

Burnout and Wellness- A Pathology Perspective

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Conflict of Interest Disclosure

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My Objectives

- Discuss burnout
- Discuss resilience and wellness
- Identify unique aspects in Pathology

Your Objective

- Develop strategies to ensure your own wellness

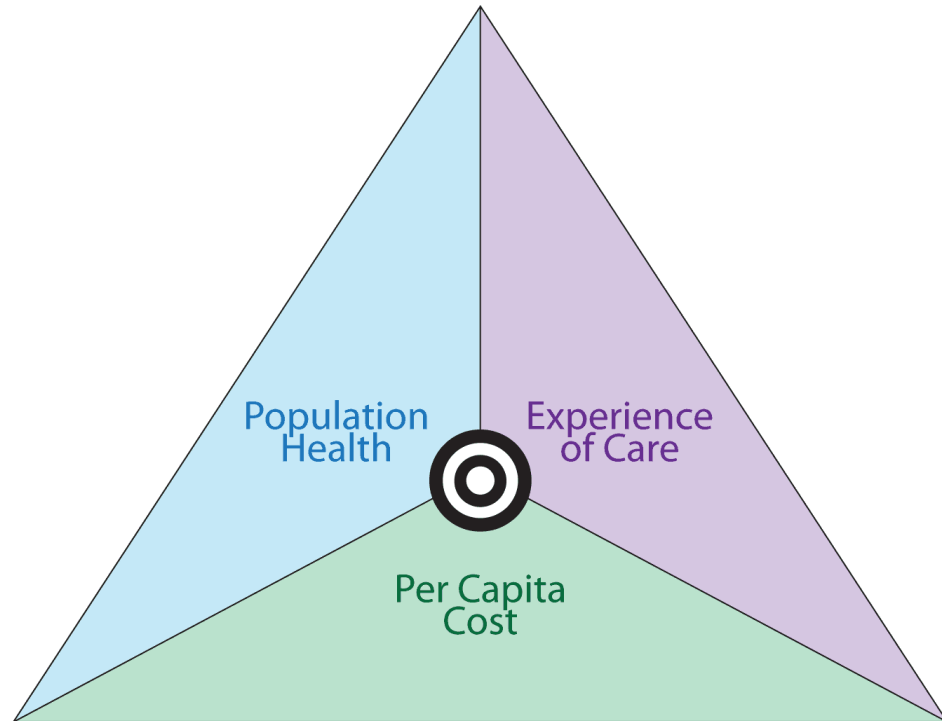


Burnout

Why I became involved

- I am a person first and a pathologist second
- I am concerned about physician burnout in myself and my colleagues with whom I spend much of my life
- I am not an expert on the subject but my feelings about this issue have given me a desire to learn more for my own self and to help others through sharing stories
 - 1990 AP Residency Program Director
 - >2017 'the troubles' at NC Baptist Hospital

Typical Mission Statement: Triple Aim or Quadruple Aim?



Reducing Costs

- Productivity
- Sustainability
- Cost effective
- Comparatively effective

Patient Experience

- Patient satisfaction
- Outcomes
- Quality
- Safety



Population Health

- Risk management through pooling
- Preventive care
- Socio-economically impactful

Provider Experience

- Provider satisfaction
- Work/Life Balance
- Workflow optimization

Burnout-- Lay Definition

exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation

Burnout--the scientific definition

- Exhaustion (emotional energy depletion)
- Depersonalization (cynicism, detachment, disengagement)
- Reduced Sense of Personal Accomplishment (lack of achievement)
- Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is the accepted measuring tool for occupational burnout
developed by Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter; many (free) on-line sites



Emotional exhaustion

- Frequent
 - I feel used up by the end of the workday
 - I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job
- Often
 - I feel emotionally drained from my work
 - Working with people all day is really a strain for me
 - I feel burned out from my work
 - I feel frustrated by my job

Depersonalization (Disengagement, Cynicism)

- Frequent
 - I have become more callous towards people since
 - I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally
- Often
 - I feel I treat some people as if they were impersonal 'objects'
 - I don't really care what happens to some cases

Lack of Personal accomplishment

- Occasional
 - I deal very effectively with the problems of my cases
 - I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my cases
 - In my work I deal with emotional problems very calmly
- Infrequent
 - I feel like I'm positively influencing other peoples lives through my work
 - I have accomplished many worth while things in this job

