

BOOSTER SHOTS

ANTIDOTES FOR BURNOUT AND COMPASSION FATIGUE

Written by: Dr. Frank Gabrin

Clear2care's mission is to heal the everyday heroes of healthcare from the disease of compassion fatigue and burnout. We believe that caring for others should feel incredibly good and seek to dismantle the big lie, or the myth, that caregivers have been taught and incorporated into their practice that we believe is the cause of this dis-ease: The myth of keeping our professional distance in order to be better caregivers. In its place, we seek to teach that to do better we do not need to step back, but rather we need to take a step forward and connect more fully with the hurting human in front of us. When we take this step forward, we engage the protocol of True Care, which is what will cause us on both sides of the stethoscope to feel better. Learn more at: clear2care.com

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This is singularly for you, the one who is on the path back from burnout. This is designed to keep you on the path, to keep you moving towards that place where you have the power to care, make a difference and change (y)our world.

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THE BOOSTER SHOTS

This book is a sort of CliffsNotes of two of my other books, *Care 101* and *Back from Burnout*, combined with a few relevant posts of the *Shot of Satisfaction*, which is a blog that I publish each week to help people inject True Care directly into their nursing or medical practice as well as their everyday lives. Once I discovered the power of True Care to transform my practice and my life, everything changed for the better for me, but soon, I realized that many times it can be oh so very difficult to care, especially if we are suffering from the cumulative emotional effects of compassion fatigue, also known as professional burnout. This is why I wrote **Booster Shots**, specifically as a way to help get you quickly into, or back into, a healthy emotional place whereby you can benefit from the effects of True Care.

Almost everything I write centers around the concept of True Care. True Care is that intangible ingredient that Mom puts into her chicken soup that actually gives her soup the power to heal you. It's the very same stuff that, for the most part, is missing from our current experience in healthcare. My experience has shown me that by adding in this missing ingredient to what we already do in our everyday practices, we help to heal not only our patients, but also ourselves—and this could be the solution to many of the challenges we now face in healthcare.

I wrote the Shots of Satisfaction (SOS) included in this book as a medicine of sorts, to be used like a deep intramuscular injection. The difference is that the medicine contained in the SOS's is not a physical substance or drug, it is the intangible stuff of perspective, wisdom, insight and knowledge that you then self-inject into your own stream of consciousness, your own thoughts and emotions. This injection has the power to help you change your experience of life, both at work and at

home. Later, when you find yourself in a difficult clinical encounter where you are finding it difficult to care, you will be able to use the stuff contained within the shot to help you generate and deliver to your patient the intangible substance of True Care and begin to create satisfaction for yourself.

THE CONTRACT

To understand the meaning of True Care, we have to recognize that it does not come from, and it is not contained within the physical goods and services that doctors, nurses or hospitals provide. It is not the history or the physical exam or the computerized chart. True Care is not the diagnosis, the treatment plan, the admission, the prescription, the antibiotic, the pain medicine, the splint, the discharge instructions or the note for work. We also need to recognize that even though the signage outside the emergency department I work in boldly proclaims “EMERGENCY CARE CENTER,” implying that you would find CARE inside, True Care is not something that inherently exists inside the walls of the hospital building. So where exactly, then, does the care a hospital promises to deliver actually come from? Intuitively, we all know that the True Care we all expect to find in there can only come from the people who work there, those of us who are at the patient’s bedside.

It is also important to recognize that we all hold an undeniable expectation of True Care. As patients, as practitioners and as a society, we all expect to find this care in the hospital, the doctor’s office, the clinic, or inside the back of the ambulance. We don’t necessarily hold the expectation that we will definitely find a solution or a cure for our present problem there, but make no mistake; we all definitely expect to find True Care there.

The immutable truth is that when the unthinkable happens, we all depend on the expert and compassionate understanding and advice of our doctors, nurses and hospitals. We all want our doctor to care about “us.” We want our doctor to have our best interests at heart even if he has another patient; even if it is 2 a.m., the weekend or a holiday. We want our healthcare providers to be honest with us and not hold back the awful truth or blow smoke up our skirt just so we don’t feel so bad. We need and

expect our doctors and nurses to be able to tolerate the uncomfortable, awkward pain of delivering the worst of news to us in a way that is sensitive, authentic, compassionate and caring.

Our deepest expectation is that our doctor or nurse will put our interests first, even over their own interests and those of the hospital or the insurance company. We have this expectation because for us healthcare is not really a “pure” business. To us, as patients, a hospital represents the birth of our child, the death of our father, the loss of our legs or a new lease on life. In other words, when we are in need, medicine is not about delivering only tangible goods and services—it is about entering into an intangible contract that is actually sacred.

This intangible, unspoken contract is True Care, and it is an absolute expectation that is held on both sides of the transaction of care, on both sides of the stethoscope. Universally we hold this expectation that this completely intangible stuff called True Care will be included with our merchandise and the goods and services we receive. The word *care*, in and of itself, implies that the receiver’s needs are of paramount importance in the transaction.

