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Wellbeing and connection are intricately tied for me. As an athlete for much of my life, the team environment in which you support each other and work toward a common goal has always been very important to me. Feeling a good sense of connection has meant that I experience a better sense of wellbeing. The need for connection was actually one of the things that made me hesitate about becoming a researcher. Running an independent lab has the potential to be an isolating experience with each person working on their own research and funding goals.

Over the years, I have found that collaboration, while also leading to better quality research, has also led to an improved sense of connection and the ability to find more meaning in my work. The more I learn this and implement this in my lab, the more my wellbeing flourishes! Collaborations have meant being able to stay connected to a close friend from graduate school as we continue to work together, to develop deeper relationships with colleagues at my institution as we find unique ways for our research interests to mesh, and building a “team” with my undergraduate and graduate student supervisees.

Our lab operates much like a sports team; we recognize and capitalize on each others’ strengths, celebrate each others’ accomplishments, and support each other through the inevitable challenges that arise. To me, the connections I have are as important, if not more important, to my wellbeing as any research successes that our lab might have.