Gender Differences

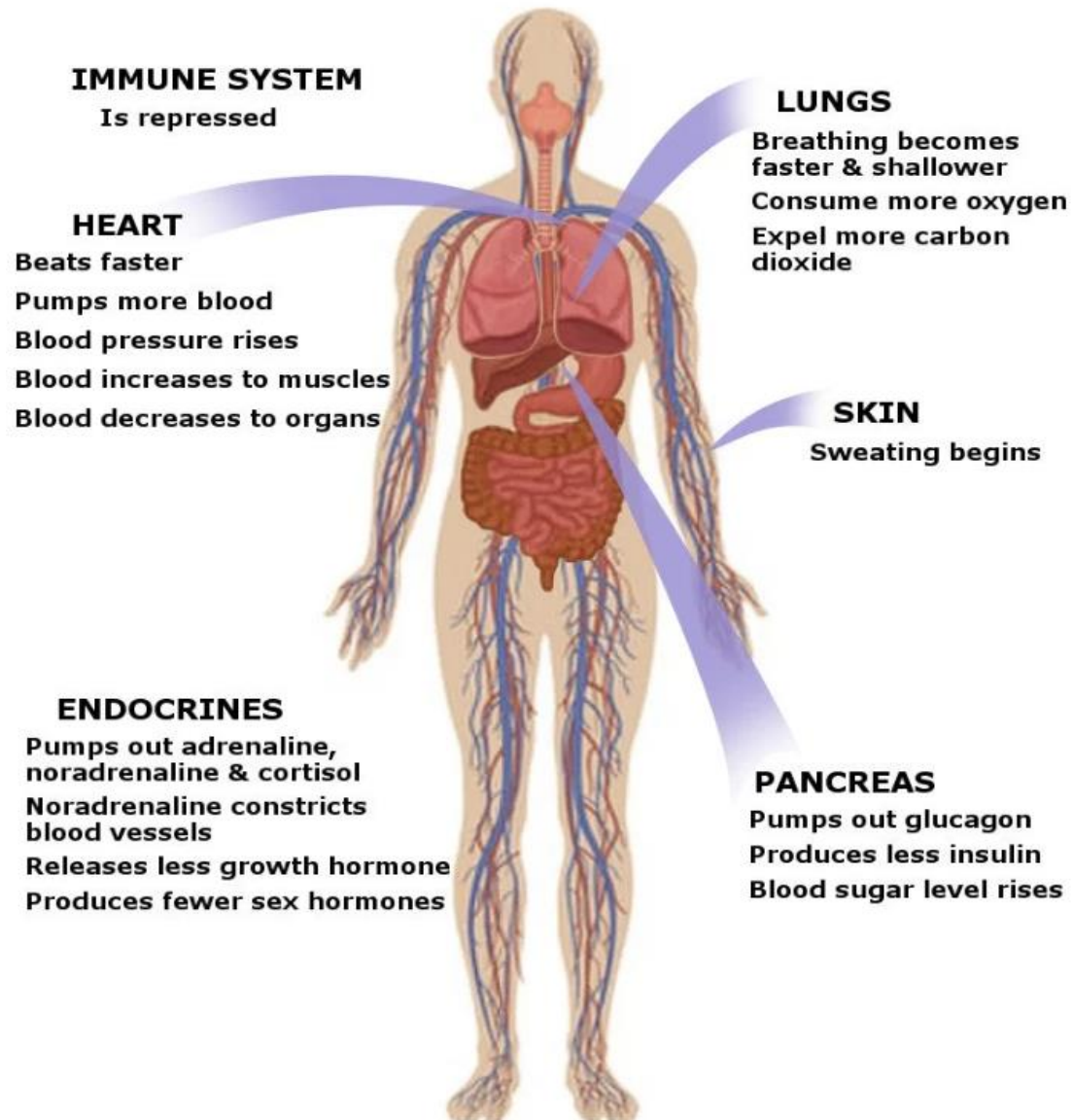
- Some evidence that women report higher rates of burnout
- Emotional exhaustion maybe more common in women and Depersonalization maybe more common in men

<https://nam.edu/gender-based-differences-in-burnout-issues-faced-by-women-physicians/> and National Academy of Medicine

