

# Putting First Things First: Self-Care and Preventing Burnout

Nerissa M. Price, MD

Behavioral Health Medical Director

The content presented within this training is for informational purposes only and not intended as medical advice or to direct treatment. Physicians and other health care providers are solely responsible for the treatment decisions for their patients and should not use the information presented and accompanying materials to substitute independent clinical judgment.

All images are used under license for illustrative purposes only. Any individual depicted is a model unless otherwise identified.



Delivering the Next  
**Generation**  
of Health Care

# Amy

*Scenario Only*

Amy is bitter.

She has worked three years in the Anywhere, North Carolina, PCP clinic and still feels left out of her office's tight knit team.

Amy works in a high-volume Medicaid clinic that is chronically understaffed.

"I sometimes look at the stuff I have to do, and I get angry," she says. "Like, why doesn't somebody else do some of it? Why is it just *me*?"

Amy is also disturbed to find herself rolling her eyes when she thinks about the communities she is trying to help.

"They don't want to save themselves, so why should I go out of my way?"

Lately, she has been thinking more and more about quitting her job.



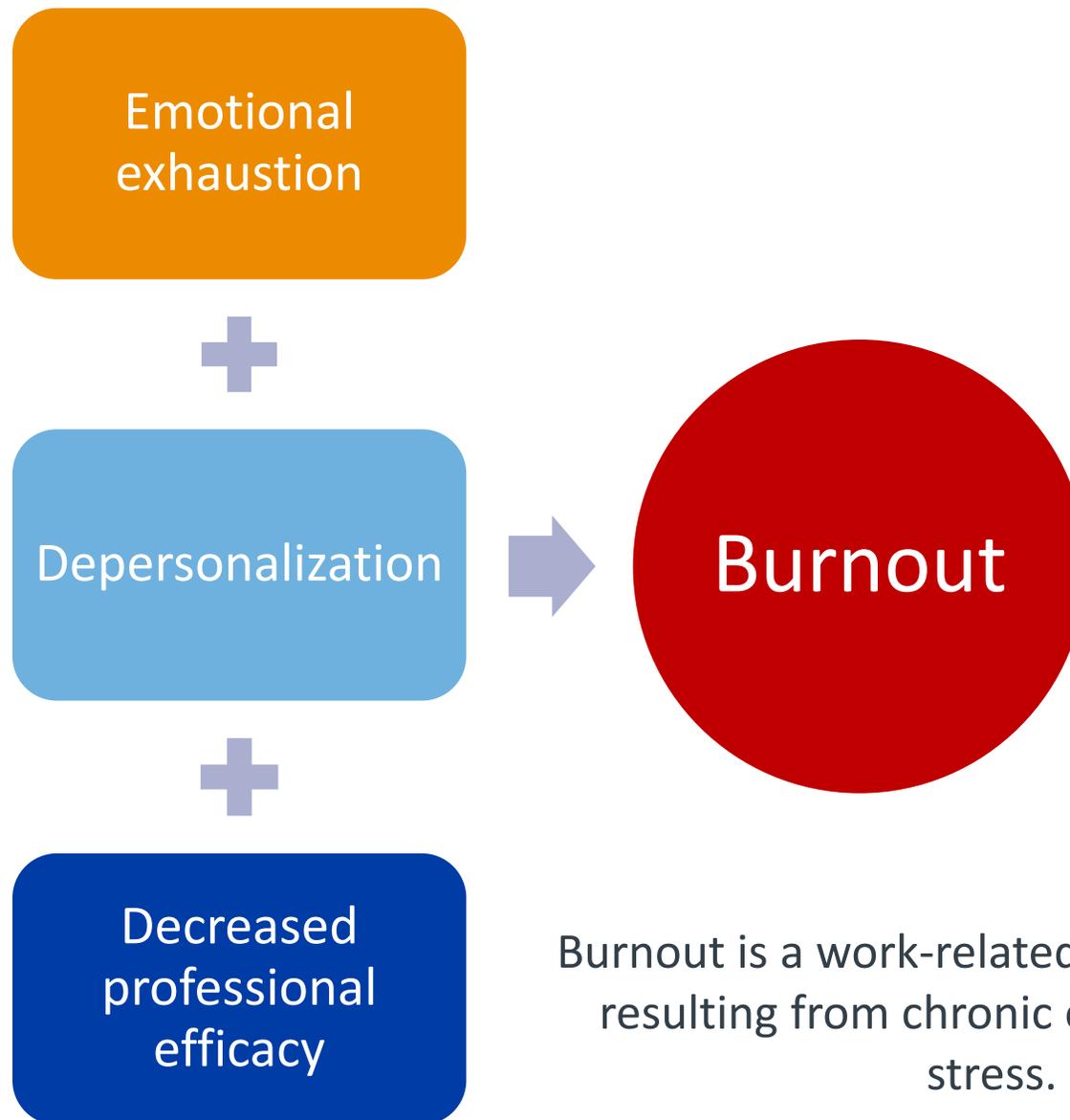
What's going on with Amy?

