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# Burnout in Anesthesia: Strategies for Sustainable CRNA Practice

Dawn Bent, DNP, CRNA, FAANA

Practice Assistant Professor

# Objectives

- By the end of this presentation, attendees will:
- Understand the definition and prevalence of burnout in nurse anesthesia.
- Recognize key risk factors contributing to burnout.
- Explore real-world case studies of CRNA burnout.
- Learn evidence-based strategies for prevention and resilience.

# What is Burnout?

- Definition: Chronic workplace stress leading to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach Burnout Inventory).
- CRNA-Specific Factors:
- High-stakes decision-making
- Long shifts & irregular schedules
- Emotional toll of patient outcomes

# Understanding Burnout



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- Psychological syndrome emerging as a prolonged response to chronic stressors on the job
- 3 key features:
  - Emotional exhaustion
  - Feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job
  - Sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment
- Early burnout measure based on comprehensive program of psychometric research was the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

(Maslach & Leiter. Burnout. In Stress: Concepts, cognition, emotion, and behavior: 351-357, 2016)

The consistent practice of asking specific questions of key stakeholders—leaders, employees, clinicians, and patients—to obtain actionable information.

**The focus of questions during rounding are to:**

- **Build relationships** ("How is your family?" "Did your daughter graduate last week?")
- **Harvest "wins" to learn what is going well**, what is working, and who has been helpful ("Are there any clinicians I need to recognize today?")
- **Identify process improvement areas** ("What systems can be working better?")
- **Repair and monitor systems** to ensure chronic issues have been resolved ("Do you have the tools and equipment to do your job?")
- **Ensure that key behavior standards in the organization are "hardwired"** (or being consistently executed) to reward those who are following the standards and coach those who are not

# Prevalence of Burnout in Nurse Anesthesia



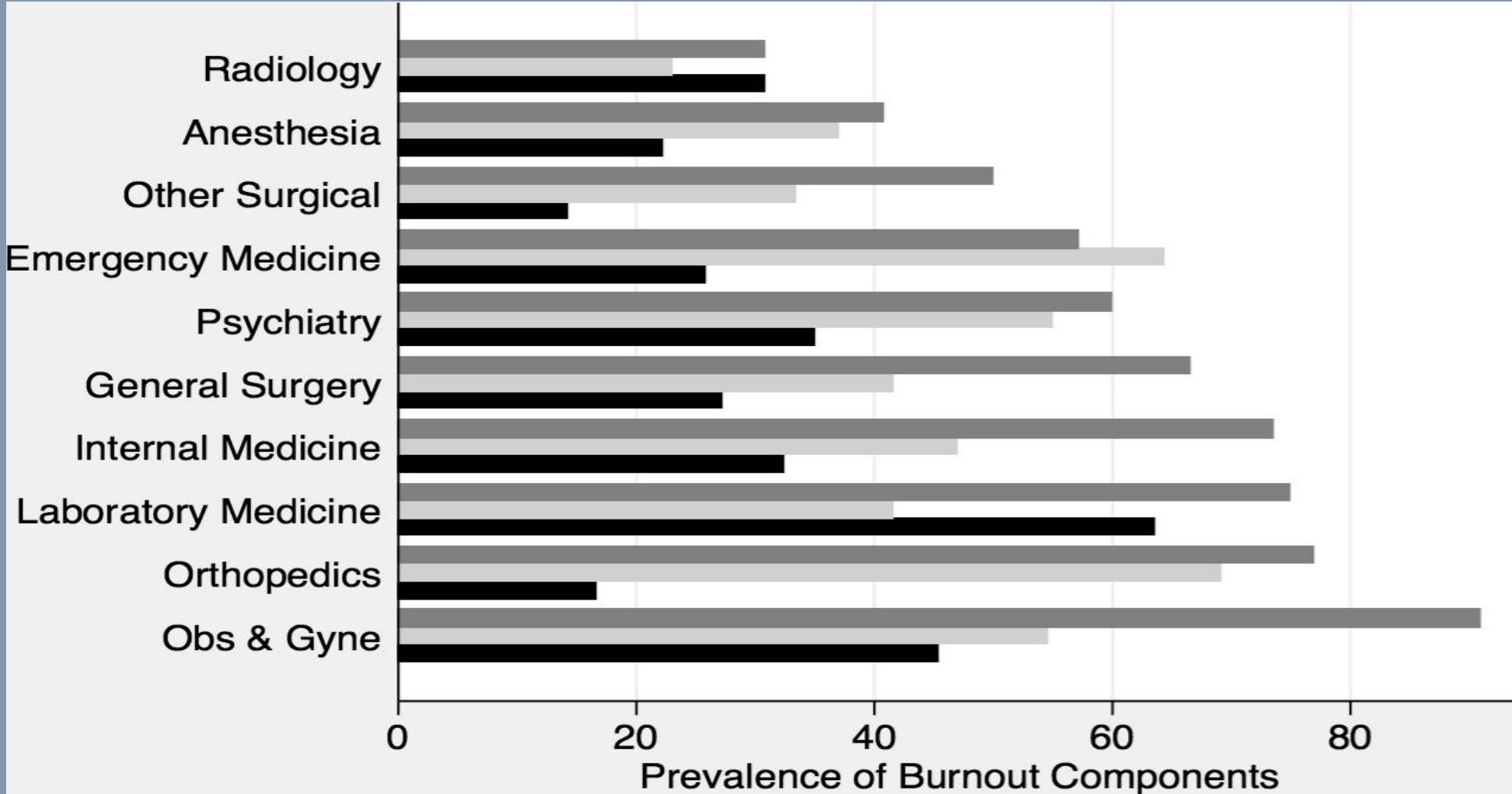
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- Statistics:
- ~40-50% of CRNAs report burnout symptoms (AANA, 2023).
- Higher rates in high-acuity settings (ICUs, trauma centers).