Stress is part of normal life

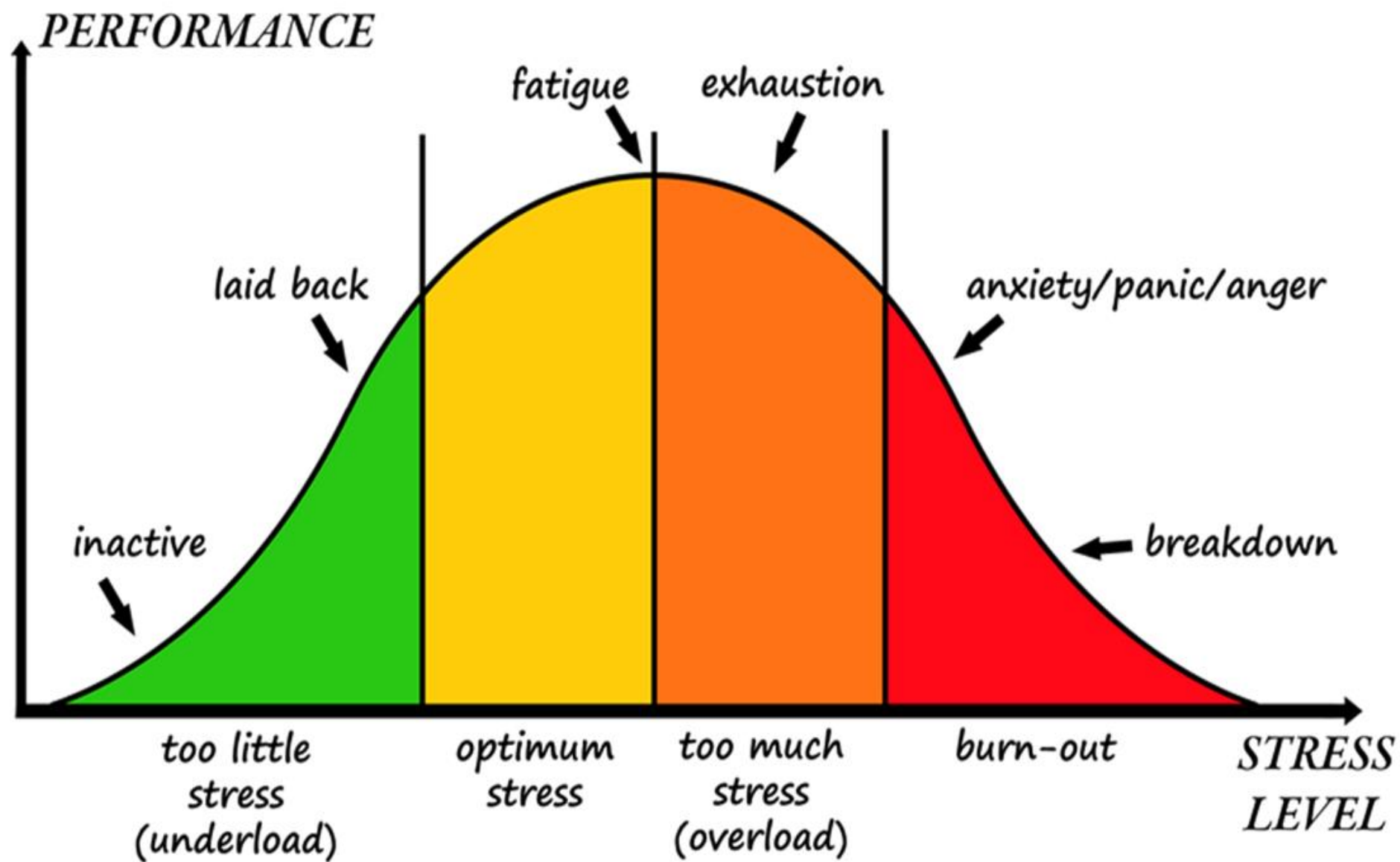
- Stress is not the same as burnout
- Stress is not about re-charging your batteries
- Stress per se does not lead to burnout

Fight-or-Flight Response



Walter Cannon referred to "the necessities of fighting or flight." in the first edition of *Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear and Rage* (1915), p. 211. Some references say he first described the response in 1914 in [*The American Journal of Physiology*](#).

STRESS CURVE



Burnout

Stress

Disengagement

Over engagement

Blunted emotions

Over reactive emotions

Exhaustion affects motivation
and drive

Exhaustion affects physical
energy

Demoralization

Disintegration

Helplessness and hopelessness

Sense of urgency and
hyperactivity

Features of Burnout Amongst Pathologists*

- Survey in conjunction with the American Board of Pathology's (ABPath) biennial Continuing Certification (CC) reporting of activities (2019, 2020)
- Data is based on 1256 respondents (820 from 2019 and 436 from 2020)
- Highest reported burnout rates were in first year of residency (41%) and in first three years of practice (47%)
- Conversely at every point in their training and practice, from half to three-quarters of respondents reported never or infrequently experiencing burnout.