Could it be burnout?

THE PROBLEM....



# Am I Burned Out?



Burnout is a work-related stress syndrome resulting from chronic exposure to job stress.

# Burnout<sup>1</sup>

- Burnout is a well-recognized risk of people-oriented professions, such as teaching, human services and health care.
- It's typical for people in these jobs "to be selfless and put others' needs first; to work long hours and do whatever it takes to help a client or patient or student; to go the extra mile and to give one's all."
- "Organizational environments for these jobs are shaped by various social, political and economic factors (such as funding cutbacks or policy restrictions) that result in work settings that are high in demands and low in resources."

1. Christina Maslach and Michael Leiter, "Understanding the Burnout Experience: Recent Research and Its Implications for Psychiatry," *World Psychiatry*, Vol. 15, No. 2, June 2016, pp. 103 – 111. doi: 10.1002/wps.20311.

# Burnout Epidemic

- **54.4%** of U.S. physicians reported at least **one symptom of burnout** in 2014, as compared to 45.5% in 2011; up in 2017 (43.9%); down in 2020 (38.2%).<sup>2</sup>
- Decline in satisfaction with **work-life balance** from 2011 (48.5%) to 2014 (40.9%); slightly up in 2017 (42.7%); up in 2020 (46.1%).<sup>2</sup>
- **50%** among physicians in training (such as medical students and residents) were experiencing burnout.
- **43%** of U.S. nurses working at U.S. hospitals reported emotional exhaustion.<sup>3</sup>

2. Tait Shanafelt et al., “Changes in Burnout and Satisfaction With Work-Life Integration in Physicians During the First 2 Years of the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Mayo Clin Proc.*, Vol. 97, No. 12, Dec. 2022, pp. 2248 – 2258. doi: 10.1016/j.mayocp.2022.09.002.

3. Thomas Reith, “Burnout in United States Healthcare Professionals: A Narrative Review,” *Cureus*, Vol. 4, No. 12, Dec. 2018, doi: 10.7759/cureus.3681.

# Burnout Amongst Specialties

## Specialties with highest burnout

- Emergency medicine
- Obstetrics and gynecology
- Family medicine
- Neurology
- Physical medicine and rehabilitation

