
Resilient Physician – Four Pillars

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Burnout is a syndrome due to stress which has three different manifestations- emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment¹. Burnout among physicians is on the rise. Increase demand for time and energy, hazzles due to insurance, patient needs, electronization of medical data, and facts have intruded into the sacred bond between doctor and patients. A recent physician's survey has found out that the major causes of burnout were too many working hours, computerization of all data and facts, and too many administrative tasks.

A burnout physician gives inferior patient care and is named more for malpractice². Suicide rate is also higher among physicians than the general public.

A happy doctor will give superior medical care and get a satisfied patient. Happiness breeds success.

To be a happy doctor, try to follow these four agreements- 4 moral imperatives needed to attain inner peace. Adherence to the four promises one makes with oneself will make one attain a more fulfilled, tranquil, and peaceful Life. This agreement which we make with ourselves will make one lead a resilient life-resilient physician.

Agreement 1: Be impeccable with your words

Words matter-our words can sow the seeds of happiness³ or wreak destruction to others. Never use your words to sin against another or ourselves. Resilient individuals are mindful of what they say to others and themselves.

Impeccable means not liable to sin. First agreement to lead a happy life is never to use our words to sin against another or

ourselves. Just one sarcastic comment can disrupt the joy of an entire family. An improper critical remark can sabotage the mood of the whole family. Conversely, one uplifting word or comment transforms someone's day- e.g., Encouraging our staff with positive comments for their work makes them work better and happier.

Gossip is a hurtful activity. Emotions are contagious, and we can use our words to spread good or bad. Words against ourselves are destructive- e.g., Negative thoughts can create havoc in our mind and our approach to society. Whenever we blame ourselves, we are violating the first agreement. Only loving words are authentic.

Agree to never use words against ourselves or others, our suffering will wane, and the peace index will rise meteorically.

Agreement 2: Don't take anything personally

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent. We should not buy someone's illusory belief system against us. When harsh words come our way, there is anger, and we react. What others say and do to us is about them, not us. Unsavory words are about the pain of the sender, not the receiver. Eg-postoperative patient who utters obscenities due to narcotics.

Eg-anguish of nurse pressured by administrators.

Recognize that harsh words directed against us are byproducts of someone else pain. Don't take harsh words seriously. Be happy.

Agreement 3: Don't make assumptions

In most cases, we assume the opinion of others is against us. We all fall prey to this trap. Ask for clarifications; Life will never be

the same as we assume. We enter into the mind of others and assume we know what they think; sadly, we assume the worst. These are cognitive distortions⁴ which beset a mind afflicted with negative emotions, e.g., mind reading

We tend to project our own realities on others-eg. a bad day for us makes us think of other's comments critically. Mind reading and judgment invariably lead to discord and separation. Always ask for clarification whenever disagreement ensues- what we hold in heart as truth may be way off the mark. Eg. drug abusing person –we believe as a bad seed, he might have been abandoned by drug-abusing parents if we take a detailed history and poor self-esteem would have led him to take drugs.

Agreement 4: Always do your best

Regret, remorse, or self-judgment will not be there if we do our best. Always offer your inspiration and not your compulsive effort. Our best can vary depending on our station in Life, e.g., our work output after being sleep deprived might not be as good as we can do after a restful sleep. Never lament on suboptimal performance. Simply keep doing your best.

We will have to continually improve and refine our skills to provide excellent clinical care to our patients. Recognize your mistakes and limitations as opportunities for growth.

If perfection is in our mind, we will be left with a continuous sense of missing the mark, feeling of inadequacy and frustration. Approach any activity with calm and love and give your best-inspired effort (not compulsive). Do your best, and you will be satisfied that you responded to whatever Life presented to you to the best of your abilities.

Resilient Physician, Let's Try

Agree to these four contracts with yourself-you will enjoy the peace and joy that may have eluded you for some time. Next time someone utters an unsavory comment against another-Pause, breathe and respond in a way loving to the offender and yourself. Develop ambitious but realistic goals for yourself. Recall that when we hit our targets, our confidence grows.

Let's be a resilient physician. Let's be happy and make our patients happy with our treatment.

References

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