don't do that, it's not gonna happen. So I'm gonna admit I have read for 15 minutes on my calendar every single night at nine 30 or 10 o'clock. I haven't done it probably in three, four months because I'm watching these TV shows that my daughter wants to do and I have this opportunity to do that with her while she's at home. So, you know what? That's okay. This is what I'm doing in that time instead, but that is still refilling my cup. So, I think that's important is to have the awareness around, it's not gonna be perfect. Different phases are gonna bring different things, but you have the intention of doing it, and you're gonna do everything you can to try to honor that commitment. And when you find that it consistently is not happening, that's the time where you need to reassess and determine, do I need to do something different or do it at a different time? Why am I not actually getting to it? I need to tweak it a little bit, and that's okay. This is all part of it.

Michael: Yeah. And for those in the back who didn't hear that, nobody is perfect at this. Right? And I think learning to be okay with not being perfect at living an intentional, balanced life I think physicians, we, as physicians put so much pressure on ourselves to do everything correctly all the time, never get it wrong, and allowing yourself permission to mess up, pick yourself back up and then just get right back on track. Reminding yourself what you can do next time to do it better or differently I think is key. And so I, I think that that's incredibly important. So thank you for, thank you for clarifying that. And so what else, you were saying, you were just coaching somebody around this. What other tips do you generally give around living an intentional, balanced life?

Arpita: So the first one, like I said, calendaring your time for you to refill your cup with something that truly brings you joy and empties your brain, number one. Number two is actually also calendaring the visionary

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time, right? We are physicians, we are high functioning professionals, individuals, we are entrepreneurs, we are business owner, whatever it is, right? We have this level of thinking that really propels us forward and allows us to create the things and do the things that we do. But the reason we had that is because for all those years of life we were studying and thinking and using our brain. And so now when we've become so used to or accustomed to this rat race of life, of all the things that human doing instead of human being, we're not allowing our brains to use that visionary side of itself, right? And so that's preventing us from thinking. So when we can calendar the time to really just allow ourself to brainstorm, to think, to be that visionary. That is when the gold happens, that's when we create the magic, because we're giving ourselves permission and giving ourselves time to create those things. So you have to allow for that first, if we're so busy, multitasking, rat racing, all the things, we don't have the time to truly think. And I think I also mentioned this to you today. I felt like, you know, with my coaching that I, I will notice if I haven't had time to sit there and like process the nuggets that I like to offer. And it will show up for me because, and it's all the things also if you're tired, if you're overworked and stressed. So just having the awareness around that and saying, okay, I need to refocus a little bit here. I need to give myself that visionary time, the time to read or whatever it is that allows you to, to be creative.

Michael: Yeah. I felt that when you said, learning to be a human being rather than a human doing. Because we can take the calendaring and the to-do list too far. And so going back to the whole purpose of this episode about being intentional about rest time, about that quiet time where you are giving yourself a moment to not be rushing to just do the next thing, cross something off the list, right? That is when the powerful kind of relationship moments come in, the thought, you know, all the different thoughts about the activities that you want to do, or the business that you're building, or the investments that you want to be kind of working on. All those things happen in the quiet moments, not while you are checking things off of the to-do list. And I, again, I say this as somebody who struggles to make sure that I'm not always going after the next achievable goal, task, thing that I can cross off my list. That is a favorite pastime of mine. And something that I am always trying to be better at. Because my favorite moments are not the times when I'm crossing things off of my to-do list. It's the quiet time that I'm, you know, sitting with my daughter reading a book. And so making sure that, that you are being intentional about all of that. It's life-changing for sure.

Arpita: And I would say to kind of like piggyback on that. The next strategy is also recognizing since we have this capacity to create and to be the visionary and be amazing with what we do, we also can't do everything like you said. So we need to decide which things we want to bag completely. I.E we don't need to do 'em. I'm putting a lot of effort and energy and importance on this thing. And does it even really matter? So, which things can you get rid of completely? Which things can you barter? I.E give to other people? Let me hire a housekeeper. Let me hire a yard guy. Let me hire my teenage son to take care of this. Let me hire my daughter to do my VA work and create my slides. What can I do? Who can I hire to do what I need to get done that doesn't require my skillset? Because my skillset is that visionary, right?

So, And then number three is what do you need to do yourself because you are the only person who truly can do it. Where are you the expert that will bring that talent that no one else can do in the area that you're in? Right? You cannot be the visionary and the worker bee. I say that over and over and over and I have to remind myself of that as well, right? Because we get caught back in our old methods and patterns, but we can't do everything. So use your kids, use the neighbor boy, use people that are resourceful around you that will be able to help you and assist you, and a lot of times it doesn't cost that much. If anything, you know, they need

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volunteer hours or, or whatever it is. Keep your plate full with the things that truly bring you joy and that only you can really do. That's an important one.

Michael: Yeah. And you know, I think we probably will dig a little bit deeper into this, but I really like for those that have never seen an Eisenhower box, which splits up the different quadrants of urgent and non-urgent versus important and not important, and trying to figure out where the things that need to get done belong. And what you were just referring to is that important, non-urgent quadrant. And those are the tasks that can be delegated. So if you find yourself, you know, stretched thin and not enough time to get all the things done, learning to delegate. And, you know, I, I feel like we're talking about like all the things that are challenging for me, but delegating is just another one of those things where, you know, I have this unhelpful thought that I need to do everything myself because I know how it needs to get done, and what I am learning is, yes, nobody else does things exactly the same way that I would and they don't need to, cuz it can still get done in a different way.