## Specialties with highest satisfaction

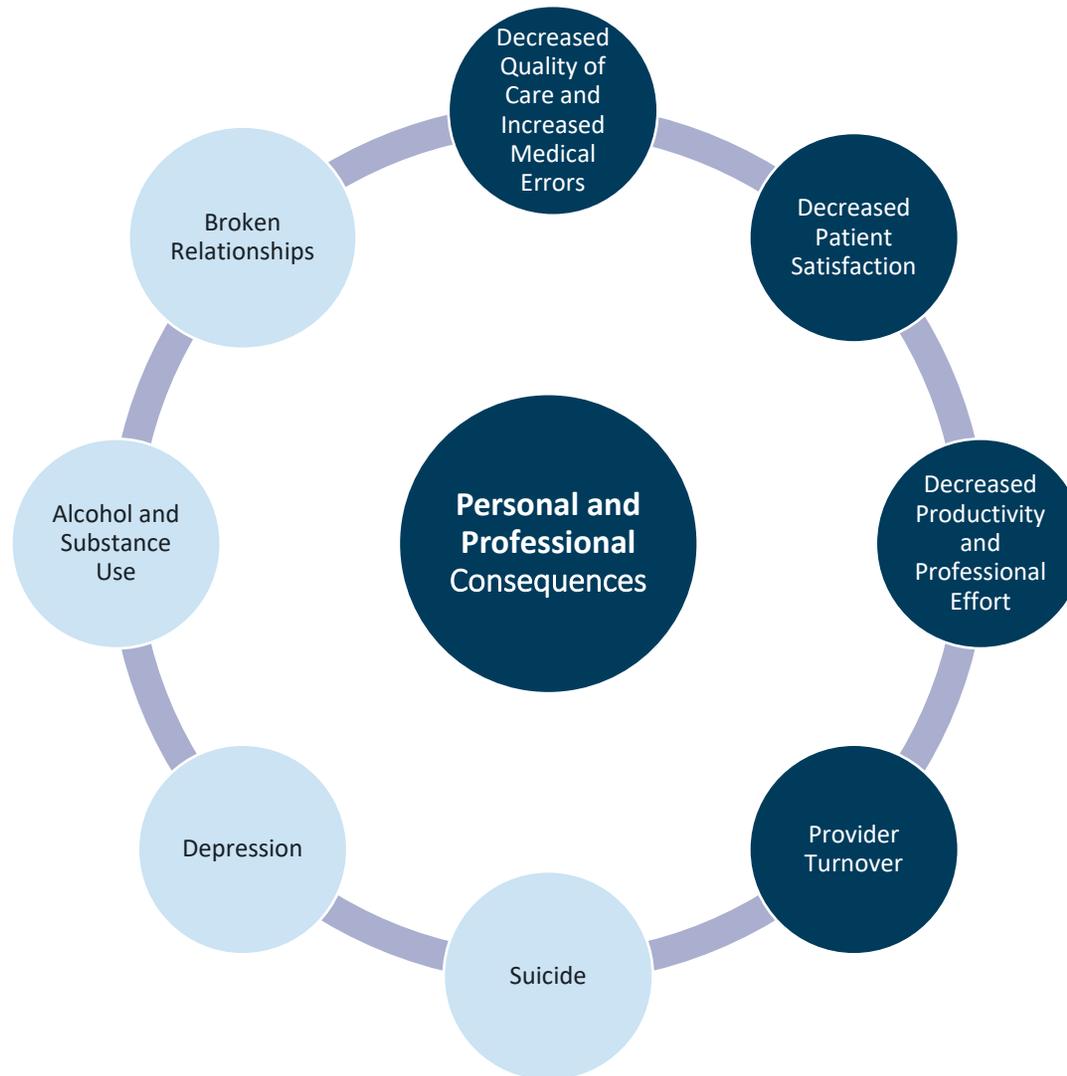
### Work-Life Integration (WLI)

- Dermatology
- Emergency medicine
- Otolaryngology
- Psychiatry
- Radiology



4. Tait Shanafelt et al., "Changes in Burnout and Satisfaction With Work-Life Integration in Physicians During the First 2 Years of the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, Vol. 97, No. 12, Dec. 2022, pp. 2248 – 2258. doi: 10.1016/j.mayocp.2022.09.002.

# Consequences of Burnout



5. CP West et al., "Physician Burnout: Contributors, Consequences and Solutions," *Journal of Internal Medicine*, Vol. 283, No. 6, Jun. 2018, pp. 516 – 529. doi: 10.1111/joim.12752.

# COVID-19...September 2020<sup>6</sup>

93% were experiencing stress.

86% reported experiencing anxiety.

