

# Putting on our Own Oxygen Mask First

How Caring for ourselves helps us  
care for our patients

Dr. Robyn Charlton of  
TheMindFitnessDr.



# Stand up if you have :

- Deliver devastating news to a patient?
- Cried on the way home because it has been such a tough day?
- Been told to get on with it, and develop a tough skin, or you wouldn't survive medicine?
- Have challenging interactions with your colleagues and team members?
- Feel worried about a colleague.
- Feel overstretched, like there is not enough of you to go around?
- Find yourself completing your paperwork after hours.
- Work full-time on a part-time salary?.
- Take the anxiety of worrying about a patient home, so you are not present with your loved ones?
- Been irritable with the loved ones in your life , because you are tired and exhausted?
- Missed important event in your children's lives because of medicine?
- Cancelled holidays or missed wedding anniversaries?
- Felt like you didn't have time to do the things you prescribe, such as not eating McDonalds or exercising regularly?



# Standing Together... as Women in Medicine

Dr. Robyn Charlton of  
TheMindFitnessDr.



# Micro MindFitness Practice

FEEL THE SOLES  
BENEATH YOUR  
FEET



USE THE SENSATIONS ON THE SOLES OF  
YOUR FEET TO ANCHOR YOU INTO THE  
PRESENT MOMENT.

FIND A MICRO MOMENT OF CALM IN THE  
CRACKS OF OUR LIVES

# MY VISION FOR MEDICINE

Where we acknowledge that parts of medicine are hard..

Where we recognise that we are not alone in our struggles...

Where include ourselves in our caregiving circle with more kindness and compassion, and ask ourselves what we need

Our hearts need as much holding, as our brains needs feeding...





# The Cost of Not Caring For Ourselves

## BURNOUT

MBI Doctors have twice the rate of burnout of normal working population.

Yates et al (2021), 15,000 Doctors Pre covid 42%. Post Covid 50 -55%.  
Confounded by culture of medicine stigma for burnout and fear of repercussions.

Suzi McAlpine-300 surveyed by MPS. Half considered leaving medicine

All professions.

May be increased incidence in primary care, emergency and psychiatry.  
Equal incidence pre-covid but increased in women post-covid (many caregiving roles)

In the 45-54 year age group.

Multiple caregiving roles

Perfectionism



Medicine for your body, mind & soul

# The Medical Mountain

Striving to be at the top of the mountain.

The way medical culture is designed.. Progression through the expertise levels.

Sometimes we encounter obstacles along the way...

Sometimes we need to stop, rest and admire the view..

Sometimes we need some help from others

Sometimes we need some equipment, including oxygen masks to get us up that mountain.

Simple, but profound practices to handle the everyday stressors of medical life.

The SOARING system is a pathway to sustain you in medicine, so that you will feel more joy and contentment







# The MindFitness Method Of Self-Care.

SOARING SYSTEM of Micro-Self-Care Practices  
BASED ON NEUROSCIENCE.

What are my self-care battery levels with SOAR (Mindfulness  
based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy).

“This is Hard”

Power in the pause to respond rather than react. Recognise  
Common humanity.

“I am not alone.”

How Can I Recharge my batteries with ING BASED ON POSITIVE  
NEUROPLASTICITY.  
( Finding ventral anchors and rewiring our brains with savoring).

“What Do i Need?”



# What will we cover?

- When Stress Becomes Burnout
- How to Manage Stress
- How to Prevent burnout and Recharge our Self-care batteries with Self-Compassion
- What is MindFul Self Compassion
- Research on Self-Compassion
- Compassion with Equanimity
- Micro-MindFit Practices to Do During Your Busy Day



