



# Testing the Balance: lead without losing yourself

DR. KARIN DI BELLA, CHAIR, DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

MAY 1, 2024

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP, BROCK UNIVERSITY



# Land Acknowledgment

# Privilege & Responsibility

- ▶ To hold space for others
- ▶ To show the next generation of leaders what is possible
- ▶ To help make the world a better place



# Background

FOR CONTEXT

The value of  
hard work



Mom



Dad

# Growing up in the Performing Arts: work ethic



Di Bella, Karin. *Dancer Drawing with Karin's Head*. 2024. Graphic. Canva, April 30, 2024.



Di Bella, Karin. *Karin at Uncle Jim's Piano*. 1980. Photograph. Circa 1980.



# “Work Ethic”

I know I'm a mean music teacher.

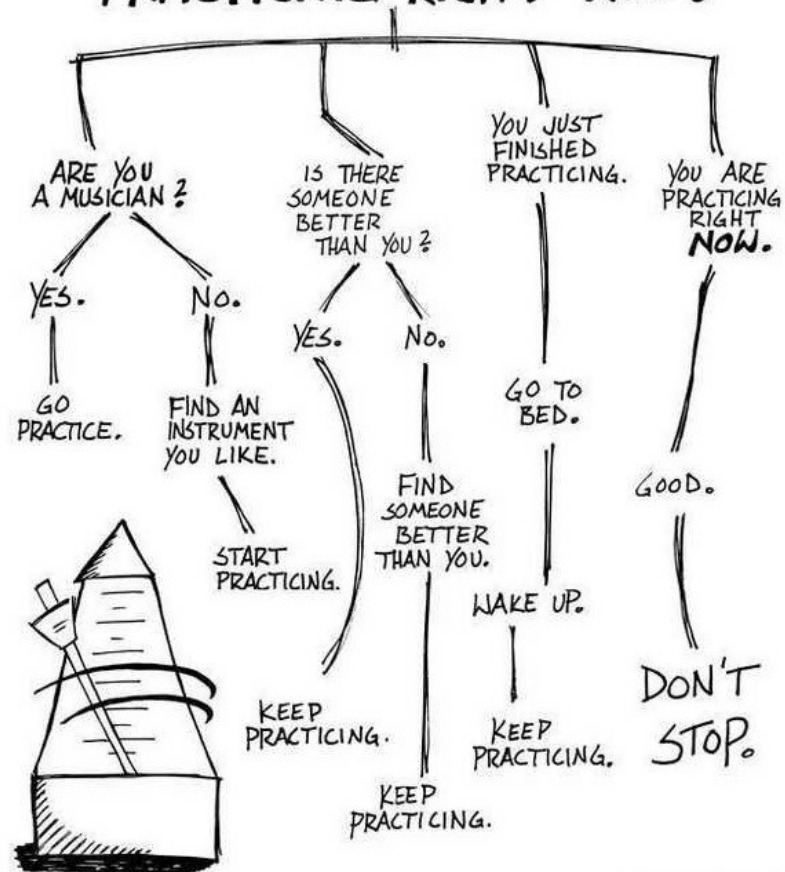
1. I am very sorry.
2. I will try to be better.
3. 1&2 are lies.
4. Go Practice.

som<sup>ee</sup>cards  
user card



Some E Cards. *I Know I'm a Mean Music Teacher*. Meme. [Someecards.com](http://Someecards.com).

## SHOULD YOU BE PRACTICING RIGHT NOW?



ODDQUARTET.COM

© JOSHUA WELLS

Wells, Joshua. *Should You Be Practicing Right Now?* Meme. [Oddquartet.com](http://Oddquartet.com).



