

Burnout in Healthcare

**Symptoms and Self-care
Strategies**

Content of the Unit

This unit focuses on work-related burnout among healthcare providers, particularly physicians and dentists.

Content of the unit

- Burnout in healthcare:
Definition and primary causes
- The immediate and long-term consequences of unaddressed burnout
- Symptoms and diagnostic approaches of burnout
- Approaches to deal with work related burnout
- Self-care techniques to reduce burnout

What is Burnout?

The term “**burnout**” was first established by psychologist Herbert Freudenberger in the 1970s to describe the physical and emotional exhaustion experienced by professionals in high-stress occupations and especially those require social interaction and full engagement with people

Key Dimensions of Burnout

Emotional Exhaustion

Feeling drained, overwhelmed, and unable to cope with work demands.

Example: A surgeon feeling physically and mentally depleted after consecutive 24-hour shifts.

Depersonalization (Cynicism)

Developing a detached, impersonal attitude toward patients.

Example: A dentist referring to patients by implanted tooth type rather than names.

Reduced Personal Accomplishment

Feeling ineffective, incompetent, or unappreciated in one's role.

Example: A physician questioning whether their work makes a difference despite years of service.

Primary Causes of Burnout in healthcare field

Excessive Workload and Long Hours

Administrative Burden and Electronic Health Records (EHRs)

Lack of Autonomy and Control

Emotional exhaustion from Patient Suffering

Poor Work-Life Balance

Inadequate Support Systems

Moral Injury and Ethical Dilemmas

Organizational Culture of Silence

Consequences of unaddressed burnout

Immediate consequences of burnout

- Increased medical errors and reduced patient safety
- Poor patient-provider communication
- Rise in unprofessional conduct
- Short-Term Physical and Mental Health Crises

Long-term consequences of burnout

- Workplace dysfunction
- Chronic health conditions among doctors
- Psychological consequences on doctors
- Systemic breakdowns in care delivery

Early symptoms of burnout

1. Constant Exhaustion and Fatigue

- Healthcare workers feel physically and emotionally drained, even after adequate rest.

2. Increased Risk-Taking Behavior

- Impulsive decisions, such as skipping safety protocols or self-medicating.

3. Anger and Self-Criticism

- Frustration toward colleagues, patients, or oneself

4. Increased Doubt and Uncertainty

- Second-guessing clinical decisions, leading to anxiety

5. Feeling Unable to Help

- A sense of helplessness despite professional competence.

6. Increased Irritability, Negativity, and Cynicism

- Pessimism about work and detachment from patients.

7. Feeling Overwhelmed by Demands

- Inability to cope with routine tasks.

Approaches to deal with work related burnout

**Organizational
interventions**

**Individual
interventions**

First: Organizational interventions

Reducing excessive workloads

Increasing autonomy

Increasing recognition

Resolving dysfunctional workplace dynamics

Minimizing procedural injustice

Resolving ethical misalignment issues

Second: Individual interventions

- Self-care strategies are individual intentional, proactive practices that individuals adopt to maintain and enhance their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being
- **Self-care is far from being selfish—it's an essential practice that renews our capacity to care for others effectively.**