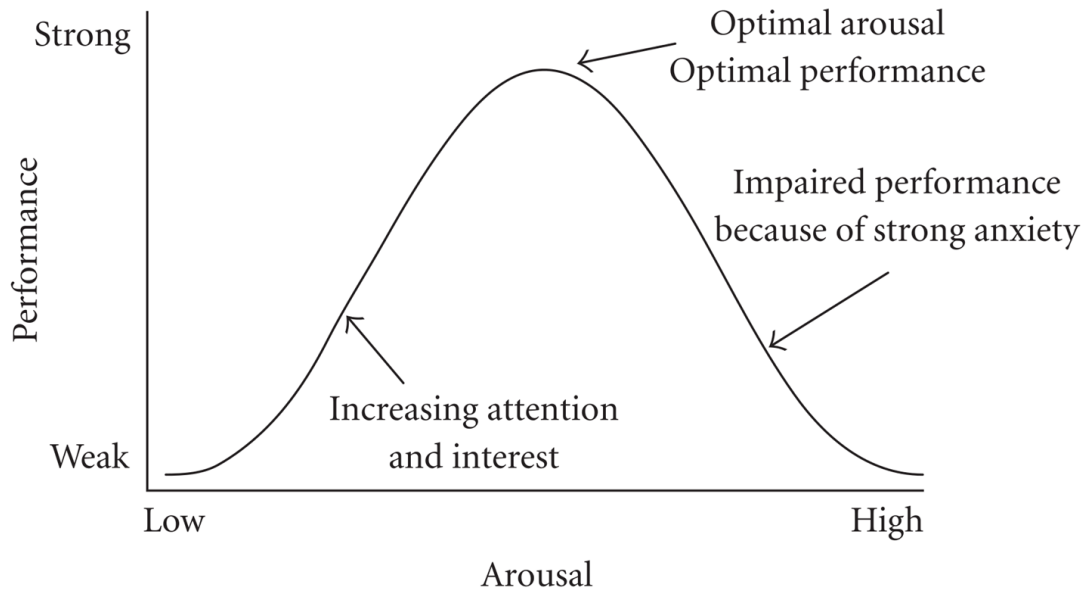
# Why am I Here ?

Dr. Robyn Charlton of  
TheMindFitnessDr.





# When Stress Becomes Burnout?



Stress is when we feel like the perceived threat is greater than our resources to deal with it.

Involves the Reptilian nervous system(Brainstem and Vagal Nerve)

Function is avoidance of harm through flight, fight and freeze

It can be energising and work to our advantage ,with and our performance maximised.

There is a point , when we feel that the threat overcomes our resources to deal it, and we go into sympathetic overdrive and dorsal vagal collapse.

# Our Zones



Green Zone Of Safety- Parasympathetic Ventral Vagal Nerve.  
(Myelinated)

Orange Zone Of Challenge-Activating sympathetic arousal but also  
parasympathetic nervous system, with good heart rate variability

Red Zone of Overwhelm: Sympathetic Overdrive  
Fight  
Flight

Activation of Dorsal Vagal System  
Freeze  
Appease

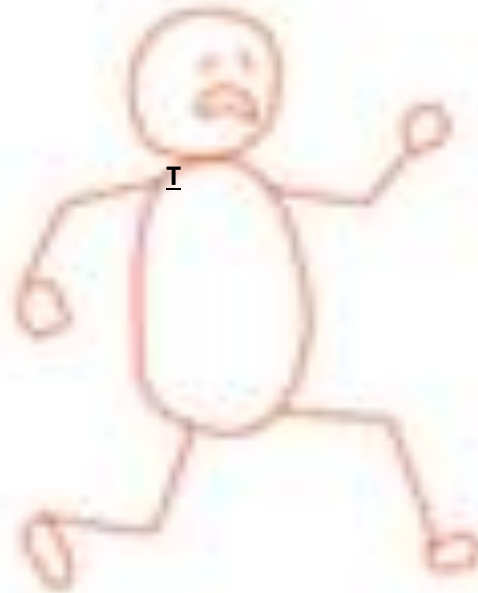


# Polyvagal Theory



## SAFE:

Feeling Safe, open to social engagement and play  
(Parasympathetic Ventral)



## MOBILIZED:

Mobilized in response to a perceived threat, ready to fight or flee



## IMMOBILIZED:

Immobilized in response to an extreme threat, shut-down and unable to move



# What is Burnout?

## Definition

When we are constantly in the stress zone of overwhelm resulting from workplace stress.

## Three Components

**Emotional Exhaustion or Energy Depletion.** “i must soldier on, but nothing left to give”

**Depersonalisation (Freeze).** Feelings of increased mental distance from your job.

**Sense of reduced accomplishment and irritability** (Sympathetic overdrive). Feeling inadequate in you role

Leads to increased medical error, absenteeism, decreased productivity and unexpected resignations and retirements. “The Great Resignation”

Overlap with Anxiety, Depression, and Mood disorders.



# Causes of burnout.

1) External to our nervous system

2) Internal to our nervous system

3) In Between Our Nervous Systems





# External Causes

Shabbir (2020)

## Systemic Factors

Overwork. increased with the pandemic  
Technology  
Lack of control or autonomy in the workplace  
Moral Injury and values conflict  
Covid related pressures  
Insufficient rewards  
Absence of fairness and inequitable workloads  
Sense of Isolation





# Internal Causes

Perfectionism/ Self-Criticism of our Internal Critic puts us into the zone of overwhelm.

Fight (Beating up on ourselves)

Flight (Only one who feels like this)

Freeze (Rumination/ Stuck to Thoughts).





# In-Between Causes

The Pain Of Connection is Caused by Empathic Resonance through activation of Mirror Neurons.

