

LEARNING TO BE HEALTHY

BY ALYSSA SCHMITT, PA-C



As medical providers we are required to be lifelong learners. As a primary care provider, I am constantly learning from my peers, specialists, and my patients. I am five years post-graduation, and still think of myself as a new graduate. Before I went to PA school, I received my Master's in Public Health. I worked in cancer behavior research at Moffitt Cancer Center during grad school and for a year after. I use many of

the skills I learned at that time to encourage my patients to complete their preventative screenings. I imagine at some point in my career I may use my public health background to help sculpt and inform public policy and programs.

Now five years into my career, two of which during pandemic craziness, I am learning how to avoid burnout. Dr. Hurley and Dr. Hotan are amazing mentors who remind me to slow down and spend more time learning about mindfulness.

Dr. Hotan hosts Dancing Date Nights (check out the Marion-Polk County Medical Society event in July) and F3 women's fitness events. Last summer, she taught us how to salsa dance. The event was complete with laughs, food, and wine. In February, she hosted a Bollywood dance and yoga class with a potluck. I am not a great dancer, but Dr. Hotan is talented and energetic and will make you believe you can do it, even if it is just for an hour.

Dr. Hurley hosts wellness events every couple of months. In these workshops, you learn how to focus on guilt-free boundary setting, prioritizing, yoga, deep breathing, journaling, healthy meal planning, and most importantly how to say no.

Honestly, a lot of the things we talk about in these workshops are things I know and things I preach to my patients, yet fail to practice in my own life. I was consistently working ten-to-twelve hours a day, followed by meetings, and volunteer events. Eventually, I would get back home to my two cats and do it again the next day. I was steadily on the road to burnout.

The camaraderie with other female providers in the community is priceless. We support each other as many realize we are all in the same boat, needing to change the culture. Mindfulness and self-care will be a lifelong journey that you have to work on every day and it's critical to create a healthy work-life balance. I find this helps me both professionally as a new provider and personally as a newlywed. I encourage you to try one of the upcoming Wellness Events hosted by the Marion-Polk County Medical Society and see if you find the same support. 📌