Self Care Strategies



Physical Strategies

- Sleep hygiene, nutritional optimization, and exercise regimens



Psychological Strategies

- Cognitive-behavioral techniques and mindfulness practices



Emotional Strategies

- Therapeutic interventions and social support networks



Spiritual Strategies

- Meaning-making activities and value-realignment exercises



Functional Strategies

- Time management systems and boundary-setting strategies



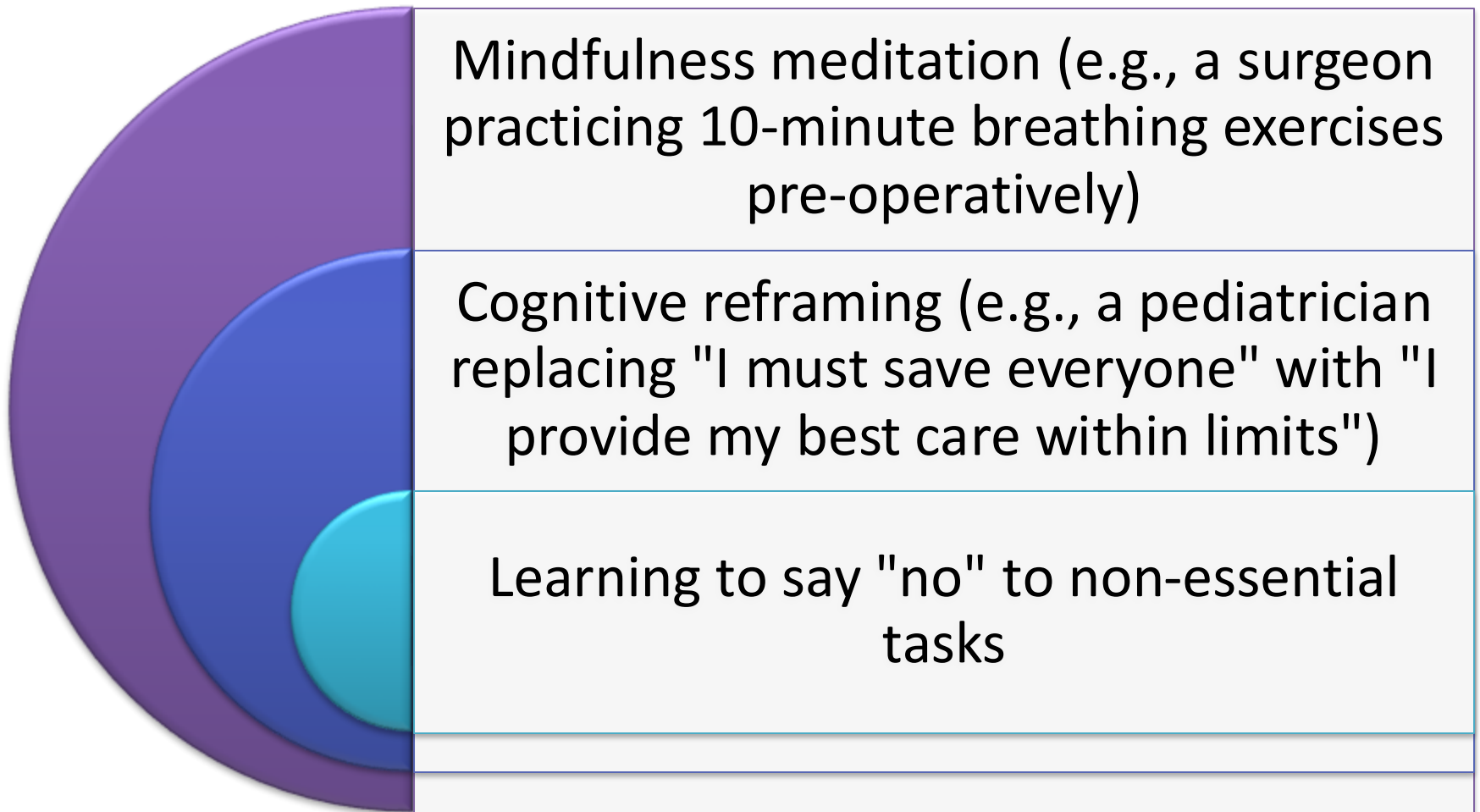
Physical Self-Care Strategies

Prioritizing 7–8 hours of sleep (e.g., an ER doctor enforcing a "no late-night charting" rule)

