

# Physician Wellness and Burnout: How to Prevent It

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# DISCLOSURES

These relationships have ended.

I served on the Scientific Advisory Board for Jenny Craig.

I served on the Medical Advisory Board for obVus Solutions.

I served on the Medical Advisory Board for Clearing.com



# OBJECTIVES

1. Define Burnout
2. Identify a Physician Wellness Hierarchy
3. Examine different strategies to increase your sense of wellbeing
4. Determine one step you can take to reduce burnout and or enhance wellness

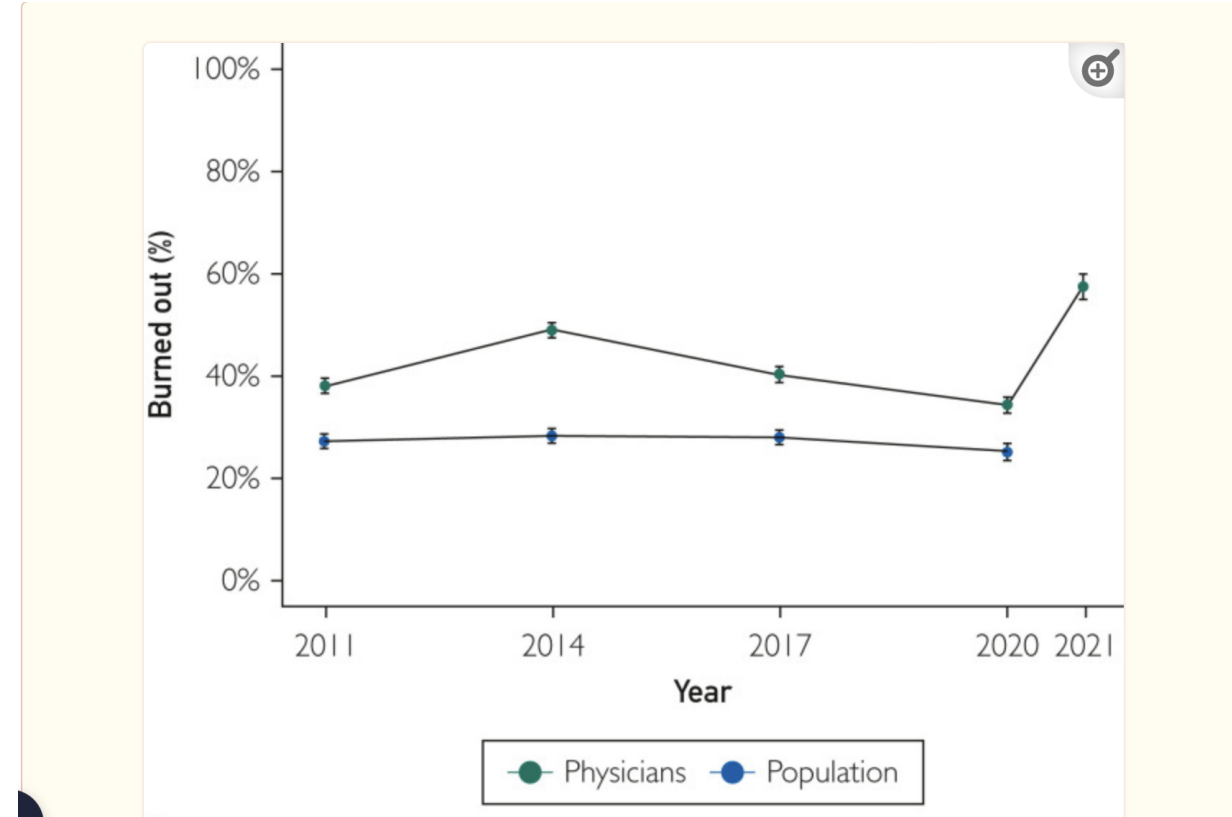


# What is burnout?

From a recent AMA article titled **Advocacy in action: Reducing physician burnout** published June 2024.

