

Commonly Asked Questions for Dr. Drummond:

Why is there an epidemic of burnout among physicians in America?

On average 1 in 3 doctors is suffering from burnout on any given office day, worldwide regardless of specialty.

Being a doctor is a job that has the maximum responsibility (people's lives are at stake) and very little control over the outcome.

Doctors are also trained and rigorously conditioned to:

- work extremely hard
- always focus on other people's problems
- live in constant fear of making a mistake
- define success as "busy"
- wait until everyone else is taken care of before they meet their needs and the needs of their family.

These two things create a "perfect storm" for burnout in their 40's and 50's. They build the successful, busy practice and notice their life is wrapped around the 800 pound gorilla of their medical career. The top of the ladder of physician success is not what they expected ... but then the profession of medicine was never designed to make you happy ... that is an individual responsibility.

What difference does Physician Burnout make? Is it really important whether or not my doctor is burned out?

Many studies have conclusively linked physician burnout to a whole host sub-optimal outcomes. Burnout is linked to

- Lower quality of care, lower patient satisfaction and higher malpractice risk
- Higher levels of medical errors and higher levels of physician and staff turnover
- Higher levels of physician drug and alcohol abuse and suicide

Physician burnout is an incredibly common and incredibly dangerous problem in our modern healthcare system.

What is the cure for burnout in physicians?

It is important to realize that being a doctor (or a nurse or a hospital administrator) is very stressful. You cannot complete a day at work without draining your physical, emotional and spiritual energy ... it's impossible. When you become aware of this fact of life for healthcare professionals ... you can immediately see two major ways of preventing physician burnout – neither of which is addressed in our medical education.

1) Lower the energy drain while you are at work

A partial list of key strategies are

- Exercise as much control as possible over your work hours
- Exercise as much control as possible over your patient mix, so that you are working with patients and diagnoses you enjoy
- Mindfulness bases stress management on the job. These breath based techniques allow you to release stress and come back to the present moment whenever needed.
- Learn effective physician leadership skills so you can take advantage of the leverage of having a high performance work team
- Have a supportive organization that values your wellbeing and makes it a priority right alongside the quality of patient care

2) Replenish your energy between days at work

- Create boundaries between work and home so that when you are off you are off.
- Have a humane call schedule that allows adequate time off
- Plan and prioritize your life outside of medicine with the same rigor you plan your professional life.
- Pay regular attention to the important relationships in your life by scheduling date nights and vacations with your children and significant others
- Understand your “authentic bucket list” and get moving on it

The key is for each doctor to begin a process of looking within themselves for fulfillment and satisfaction. Having reached this internal, personal clarity as a first step ... they can

then design a life and career (either inside or outside of clinical medicine) that matches this vision.

This is very much in line with [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](#). A successful physician is at level four where they are meeting their needs for achievement, status, responsibility and reputation. Burnout is a signal that they are ready for level five: Self Actualization. This is the stage of personal growth and true fulfillment can take place. AND their medical education did not pay one minute of attention to any of these issues.

It's every doctor for themselves here. Everyone acknowledges the problem of physician burnout, but there are only a small handful of qualified coaches who address it directly. This urgent need for physician support is one of the main reasons I created TheHappyMD.com

Here is a [link to the Burnout Prevention MATRIX Report](#) with over 117 Ways to Lower Physician Stress and Prevent Burnout