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In the world we live, and the profession we've chosen, maintaining a healthy lifestyle and a synergistic work-life balance is not always easy.

## Finding a healthy balance

When I was in fifth grade, I was awakened one night by red flashing lights outside my home. Disoriented and frightened, I scurried to the front door in time to see my father being loaded into an ambulance on a gurney. In the coming days, we learned dad had developed diabetes and suffered a diabetic seizure.

A former president of his own national association, my father was passionate about his profession, was the financial provider of the family, worked long hours and rarely made time for himself. The seizure and diagnosis served as a rude awakening, and over the next year, he made many life-altering changes. Through an improved diet and exercise, my father lost a hundred pounds, enabling him to stop insulin injections. My father is no longer with us, but until the day he passed, he maintained a healthy lifestyle and was never forced to resume insulin shots.

It's emotional for me to relive this memory, and I am sure many of you are wondering what it has to do with the golf course management industry. I felt it was important to share the story in hopes you will take a few minutes and think about your own health, and not just your physical health, but also your mental health.

As I have said repeatedly, I can't imagine a more gratifying profession. Often on social media, I use the hash tags #thisismyoffice and #golfcoursesuperintendent. It's no secret I love my profession and my office — especially the outside one. Many people not in the profession envy our jobs, and rightfully so.

However, our industry can be extremely stressful. In my close to 30 years as a GCSAA member, the demands and expectations of employers and golfers have only increased. Superintendents are usually at work before the sun rises and often still on the course as the sun sets. We often work seven days a week during our seasons in a somewhat unrealistic attempt to provide perfect playing surfaces. We manage our facilities as if they were our children. We are problem solvers, so we're often seen as the "go-to" person at our facilities. Even when we're not physically on the job, the job is never far from our minds.

How we live and manage stress has a significant impact on our physical and emotional health. Unfortunately, I have seen numerous friends and acquaintances in the business struggle with personal challenges related to the stress of the job and the lifestyle choices they've made in reaction to those stresses.

There is no shame in this, and nobody should be judgmental. The reality is that mental and physical health are not easy subjects to broach, and negative choices are too easy to hide or deny to ourselves and our loved ones.

Although my efforts will be ongoing, the scare my family faced many years ago helped shape my life. I strive to maintain a healthy lifestyle and a realistic work-life balance. I do my best to eat healthy and exercise regularly, even when I don't really want to. I know if I don't strive to live better every day, the results can be detrimental.

But no matter how successful we are in maintaining a healthy work-life balance and managing the stress in our lives, we all can use a little extra help in these areas. That's why I'm proud that GCSAA is stepping up to offer counsel and education about these issues during the upcoming Golf Industry Show in San Diego, Feb. 2-7.

Some of us can benefit from a concrete goal to provide the motivation to get up and get going, and for the third year running, GIS will feature a great one — the Health in Action 5K on Feb. 7, presented in partnership with Syngenta. Proceeds from the run benefit the Environmental Institute for Golf; the health benefits, however, are all yours. For more information or to register, go to <http://bit.ly/2Ozh3Gn>.

Also in San Diego, GCSAA has created a new educational track — the Emotional Health Track — that offers several seminars and free sessions focused on mindfulness and managing stress. The association has heard time and time again from our members that education on these topics can be just as beneficial as classes on agronomy or business management, so I hope many of you will explore this track. For more information on this new resource, go to <http://bit.ly/2PgdMkF>.

In the world we live, and the profession we've chosen, maintaining a healthy lifestyle and a synergistic work-life balance is not always easy. My hope in writing this message is that you take a good look in the mirror, get a check-up if it's due and then decide if changes are needed. Sometimes the smallest changes can pay dividends, and GCSAA and I care about you.

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