

7 STRATEGIES to become a Healthier, Happier Healer

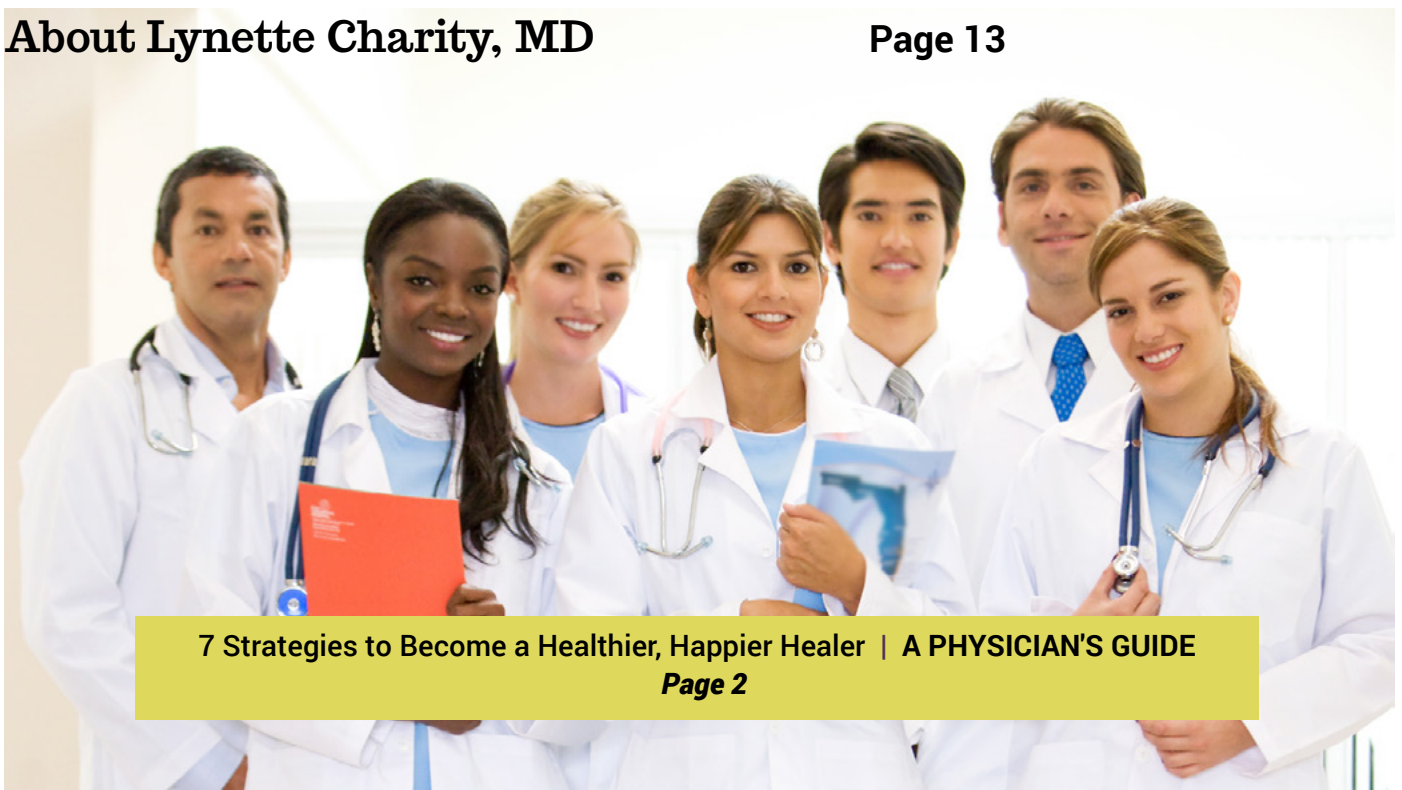
A PHYSICIAN'S GUIDE



LYNETTE CHARITY, MD

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Introduction

Medicine is our calling, but it's not supposed to kill us! Did you know that approximately 400 physicians die by suicide annually. Why that's more than one/day! And the leading reason physicians die by suicide is untreated or under-treated depression. You see, depression and other mental illnesses are equal opportunity disorders. Having an MD or DO behind your name doesn't give you any immunity. Let's just be clear on that, shall we?

Becoming a Healthier Happier Healer

After graduating from medical school, we start our career eager to serve. But over time, something happens. Disillusionment happens. Feeling disposable and devalued happens. Depression happens. Well, it's time, as individuals AND as a collaborative force, to "heal the healers". You spend your medical career saving others' lives. How about saving your own? It's now time to put YOUR oxygen mask on first!