“Burnout is a [long-term stress reaction](#) that can include:

- Emotional exhaustion.
- Depersonalization (i.e. lack of empathy for or negative attitudes toward patients).
- Feeling of decreased personal achievement. ”



# American Medical Association Policy

## Physician and Medical Student Burnout D-310.968

1. Our AMA recognizes that **burnout**, defined as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment or effectiveness, is a problem among residents, fellows, and medical students.
2. Our AMA will work with other interested groups to regularly inform the appropriate designated institutional officials, program directors, resident physicians, and attending faculty about resident, fellow, and medical student **burnout** (including recognition, treatment, and prevention of **burnout**) through appropriate media outlets.
3. Our AMA will encourage partnerships and collaborations with accrediting bodies (e.g., the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education and the Liaison Committee on Medical Education) and other major medical organizations to address the recognition, treatment, and prevention of **burnout** among residents, fellows, and medical students and faculty.
4. Our AMA will encourage further studies and disseminate the results of studies on physician and medical student **burnout** to the medical education and physician community.
5. Our AMA will continue to monitor this issue and track its progress, including publication of peer-reviewed research and changes in accreditation requirements.
6. Our AMA encourages the utilization of mindfulness education as an effective intervention to address the problem of medical student and physician **burnout**.
7. Our AMA will encourage medical staffs and/or organizational leadership to anonymously survey physicians to identify local factors that may lead to physician demoralization.
8. Our AMA will continue to offer **burnout** assessment resources and develop guidance to help organizations and medical staffs implement organizational strategies that will help reduce the sources of physician demoralization and promote overall medical staff well-being.
9. Our AMA will continue to: (a) address the institutional causes of physician demoralization and **burnout**, such as the burden of documentation requirements, inefficient work flows and regulatory oversight; and (b) develop and promote mechanisms by which physicians in all practices settings can reduce the risk and effects of demoralization and **burnout**, including implementing targeted practice transformation interventions, validated assessment tools and promoting a culture of well-being.



# Highlight

9. Our AMA will continue to: (a) address the institutional causes of physician demoralization and **burnout**, such as the burden of documentation requirements, inefficient work flows and regulatory oversight; and (b) develop and promote mechanisms by which physicians in all practices settings can reduce the risk and effects of demoralization and **burnout**, including implementing targeted practice transformation interventions, validated assessment tools and promoting a culture of well-being.

“Demoralization is a state of hopelessness and helplessness that is akin to, but separable from, depression.<sup>1,2</sup> It is associated with a sense of subjective incompetence, the belief that a person is unable to express his or her values and achieve his or her goals.<sup>3</sup>”

<https://www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/2012/1101/p861.html>



# Highlight—What has the AMA done?

The AMA has:

- “Successfully fought for passage of the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act, which provides essential physician wellness resources and was signed into law in March 2022.
- Established a national campaign to help states enact confidentiality laws that protect physicians seeking help for wellness, burnout and fatigue, and remove inappropriate, stigmatizing questions on physician licensure and renewal applications. The campaign also helps health systems and academic medical institutions remove questions on credentialing and other applications that might prevent physicians, residents and medical students from seeking care for mental wellness.”





# Highlight—What has the AMA done?

- “Helped achieve—through efforts with partners—statewide changes in Massachusetts and Virginia, as well as changes in more than 26 states, multiple national, regional, and state hospitals and health systems and urgent care centers, and other facilities—having a positive impact on hundreds of thousands of physicians.”
- Advocated for and supported new laws and policies in over a dozen states that protect physicians who seek care for wellness and burnout.
- Built the [AMA Organizational Biopsy®](#), an assessment tool that helps health care organizations holistically measure and take action to improve the well-being of their physicians and other health professionals.
- Shaped more than [40 policies and secured regulatory victories](#) that have reduced documentation burdens.”



# The Reciprocal Domains of Physician Well-being

Chart illustrating the 3 domains of physician well-being,  
with each domain reciprocally influencing the others.

What do physicians need to  
function optimally?



What can be done?  
Hold listening sessions and then  
Take action on steps to improve work  
flow and efficiency of practice.

What can we do now?  
What is in our control?

Physician Well-Being: The Reciprocity of Practice  
Efficiency, Culture of Wellness, and Personal Resilience,  
NEJM Catalyst August 7, 2017



# AMA's Stop That, Start This Check List

Notifications of scheduled appointments (e.g. specialist visits, diagnostic testing) automatically entering the inbox	Ask your IT department to help turn off <a href="#">inbox notifications</a> (and escalate to the CIO/ compliance officer if they say it is not possible)
Directly answering patient inquiries that come through the patient portal	Develop standard protocols to allow team members to address <a href="#">patient portal</a> messages
Being caught off guard by a patient's unexpected agenda items	Implement <a href="#">pre-appointment questionnaires</a>
Reviewing lab results with patients after their appointment via an additional phone call or patient portal message	Develop <a href="#">pre-visit lab protocols</a> and review results with patients <i>during</i> their appointment
Refilling long-term medications at each appointment with only enough to last until the next appointment	Implement <a href="#">90 x 4 annual prescription renewals</a> , where long-term medications are refilled at a 90-day supply with 4 refills once a year
Resigning yourself to “stupid stuff” in your day-to-day just because that’s how it has	Engage your local leaders to start a <a href="#">Getting Rid of Stupid Stuff</a> initiative