Arpita: That goes back, we touched on the perfectionism earlier, but that B minus work, right? We have this urgency. I know I personally had this urgency that I was the only one that could get it done and I was the only one that could get it done well, and I was the one that was creating all the urgency around it, right? Not only do I have to get it done and get it done well and perfectly, but it has to be done today. And so when I was able to really recognize that I was doing that and I actually said this today, let go of one thing that I think has to be done today. Just stop doing it and see what happens. I started to realize that nobody noticed, right? I was the one that caused all that urgency. So picking up on that for yourself, who is really creating the urgency in your life for everything to get done and to get done to a certain level and by what timeline? Is it you? Really, that's important.

And then, just having a shift towards what is really the need for it. Right. I had a conversation with somebody today who was saying that they had to make sure that their son had everything they needed for prom, like the tux and everything was perfect, and the boutonniere and all that stuff. And the son was taking the initiative to do it himself, and it might not have been the way that was planned by mom. And so what? Right. Why is this even a problem? What's the urgency? Where's the gift in this, where it would actually be awesome if it didn't turn out right? And so part of that is recognizing that why do we need it to be perfect? Does it really need to be perfect? What's the gift if it's not perfect? You know, working with those options as a fallback.

Michael: Yeah. And what do you give yourself by letting somebody else figure it out? Right. So in how many ways are you disempowering the other people in your life by constantly needing to be the one to do all the things right? And how might you serve other people in your life, like your children, right? As a great example, right? They, you know, my kids are probably still a little too young to be doing things like going to the florist and picking out flowers. But how can you empower other people to do the things that actually are gonna help you out timewise?

Arpita: Right. Exactly. And letting go of that need to be in control. Right. What things do you really, truly need to be in control of versus not? And this, it, it does, it spills back to, I think, our residency training, right? Where we had to be perfect in everything. And so now we get to choose what we truly need to be perfect at in the patient care or the interaction to make sure we're being safe and doing everything properly versus the flowers and the tux for prom. Right? If it's not perfect, is it gonna, what's the worst that's gonna happen, right?

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It's, it's important. It doesn't seem like a big deal, but when we keep adding all these things to our life, it makes it overwhelming and not enjoyable, quite frankly. Yeah. No. But yeah. I feel like I could talk about this forever. Do you have any other tidbits or remarks that you wanna add to some of these strategies that we've talked about today?

Michael: Yeah, I think this is really all about trying things out, seeing, trying things on, seeing if it fits. Figuring out what works best for you, and then deciding, do I want to keep doing this, or, you know, this particular way, or do I wanna shift and try things a different way? Right. I think for me, I'm somebody who struggles with change. I kind of, well, if I'm doing it this way and it's working, why would I change it? And the answer is, well, if you keep doing things the same way, then you're gonna keep getting the same result. And if that is a urgency and a feeling like you don't have control or you just can't handle one more thing, then do you really want to continue doing things in that way? And might it be helpful just to try something out? I know for a lot of people, calendaring can feel like budgeting and nobody likes the dreaded B word. Right? You know, calendaring is like budgeting your time. And so it all of a sudden brings up all of this resistance for people. I don't want to do that. I don't know how long it's gonna take. I don't feel comfortable putting all of this stuff on the calendar. And if you don't, then what? What changes? How is your life any different if you don't give it a try and maybe you try calendaring and it's not your thing, maybe you decide that you don't want to continue doing it. And that's okay. And then you can move on to try, you know, another technique, another tool to see how it might better fit in your life so that you can be living a more balanced, intentional life.

Arpita: Totally. If you change it and you don't like it, you can always go back. Right? But if you never make the change in the first place, you're never gonna know the difference and you're gonna stay stuck in that rut. So, it is hard that, what is it? Discomfort is the currency of your dreams, and then comfort doesn't change you. Those are those two quotes that we hear over and over and over, but it's true. Right? Yeah.

Michael: So, all right comfort doesn't change you. I know. I wish it did because I would so much rather be comfortable all the time. I know comfort feels much better.

Arpita: Yes, it does. But it also keeps you where you are. And if we wanna move forward, we gotta experience a little bit of discomfort, so, well, awesome.

Michael: Yeah, this is great. Any last key bits, you know, nuggets, takeaways that you wanna share with the audience?

Arpita: I would say again, start minimum baseline is always my first thing. You know, if you go and say, okay, we've got three or four strategies I learned today, I'm gonna do all of them full force, you are going to fail. I'm gonna tell you right now, it ain't gonna happen because it's too much. Right? We are busy people. So pick one thing that resonated with you today and make it so that it's almost impossible to fail implementing it right? When you implement it, that you are going to be able to do it and start with that. So again, if you're doing none of this so far, start with five minutes a week of me time. Just giving yourself the break to drink the cup of coffee by yourself in the room, by yourself, even if the kids are screaming in the other room. Just you figure it out, right? Figure out the minimum baseline, one thing that you wanna implement and stick to it. Honor that commitment to yourself, rebuild your trust with yourself that you're gonna do what you say you're gonna do,

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and then you can slowly expand from there. We've got nothing but time, and this is when we are going to focus on ourselves for once and. Be intentional with how we wanna live moving forward.

Michael: Fantastic. That's such great advice. Well, I love chatting with you as always about these topics and already looking forward to the next time we get to discuss some of our favorite things.

Arpita: Yes, sounds good. Looking forward to it, Michael.

Michael: All right. Take care and thanks everybody for tuning in to this episode of Doctors Living Deliberately. Looking forward to seeing all of you next time as well. Take care.

Arpita: Bye.