One of the lines in my offer letter for a faculty position at UCSF read “Additionally, you will have the Bay Area and San Francisco as an extensive playground at your leisure.” How true! For me, maintaining balance with a career dominated by time and energy spent at UCSF means being outdoors, using physical activity to connect with nature and to have fun, and sharing all of this with my family.

One of my first memories of coming to the Bay Area is the smell, a mix of fresh, clean ocean air with the scent of redwoods. What better stuff could one wish to breathe? In the city, run up the stairs to Grand View Park on 14th Ave – great if you can escape for an hour during your work day. This place has an unbelievable view of the city and a direct breeze off the ocean.

My mainstay is running. I love the simplicity. All you need is a little bit of time and, debatably, a pair of running shoes. There is no better way to connect with oneself and with our beautiful surroundings. My recommendation for those who are not already regulars is to try this not using gadgets, watches, or goals. These all have their place, but for starters just go out and see what happens.

From Parnassus: 1) Golden Gate Park- Run down the hill and into the park; there is no wrong way-just explore. Down to Ocean Beach and back is about seven miles. There is an endless number of shorter routes through the many gardens, mini parks, and sanctuaries. 2) Presidio to Golden Gate Bridge- Take Stanyan or go through the Park to Arguello and into the Presidio, then over the Bridge- about 12 miles roundtrip.

If you like trails and hills there are plenty. Dipsea is a great way to get to know the area. In Mill Valley park on Throckmorton near Old Mill Park. Go through the Park and ask someone where the Dipsea stairs are. I like to pound the stairs, but the Dipsea also makes for a great walk/hike. My wife and I love to do this with our kids- just be ready to carry them most of the way. The stairs lead to the trail- seven and a half miles of some of the most beautiful terrain in the area and perhaps the world. Have a beer and brunch in Stinson. Take the shuttle back to Mill Valley. Here is the link to the famous course (oldest trail race in the U.S.): www.dipsea.org/course.html.

Get in the water. Although formidable here, if done correctly it is safe and a treasure at your fingertips. If you haven’t swam much since you were a kid, use the facilities and classes at UCSF to brush up. Then buy a wetsuit (Sports Basement or any surf shop). A 5mm suit will keep you warm. Practice swimming in the Bay at Aquatic Park. We like to drive to Santa Cruz for the day- Capitola has a great beach and protected cove. Once you feel the urge to venture out into the ocean, first be careful. But with a surfboard, boogie board, or paddle board enjoy the waves. Or, put it all together with biking (covered in a prior edition) dial up the intensity and train for a triathlon. There are many to choose from in the area. I like the vineman half. www.vineman.com