<https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/ama-steps-forward-stop-this-start-that-checklist.pdf>

Accessed 7-8-2024

Title

Level

Key factors at level



Beyond burnout: a physician wellness hierarchy designed to prioritize interventions at the systems level. The American journal of medicine, 132(5), 556-563.

**Figure** Health professional wellness hierarchy.

# Setting Boundaries Sets the Stage for Stress Reduction

- After-hours work intrusion via technology can create stress.
- A culture that acknowledges the value of weeknights off and weekends off is one that fosters wellness.
- Making your schedule clear to colleagues helps.
- Make a list of your priorities.
- Schedule your time according to your priorities.





# What is a Growth Mindset?

**Is intelligence malleable or fixed?**

**Malleable** — “If I make a mistake, I try to learn and figure it out.”

**Fixed** — Mindset that people can’t get smarter and do not work to learn from mistakes.



Moser JS, Schroder HS, Heeter C, Moran TP, Lee Y-H. Mind Your Errors: Evidence for a Neural Mechanism Linking Growth Mind-Set to Adaptive Posterror Adjustments. *Psychological Science*. 2011;22(12):1484-1489.

# Results of Research with Growth Mindset?

## **25 students were given a test**

Click a mouse button to correctly identify the center letter of a five-letter string of letters

- (MMMMM) or (NNMNN)
- Easy to make a mistake
- Check belief system about mistakes

Electrical activity in the brain was measured.

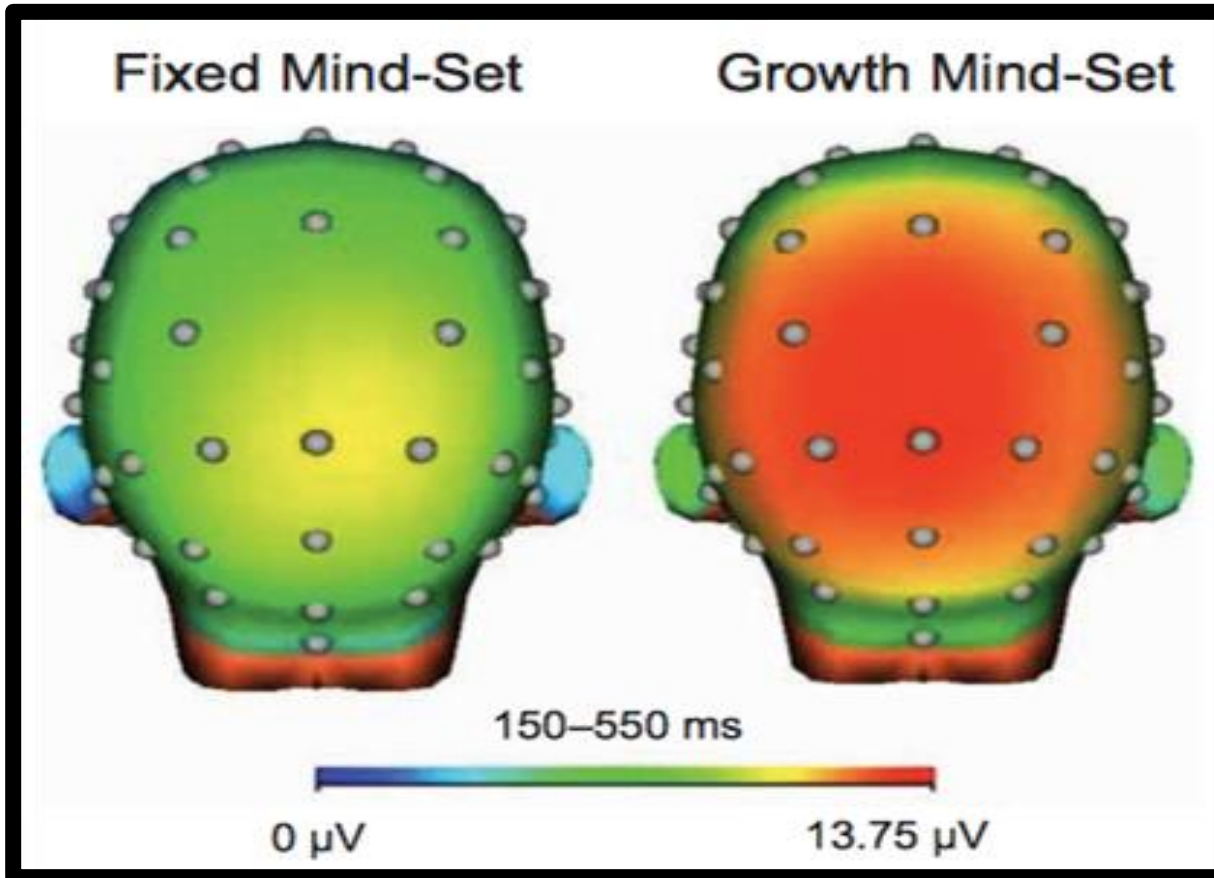
With a mistake, there are 2 signals within a quarter of a second generated by the brain and recorded in electrical activity.