# Bar Chart Comparing Burnout Rates Across Medical Professions.



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# Causes of Burnout in Nurse Anesthesia



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- Workload & Staffing Shortages
- Case Study: A CRNA in a rural hospital covering 24-hour call with no relief.
- Emotional & Ethical Stress
- Example: Managing intraoperative complications leading to moral distress.
- Lack of Autonomy & Support

# The tale of two CRNA's



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# The “Physicians Personality”



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- Adaptive
  - Diagnostic rigor
  - Thoroughness
  - Commitment to patients
  - Desire to stay current
  - Perfectionism\*
  - Obsessional\*
- Maladaptive
  - Difficulty relaxing
  - Problem allocating time for family
  - Sense responsibility beyond what you control
  - Sense “not doing enough”
  - Difficulty setting limits
  - Confusion of selfishness vs. health self-interest
  - Difficulty taking time off

# Disproportionately Impacted by Burnout



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- Healthcare workers of color
- Immigrant healthcare workers
- Female healthcare workers
- Healthcare workers in rural communities
- Healthcare workers in tribal communities
- Low wage healthcare workers

# Overworked CRNA



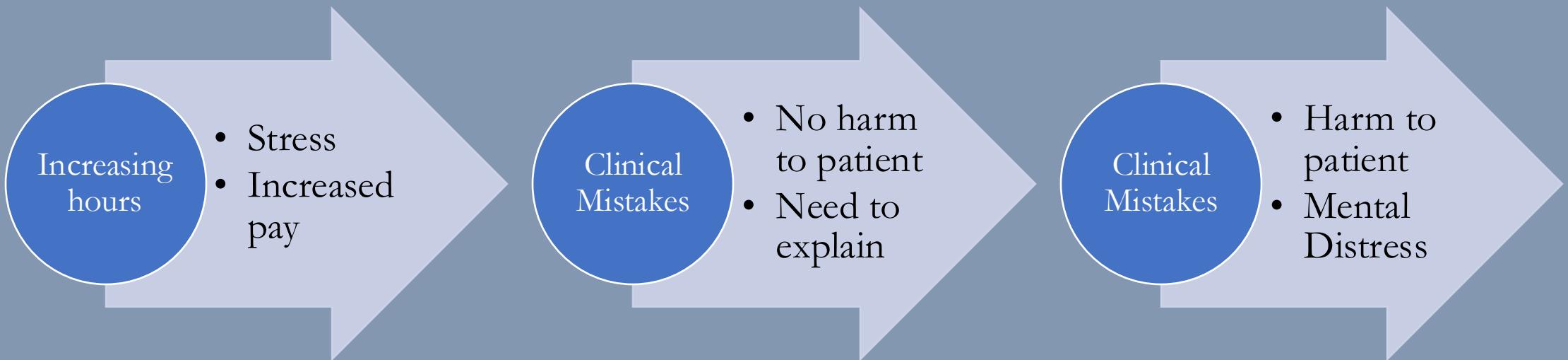
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- Scenario: A CRNA in a busy urban OR works 60+ hours/week, experiences sleep deprivation, and starts making minor errors.
- Outcome: Near-miss medication error → forced leave for mental health recovery.
- Lesson: Importance of workload management and self-awareness.

# Events Leading to Burnout



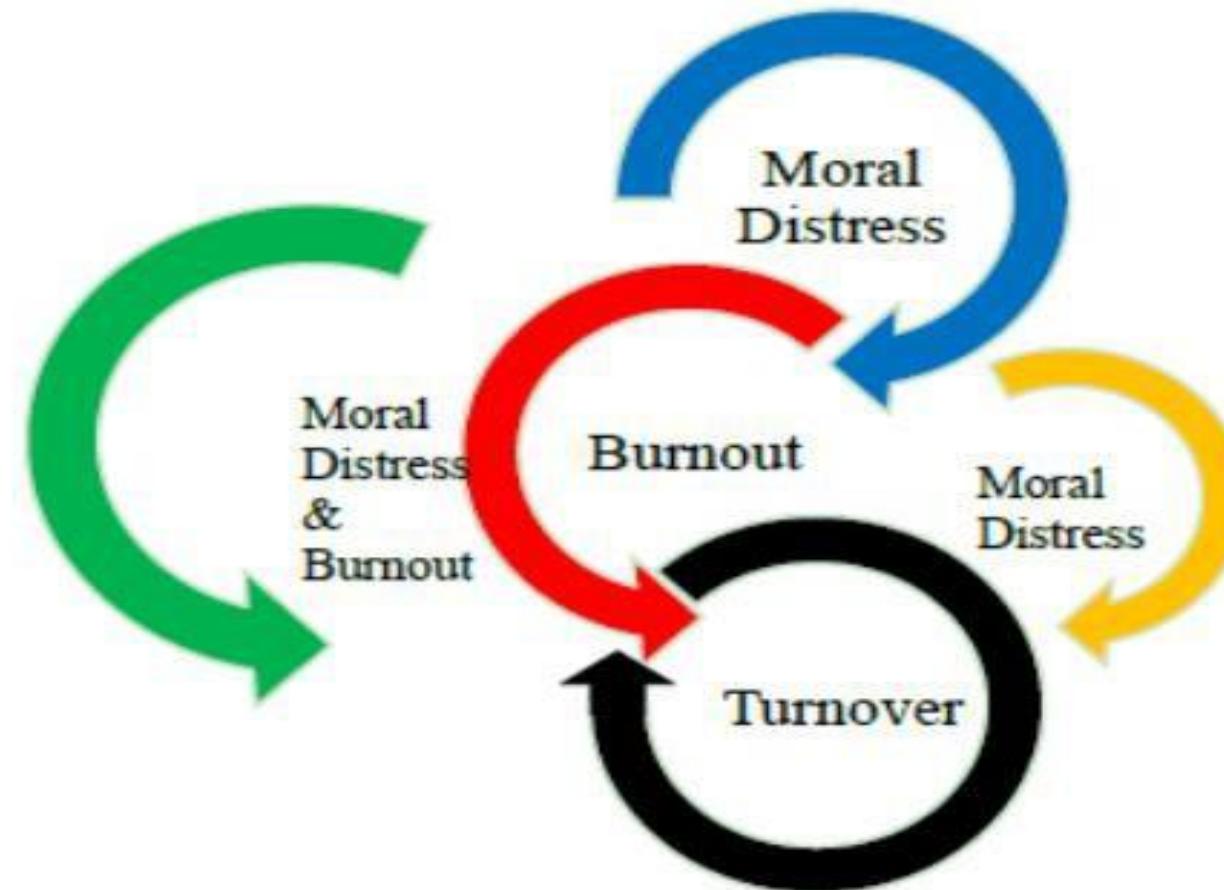
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# Moral Distress