CAP Wellness Project Team Survey Results*

- Survey of CAP members; 499 responses (12.6%)
- 41% reported at least one symptom of burnout all the time or often within the past 12 months; similar proportion of responses were observed across gender, stage of training, and years in practice
- 35% reported that burnout has increased their chances of diagnostic errors
- 39% reported that their feelings of burnout have made them consider leaving the practice of medicine

*Auerbach, et al. (revision submitted)

Some Consequences

- Increased rates of error with potential harm to patients and other risk management issues
- Poorer relationships with colleagues, lab staff, other healthcare providers, administration
- Increased absenteeism and turnover leading to increased workload
- Job dissatisfaction
- Increased health problems, physical and/or mental
- Impact on family and friends
- Cost to healthcare system at large

Causative Factors

- Too little autonomy
- Bureaucracy
- Long hours
- Regulatory & compliance requirements
- Reimbursement
- EMR and documentation
- Mergers & acquisitions
- Workload
- Patient suffering

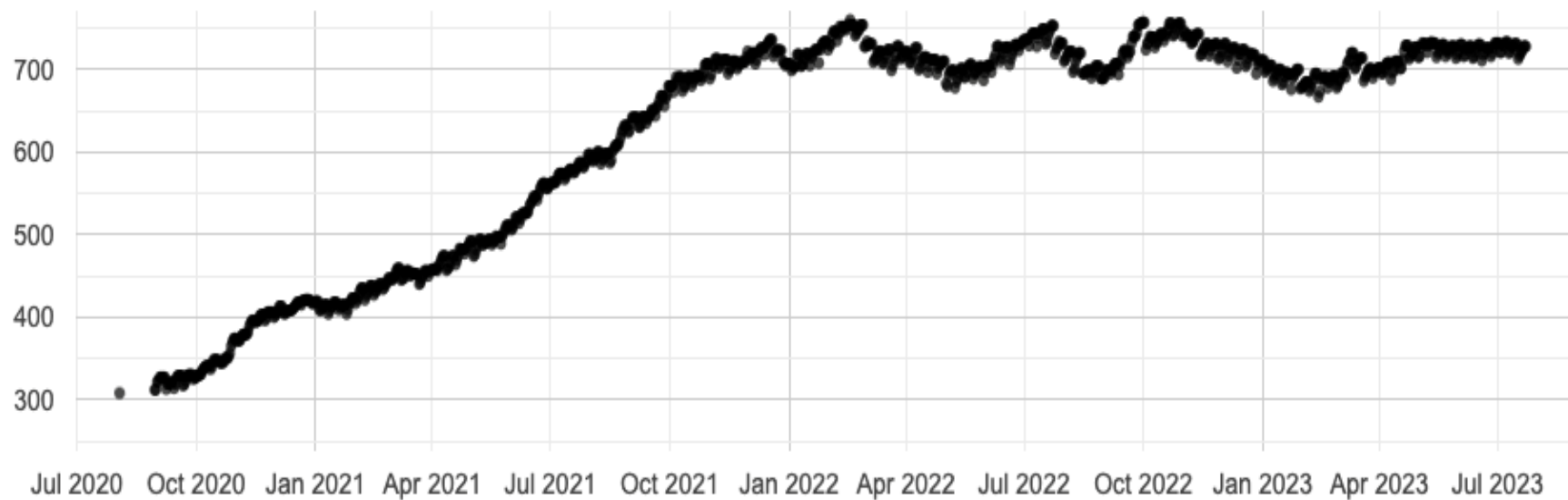
Modified from Peckham--Medscape Lifestyle Report

Pathologist's Causative Factors

- Isolation (typically remote from direct patient care and healthcare providers)
- No control of workload
- Workforce shortage
- TAT pressure
- Pressure for detailed, accurate reports
- Lack of recognition by healthcare providers, and patients & family
- Most regulated department in health system

Jobs by Date

Date 07/26/2020  07/23/2023



From: PathologyOutlines.com

Wellness



Wellness Resources for Pathologists



According to the [2022 Physician Burnout and Depression report by Medscape](#), nearly half of the 13,000 physicians surveyed across all specialties reported feeling burned out last year. Drill down to pathologists and 35 percent of those surveyed reported feeling burned out in 2021. It may be easy to assume that the drudges of the COVID-19 pandemic were the top contributors to physician burnout and depression, however the Medscape report found that bureaucratic tasks (eg, charting paperwork) topped the list of reasons at 60 percent.

“The truth is, as pathologists we must complete a significant amount of bureaucratic tasks from transcription systems and administrative duties,” said Marisa Saint Martin, MD, FCAP, “not to mention the inherent pressure of making correct diagnoses. Those things added with the professional isolation of being removed from other specialties can make fighting burn out or depression tough.”



“Pathologists’ wellness was top of mind prior to the pandemic and will continue to be front of mind for those in practice, leadership positions, and those just beginning their career, that’s why it’s important for the CAP and members to highlight and share resources to assist in the health of our colleagues and the specialty.