1. Initial “Oh, crap!” response.
2. Second-indicated the person is aware of mistake and trying to fix it.



Moser JS, Schroder HS, Heeter C, Moran TP, Lee Y-H. Mind Your Errors: Evidence for a Neural Mechanism Linking Growth Mind-Set to Adaptive Posterror Adjustments. *Psychological Science*. 2011;22(12):1484-1489.

# Results of Research with Growth Mindset?



A larger difference between the incorrect and correct answers = Growth Mindset

The difference between the Brain's second response to an Error—the what can I do to correct this in the future.



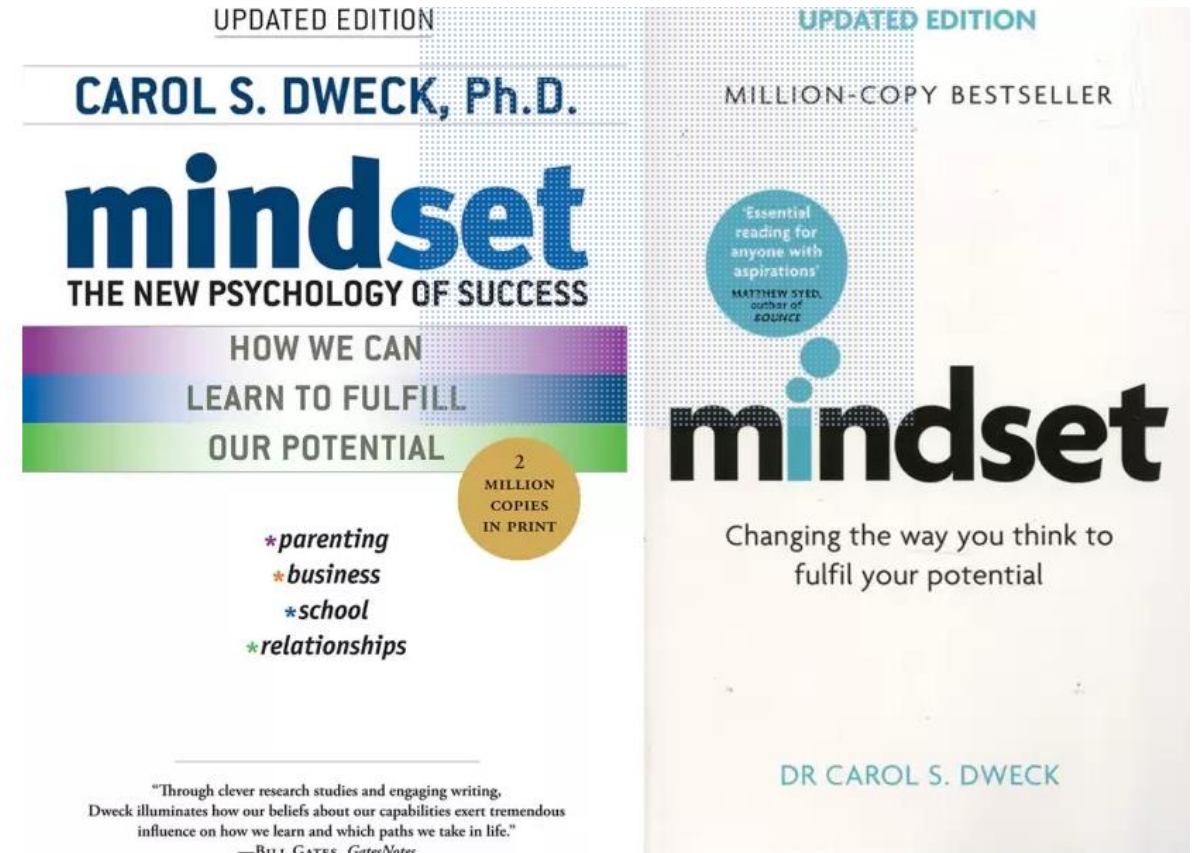
Moser JS, Schroder HS, Heeter C, Moran TP, Lee Y-H. Mind Your Errors: Evidence for a Neural Mechanism Linking Growth Mind-Set to Adaptive Posterror Adjustments. *Psychological Science*. 2011;22(12):1484-1489.



