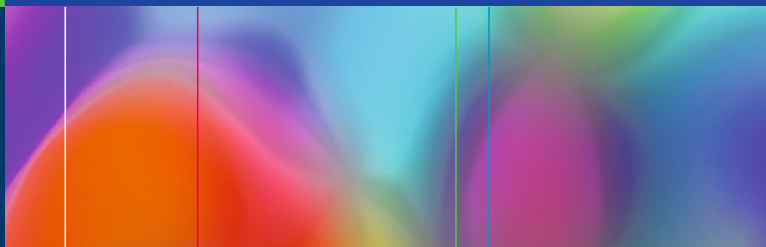


John D. Kelly IV
with Ann Marie Kelly



The Resilient Physician

A Pocket Guide to Stress Management

 Springer

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A Pocket Guide
to Stress Management

With Contributions by Ann Marie Kelly

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*I dedicate this work to the woman of
my dreams and the answer to my
prayers: My wife of 30 years,
Marie Theresa.
You are an exemplar of faith, loyalty,
and a woman “built for others.”*

Preface

The medical vocation is indeed a marathon (Fig. 1). Years and years of “on call” and a seemingly endless stream of demands can exact their toll on physician well-being. This book is for those of us who struggle with attaining balance and finding some measure of happiness in the midst of the stressors which seem to be mounting year by year.

I wish to share the hard-earned wisdom I have learned in my 26 years of practice in Orthopedic Surgery. Many things I will discuss are the result of suffering and pursuing happiness in “all the wrong places.” Other insights shared are derived from my study of the literature on stress management and resilience.

Recovery Several years ago I developed a serious eye infection. The unique organism which attacked the soft tissues around my right eye was *Nocardia asteroides*, an opportunistic contagion peculiar to immunocompromised hosts. My eye surgeon informed me that he usually saw this infection in severely debilitated patients, such as those suffering from HIV infection (Fig. 2).

At that time, I was trying to establish a practice and be a good husband and responsible father to our twin daughters. I reasoned that sleep could be “downsized” in an effort to fulfill my goals. I was also plagued by perfectionism and a rather healthy dose of excessive guilt such that there was little joy in my life.

After nearly losing my vision, I became determined to take better care of myself and tame the demons that were robbing me of my happiness. I dedicated myself to learning the fundamentals of



Fig. 1 Life is a long race



Fig. 2 Rock bottom: Serious infection, right eye



Fig. 3 We can decide our destiny

resiliency and enlisted the help of a therapist. I recognized that physician self-care must receive primacy over caring for others. I further appreciated the truth that the singular most effective means of “providing” for our patients, families, and friends is to preserve our own personal happiness.

Despite ever increasing demands, resiliency can be attained. Decisions are required which will promote health and happiness. In fact, what separates humans from primates is the capacity for self-awareness and imagination—both tools essential for crafting one’s life (Fig. 3).

I am living proof of the power of decision.

Today, I am more peaceful and happy than ever *and* I have never been more effective in my vocations of surgeon, husband, father, and friend.

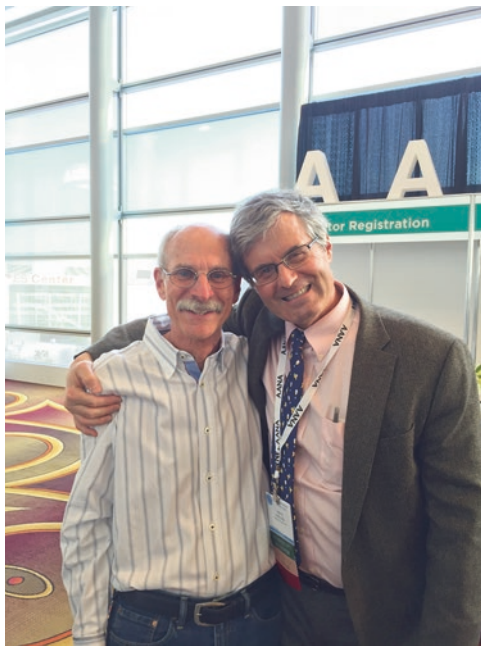


Fig. 4 Author and dear friend Ben Rubin, M.D.

This book is my gift to all of us fighting the daily battles of seeking balance in this most wonderful of vocations. It is time we each reclaim our lives and emerge from the depths of overwork and despair (Fig. 4).

Philadelphia, PA, USA

John D. Kelly IV

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