

A National Look at Physician Wellness and Burnout



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Medscape recently released two 2023 reports covering physician wellness and burnout. As we address symptoms of overall wellness, we must remember to look at both ends of

the spectrum. Just because you may feel burned out in one area of your life doesn't mean that others aren't flourishing and thriving. Using strengths and supports from one area of your life to help build in others is an often underutilized tactic.

In coaching, a tool typically used early in the process is the Wheel of Life. While there are many variations, they all generally assess common domains of life; relationships, family and friends, health (physical and emotional), finance, career, fun and recreation, spirituality, and personal growth. The general idea is to reflect on each area and rank it from 1-10. Visually, you are given a depiction of the balance in your life. Areas where you may have scored lower, yet you prioritize in your life, are potential areas to work on through coaching.



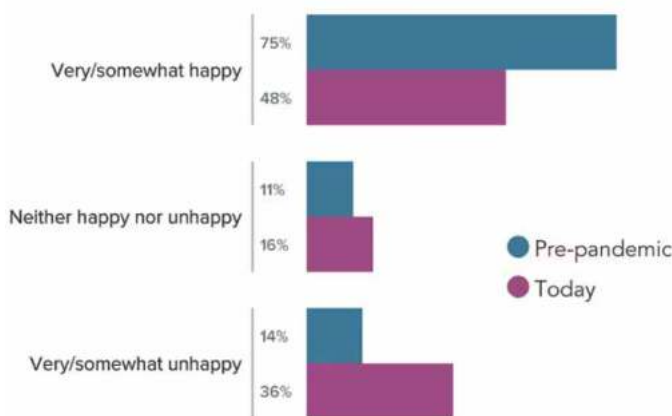
The 2023 Physician Lifestyle & Happiness Report had almost 9,200 physicians respond and focused on how physicians are regaining their healthy lifestyles, marriages, and relationships post-pandemic. Compared to 75% pre-pandemic, about half of physicians (48%) reported they are very or somewhat happy at work (See Figure 1).

Parenting plays a prominent role in conflicted feelings for physicians, particularly women. The report found that 49% of female physicians felt conflicted in balancing their highly demanding job with responsibilities and parenting. Moreover, they found it difficult to talk about this conflict with their boss and often turned down career advancement opportunities to avoid further stress.

Marriage and relationships are often an indicator of wellness. Fortunately, 81% of physicians surveyed reported their marriages as very good or good. This is important, as spouses or partners can provide a level of support in addressing one's health and wellness. However, physicians experience divorce rates similar to the general public, around 24%. Additionally, 65% of physicians said burnout has had a negative effect

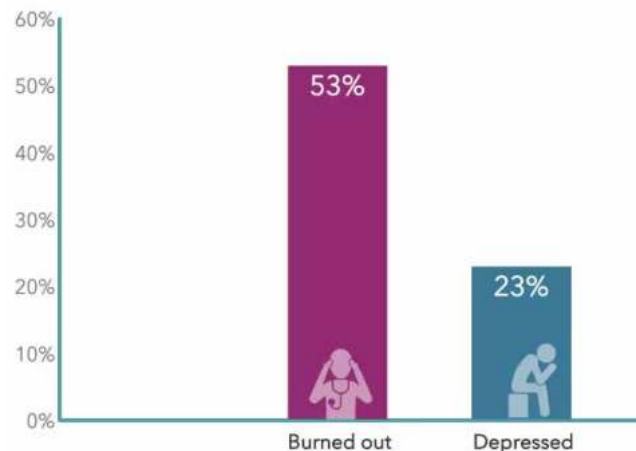
(Figure 1)

Physician Happiness at Work, Before the Pandemic vs Now



(Figure 2)

Are You Burned Out and/or Depressed?



on their relationships. Most often, others will notice burnout in a physician before they do.

The 2023 Physician Burnout & Depression Report, with almost 9,100 respondents, stated that even though COVID-19 is causing fewer deaths in the US now than two years ago, the effects are still prominent and burdensome among physicians and healthcare workers. Compared to 2018, burnout among physicians overall has risen from 42% to 53% (See Figure 2). For some specialties, rates have been as high as 65% (See Figure 3). Burnout is also not an isolated event. Sixty-two percent of physicians said they felt “pervasive and persistent” feelings of burnout for more than one year. Contributors to those feelings include too many administrative tasks (including EHR), lack of respect from coworkers and/or patients, too many work hours, and lack of autonomy. Of those who reported feelings of burnout, 43% said that it had a strong or severe impact on their life.

Burnout is often misinterpreted as an individual moral failure to cope with their surroundings. In reality, this chronic stress-induced syndrome is caused by a lack of attention to systematic inefficiencies and poor workplace culture. While it takes a team of individuals to make significant changes at the system level, understanding your personality, characteristics, and communication styles can benefit how you approach and cope with stressful situations. Coaching often uses different psychometric tools to assess a physician’s individual style and work with that person on how to use their strengths most effectively.

For more information on coaching, contact Lindsey Hanlon with LifeBridge at (402) 413-2060 or lindseyh@nebmed.org. For links to the complete reports, check out our website at www.lifebridgenebraska.org. □

(Figure 3)

Which Physicians Are Most Burned Out?

