



# Human Optimization

## Pod Club Discussion Questions



### E48 The Struggle with Work-Life Balance and Why Work-Life Integration May be a Better Solution

Guest: Andrea A. Tooley, MD, FACS, Associate Professor, Oculofacial Plastic Surgery | Mayo Clinic – Rochester, MN (2020-2025); Innovative Ophthalmology | Paducah, Kentucky (2026-Present)

*The three big questions explored in the podcast:*

#### Question 1

What is work-life integration, and how is it different from work-life balance?

#### Question 2

Why do we all struggle with this concept of “balance” in our lives?

#### Question 3

What do we need to do to change our thinking and our actions to create work-life integration that leaves us productive and fulfilled?

### Discussion Questions:

1. The podcast suggests that "work-life balance" often feels like "another pressure" or "another thing we're failing at." Do you agree with this assessment?
2. Dr. Tooley defines "work-life integration" as a "slight reframe of balance where you're never all or nothing," allowing for more "fluidity." How might this conceptualization differ from your current approach to managing work and personal life?
3. Dr. Tooley shares her strategy of re-evaluating her daily strategy every six months to adapt to changing life seasons. What benefits or challenges do you foresee in adopting a more flexible, periodic re-evaluation?
4. The speakers discuss the importance of knowing yourself, your values, and your goals to make intentional choices. What steps can you take to better understand your core drivers and non-negotiables? Perhaps you and your podclub members can support one another in this reflection.
5. The podcast highlights feelings of "guilt" (and especially "mom guilt") associated with striving for balance, often stemming from external definitions of success. How do you identify and challenge external pressures or definitions of success that might be contributing to feelings of inadequacy in your own life?
6. Dr. Tooley gives examples of "segregation" (no work email on phone) and "blending" (kids at work meetings) that work for her. What are some specific areas in your life where you currently segregate work and personal life, and where might you consider blending them more intentionally?

7. The discussion touches on the idea that "you can do everything, but not all at once." How do you prioritize and make decisions about what to say "yes" or "no" to, especially when faced with opportunities that might not perfectly align with your current goals or capacity?
8. Based on this episode, what is one small change you are going to make to help improve in this area. How are you going to keep yourself accountable to that and measure your success? (Be sure to keep it simple, start small, and make it very clear).