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# Moral Injury in Nurse Anesthesia



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- Scenario: A pediatric CRNA repeatedly sees preventable anesthesia complications due to systemic hospital failures.
- Outcome: Develops cynicism, leaves the profession early.
- Lesson: Need for institutional support and debriefing protocols.

# Our Moral Compass



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“I couldn’t  
continue to  
watch patients  
suffer”



# Signs and Symptoms of Burnout



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- Physical: Chronic fatigue, headaches, insomnia.
- Emotional: Irritability, detachment, depression.
- Professional: Decreased performance, absenteeism.

# Consequences of Burnout



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- For CRNAs: Career dissatisfaction, substance abuse, early retirement.
- For Patients: Increased medical errors, poorer outcomes.
- For Hospitals: High turnover, financial losses.
- Visual: Infographic linking burnout to patient safety risks.

# Impact of Burnout on Individuals



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- Chronic work-related stress, a precursor to burnout, has been associated with poor physical and mental health outcomes for health workers, including:
  - Impaired cognitive function
  - Increased risk of heart disease
  - Type 2 diabetes
  - Fertility issues
  - Sleep disruptions and insomnia
  - Family and relationship conflict
  - Isolation
  - Anxiety and depression
  - Increased risk for substance use and misuse

(Han et al, Ann Intern Med: 170(11):784-790, 2019), (Salvagioni et al, PloS one: 12(10):e0185781, 2017)

Societal, cultural,  
structural, and  
organizational factors  
that contribute to  
burnout among  
healthcare workers

## Factors associated with burnout among health workers



- Societal and Cultural**
  - Politicization of science and public health
  - Structural racism and health inequities
  - Health misinformation
  - Mental health stigma
  - Unrealistic expectations of health workers
- Health Care System**
  - Limitations from national and state regulation
  - Misaligned reimbursement policies
  - Burdensome administrative paperwork
  - Poor care coordination
  - Lack of human-centered technology
- Organizational**
  - Lack of leadership support
  - Disconnect between values and key decisions
  - Excessive workload and work hours
  - Biased and discriminatory structures and practices
  - Barriers to mental health and substance use care
- Workplace and Learning Environment**
  - Limited flexibility, autonomy, and voice
  - Lack of culture of collaboration and vulnerability
  - Limited time with patients and colleagues
  - Absence of focus on health worker well-being
  - Harassment, violence, and discrimination

*“This is beyond  
my control...”*



(Addressing Health Worker Burnout: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on Building a Thriving Health Workforce, 2022)

# What Steps Can We Take?



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# What Can I Do For Myself?

