

MODULE 2 ACTIVITY

Cleaning Up Your Plate

One of the most difficult yet necessary things we need to do is clean up our responsibility plates at work. We can easily get overloaded as individuals and as a community. It is almost like a lunch buffet: We start at one end of the buffet and load up on everything that looks delicious, thinking we have to try everything. And before we know it, we are halfway through the table with no more room, yet there are still delicious entrees. If we are mindful of our selections, we may not get to try everything, but we can be satisfied with our selections and confident that our plate will meet our needs.

Note: Not everything about what goes on our plate seems under our control. Our work, policies, upper managers—all can place explicit and implicit expectations upon us to load up as much as we can. It is simultaneously their responsibility to recognize when expectations and requirements are unreasonable and need to be eliminated. At the same time, it is within our power to draw our own lines to reserve a portion of our plate for the things we know are most critical for us and to protect that at all costs.

This exercise is both an aspirational exercise and an active decision-making exercise. It contains four parts, and by the time you are done, you will have identified action steps for prioritizing your efforts in your work.



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Part 1: What needs to be on your plate?

You know that old USDA food pyramid that broke down ideal amounts of various food groups? That model has long been abandoned by nutritional experts in favor of visual tools for proportioning up your food plate based on macro-nutrients—proteins, fats, and carbohydrates—and recognizing that there are foods with more or less nutritional value in those categories. In other words, foods are neither good nor bad but have various nutritional utility in meeting our protein, fat, and carb needs.

We can use the same idea with our own lives. Below, identify the objective or purpose of your three main values—either personally or professionally. Think of them as your nutritional building blocks for your well-being. What are your proteins, fats, and carbs? You only get three.

Write them in below. See the example of “Professional Well-Being” as a value that we put under our protein section.

Note: There is no distinction between proteins, fats, and carbs for this exercise. They simply represent our three main values and all are important.

EXAMPLE: PROTEIN	PROTEIN	CARB	FAT
Professional Well-Being	Value here	Value here	Value here

Now that you have your three main building blocks/values, identify as many systems, practices, and policies that actualize those blocks. It doesn't matter how effective they are at this moment, and it doesn't matter if you are using them now.

Make sure to rewrite your values in the top heading.

EXAMPLE: PROFESSIONAL WELL-BEING	Value here	Value here	Value here
Well-being programming, computer-free lunch breaks, dinner parties, gym time			

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Part 2: What does your plate look like now?

The next step is to be honest about how your plate looks like right now. It may not be pretty or ideal, and that is okay. Below, draw and portion out your plate as it currently stands with the practices you listed above. Do your best to remember and display everything you do in your work. And if you can't fit everything on your plate in the proportions, that's okay and is actually quite telling of all the work you are doing.



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Part 3: What is your ideal plate?

Thinking back to your building blocks and the various activities you could do, what would your ideal plate look like? What would you want to focus on? What aligns most with you and your work values? What activities are most effective within each building block? How much time and what resources would you devote to them? Proportion that out below.



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Part 4: Making minor changes

One of the biggest blunders people make when trying to change their nutritional routines is that they make sweeping changes immediately without setting up microhabits (see Module 9 for more information about microhabits). We need to avoid making the same mistake with our personal well-being. Proportion your plate on the next page by dropping all the extra stuff that feels necessary but isn't. Keep the practices and systems that still actualize your building blocks, then make room for one slight change to your plate to get you closer to your ideal plate. This is your transition plate. It will not be perfect, but it is closer to your ideal plate. Return to this activity regularly to create new transition plates.