80% getting less than 8 hours of sleep.

77% reported frustration.

75% worried about exposing family members to COVID-19.

**76% reported exhaustion and burnout.**

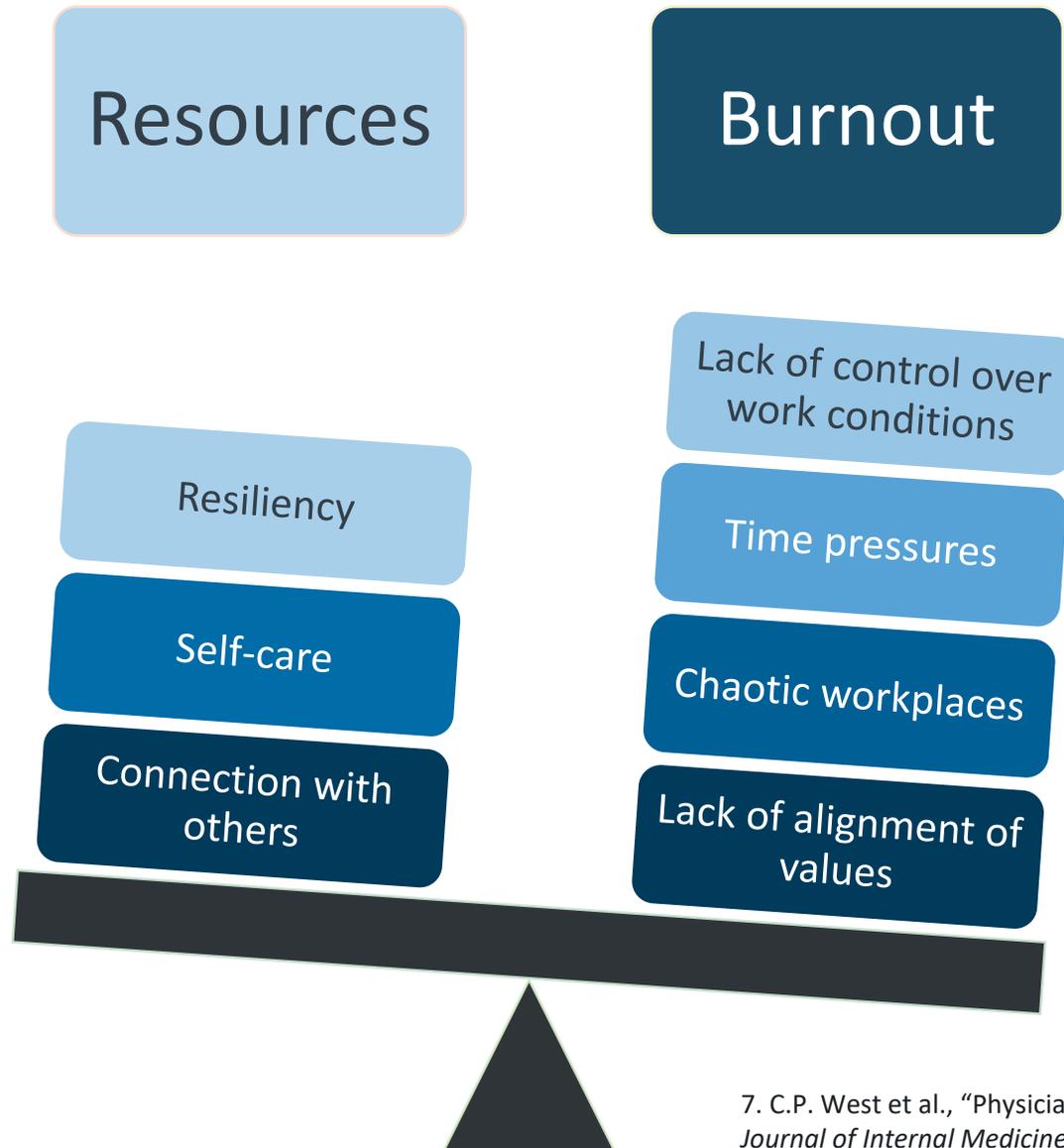
49% have cried at work in the past year.