What is Mindset?

Simply defined it's a way of thinking. It's a BIG deal. In order to become a happier you, you will need to change your mindset based on the 7 strategies outlined in this guidebook. Are you ready? Let's begin.



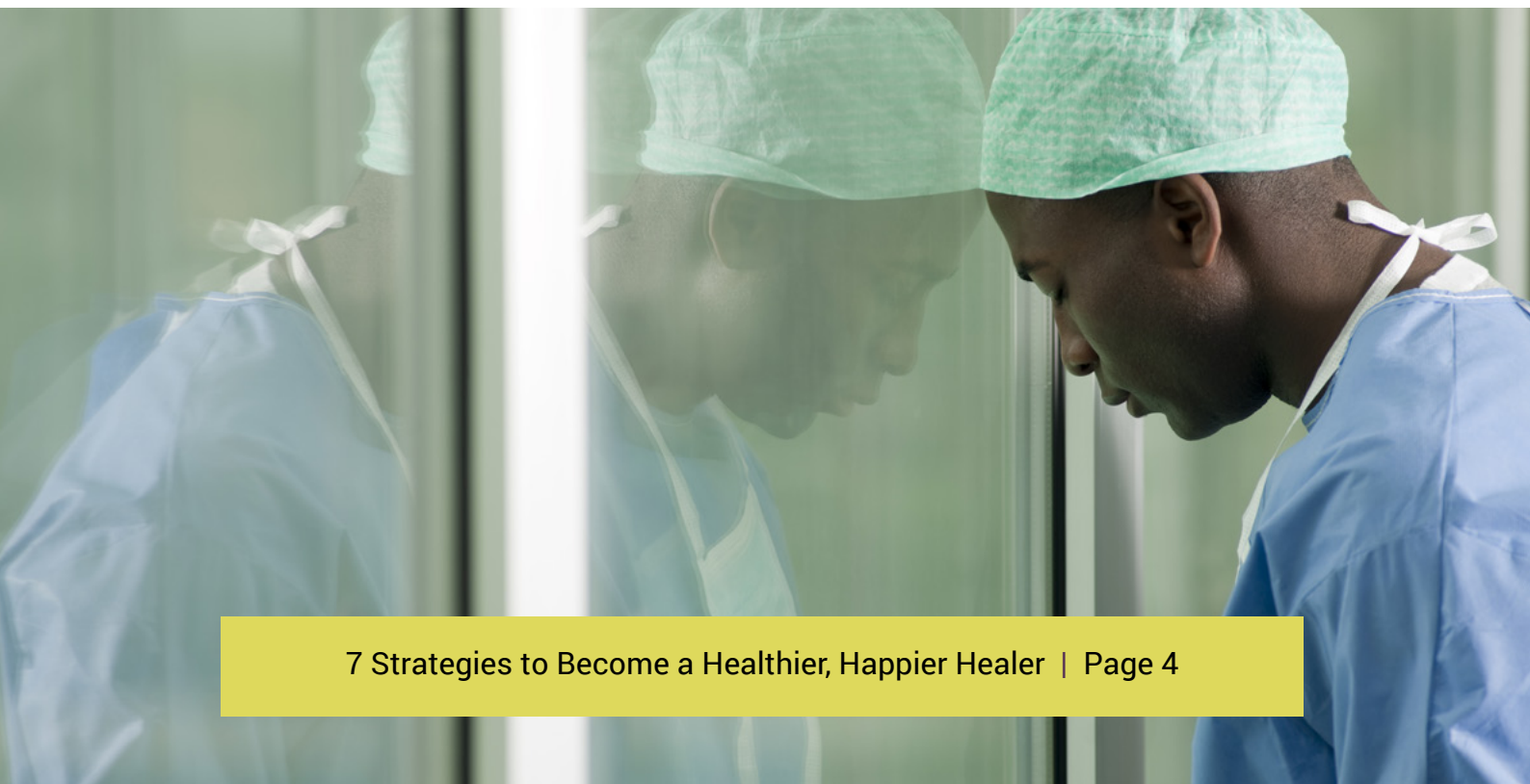


The Problem

As the healthcare system has evolved into a business, putting productivity before patient care, we are experiencing more and more stress in the workplace. Three issues; too many bureaucratic tasks; too many hours at the job and at home working on the job; and too many patients with too little time to truly connect with them, cause a majority of the stress experienced. Loss of autonomy and the disrespect from administrators, colleagues and other medical staff are also contributors to the stress. This stress leads to BURNOUT!