Michael Cohen, MD, FCAP



CAP Wellness Resource





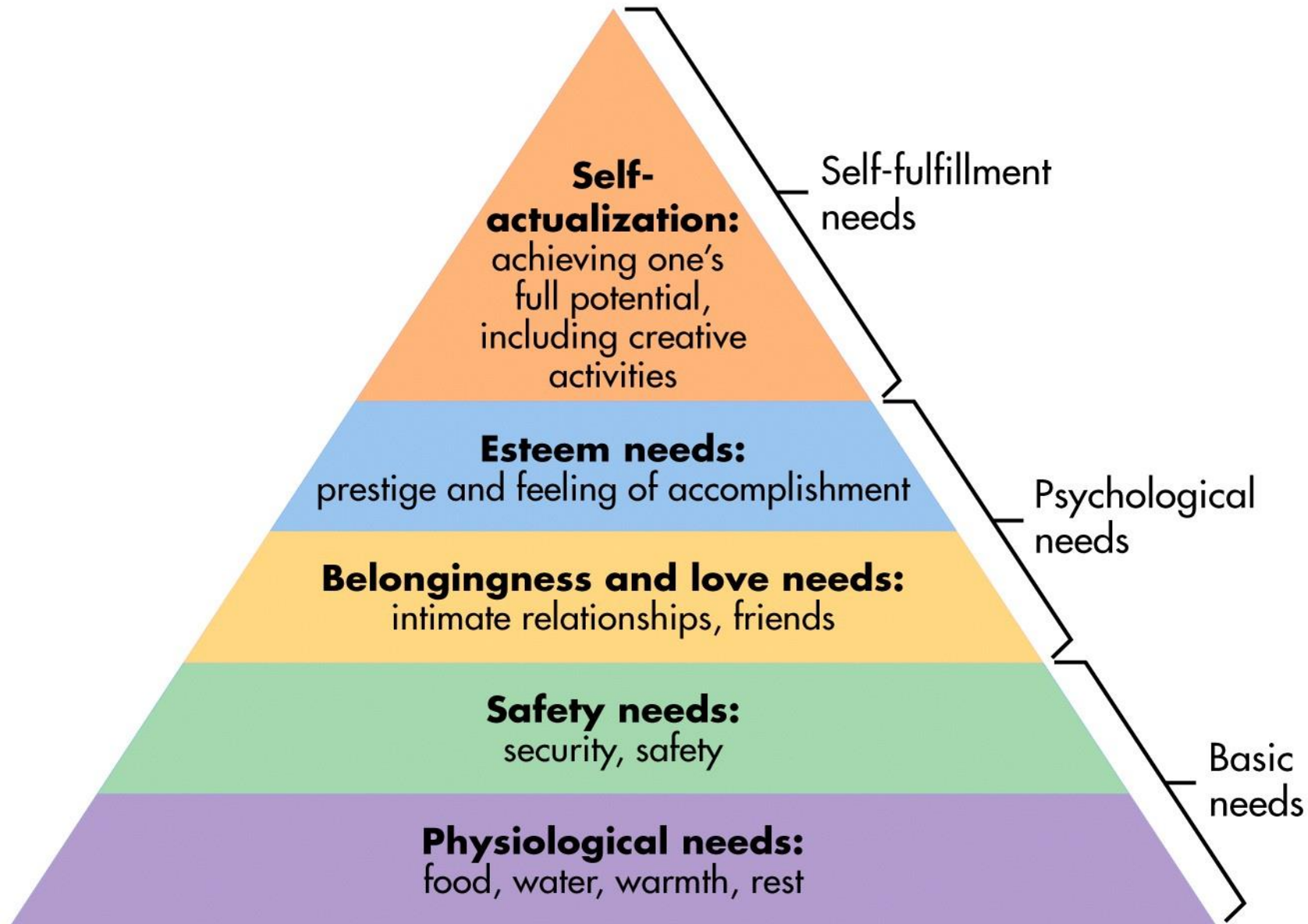
National Academy of Medicine

Action Collaborative on
Clinician Well-Being and Resilience

Levels of Attention

- National (e.g., AMA, NAM)
- Health System
- Organizational Unit (e.g., Department)
- *Individual*

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Resilience

- The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties
- Elasticity, Flexibility, Persistence, Plasticity, Recoil, Toughness,...
- Resilience does not make you stronger so you can withstand anything, and you keep going even when it isn't good or right for you
- “Resilience is the space that exists between getting what we need and having a stress reaction” – Chris Schmitt

Cultivating Resilience

- At any level (i.e., national, health system,...)
- Mission/Vision/Core Values
- Initiative
- Start where you are, with whatever you have