48% have considered either retiring, quitting their jobs, or changing their careers altogether.



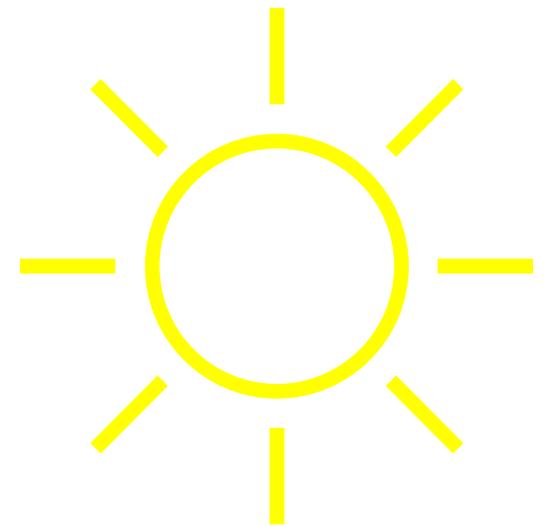
6. "The Mental Health of Healthcare Workers In COVID-19" Mental Health America, <https://mhanational.org/mental-health-healthcare-workers-covid-19>.

# The Struggle<sup>7</sup>



7. C.P. West et al., "Physician Burnout: Contributors, Consequences and Solutions," *Journal of Internal Medicine*, Vol. 283, No. 6, June 2018, pp. 516 – 529.

THE SOLUTIONS....



# Wellness<sup>8</sup>

*Wellness is a conscious, deliberate process that requires a person become **aware of** and make **choices** for a more satisfying **lifestyle**.*

---

Emotional

---

Financial

---

Social

---

Spiritual

---

Occupational

---

Physical

---

Intellectual

---

<sup>8</sup>Adapted from Swarbrick, M. (2006). A Wellness Approach. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 29 (4, 311-314)

# Fixing Burnout<sup>9</sup>



9. © 2016 Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University. All rights reserved. <https://wellmd.stanford.edu/about/model-external.html>.