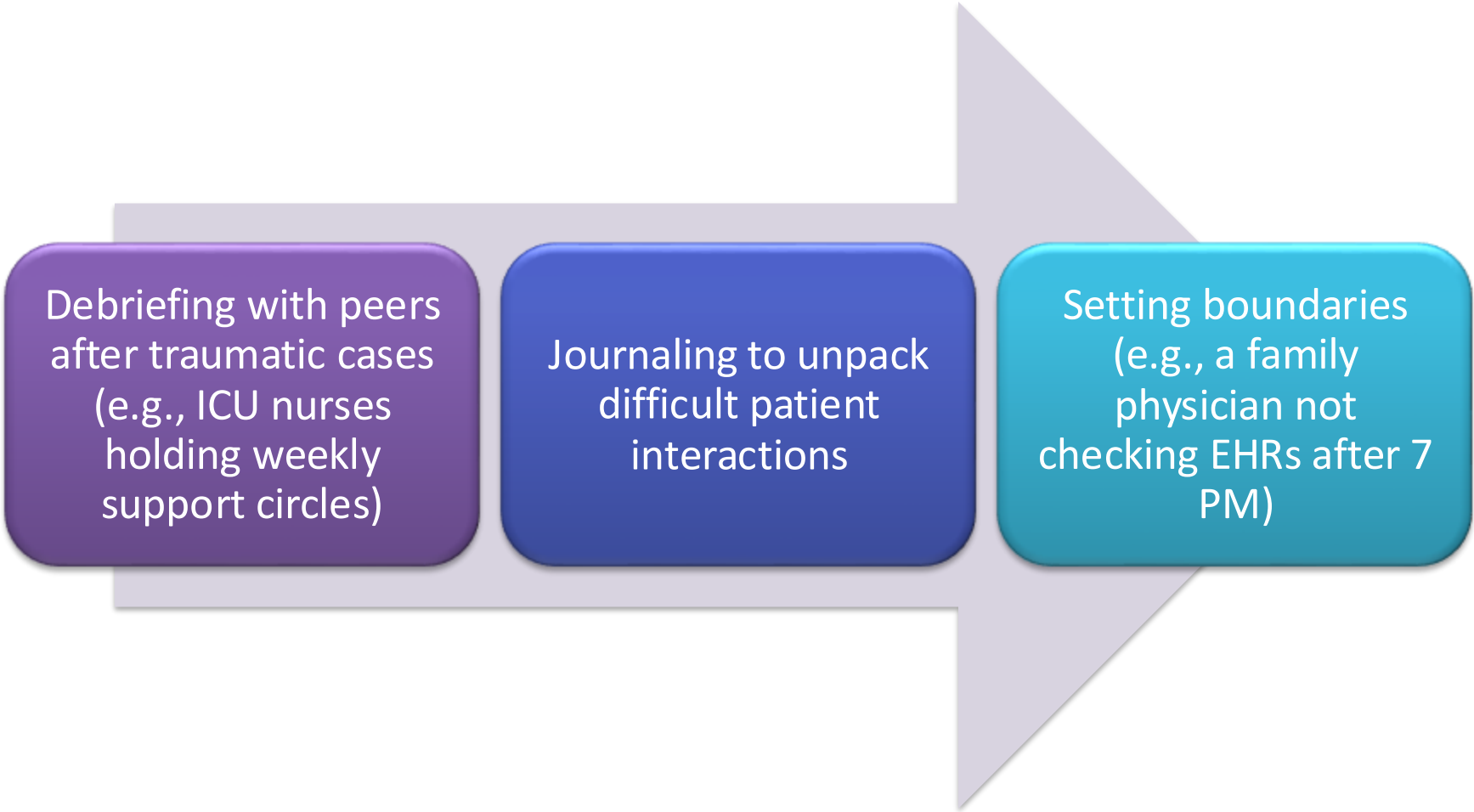
Short movement breaks between patients (e.g., a dentist doing 2-minute stretches after each procedure)