- Identify Values
  - Debunk myth of delayed gratification
  - What matters to you most?
  - Balance personal and professional lives
- Optimize Meaning in Work
  - Flow
  - Choose/limit type of practice
  - Environment
- Nurture Personal Wellness Activities
  - Relationships (connect w/ colleagues; personal)
  - Religious/spiritual practice
  - Personal interests/hobbies
  - Self-care (exercise, sleep, regular medical care)

# 10 Keys to Resilience: A Holistic Approach



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- Optimism: belief in brighter future
- Facing fear: adaptive response
- Moral compass/ethics/altruism
- Religion and spirituality: drawing on faith
- Social support
- Resilient role models
- Training: physical fitness
- Brain fitness: challenge your mind and heart
- Cognitive and emotional flexibility
- Meaning, purpose, and growth

# Overcoming Healthcare Burnout



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- Reduce administrative and documentation burdens, increase practice efficiency
- Transform organizational cultures to prioritize healthcare worker wellness
- Strengthening social connection and community
- Invest in public health and our public health workforce
- Ensure that every health worker has access to affordable, confidential, and convenient mental health care
  - Offer evidence-based training and practices that support prevention, early intervention, and treatment of an array of conditions including burnout and mental health challenges
- Protecting healthcare workers from workplace violence must be prioritized



# Burnout symptoms...



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Join at [menti.com](https://menti.com) | use code 2367 3884

Mentimeter



DB

What, if any, burnout symptoms have you experienced in the past year

leader focus transpiration  
creative fast bold  
inspiration

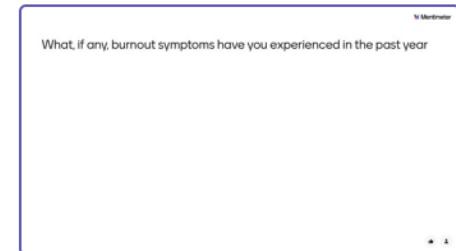


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New survey



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# Strategies for Prevention and Resilience



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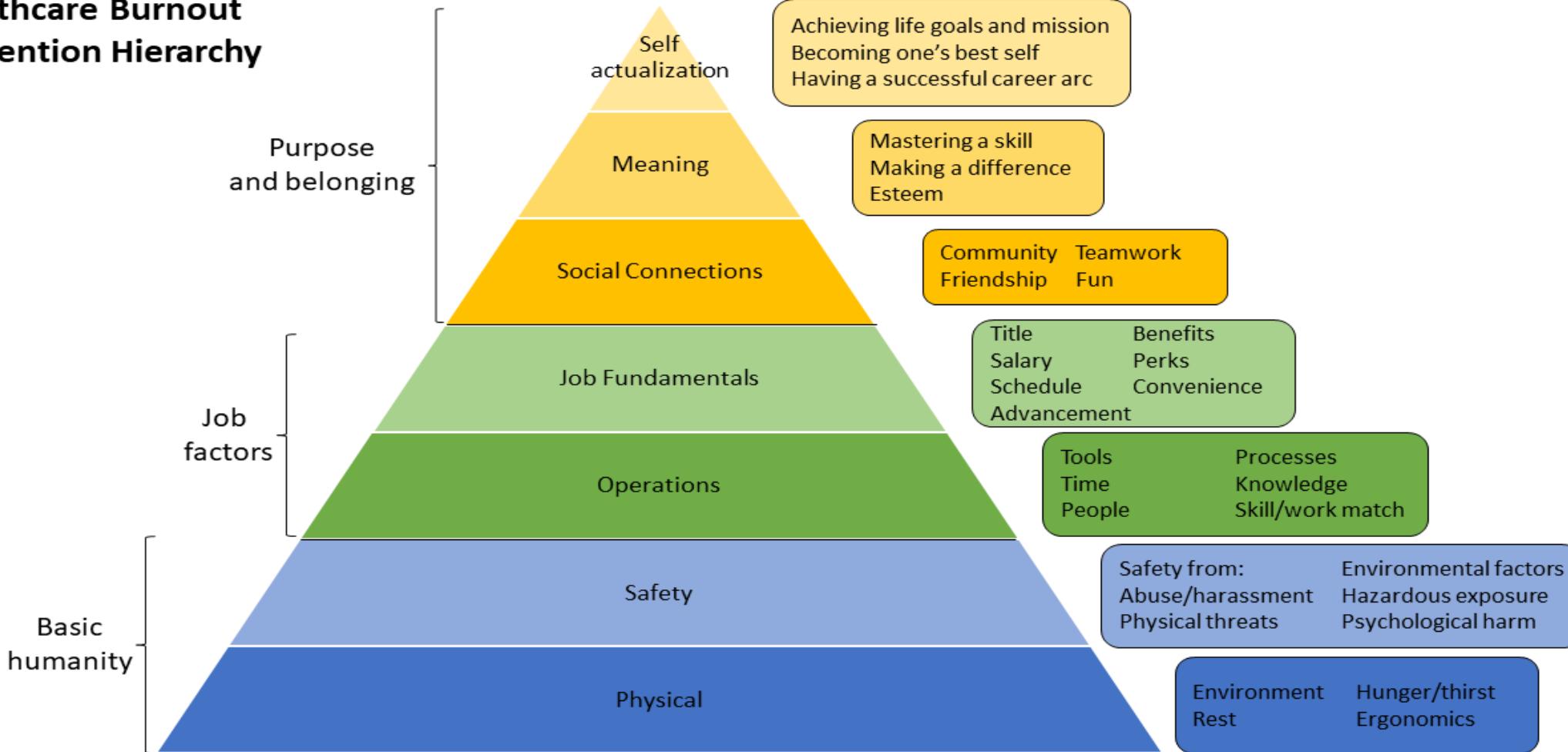
- Institutional Changes:
  - Better staffing ratios, wellness programs, mentorship.
- Personal Coping Mechanisms:
  - Mindfulness, exercise, peer support groups.
- Advocacy & Policy:
  - AANA wellness initiatives, lobbying for CRNA protections.