# Organizational Strategies to Fix Burnout

## **You can't manage what you don't measure.**

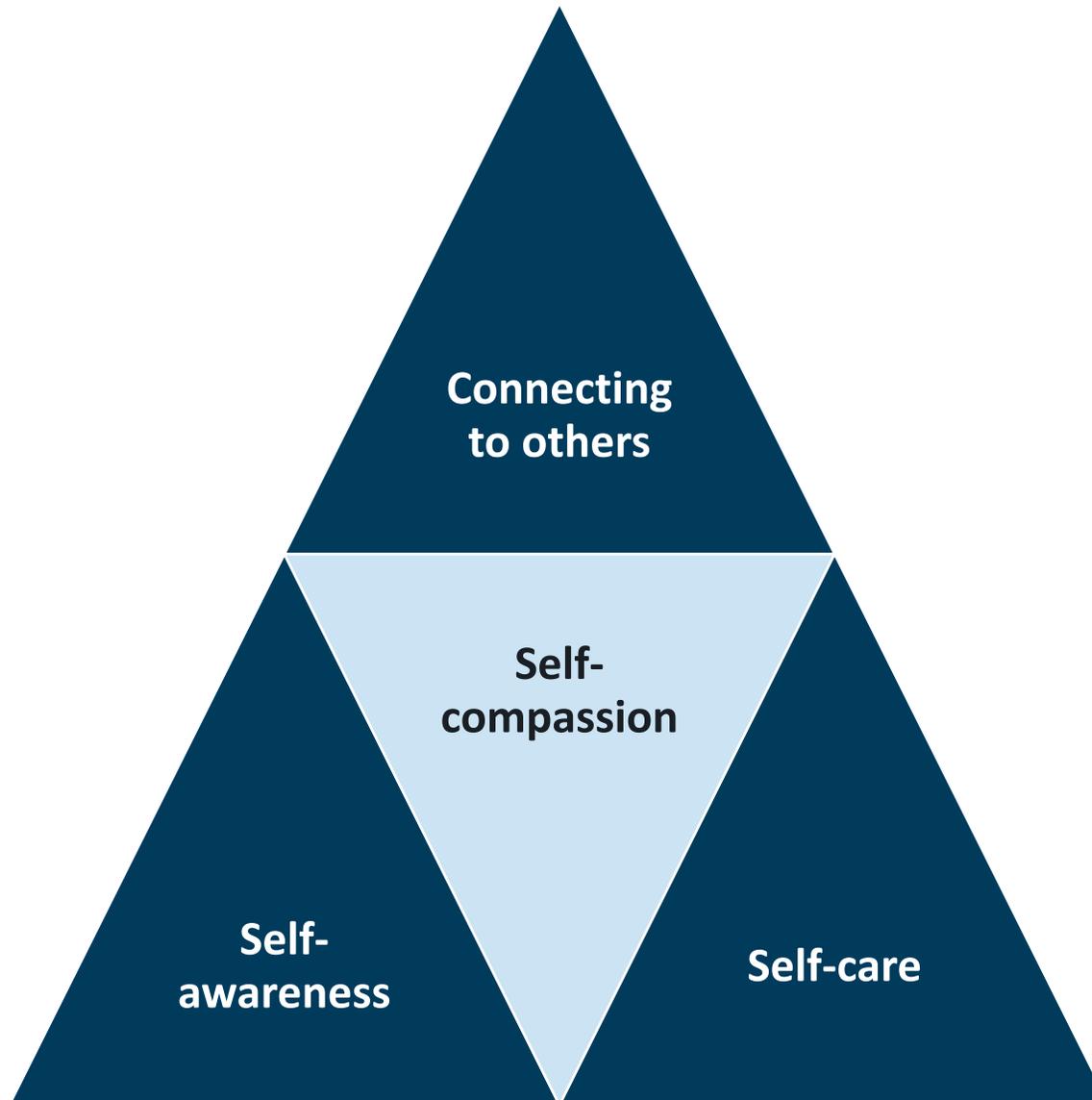
1. Acknowledge organizational responsibility in fixing burnout.
2. Select a well-being assessment tool, and measure in your office.
  - Measure regularly.
  - e.g., AMA Mini-Z, Well-Being Index, Maslach Burnout Inventory, Oldenburg Burnout Inventory, Stanford Professional Fulfillment survey, etc.
3. Convene a group of staff members tracking well-being and recommendations.
4. Adopt the lens of well-being through every decision.

# Examples of Strategies to Fix Burnout<sup>10</sup>

- Offer more flexible scheduling options for providers.
- Pair support staff (e.g., MAs, RNs, etc.) with the same providers.
- Evaluate tasks which can be delegated to other staff or automated.
- Acknowledging achievements of staff in public (e.g. in meetings) and 1:1.
- Make sure there are opportunities for staff to offer feedback or suggestions for improvement (including anonymously).
- Incorporate patient case stories in meetings.
- Provide a mechanism to develop and share better Electronic Health Record (EHR) templates.