# Carol Dweck and Growth Mindset

- Carol Dweck's Theories of Intelligence Scale
- 6 point Likert Scale
- “You have a certain amount of intelligence and you really cannot do much to change it.”
- Scored so that the higher score was most compatible with a growth mindset.

Test your mindset at <http://mindsetonline.com/testyourmindset/step1.php>



Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York: Random House.

Dweck, C. S. (2017). *Mindset by Carol Dweck*. London, United Kingdom: Robinson.



# Growth Mindset and Physicians

“Physicians are immersed in a culture that perpetually defers self-care and responds to errors with shame and blame.”

A higher percentage of physicians condemn themselves when they make an error compared to people in other fields.

52% of MDs put off self care and only 15% of people in other fields do (self-report).

It is recommended that MDs work with coaches or therapists to reframe mistakes as opportunities to learn and grow.



Mandy Erickson June 28, 2021 in The Scope Published by Stanford Medicine, article titled, “Physician Well-Being and Burnout.”

# Social Connection as a Basic Human Need

“...we emphasize that social connectedness is a basic human need that when lost leads to burnout..”

## JAMA Viewpoint

Southwick SM, Southwick FS. The Loss of Social Connectedness as a Major Contributor to Physician Burnout: Applying Organizational and Teamwork Principles for Prevention and Recovery. *JAMA Psychiatry*.2020; 77(5):449–450. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2019.4800



Maslow's hierarchy of needs



# Social Connectedness in Medicine

“Strong peer support in a small rural group practice brings friendship, pride and loyalty, all of which motivate retention.”

- Mandal A, Phillips S. To stay or not to stay: the role of sense of belonging in the retention of physicians in rural areas. *Int J Circumpolar Health*. 2022 Dec;81(1):2076977.

“Groups that provide us with a sense of place, purpose, and belonging tend to be good for us psychologically. They give us a sense of grounding and imbue our lives with meaning. They make us feel distinctive and special, efficacious and successful. They enhance our self-esteem and sense of worth.”

- Haslam SA, Jetten J, Postmes T, Haslam C. Social identity, health and well-being: An emerging agenda for applied psychology. *Appl Psychol*. 2009;58(1):1-23.