Physician burnout is a long-term psychological condition whose common symptoms include emotional exhaustion and detachment, feeling useless or meaningless, and experiencing negative attitudes toward patients. And finally the flame of your “calling” goes “POOF”! When that happens, some physicians choose to quit the profession and some choose to quit their lives! Stress leads to burnout which leads to depression which leads to SUICIDE!

What can be done? I’m glad you asked.



Let's look at 7 strategies to prevent burnout and depression and renew your zest for life. It's all about

MINDSET!

- M** Move out of your own way
- I** Identify your overwhelm
- N** Navigate away from naysayers
- D** Discover your true authentic self
- S** Seek a new perspective of what is right for YOU
- E** Elicit help from mentors and coaches
- T** Transform into a new YOU





Move Out of Your Own Way

“Be miserable. Or motivate yourself. Whatever has to be done, it's always your choice.”

– WAYNE DYER

A few years ago, I was fired from a hospital-employee position after calling the Chief of Anesthesiology an “IDIOT”! Who knew that was a reason for termination. I guess I didn’t read the fine print of my contract. That event was the catalyst for me to get out of my own way and find a new “calling”.

Are you miserable in your present career? Are you imprisoned by indecision, frustration, and fear of the unknown? This is INERTIA! Inertia will lead to more stress. You are faced with two primary choices. Either you accept the conditions you’re presently in or you accept responsibility for changing them. That’s it! YOU must be the change! Don’t allow your inner critic to hold you hostage. Make an escape plan and stop stopping YOU!



Identify Your Overwhelm

“Some people believe holding on and hanging in there are signs of great strength. However, there are times when it takes much more strength to know when to let go and then do it.”

– ANN LANDERS

Being a physician, a mother, a wife and a caregiver became too much for me and I knew something had to change. I loved medicine. I loved my husband. I loved my children. I loved my home. I loved my mom and disabled brother. So I made the decision to hire a nanny and a housekeeper. I found an agency to manage my brother's affairs. And I moved my mother closer to me. This didn't solve all of my issues, but it freed me up to start running! It's amazing how many people you can cuss out in 26.2 miles! What a stress-reliever.

Even on a good day, life can be overwhelming. However, when every day is a BAD day due to constant overwhelm, it's time to identify that stress and find resolution. If it feels too much, it is too much. Is it the many “hats” you wear at work; you see patients; you give presentations; you sit on committees? Once you put a face on what keeps you up at night, you can better find ways to resolve the issue. Worry is not a productive activity. Saying “No” frees you to say “Yes”. Stop apologizing for who you are. Take time to refresh, restore, reinvent. Just chill.



Navigate Far Away from the Naysayers

“If I would have listened to the naysayers, I would still be in the Austrian Alps yodeling”

– ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER

Growing up in the segregated South of the 1950's-60's, I had my share of naysayers whom I called DreamSmashers. I was one of the first Blacks to integrate a White high school and when I asked my Guidance Counselor to help me with applying to college, her response was “Now you might be able to get into one of those NEGRO colleges, but no medical school's gonna take a COLORED girl!” Fortunately for me, DreamKeepers found me and the rest is history. And as I have traversed through my medical career experiencing racism, sexism and ageism, I have maintained my supporters and discarded the naysayers.

A career as a medical doctor was your dream. You understand your “why” for doing it. But something has changed and you are “rethinking” your decision. And that's okay. You're tired. You need to reassess your “why”. And that's okay. You feel that you have a different purpose; a different passion. And that's okay. So now you need to rid yourself of those in your life who don't support your new vision, including your inner naysayer. Your life should be filled with positive vibes that give you an “atta girl or atta boy! Feeling!”



Discover Your True Authentic Self

“Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable. Be honest and transparent anyway.”

– MOTHER THERESA

When I was 60 years old, I had a “come to Jesus” moment. Yeah, it took me that long to discover my true authentic self. We physicians try so hard to always do the right thing. We fear doing something wrong, saying something wrong, or just “acting” wrong in the eyes of an observer. Well, I decided to stop NOT-being ME! To err is human and last I checked we are all human. Once I decided that I wasn’t perfect, it freed me to be me! So I started doing stand-up comedy! And I used lessons I learned in telling jokes to be who I really wanted to be! Oh, what a relief!