10. Reprinted from "Tactics to Reduce Burnout: For Use in Your Practice Setting," *Practice Transformation Series: Burnout*, American Medical Association, 2015, [https://cdn.edhub.ama-assn.org/ama/content\\_public/journal/steps-forward/937327/10.1001stepsforward.2017.0010supp5\\_1710429982.86224.docx?Expires=1715956813&Signature=I6-tfIpMXFssyScgEaj9CppuKypUiWrMPIMs5w5XwP5VdPO4rh-vG5SCLyTfTIPWtAlz63qlz3s8J02yDqqdyKbCswKcRcxfsB67N7uOVGrLDjeEH7X2Oji5xm9DshJtDClinQO8k1fyS51u5T-hyBbrlZKF0WkkWhJuRoHLS6PH3tSVL-8Gmb4Rnrvd~0JJbE-T1RQ-9t~hRRvRIUetpfwKlrIrJyp3QD-TJzzO2c9dP5rRemy5UM77KMvVq~BTWq1zetE50QMBAcmeBUZp2m6Q~6wT1zmMElydxN8niUbTZITHugTCJlw3EbFI-yZkcaaallgo9~alLW2rtZw\\_&Key-Pair-Id=APKAIE5G5CRDK6RD3PGA](https://cdn.edhub.ama-assn.org/ama/content_public/journal/steps-forward/937327/10.1001stepsforward.2017.0010supp5_1710429982.86224.docx?Expires=1715956813&Signature=I6-tfIpMXFssyScgEaj9CppuKypUiWrMPIMs5w5XwP5VdPO4rh-vG5SCLyTfTIPWtAlz63qlz3s8J02yDqqdyKbCswKcRcxfsB67N7uOVGrLDjeEH7X2Oji5xm9DshJtDClinQO8k1fyS51u5T-hyBbrlZKF0WkkWhJuRoHLS6PH3tSVL-8Gmb4Rnrvd~0JJbE-T1RQ-9t~hRRvRIUetpfwKlrIrJyp3QD-TJzzO2c9dP5rRemy5UM77KMvVq~BTWq1zetE50QMBAcmeBUZp2m6Q~6wT1zmMElydxN8niUbTZITHugTCJlw3EbFI-yZkcaaallgo9~alLW2rtZw_&Key-Pair-Id=APKAIE5G5CRDK6RD3PGA).

# Personal Resilience



# Self-Awareness

## Check your emotional temperature!

- Not always easy

## Career evaluation may be needed.

- Is there a mismatch?

## Red flags

- Insomnia
- Mood changes: depressed, anxious, persistently irritable
- Isolation
- Avoidance
- Poor concentration
- Relationship conflicts
- Problems at work
- Suicidal ideation



# Self-Compassion

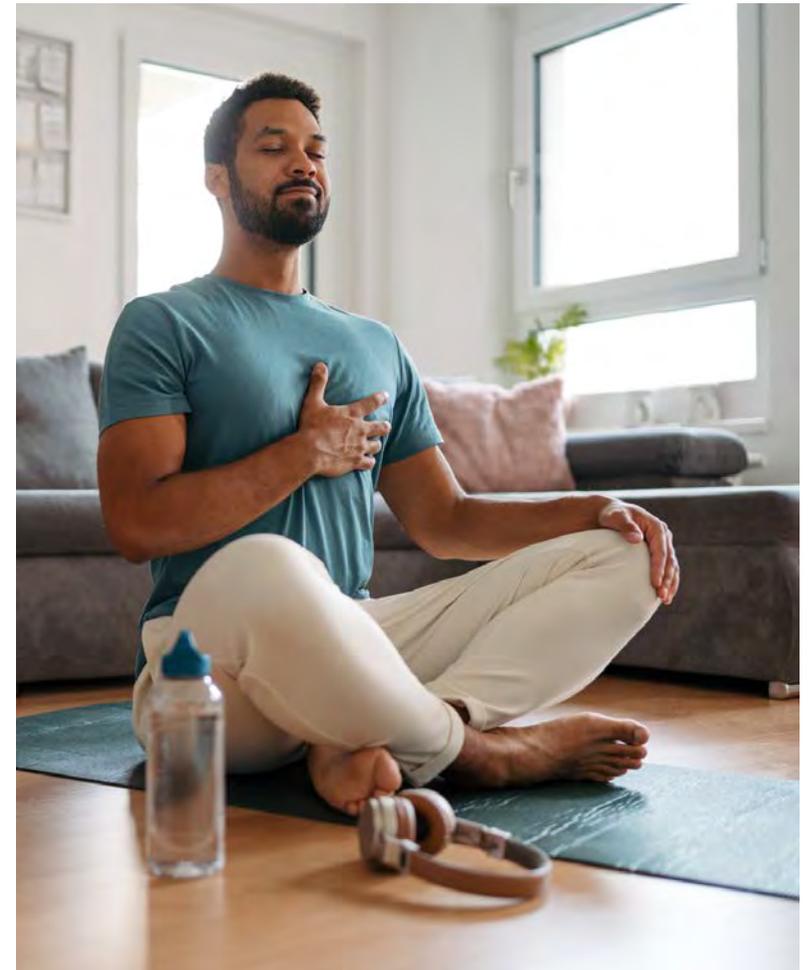
“Treating yourself the way you would treat a friend or patient who is having a hard time and learning to embrace yourself and your imperfections gives you the resilience needed to thrive.”<sup>11</sup>



