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Be the best you

In the last few weeks of my GP training, I attended one of the 'Be the Best You' courses run by the RCGP. As a strapped-for-cash trainee, this fully funded course for RCGP members was very appealing. Non-members can also attend for a charge. There was a wide range of GP delegates, from mid-stage trainees to 20 years-plus experienced partners, including salaried GPs, locums, GPs involved in teaching, GPs involved in research, and GPs with special interests.

In the opening few minutes, it was apparent that the presenters worked for 'Happy People', an organisation based in London whose employees are reported to have among the best work-life balance in the country. Initially I had misgivings that they would not understand the unique nature of the pressures GPs face, but was pleasantly surprised by their useful insights and anecdotes.

They opened with a useful reflection on what makes organisations effective. Is it about salary, or is it something more than that? What really empowers people to do their best work? How important is a sense of control?

The course included a variety of workshops, including coaching skills, time management, and dealing with difficult colleagues. Throughout the course, the presenters shared useful stories to put the themes into context, both from initiatives they have tried in their own organisation and from anecdotes that GPs and other delegates have shared at other courses.

There was advice around how to assert yourself, insights into your personality, and what impact this might have on your interactions with patients — not only if they have a different personality from you, but also if you are very similar. There was encouragement to reflect on the personalities of colleagues, and how this may affect working well together in a team.

When delegating a task we were encouraged to aim to delegate completely, to really allow and trust colleagues to complete a task without interference, to empower them.

They posed the question, *'What if every decision you made in the workplace was*

based on the happiness of your staff?' Evidence from hospitals suggests that happiness and engagement with staff improves care and helps save lives,¹ but can you really make every decision based on the happiness of your staff?

Also discussed was the value of playing to people's strengths rather than always focusing on what needs to be improved. During training, the language of the portfolio is dominated by recognising your weaknesses and focusing on them, which to an extent is right and just to ensure every GP has a sufficient baseline in every area. However, there is very little scope for celebrating a trainee's individual strengths. It was great to hear that appraisals don't need to be about your weaknesses; they can be about your strengths. Not only is it acceptable to work to your strengths, but you are also more likely to have a happy, effective organisation if you do.

There was a brief sharing of ideas about more effective working, such as reducing isolation at work and sharing knowledge by using a communal computer room for GPs to check letters, file bloods, and sign prescriptions alongside colleagues rather than alone in their consulting room; utilising allied professionals more effectively, for example, pharmacists offering medication reviews or practice paramedics providing home visits; and strategies to reduce the administrative burden that practices face.

After the course I felt empowered. It left me with plenty to think about regarding how we might ensure that GPs and other staff are truly 'happy people' and how I can be the best me.

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Details of further courses run by the RCGP are available at: <http://www.rcgp.org.uk/learning/other-courses-we-run.aspx>

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