Meal prepping to avoid skipping meals during shifts

Psychological Self-Care strategies



Emotional Self-Care strategies

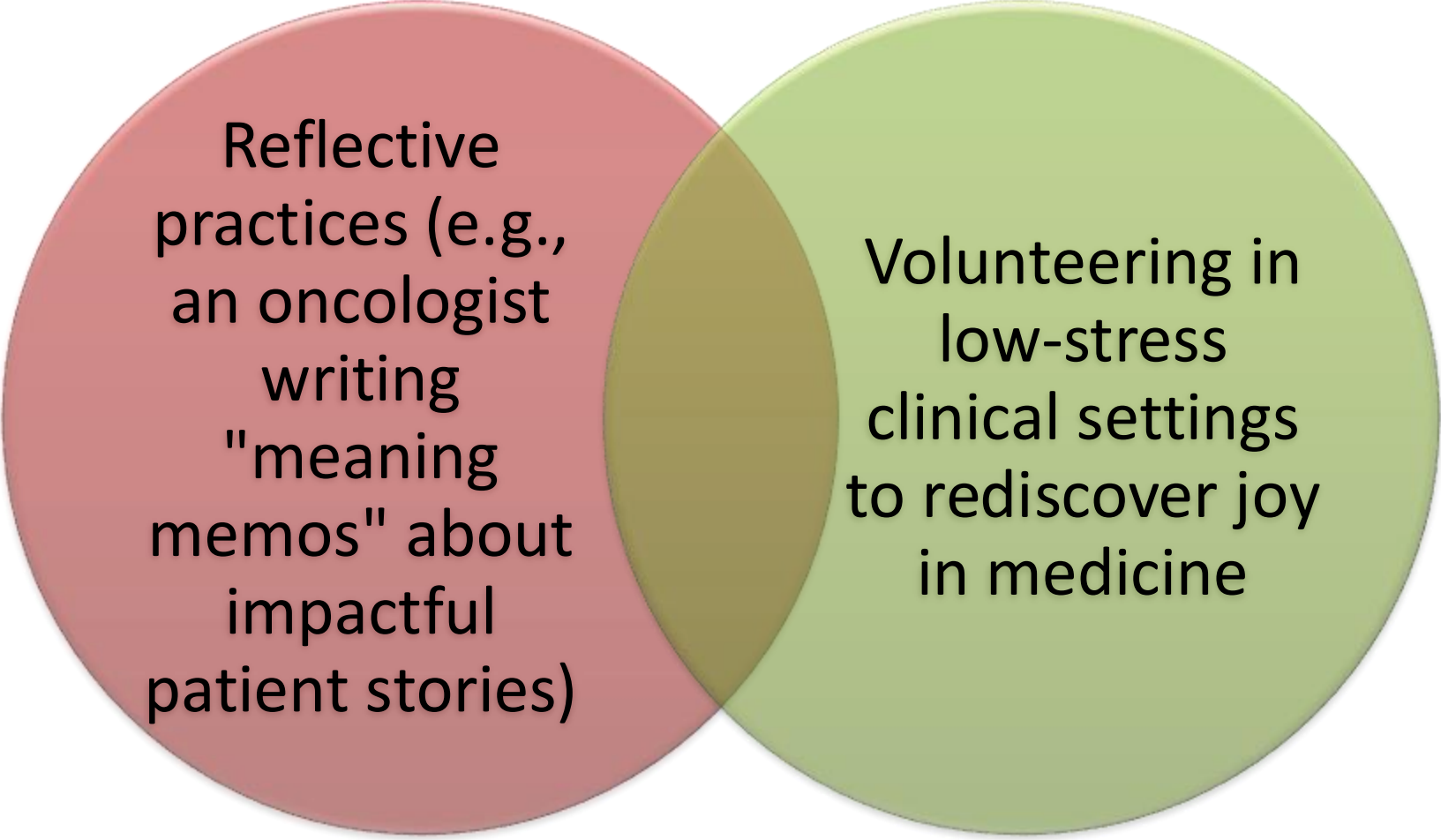


Debriefing with peers
after traumatic cases
(e.g., ICU nurses
holding weekly
support circles)

Journaling to unpack
difficult patient
interactions

Setting boundaries
(e.g., a family
physician not
checking EHRs after 7
PM)

Spiritual Self-Care strategies



Reflective practices (e.g., an oncologist writing "meaning memos" about impactful patient stories)

Volunteering in low-stress clinical settings to rediscover joy in medicine

Functional Self-Care strategies

Time-blocking for charting (e.g., a dentist reserving 30-minute slots for notes)

Delegating tasks when possible (e.g., a senior resident training interns to handle discharge summaries)

Self-care techniques to reduce burnout

Self-care programs don't have to be expensive or involve high expenditures. They should be something the person enjoys and that gives them a positive sense of self.

Toxic self-care programs, which provide a temporary sense of happiness but lead to future harm, should be avoided, especially those related to addiction, food, or expensive shopping.

Self-care programs are pre-planned actions, meaning the person must have planned the program in advance and not be a coincidence.

Programs should be scheduled periodically—weekly, monthly, semi-annually, or annually—and should not be abandoned based on the changing circumstances.

Self-care programs should be routine, consistent, and repetitive according to a known, pre-determined pattern.

The program must be implemented, adhered to, and explained to those around the person, as the surrounding environment may discourage a person from implementing it for financial, social, or familial reasons.

Self-care techniques to reduce burnout

Exercise



Practice relaxation regularly



Self-care techniques to reduce burnout

Set boundaries and preferable ways of interacting with colleagues,

Get a good night's sleep for 6-8 hours daily

Self-limitations



Sleep Habit

Self-care techniques to reduce burnout

Strengthen your religious and spiritual side and practice religious rituals regularly



Enjoy positive, supportive social relationships and avoid negative people



POSITIVITY

Self-care techniques to reduce burnout

Watch your favorite movies regularly



Practice shopping, but break it up into regular intervals, not all at once, provided it doesn't negatively impact your budget



Self-care techniques to reduce burnout

Regular social interaction with friends



Strengthening social relationships with family and close friends



Self-care techniques to reduce burnout

Taking annual or semi-annual vacations on a regular basis



Consulting a psychologist



Course Ended!

Hope that you got
valuable information
during this course