<sup>11</sup>Kristin Neff and Christopher Germer, *The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook: A Proven Way to Accept Yourself, Build Inner Strength, and Thrive*, The Guilford Press, New York, 2018

# Self-Care

- Exercise:
  - Yoga or tai chi
- Practice good nutrition and hydration.
- Get adequate sleep.
- Don't use illicit drugs, use ethanol (ETOH) responsibly and monitor caffeine intake.
- Maintain positive social supports — physical distancing vs. social distancing.
- Take restorative health measures, such as meditating, talking to friends or family, having quiet time, listening to music, having a dance party, reading, taking a walk, gardening, praying (if religious), and so on.
- Limit media exposure.
- **SEEK HELP!**



# Importance of Pause

**Medicine is a rewarding yet demanding, often chaotic environment.**

- This may lead to chronic stress response.
- Chronic stress response can lead to cardiovascular disease, obesity and depression.

**You need to regularly trigger the relaxation response.**

- Mindfulness is a way of remaining in the present while processing unfolding events and feelings in a compassionate and nonjudgmental way.
- Mindfulness-based interventions may help reduce physician burnout and increase empathy.

**Recovery requires time.**

- Connect with others to honor a critical incident or about moving forward and resilience.
- Schedule times to pause (e.g. commute to/from work, first 30 minutes of the day, or lunch time).

# Connecting to Others

- Seek out contact with your support system, even if far away.
- Be open to different types of support.
- Discipline yourself to have conversations with people who know you well enough to recognize when something is bothering you.
- Reprioritize your schedule to spend more time with those who mean the most to you.



# Resources

**National Domestic Violence Hotline** — Well-being support and resources are offered free of charge, 24/7, to those dealing with domestic violence situations at **1-800-799-7233**.

**National Parent and Youth Helpline** — Parent advocacy and emotional support is provided 1 – 10 p.m. ET, Monday – Friday, at **1-855-427-2736**.

**National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** — Well-being support is available for those in distress or crisis 24/7 at **988**.

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline** — Treatment referral and information resources are available 24/7 for those dealing with substance use issues at **1-800-662-4357**.

**Hope4NC Helpline** — Referrals and connections are provided to mental health and resilience resources 24/7 at **1-855-587-3463**.

# Amy

*Scenario Only*



Amy recognized that a major driver for her burnout was workload. She sits down with her manager, and they come up with a new work schedule that allows her a few hours each week to work on various process improvement projects that will help the entire team.

During the discussion, she realizes that she is not the only one in her office who may be struggling with burnout, which helps her feel not so alone. Because she is working on strategies that will benefit the entire team, she has more interactions with others in her office.

That alone makes her feel more like she's part of a community.

# Amy

*Scenario Only*



Amy also realizes that she does not take her vacations at regular intervals. She decides that beginning to take regular vacations will help her look forward to much deserved time off, and she schedules 30 minutes of “me-time” every day after work to either read, take a walk around her neighborhood or listen to her favorite podcast.

Amy and her manager agree to check back in after a month to see how things are going.

Even though Amy hasn’t solved all the problems that may contribute to burnout, she feels more hopeful and more energized with where she is heading.



**AmeriHealth** *Caritas*<sup>™</sup>

---

North Carolina