

FINDING JOY IN PRACTICE

We've all heard about the burnout epidemic that's plaguing physicians across the country. It's time to look at the issue from the other side: what can we do to prevent physician burnout, create a positive working environment, and reclaim joy in practice?

What can I do?

Work-life boundaries

Develop a habit that signals taking off your "doctor" identity for the day and focusing on your life.



Cultivate supportive relationships

A study of rural women physicians showed that supportive relationships at home were one of the top factors in determining happiness at work.

Reflect on thought patterns that make the worst out of situations

You may find yourself hanging onto thought patterns that are negative, destructive, and increase your stress instead of solving problems. When you notice yourself doing this, try the "ABCD" approach to restructuring your thoughts and seeing things more realistically.



Activating Event What happened?	Consequences Reactions- were you angry, or sad?
Beliefs Immediate thoughts- "It's his fault," "I should have known."	Disputes New thoughts and changed perspectives

Try mindfulness

Mindfulness is a practice of being aware of your thoughts, feelings, and sensations at the present moment. Mindfulness meditation has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety, chronic pain, and hypertension.



What can we do as a team?

Reorganize workflow to improve efficiency

Clinics have found success with various techniques, such as using scribes for in-visit documentation, doing labs and medication review before the visit, co-localizing workspaces to improve communication, sharing more clinical care among the team, and using longer-term prescription renewal to avoid frequent refill work.



Take a team approach to care

Recognize that everyone has something to offer the team, and be comfortable delegating tasks that don't require physician-level attention.

Make peace with the EHR

Have scribes record notes and enter orders during the visit. Identify EHR tasks that you have to do repeatedly, and approach a skilled user or IT about ways create a template to automate those tasks.



What system level changes can we make?

Prioritize burnout prevention

Establish programs and resources to help care providers stay well. One hospital made a "reset room" out of an unused office where providers can relax, refocus, and reenergize after a highly stressful situation.



Treat physician wellness as a quality measure

Burnout isn't an individual problem; it's a serious quality concern that employers have a responsibility to address. Stressed and exhausted physicians are far more likely to make mistakes that compromise patient health.



Accept nontraditional scheduling



Acknowledge that flexible scheduling or working less than full time is a successful strategy for balancing life commitments, creating work-life balance, and improving wellness.

Adjust staffing to suit workflow

Interventions that improve efficiency and physician wellness, such as scribing and team-based care, may require more clinical support staff. A study of high-functioning clinics suggests that teams of 2-3 clinical assistants per physician allow optimal team based care.



Sources

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