# Chair, round # 1

2014-2018



# Chair, round 1: 2014-2018

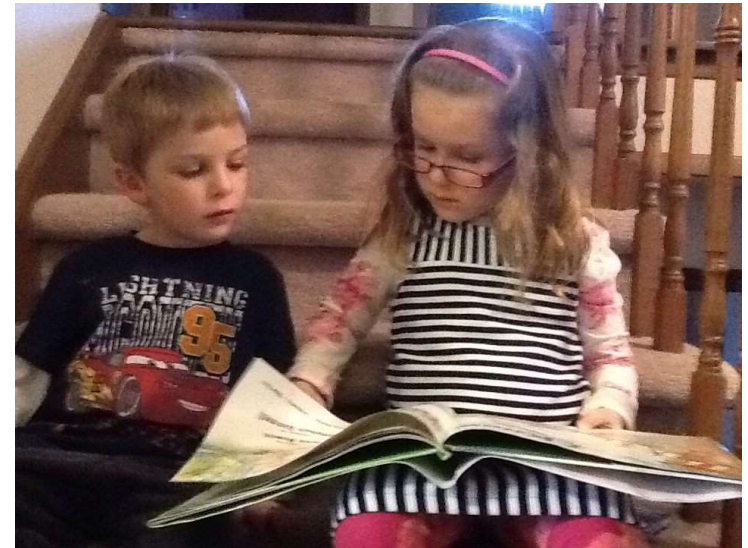
- Chair of MUSI 2014-2017
- Director of STAC 2016-2018
- Move to MIW June 2015
- Opening of PAC Fall 2015
- MUSI Self Study 2015-2017



*Di Bella, Karin. Paolo & Nicola  
Disco Dancing in the Kitchen.  
2014. Photograph. 2014.*

Chair, round 1:  
2014-2018

These are the years I  
was not fully present  
with my kids.



Di Bella, Karin. *Paolo & Nicola Reading on the Stairs*. 2014. Photograph. 2014.

# Chair round #1: snapshot



Brought my “work ethic” with me into this position



Looked forward to the kids’ bedtime so I could get more work done



Accustomed to working late at night

Quiet

No one expects you to be available



Met all my deadlines

“You’re doing a great job!”



No boundaries around communications or work time

## Chair round #1: snapshot

Anxiety response: work all the time

To the complete abandonment of:

- Sleep
- Mental and physical health
- Health of my marriage
- Being present with my kids

Couldn't hold space for anyone

# Chair round #1: how it went



First two years I  
really enjoyed it

Challenge  
Felt I was making a  
difference



Third year – burnout started



Fourth year – beyond fumes



Health score





# Intermission

TWO YEARS TO MAKE BIG CHANGES

# New mission



I vowed to change everything about how the next round would go



Improved:

Marriage, physical and mental health

Spent intentional time with my kids, who were now 10 and 8



Became deeply interested resources around:

Productivity

Efficiency

Email management

Wellness



# Chair, round #2

2020-2024

## Chair round #2: 2020-2024

Unique opportunity to try out my new experiments  
with boundaries in different scenarios

Working  
from home

Hybrid

In person



Could I successfully put a container around my  
work time when we are all working at home?



# Chair round #2: Lead by example

- ▶ So many junior colleagues are looking to us as models
  - ▶ What will their lives look like if they take on a leadership role?
- ▶ “Work ethic” is NOT working around the clock
- ▶ It IS:
  - ▶ Setting intentional boundaries
  - ▶ Being able to hold space for others
  - ▶ Being present in your home life







# How To

YES, IT'S POSSIBLE.

# Balance vs. Boundaries



Balance



Boundaries



# Just don't read your emails (ha!)

- ▶ Work communications: arguably the biggest challenge with work-life boundaries
- ▶ Email, Teams messages, phone calls, other platforms
- ▶ So many open loops



# Right to Disconnect

Ontario Policy, June 2, 2022

- ▶ All employers in Ontario with 25 or more employees
- ▶ “Not engaging in work-related communications ... so as to be free from the performance of work.”
- ▶ <https://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/written-policy-disconnecting-from-work>





# Brock's policy

- ▶ <https://brocku.ca/policies/>
- ▶ Under “Office of People and Culture Policies”
- ▶ Paraphrased for our purposes today:
  1. Keep your working status updated (use an out-of-office notice)
  2. Try not to bug people outside of work time





Great, but...