If others are in flight or fight, we emphatically have the same response , which will put us into the zone of overwhelm causing vicarious traumatisatisation and social disconnection.

Science of Co-regulation in infants and mothers. Can teach children to self-regulate by co-regulating.



# Protective Factors to Banish Burnout

Good Leadership: having a Director of Wellness and Charter for Doctor Wellness.

Decreased workloads and increase health workforce.

Decreased barriers to normalising burnout.

Support from peers.

Support at home

Adequate Sleep

Work/Life balance

Mental health support for doctors

Micro self-care practices to do on the go. Kristin Neff 2020







# Vental anchors through Micro Self-Care Practices

Fessel (2021): 15 days showed decreased burnout.

Kristin Neff(2020):MSC for Healthcare Decreased burnout and changing culture of medicine.

Micro Moments of Calm





# The Letting Go Practice

Trigger: Doorways / Washing Hands/Before writing clinical notes/ Waiting for Coffee/Eating your lunch/ Setting a timer/ Looking At your Screensaver.

## TAKE A PATIENT PAUSE

Soles of the Feet/ Sensations of Hands  
Sensations of the Breath  
Feel stress in the body  
Letting Go of Experiential Distress on the  
Exhale



# MindFitnessDr. Screensaver Series

EXHALE TO  
LET GO  
OF STRESS



Use as a Screensaver to be a reminder for your practice.

Recognise your stress is experiential distress of others, your own distress and response to others distress.

EXHALE TO LET IT ALL GO.  
TRY TO EXTEND THE EXHALE IF POSSIBLE.



# MindFitnessDr. Screensaver Series

EXTEND YOUR  
EXHALE TO FIND  
CALM.



Use as a Screensaver to be a trigger for your practice.

Recognise your stress is experiential distress of others, your own distress and response to others distress.

EXHALE TO LET IT ALL GO.  
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A vertical image on the left side of the slide shows the silhouette of a person stretching on a beach at sunset. The person is in the foreground, and the background features a calm sea and a vibrant orange and yellow sky.

# Discussion with neighbour

Let's talk about burnout....



# How Do We Manage Stress in Medicine?

Suffering is Pain X Resistance (Striving and Inner Critic).

What we resist persists

Mindfulness allows us to become aware of our own Self-care Battery levels and and What Emotions may be draining them. If let emotions come and go they last 90 seconds.

Name it to Tame it.  
Feel it to Heal it.

SOAR is Mindfulness in Action.

S: Surrender to your Senses to Anchor You Into the Present Moment.

O: Observe Your emotions like a curious Scientist.

A: Allow emotions (Give Them Space).

R: Release Our Thoughts.





# MindFitnessDr. Screensaver Series

WHAT ARE MY  
SELF-CARE  
BATTERY LEVELS?



Use this as a reminder to do your practice

**S:** Soles of the feet to anchor you into the present moment.

**O:** Observe your Self-Care Battery Levels.

**A-** Allow and Accept them.

**R-** Release Thoughts including Striving, Resistance and Inner Critic

# MindFitnessDr. Screensaver Series

REMEMBER TO  
SOAR TO  
LET IT BE



Use this as a reminder to do your practice

# How Do We Prevent Burnout?

What Do I Need In this Moment to recharge my battery?  
The I of SOARING

Off the Job practices :sleep, exercise, nutrition,talking to supportive friend.

On the Job Practices  
Calm Strength  
Yin Self-Compassion  
Yang Self-Compassion  
Gratitude for Everyday things  
Self-Appreciation.  
What Went Well

Neurons that Fire Together,Wire Together.

Nourishing it with all Your Senses (Embodied feeling of it)  
Giving it Three Breaths to Savor It and Rewire Your Brain.

Empathic resonance goes both ways: Upwards spiral





# What is Self-Compassion?



Self-compassion is simply giving yourself the same kindness, care, and support when you are feeling stressed, down, or in pain that you would give to a loved one, such as a child or a friend.

Activates the calming parasympathetic nervous system and Mammalian caregiver system



# Components of Self-Compassion

- Mindfulness with SOAR (Rumination)
- Common Humanity (Isolation)
- Self Kindness (Self-Criticism).



# How Self-Compassion Can Be a Liferaft



**Micro Self-care practices you can use in the moment when caregiving.**

**Feel compassion for your empathetic distress.**

**Activate your calming nervous system.**

**Empathetic resonance goes both ways.**

**Empathy is I Feel you (activating sympathetic nervous system)**

**Compassion is I hold you (activating parasympathetic and mammalian nervous system)**



# How would you treat a friend?







# Yin And Yang Self-Compassion

Yin Compassion (Acceptance) is loving, connected presence

Yang Compassion (Action) is Mama Bear Fierce Compassion

More satisfied in your work when you can draw boundaries.