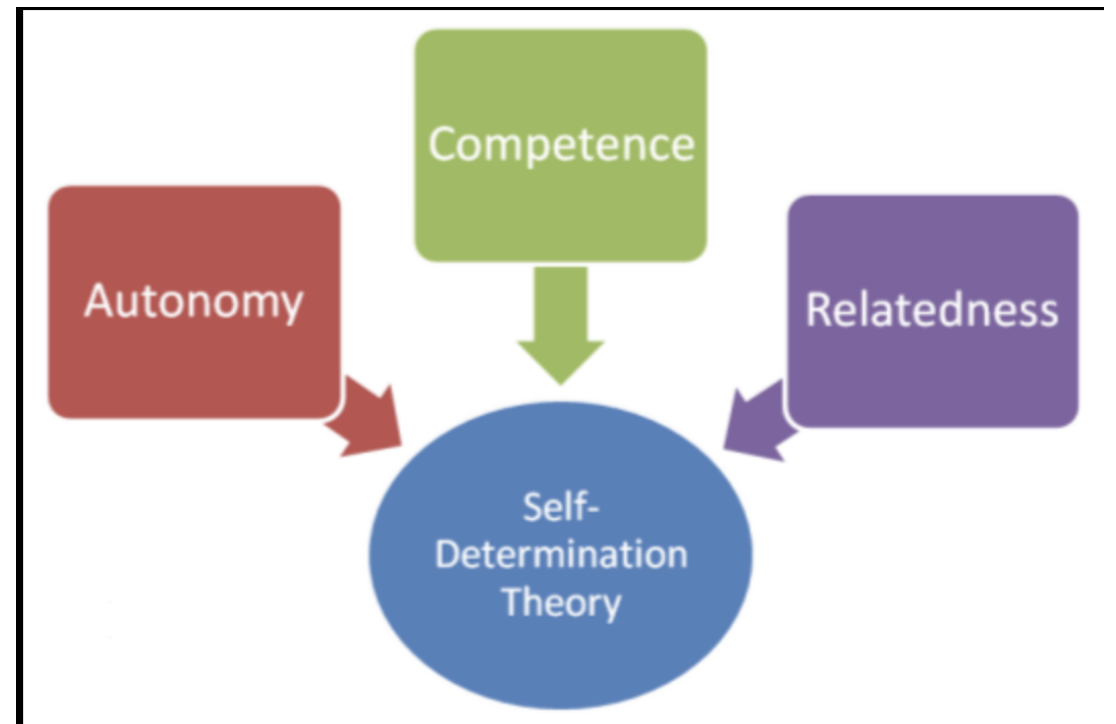


# Importance of Autonomy

Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory

We all need 3 things to stay motivated and engaged.

- 1—Relatedness—social connection
- 2—Competence
- 3--Autonomy



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-determination\\_theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-determination_theory)



# Concept of Flow

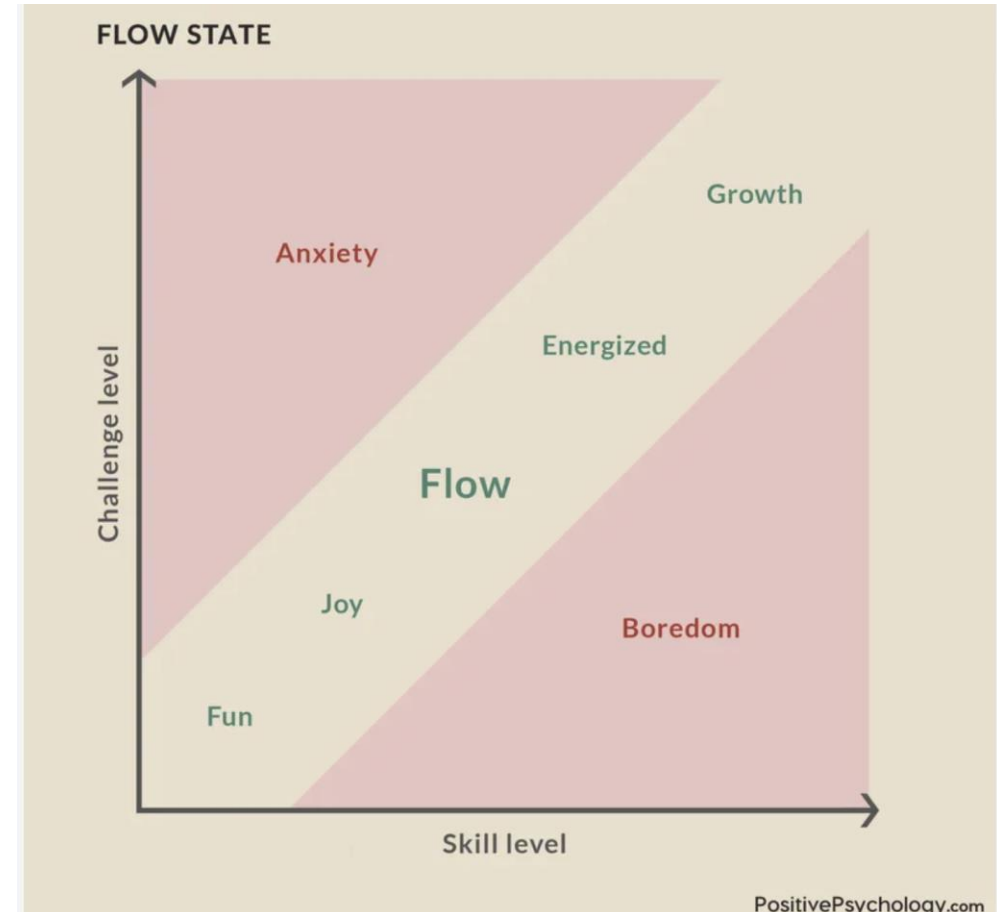
“The best moments in our lives are not the passive, receptive, relaxing times . . . The best moments usually occur if a person’s body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile.”