# Pyramid of Prevention



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## Healthcare Burnout Prevention Hierarchy



# Prevention

- Question: "What strategies have you seen work in your for you?"

## Strategies to avoid BURNOUT and taking care of yourself

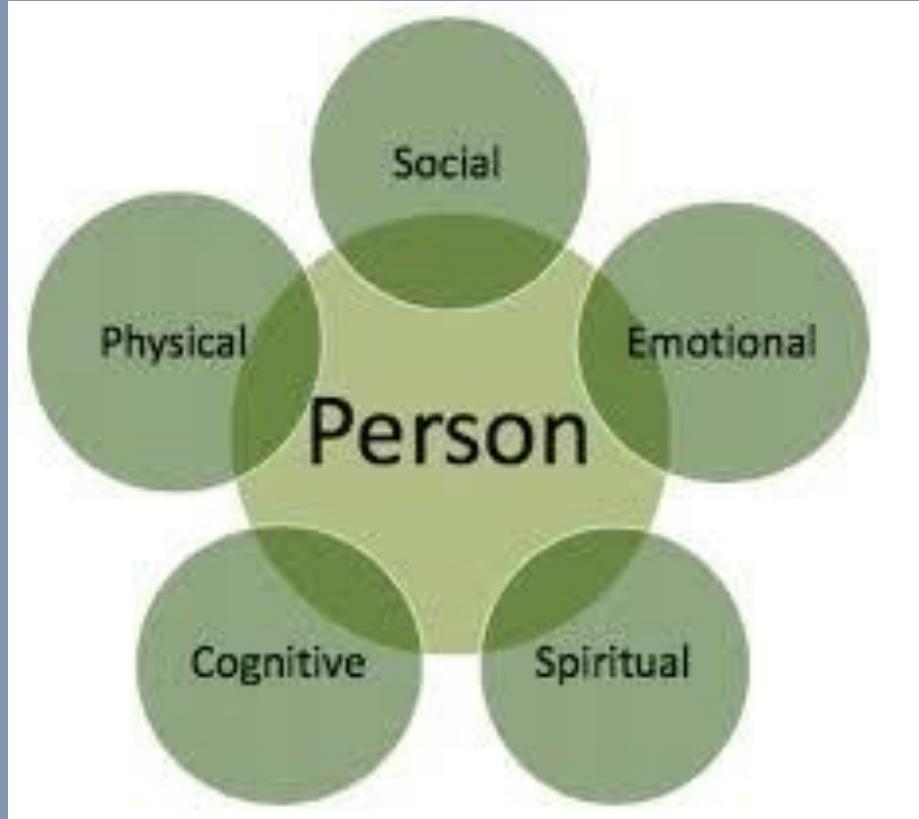
- Practice SELF CARE**  
take time for yourself  
get enough sleep  
eat a healthy diet
- Take BREAKS**  
rest and recharge daily  
spend time in nature  
regular short breaks
- Manage WORKLOAD**  
organize your activities  
break down large projects  
realistic goals and deadlines
- Identify SOURCES OF STRESS**  
reduce stress triggers  
focus on solutions  
challenge negative self-talk
- Stay ORGANISED**  
write things down  
declutter your space
- Practice TIME MANAGEMENT**  
prioritize your tasks  
create a schedule  
productivity tools & techniques
- Practice MINDFULNESS**  
focus on the present  
gratitude and meditation  
deep breathing exercises
- Pursue HOBBIES**  
time for your passions  
engage in activities you enjoy  
learn new skills
- Set BOUNDARIES**  
stay focused  
learn to say "no"  
unplug from technology
- EXERCISE**  
physical activity everyday  
go for a walk  
yoga or stretching
- Connect with OTHERS**  
time with friends and family  
group activities  
attend local events
- Ask for HELP**  
talk to your manager or HR  
seek professional help  
social support

more visual notes on [www.iulianolariu.com](http://www.iulianolariu.com)