You can only control what YOU do



As leaders we must be mindful of how we time our outgoing communications



What about those who try to contact *us* at all hours?



First step: determine your work boundaries



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# Communication boundaries

SO PEOPLE KNOW WHEN THEY CAN HEAR FROM YOU

# Regular work hours



Or maybe, regular *communication* hours



What are reasonable work hours?



When can people expect you to be available to them?



Suggestion: M-F, 8:30-4:30 (ish)

# Communicate expectations



Especially if time boundaries are new for your and/or your unit



Let your unit know your availability



Most important: *you have to stick to it*



Say it, and mean it



This is a form of kindness! Let people know when they can expect you to be available.

# Outgoing emails

- ▶ Review your time boundaries
- ▶ Send outgoing emails only during your stated work times
- ▶ Some email tools to help:
  - ▶ Auto-send emails at a future date/time
  - ▶ Save in drafts and manually send later

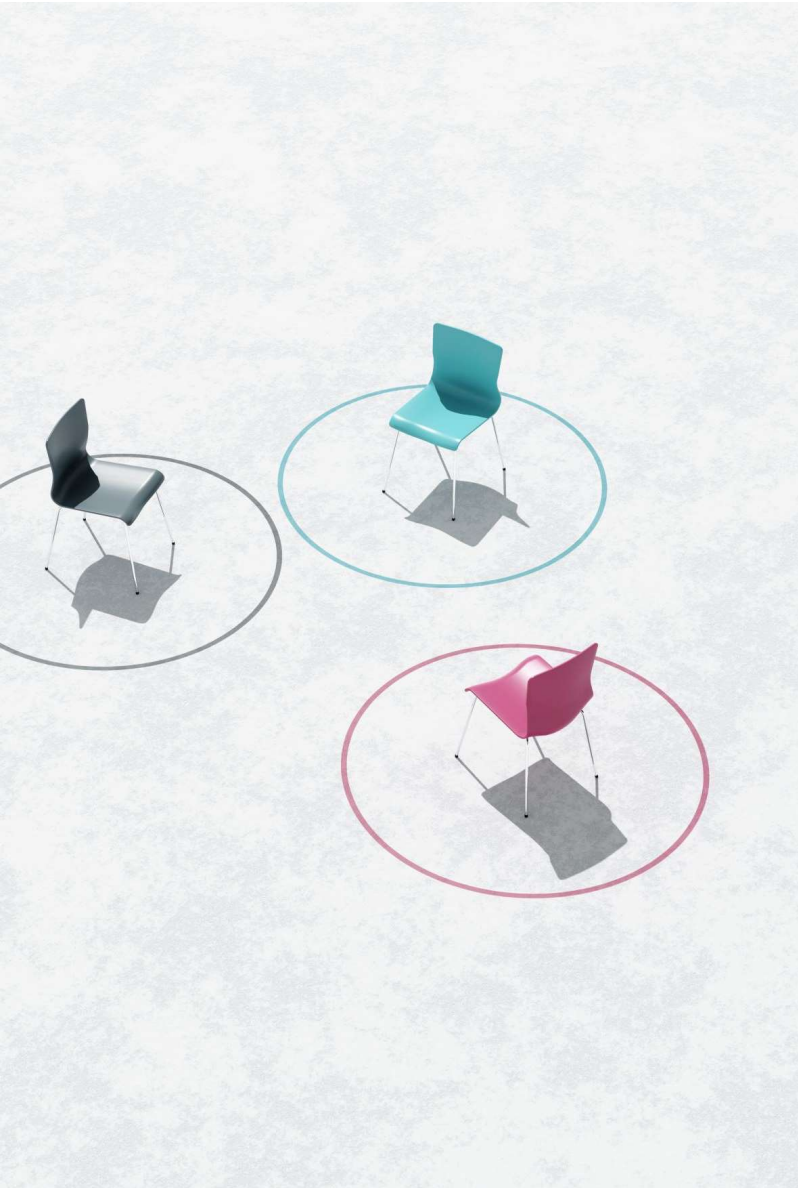


# Outgoing emails

- ▶ Only send outgoing emails during your official work times
- ▶ Strategically manage expectations
- ▶ Respect other people's boundaries
  - ▶ Program around people's out-of-office notifications
  - ▶ Respect their vacations, but still get that email off your hands