Purpose

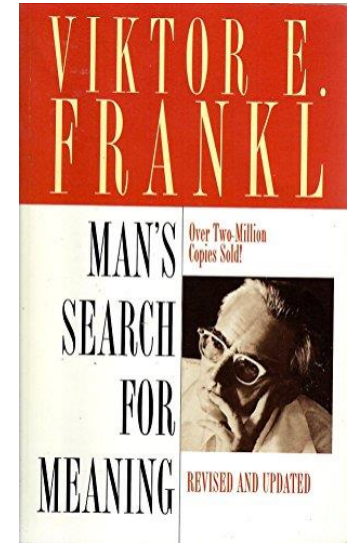
Man's Search for Meaning

(Original Title: From Death-Camp to Existentialism)

Viktor Frankl, 1959

Three ways to discover meaning in life:

- By creating a work or doing a deed
- By experiencing something or encountering someone
- By the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering



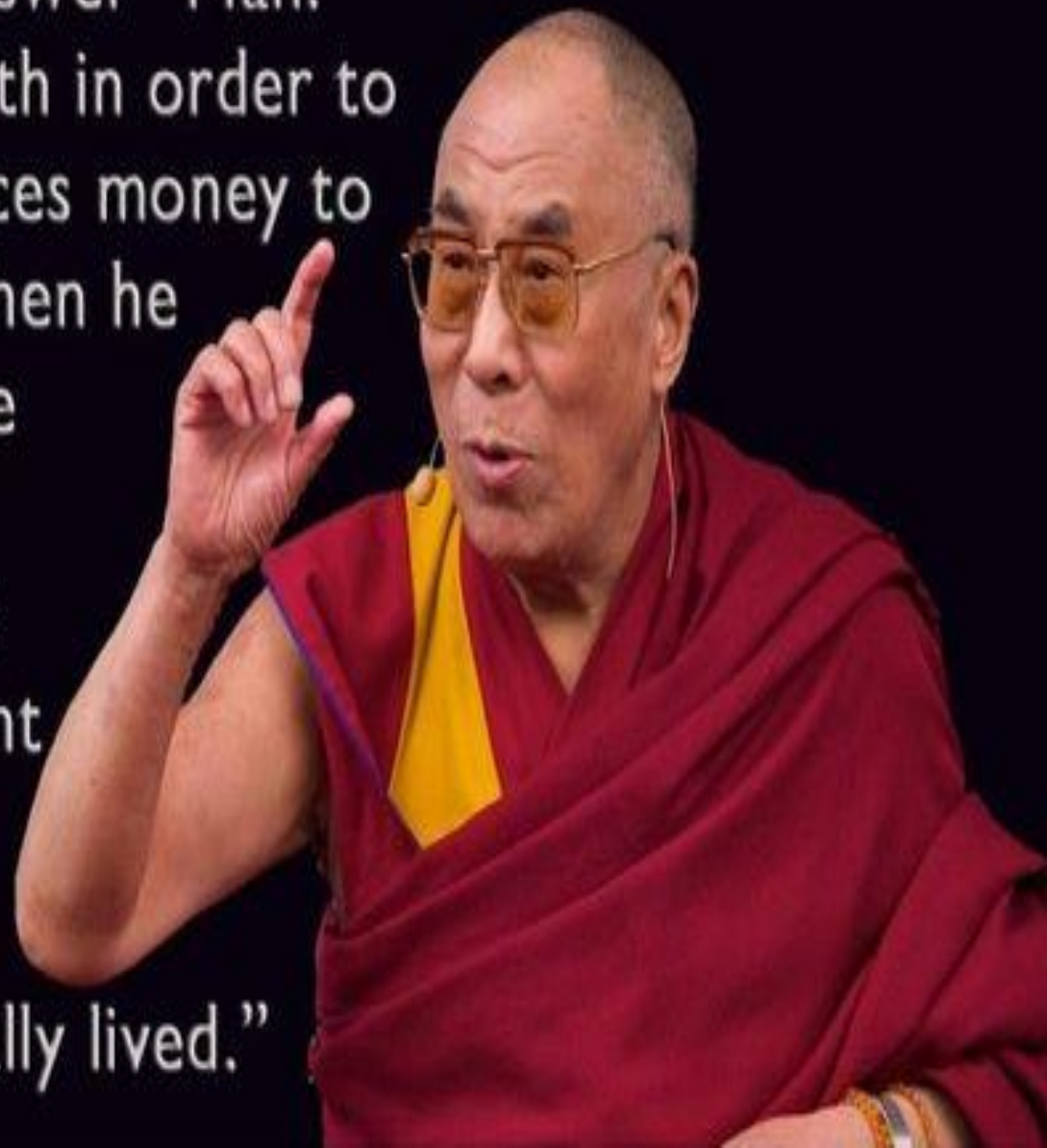
“Purpose gives meaning to our being and purpose has myriad meanings for us.” – **Somali K . Chakrabarti**

“The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.” – **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

“The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away.” – **Pablo Picasso**

“The two most important days in life are the day you were born and the day you find out why.” – **Mark Twain**

The Dalai Lama, when asked what surprised him most about humanity, answer “Man. Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then he dies having never really lived.”