Quote from Csikszentmihalyi 1990

When are you in flow at work?

When are you in flow at home?

How can you create more moments of flow?



# What is in Your Control? Spotlight on Physical Activity

150 min of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week (5-minute bouts count)

Treadmill workstation

Stationary Bike workstation

Portable peddler

Walking meetings

Exercise ball as chair

7 minute exercise routine

<https://www.nytimes.com/guides/well/activity/the-7-minute-workout>

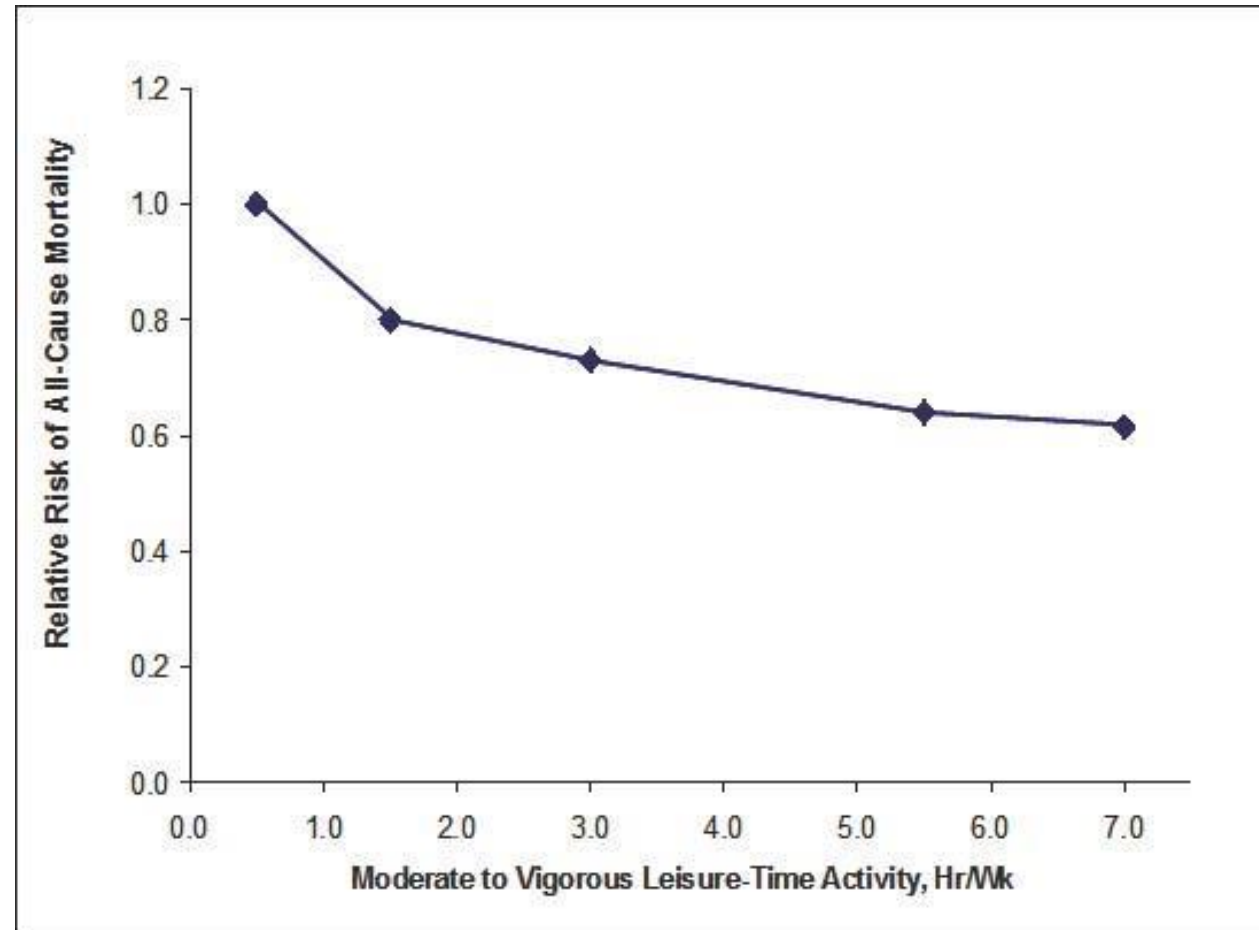
5 minute exercise snacks each hour

Squats

Planks

Bridges

Burpees

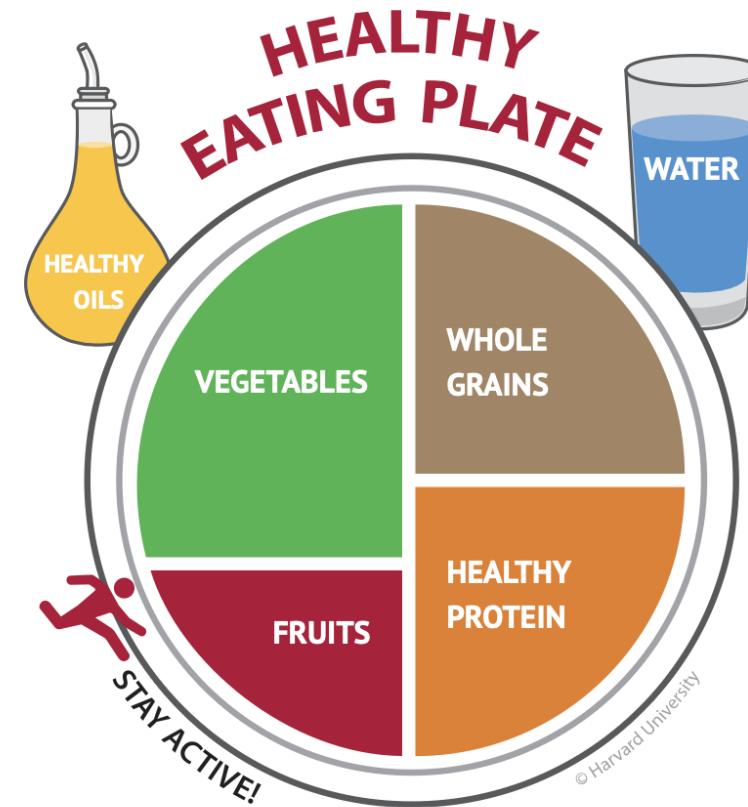


# What is in Your Control? Spotlight on Nutrition

Recommendations are to eat at least how many servings of fruit and vegetables a day?

5

Am J Clin Nutr. 2021 Aug 2;114(2):530-539.



[https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/healthy-eating-plate/#:~:text=Who%20created%20the%20Healthy%20Eating,\(USDA\)'s%20MyPlate](https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/healthy-eating-plate/#:~:text=Who%20created%20the%20Healthy%20Eating,(USDA)'s%20MyPlate)





# Nutrition Tips

Bring your lunch

Focus on Harvard Healthy Plate meals

Cook in batches on Sundays and freeze

Connect with colleagues or neighbors  
and share your meals

Delegate the cooking to someone else

Buy prepared meals that are  
unprocessed and healthy

Prepare healthy snacks to bring to work

- Nuts and dark chocolate
- Carrots and hummus
- Apple and almond butter