Are you living a life/career that is authentic? Are you doing what you love in your medical profession? Are you being true to yourself in your thoughts and actions? Or has your dream career become just a day job? What brings you joy? When you discover who you are under all that training, you will be a force to be reckoned with.

Seek a New Perspective of What is Right for YOU

“Sometimes a change in perspective is all it takes to see the light.”

– DAN BROWN

Let me tell you, when you are faced with an unexpected twist in your career plan, it gives you pause. Back to my being fired. This was a game-changer. Now I didn't completely transition out of clinical medicine, however after re-assessing WHY I “flamed out” on that particular day made me think “THIS is NOT working. What can I do to make a change?” I found another position in an ambulatory surgi-center; no nights, no weekends, no call. I also traveled doing locums. I actually enjoyed this work model and it allowed me to pursue my comedy and speaking. Oh yeah, I also decided I wanted to become a professional speaker! A new perspective that was right for me.

You will always have moments where you say “Should I stay or should I go?” If you are stuck in a rut, maybe just maybe you need to view your situation from another angle. If you stay, can you “modify” your situation. If you choose to go, can you transition gradually or will you just have to “take the leap”? That leads us to Strategy #6.



Elicit Help From Mentors & Coaches

“Ask for help not because you’re weak, but because you want to remain strong.”

– LES BROWN

Learning comedy or public speaking takes professional help, I came to realize. It took some time, but I was successful because of my career transition coach, my comedy coach, my speaking coach and several mentors whom I asked “How would you start a speaking business? What are the key elements of a compelling speech? How do I get to do a TedxTalk?” And with their help, I answered the question “Should I stay or should I go?” I transitioned out of clinical medicine. Better late than never. It was the best solution for me.

Just as you trained in medical school and during your residency, you gained knowledge from those who had “been there, done that!” If you struggle now to make sense of your career path, asking for help; asking for guidance from others is the way to go. There may be options within clinical medicine that you might not have considered that would give you the de-stressed work environment you desire. Observe what other physicians are doing to make their work more meaningful. An overhaul of how you practice may be just what the doctor ordered. Sometimes change for a healthier happier you may mean seeing less patients, or decreasing your non-clinical workload or being able to pick your children up from school at 3pm. Your coach(es) can assist you in seeing THE TREE in the forest that is the answer to your particular situation.



Transform into the New You

“Don't fear failure. Fear being in the exact same place next year as you are today.”

– MICHAEL HYATT

I must admit, I am happier these days. I now use my experiences of navigating life stress, burnout, depression and a near-suicide to “wake up” my audiences to considering a career change as a mode of psychotherapy. For 40 years I’ve “put people to sleep” and during the past 10 years, I spent the time wandering through a career fog, worrying about what others might think of me if I decided to quit. It was depressing...literally. Regaining control over my life professionally has been a metamorphosis; from caterpillar to a beautiful butterfly. Okay, I guess that’s a little too much.

As for YOU, It’s time. It’s time for something drastic. Your career could possibly be killing you or at the least doing physical harm to your mind, body and soul.. Change uses external influences to modify actions. Transformation modifies beliefs so actions become natural and the desired results are achieved. You need to utilize both to have the future you want. The process will produce a better YOU. So what’s stopping you, huh?

Dr. Charity Speaks

Humorist | Author | Speaker

My name is Lynette Charity, MD,
Burnout to Bliss Physician.

Join my workshops to help
you through what I've already
experienced, worked through, and
overcame.

Let me share with you how you
can "*Laugh your Way out of a
Lawsuit*" and "*Stay Inspired, Stay
Healthy, Stay True to You*".



About Lynette Charity, MD

Dr. Lynette Charity is a Board-Certified Anesthesiologist with over 35 years of experience "putting people to sleep". She is also an author, humorist and award-winning international speaker. She competed in the semifinals of Toastmasters' World Championship of Public Speaking held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2014 where she won a 3rd place trophy. Out of her many award-winning speeches, she is most passionate about "Beware of DreamSmashers".

Dr. Charity graduated with honors from Chatham College for Women in Pittsburgh, PA and received her MD degree from Tufts University School of Medicine. She has practiced nationally, internationally and maintained a long private practice career. Drawing from her vast experience, she delivers personal and powerful stories that educate and inspire. She speaks to various groups in her capacity as a medical expert in the field of Anesthesiology, and her presentations are always sprinkled with humor.

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