Self care

Life Lesson: Put on your own oxygen mask before assisting others.



*seriously.
you can't help anyone if you're dead.*

Self Care

- Address emotional pain
- Avoid repetitive negative thoughts
- Make time for friends and family
- Make time for yourself
- Practice gratitude (not resentment)
- Nourish your body with healthy food
- Get enough sleep
- Move your body
- Manage medical and physical problems
- Ask for help
- Connect with your spirituality and your purpose
- Help others/Volunteer
- Practice mindfulness

Mindfulness

Merriam-Webster dictionary definition:

The practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, or experiences on a moment-to-moment basis.

Mindfulness is a way of perceiving and observing; it can be developed using various tools, including meditation.



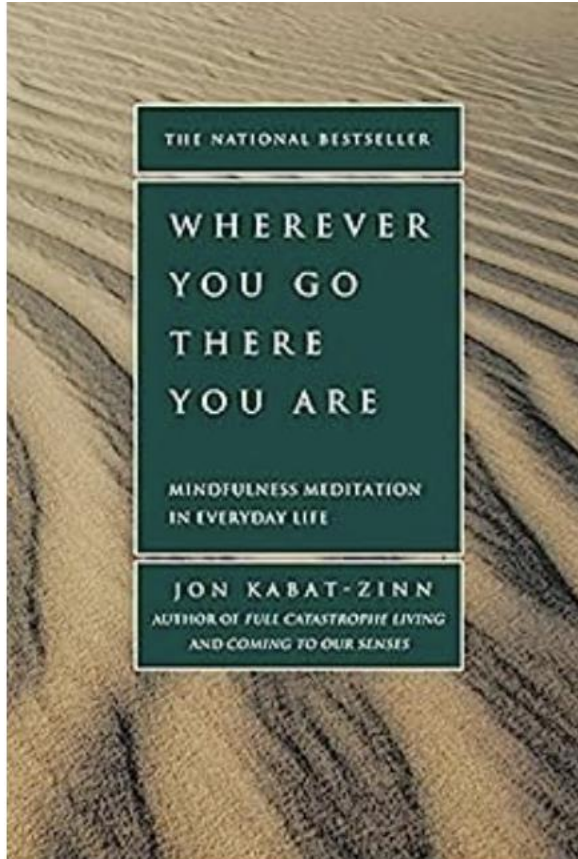
Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness is a type of meditation in which you focus on being intensely aware of what you're sensing and feeling in the moment, without interpretation or judgment. Practicing mindfulness involves breathing methods, guided imagery, and other practices to relax the body and mind and help reduce stress.

--from Mayo website



Mindfulness Meditation



Headspace

The best meditation app

This app has the largest variety of meditations, with guided sessions for beginners and less-structured programming for pros. Its rich library of meditations is well organized and easy to navigate.



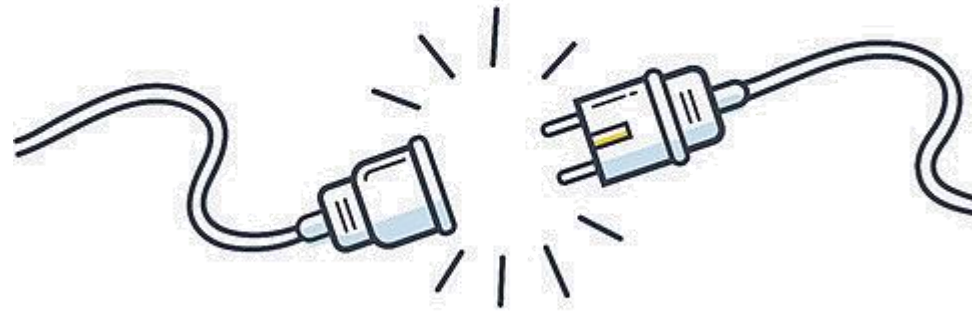
Calm

Less-structured meditations, more-ambient soundscapes

Calm offers guided and unguided meditations that focus on relaxing in general and keeping steady in tough times. And, as an added perk, the app lets you personalize your experience.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/in-depth/mindfulness-exercises/art-20046356>

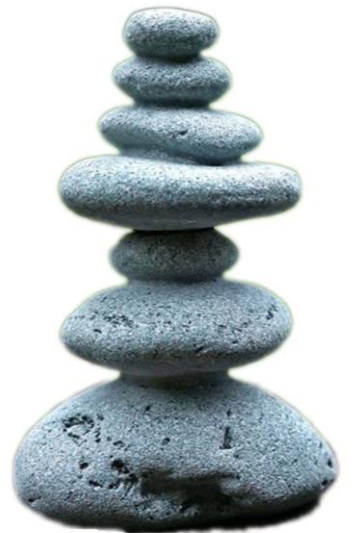
"Almost everything will work again if
you unplug it for a few minutes,
including you."