# Creating a Culture of Wellness



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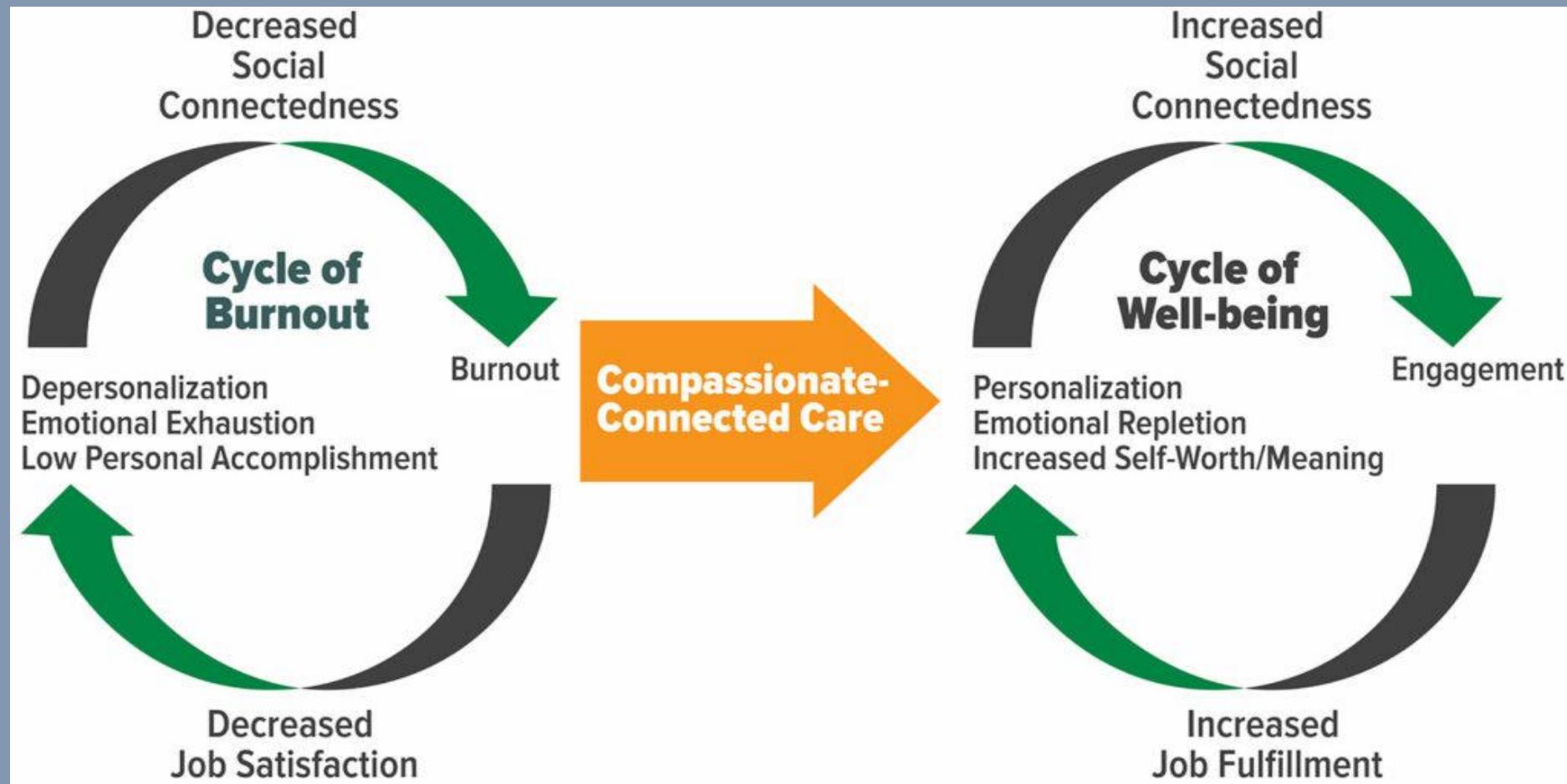


- Valuing ourselves
- Valuing our colleagues
- Valuing our personal relationships

# Wellness-Centered Leadership

- Care
  - Recognize critical role leader behaviors play in the well-being of team member
  - Understand multi-faceted needs of individuals
- Cultivate Relationships
  - Develop relationships with individuals
  - Nurture interrelationship of the team (community)
- Cultivate a collective vision and shared sense of purpose
  - Inspire Change
  - Help team think beyond current state
  - Provide team members the opportunity to make suggestions for improvement
  - Build consensus regarding priorities for improvement
  - Empower team to drive change

(Shanafelt et al, Academic Medicine: 96(5):641-651, 2021)



# Resources

- AANA Wellness Resources
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
- Peer support networks

# AANA Wellness Resources



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<https://www.aana.com/membership/here-for-you/health-and-wellness/>

- Wellness
- AANA Helpline
- Adverse Medical Events/Critical Incidents
- Burnout and Compassion Fatigue
- Depression and Suicide
- Fitness for Duty Workplace Resources
- Managing Stress
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Sleep and Fatigue
- Resident Wellness
- Wellness in the Workplace
- Substance Use Disorder (SUD)
- Where to Get Help
- AANA Wellness Ambassador Network
- Wellness Educational Resources

# PANA Peer Assistance



- <https://www.pana.org/page/Peer Assistance>



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# National Suicide Prevention Lifeline



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- <https://988lifeline.org/>

# Conclusion

- Key Takeaways: Burnout is preventable; systemic and personal changes are needed.
- Call to Action: Advocate for healthier work environments.

# Take care of you!



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**"I make it a point  
to practice self-care.  
I make an appointment  
with myself."**

**MANISHA SINGAL**

MD, Industrial & occupational physician  
One of the founders of the Benton Against Covid-19



THE Healthy