Modelling to others that it is alright to self-care to guard against burnout; Self Compassion is Contagious

Kristin Neff (2020) MSC six week programme changing systems to be more Self-Compassionate.

# Beliefs About Self-Compassion



# Why Self-Compassion is Not Selfish...



# Self-Compassion Research

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## Health

- Lower stress reactivity
- Reduced inflammation
- Reductions in anxiety and mood disorders
- Higher engagement in healthy behaviors

## Relationships

- More likely to engage in perspective-taking
- More caring and supportive in interpersonal relationships
- Increases compassion toward others

## Resilience

- Decreased rumination on negative
- Improved coping with difficult situations (e.g., divorce, trauma, chronic illness)
- Take greater responsibility for their actions
- More likely to persist in the face of failure



# Giving and Receiving Compassion





# The Letting It In Practice

Trigger: Doorways / Washing Hands/Before writing clinical notes/  
Having a lunch/ coffee break/ Entering or leaving premises.

Take a Patient Pause

Soles of the Feet/ Sensations of Hands  
Self-Care Battery Check in With SOAR

Inhale what you need , nourish it, Give it three Breaths  
Exhale Empathic Distress

Or Inhale What You need  
Exhale What Others Need



# MindFitness Practice for Self-Care Free Screensaver Series

ITS OKAY TO BE  
PERFECTLY  
IMPERFECT



Get for Free at [www.mindfitnessdoctor.co.nz](http://www.mindfitnessdoctor.co.nz)







# Recharge Retreat

22nd May (2.00- 5.00.p.m) online

Introduction to Mindful Self-Compassion, and the six- week Mindful self-Compassion Course for Women in Medicine. Followed by one hour of Yummy Yin for Self-Compassion







# 6-Week Self-Compassion For Women in Medicine

Starts Monday May the 30th 8.00.p.m- 9.00p.m. online



**Week 1: What is Self-Compassion and the neuroscience behind It**

**Week 2: Practicing Self-Compassion in Our Busy Lives.**

**Week3: How to Discover Our Compassionate Voice.**

**Week3: How to Meet Difficult emotions in the workplace.**

**Week 4: Self-Compassion and Burnout In Medicine.**

**Week 6: Making It Count:Accessing our Core values as Doctors.**





# The MindFitDr: An eight-week course to transform the way you do medicine (and Life)

The Stress Reset for Women in Medicine.  
Short Teaching Topic followed by a Micro-Self-Care practice to implement into your medical life

Short on purpose  
Don't want to add to overwhelm  
Less is More





### **Module One - When stress becomes burnout**

You'll learn how chronic stress can lead to burnout, how to identify your stage of burnout; and how burnout affects your nervous system and your medical practice. I'll introduce you to the MindFitness Method of Self-Care to Manage Stress and Banish Burnout.

### **Module Two - Check your battery**

You'll use mindfulness practices to develop your awareness of the signs and symptoms of burnout and learn simple practices to assess your self-care battery level and take action before you hit burnout.

### **Module Three - Energy depleting emotions**

You'll begin to notice the emotions that zap your energy and use MindFitness practices to observe your emotional state throughout the day. You'll learn simple practices to tame and heal your emotions, so you can be a calming presence for your patients even in tough situations.

### **Module Four - Releasing and letting go**

You'll learn how striving, hustle culture, self doubt, imposter syndrome and feeling inadequate all contribute to burnout. You'll practice unhooking from these unhelpful strategies, releasing experiential distress and using breathwork to let go of stressful thoughts and leave anxiety at the office..

## **Module Five - Acceptance and Letting it Be**

You'll learn to let go of the illusion of control and accept that you're not superhuman, you can't fix or save everyone and no amount of beating yourself up will change that. (I get it, that can be tough). You'll discover how to treat yourself and others with loving kindness and self compassion, no matter what the circumstances. (Trust me, this one is a game changer).

## **Module Six - Preventing burnout through self-care**

Drawing on the Te Whare Tapu Wha (body, mind, social and spiritual) model of health, you'll discover new ways to replenish your energy, regulate your nervous system and rewire your brain at home and at work.

## **Module Seven - Letting in the good**

Neuroscience tells us that appreciating the good is not only a simple way to recharge your battery, but actually rewires your brain. In this module you'll learn how to use all of your senses to nourish and savour simple moments, so you soak up all that goodness, replenish your energy and rewire your brain with the resources you need to handle stress. **Module Eight**  
**- Reclaiming what matters in medicine**

Now that you know how to care for yourself, it's time to find new meaning in the practice of medicine. In this module, you'll identify your core values, set self-care goals that align with those values and create your own MindFitness plan for ongoing self-care.



# Thank You