# What is in Your Control? Spotlight on Sleep and Sleep Tips

- Same schedule weekdays and weekends
- Achieve 7-9 hours a night
- Nap 20-30 minutes before 3pm
- Careful with caffeine
- Blue wavelength light blocks melatonin
- Eat 3 hours before bed
- Alcohol disrupts REM sleep
- Keep bedroom like a cave



<https://www.thensf.org/how-many-hours-of-sleep-do-you-really-need/>



# Take Aways:

1. The three domains of physician wellbeing include
  - Efficiency of practice
  - Personal resilience
  - Culture of wellness
2. In the health professional wellness hierarchy, the foundational level is
  - The basics of food, water, and sleep.
  - The next level is respect, followed by safety, appreciation, and the top of the hierarchy is to heal patients and contribute.
3. Wellbeing involves more than exercise, diet and sleep.



## Take Aways:

4. A growth mindset is described by Carol Dweck, PhD, as an attitude of learning from mistakes and mishaps.
5. It is recommended that physicians adopt a growth mindset and avoid a shame, blame, and guilt attitude.
6. A sense of belonging is a basic human need.
7. Physicians can enhance their sense of well-being and help colleagues to do so, too, by creating opportunities for connection.



# Take Aways:

8. Accumulate 150 minutes of physical activity per week
9. Use the Harvard Healthy Plate as a guide for each meal
  - $\frac{1}{2}$  fruit and vegetables
  - $\frac{1}{4}$  whole grain
  - $\frac{1}{4}$  healthy protein
10. Sleep 7-9 hours a night for adults



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