# Why is this important?

- ▶ Because it gives you margin, space
- ▶ Avoid working in reaction mode
- ▶ So when you *need* the space, you have it

Supports colleagues:

- ▶ They know what to expect from you
- ▶ When you are available to them
- ▶ When you are *not* available to them



# Your inbox

YOU ARE IN CONTROL

# Incoming emails: notifications

- ▶ We are wired to respond to notifications
- ▶ They are distracting and impossible to ignore



# Notification management

- ▶ Personal phone
  - ▶ Consider removing email notifications including dings, badges, banners
- ▶ Desktop/laptop
  - ▶ Consider removing notifications from there too, including pop-ups, dings
- ▶ End of the workday
  - ▶ Close down your email app and/or the web tab that contains your email



## Academic emergencies: Favourites

There may be some people whose emails you don't want to miss

Set them as "Favourites" in Outlook

You can manage their notifications separately on your phone if you use the Outlook app



# Emergency contact

- ▶ Give a few select people a reliable way to contact you in case of emergency
- ▶ They are unlikely to use it!
- ▶ Explain the terms of the privilege
- ▶ This gives you more confidence in leaving your email alone outside of work hours, or when you're away



# Inbox triage

- ▶ Free training: [www.stackmethod.com](http://www.stackmethod.com)
- ▶ Emails don't live in your inbox
  - ▶ Group them into folders by urgency
- ▶ Action items
  - ▶ Put them in your calendar or to-do list so they don't get lost
- ▶ Your inbox is not your to-do list!!
  - ▶ Create a to-do list somewhere else



# Inbox triage: Results

- ▶ Your emails are managed. Nothing is missing or dropped.
- ▶ You don't lose things in your overflowing inbox.
- ▶ No more sense of dread and overwhelm when opening your inbox.
- ▶ Put email aside for a while during the day to do other things.
- ▶ Quickly manage a large number of emails, such as after a vacation.
- ▶ CONFIDENTLY LEAVE YOUR EMAIL ALONE OUTSIDE OF WORK HOURS.





# Level up with routines

MORNING, END OF WORKDAY



# Morning Routine

- ▶ Start your day on your terms
- ▶ Opportunity to ground yourself before everyone needs you
- ▶ Give yourself time before giving to others
- ▶ Fiercely protect this!





# Reflection practice

- ▶ Opportunity to work through whatever needs working through
- ▶ Private, no judgement
- ▶ Chance to be real about your thoughts
- ▶ Brainstorm opportunities for complicated tasks
- ▶ Strategy session for managing difficult situations/people
- ▶ Journaling, meditation, exercise, a walk outside, etc.



# Workday shutdown

- ▶ From Full Focus Planner:
- ▶ Before you close down your communications
- ▶ Clear out your inbox
- ▶ Move action items to your to-do list
- ▶ Look to the next day to see what's coming, and the day after
- ▶ Plan 3 top tasks to accomplish the next day



More training  
available



Monday May 6,  
Mental Health  
Week:

"Considered  
Communications:  
support workplace  
wellness with intentional  
communication  
boundaries"



Tuesday June 25,  
Wellness Day:

Inbox Champion!  
Work-Life Boundary  
Champion!



# Postlude

NEW NORMAL



# Fully present



Di Bella, Karin. *Paolo Wins Game MVP.*  
Photograph. 2023.



Di Bella, Karin. *Nicola's Birthday.*  
Photograph. 2023.





Thank you 😊



Q&A