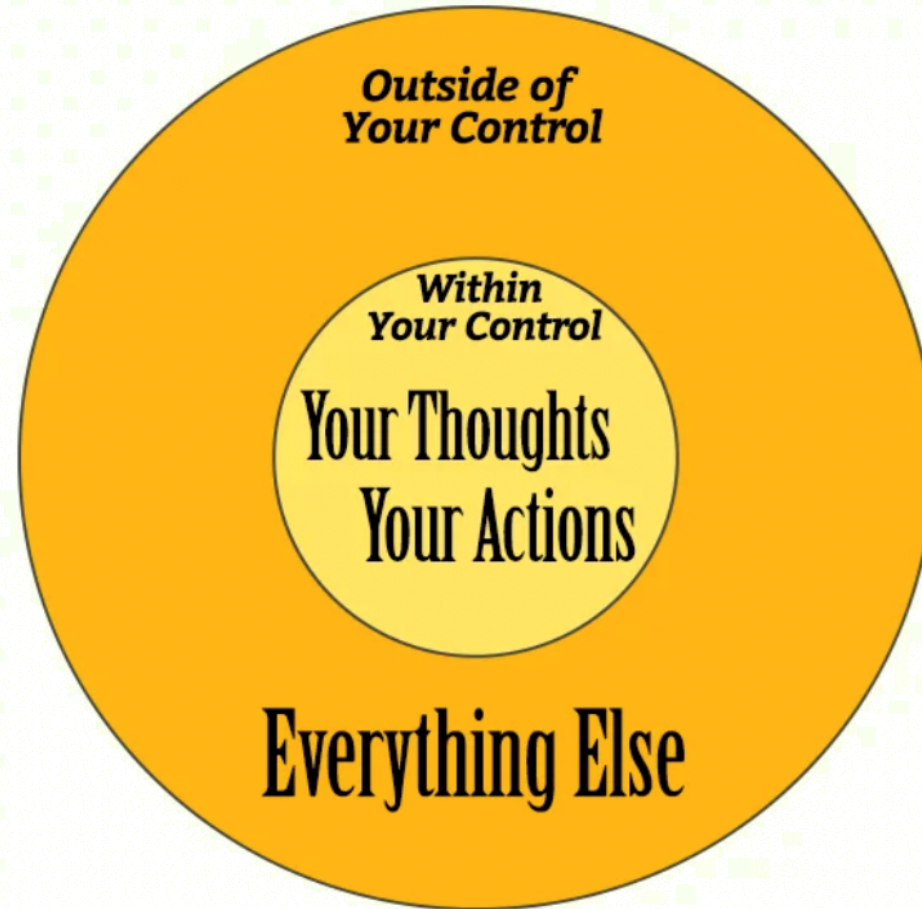
Anne Lamott

The Serenity Prayer attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.



Stoic Dichotomy of Control



Interventions-- Reactive

- Peer support
 - Encouragement from colleagues
- Ongoing mentoring
 - Physicians appreciate meaningful feedback
- Connect with resources
 - Individual coaching
 - Employee Assistant Programs
 - Social Activities

Interventions-- Proactive

- Wellness Leader
- Awareness and Education
- Change the system
 - Input from stakeholders
- Provide Resilience Tools
- Couple and Family Support
- Small groups
 - Vulnerability
 - Community

Strategies to Prevent Burnout

- Allow people time for medical appointments and exercise
- Provide healthy snacks
- Offer (mindfulness) meditation resources
- Have a monthly lunch for people to just talk (possibly with a speaker)
- Is there a dedicated room for nursing moms
- Know how and where to refer people
- Make gratitude a habit, e.g., journaling

Strategies to Prevent Burnout

- Make use of industrial and systems engineering to rework workflows
- Don't eat lunch alone in your office
- Make use of ergonomic resources
- Recognize people (*Encouraging the Heart*)
- Manage by walking around
- Set up a table to allow people to work on a puzzle or hang a print that people can color
- Remind people we have champagne (1st world) problems

Build a Community

“A group of individuals who share a mutual concern for one another's welfare.”

Charles Vogl
(The Art of Community, 2016)



Regular Article



A Strategy for Wellness in a Pathology Residency Program: Enhancing Chances of Success During an Epidemic of Burnout

**Marisa C. Saint Martin, MD, ACC¹, Phillip J. DeChristopher, MD, PhD¹,
and R. Paul Sweeney, BBA¹**

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Who are you to the ones you love?



It's been a severe pleasure