



▲ Figure 1.
Dr. Epitropoulos with
her grandson, John.



◀ Figure 2.
Dr. Epitropoulos at
the Hi'ilawe Falls
in Hawaii's Waipio
Valley.

▲ Figure 3.
Dr. Epitropoulos with her
husband, son, and
daughter after a
Buckeyes football game.

FAMILY, FITNESS, AND FOOTBALL



Enjoying life away from the OR comes in many forms.

BY ALICE T. EPITROPOULOS, MD

Ophthalmology is an intense specialty. So much of our surgical outcome relies on perfecting small details, and we set high standards for ourselves. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance has helped me overcome the stress and prevent burnout. Enjoying activities outside of work can provide both a physical and mental release. Taking the time to recharge and challenge myself physically and mentally helps to counterbalance the day-to-day responsibilities of being a surgeon.

FAMILY TIME

I spend the majority of my free time with my family. I feel very fortunate to have a large, close-knit family, and my husband John is a huge support system for me. My daughter, Christina, is a general dentist and she and her husband Aaron have a beautiful 2-year old son. I feel privileged to be able to babysit my

grandson every Monday (Figure 1). My son, Frank, is in his first year of medical school at Lincoln Memorial in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Our favorite thing to do as a family is travel, which is rejuvenating and fun. It enriches your soul. The best part about it is experiencing it with the ones you love. My family and I recently visited the Holy Land, which was incredible and life-changing. This past year, with about 50 extended family members, we went back to visit our roots in Greece. We look forward to these family trips, which not only help provide stress release but also give us the opportunity to create lifelong memories.

EXERCISE

Incorporating exercise into my daily routine is another important part of my life. We all know that the daily grind can be stressful. It adds up, whether because of work, family, or just the general pressures of everyday

life. I can reduce that stress and at the same time become healthier by exercising.

Other than chasing after my grandson, my favorite way to stay in shape is by doing Pilates. When I'm traveling with family or visiting a fun location for a meeting, I love to head outside and find a trail to hike. The fresh air recharges the lungs, and spending time in nature gives me an opportunity to step back and enjoy the little things.

Exercise is important in today's digital era. Our tablets, phones, and computers capture our attention on a daily basis when we're at work and home. It's extremely beneficial to get away from all that technology and back to the basics. There are no screens to look at while you're hiking—only the trees, the animals, and the beautiful nature around you. It brings me a special kind of enjoyment.

HIKING TO HI'ILAWA FALLS

This past year, my husband and I took our kids and grandson to Hawaii. It was fun to watch the baby's reaction to seeing the sandy beach for the first time and his expressions as he saw the whales breach. I got to spend quality time with my son when we embarked on an 11-mile hike. It was probably the hardest hike I've ever taken, but it led to one of the most inaccessible and breathtakingly gorgeous waterfalls in the world, the Hi'ilawe Falls in the Waipio Valley. It's one of the tallest and most powerful waterfalls in Hawaii.

We spent pretty much the whole day together on this hike. There were no real trails to follow, so we had to make our own—swimming upstream, jumping from rock to algae-covered rock. Several hours into the hike, we started having second thoughts about whether it was really smart to be doing this on our own because there was no cell service and no way of getting help if either of us were to get into trouble. I was lucky to escape with just a couple of torn tendons in my finger from slipping on an algae-covered rock. We powered through our doubts, took it one step at a time, and eventually made it to our destination where we were rewarded with a spectacular view (Figure 2).

THE OHIO STATE BUCKEYES

One other thing that brings me joy and reduces stress in my life is the Ohio State Buckeyes football team. Having been born and raised in Columbus, Ohio, attending the Ohio State University for both my nursing and medical education, and doing my residency there, it's safe to say that I love the Buckeyes. On top of all of that, both my husband and my son played football for the Buckeyes (Figure 3).

CONCLUSION

It's never too late to find your balance. Participate in activities that will help you maintain a better work-life balance and prevent burnout. But really, it's all about finding out what *you* want to do and what brings *you* joy. You only get one life, so live it to the fullest! ■

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