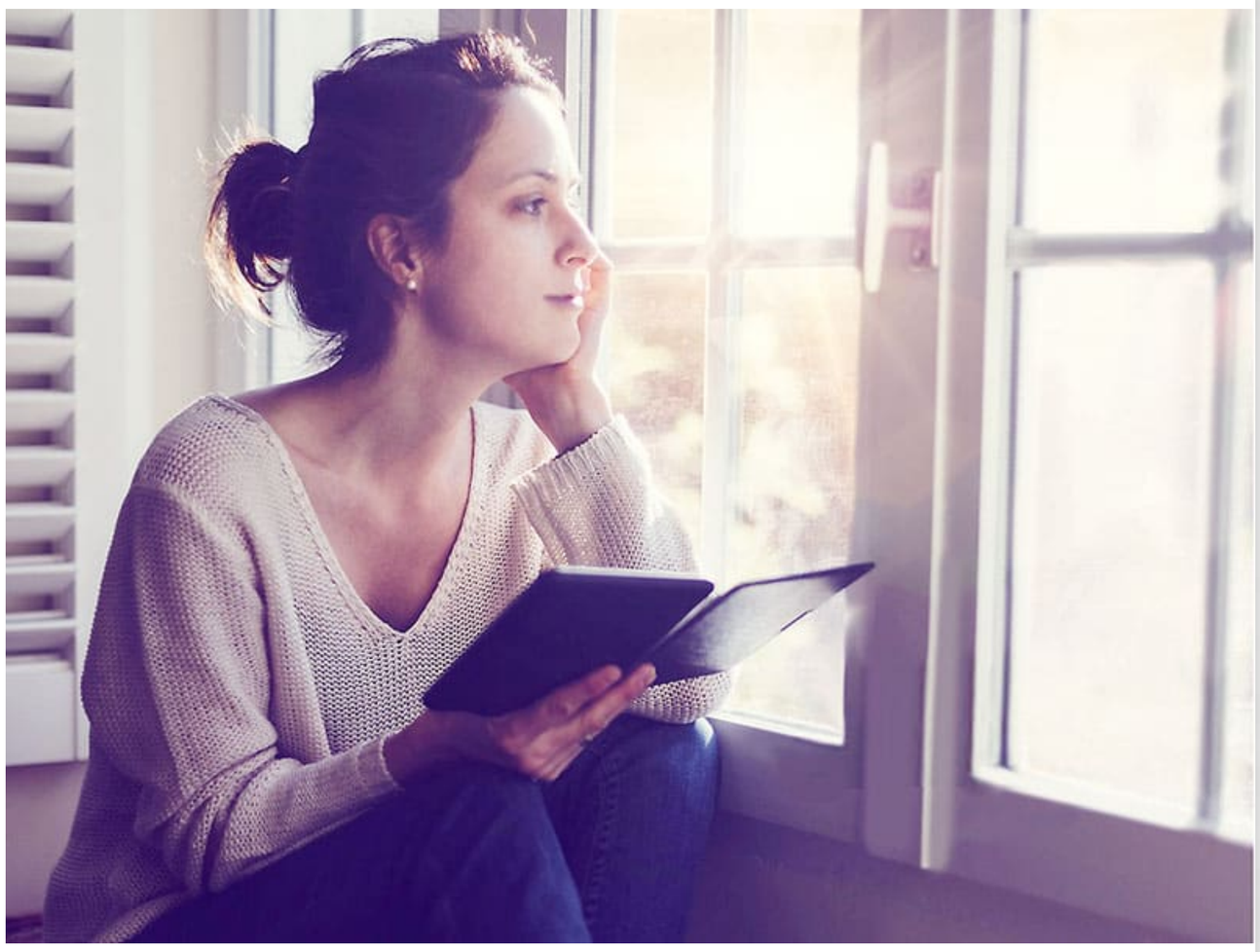
Neutralizing Physician Burnout

Optimize Meaning in Work; Minimize Overcommitments



There are two fundamental mechanisms to drive a positive balance in your energy accounts and avoid burnout:

1. Lower your stress levels and the drain they produce,
2. Improve your ability to recharge your energy accounts.

Most physicians will use a combination of both methods to treat and prevent burnout. We will discuss multiple tools in both categories in two upcoming posts.

But before we end this introductory blog, let me remind you of two things that stop many physicians from preventing burnout:

1. The comprehension trap: The tendency to study a concept until you understand it, and then fail to put it into action. Because of our long history in the educational system, most physicians will study until we feel confident we could answer a multiple-choice question like the ones on our board exam. Then we often fail to translate this new knowledge into new actions. Do not let this happen to you. As you read the articles in this series, pick an action step that makes sense and take it. The only way to tell what will work for you is to take new actions and notice your results. Expecting a different result from new comprehension alone is insanity; see below.

2. Einstein's definition of insanity: "Doing the same things over and over and expecting a different result."14 Free yourself from your workaholic conditioning. If you notice your own burnout and simply double down on the things you are already doing to get more done in the office or hospital, your workaholic conditioning has trapped you. Although the patient must come first in the office, physicians must

Once again, the only way to get different results is to take action – different actions than you are taking right now. You don't necessarily need to take more actions, just different ones.

This blog post is one in a three-part series on preventing physician burnout. The first step in prevention is to recognize burnout as it arises. You now know burnout's causes, effects, prevalence, and pathophysiology. In future blog posts, I will show you multiple tools to lower stress and create life balance. Each of these techniques has been tested in the real world by physicians just like you.

You can see your programming now. You are awake and able to recognize the burnout all around you. Your best next step is to pick a new tool from this article series and try it out. Remember, you can't give what you ain't got. It is time to start managing your energy accounts intentionally and on purpose. Your patients, staff, and family are counting on you. Ω

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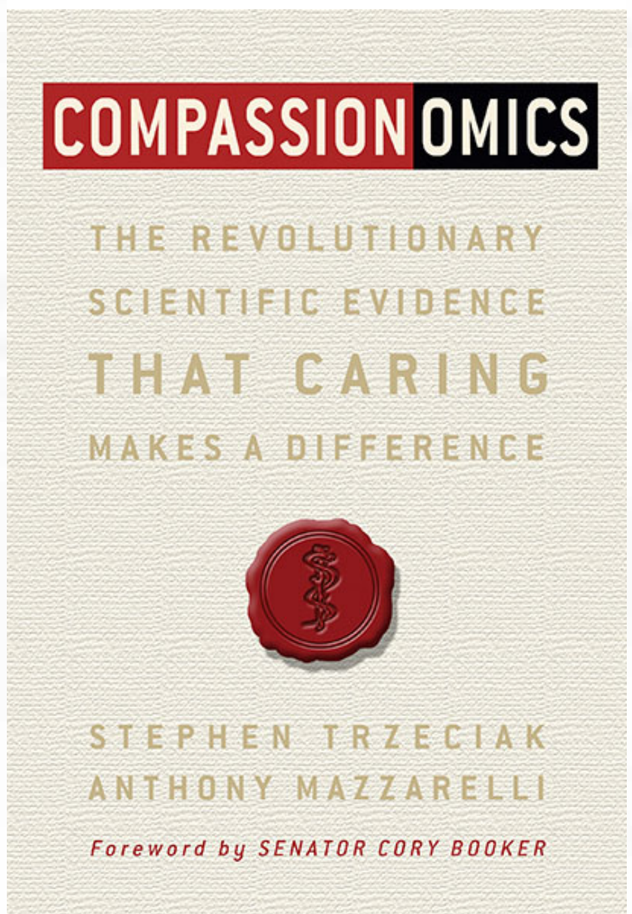

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