It is precisely this desire to care for others that draws us into our healthcare careers in the first place. Most of us feel called to be doctors and nurses. The desire to help, to heal, to console, to improve, to comfort is what sets healthcare workers apart from all other types of workforces. This is what is different about the work we do, and this is why the rules from other industries just don’t apply. This is also why the enigma of compassion fatigue and professional burnout only happens in those who want to care for others and our society: doctors, nurses, police and fireman, teachers, social workers, emergency responders and our armed forces. We the givers of care and the work we do are unique because our

primary mission in the work that we do is to care!

I personally believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that those of us who work in healthcare are born with a primary pure and uncorrupted desire to care. What this means is that as healthcare workers, we want to care about and for people in need as much as patients want someone to actively care about and for them. This shared need to receive and give care is rooted in our shared humanity, but it is not being met in today's Western healthcare arena.

Why not? I believe it is because we have become so fascinated and distracted by technology that today our industry is not even focused on care, and neither are we. These technological advances have us focused, instead, solely on the cure, the tangible physical goods and services of healthcare, and we have mistaken the cure for care. But in reality, because the commodity of care itself is not tangible, cure and care are worlds apart.

Unlike cure, care is an intangible process that, until recently, has not been clearly researched, defined or taught in modern medicine, nursing or allied health. In truth, we have had no vocabulary or context with which to explore or teach this intangible. Because of this, True Care is the missing ingredient within almost all patient encounters happening right now.

I believe that this the root cause of most of the problems in healthcare today. This is why patients and their families are not satisfied with their experience. This is why bright, gifted, talented and well-meaning doctors, nurses, midlevel providers, medics, techs, social workers and other healthcare workers are suffering from compassion fatigue and burnout, rather than feeling like masters of their craft. Unless we learn how to inject the intangible substance of True Care into the process we currently use to deliver our merchandise and services, all of us—patients, you, me and all of society—will continue to suffer the frustration of not getting (or giving)

what we came for from our spectacular healthcare systems. If we don't begin to inject True Care into the mix, we will all continue to struggle without finding satisfaction, on either side of the stethoscope.

It does not matter who you are: when your time comes and you, or your father, wife or child, fall victim to trauma or disease, you will expect that the professionals you go to get care from will be able to connect deeply with you and your situation. You will expect them to stand in your grief, your sadness and your despair in order to be able to give you compassionate expert advice about what your situation really is, what you can expect and what the best course of action is.

You want and you need that deep connection in order to feel like you are getting the best possible medical care that will maximize your chances of beating your situation and being healthy again. And if that is not a possibility, you need someone who, in that deep connection, can be honest with you and lament with you. When we are hurting, we need someone to be our lifeline, to throw us a rope and stay in that painful connection with us until we know that they fully comprehend what we are going through. We need that someone to stay with us until we know that they feel our pain. None of us in this sort of situation wants to, or can, go it alone. And that, my friends, is exactly why we signed up for our positions on the healthcare team, because we wanted to be that person that others turn to for True Care.

We all say we care *about* our patients, but I have come to understand that just caring *about* someone or something is passive and does not really accomplish anything. We have forgotten that it is because we care about them that we originally wanted to make a difference by doing the work to care *for* them. Truly caring *for* someone is an active process, and participating in this process can change everything for us, as well as our

patients. Participating in this active process of caring *for* another, by generating and delivering True Care, requires us to come close and make a true connection with our patient.

It is when we don't do the emotional work that would allow us to feel and alleviate their pain, and then actively work to make a difference for them from that place, that we begin to experience our own dissatisfaction of not getting the experience that we wanted in the first place. Over time, not getting what we wanted turns to frustration and we begin to feel that we can't and don't make a difference no matter how hard we work. This is why we feel and act like victims of circumstance. This is what leads us to become cynical and downtrodden. This is the real cause of compassion fatigue and burnout.

Burnout leaves us emotionally wounded and dysfunctional. When we are burned out we are exhausted. We become cynical and our perceptions of other people are dehumanized. We begin to label people in a derogatory fashion. We become irritable and quick to anger. When we are in this horrible emotional place, we may find it very difficult, if not impossible, to generate and deliver the True Care we wanted to give our patients, the same care they are looking for.

The process of mindfully generating and delivering True Care causes you and your patient to feel better. The reason you will both feel better is because when you generate True Care, you become the cause of a change in a specific blend of neurochemical transmitters found in both your brains. This change is primarily in the prefrontal cortex, and it causes the wholesome feel-good areas of your brain to light up and drip dopamine as well as other feel-good neurotransmitters. It was Deepak Chopra who said, *"To think is to practice brain chemistry!"* I say, *"To activate compassion is to create feel-good brain chemistry!"* Through True Care, you

will be the creator of real and lasting satisfaction on both sides of your stethoscope.

THE BIG LIE

Before we move on to the mechanics of True Care, let's look at an important question: why are we not automatically generating and delivering it already? We came to these positions with a pure and simple desire to care for others in need and we want our care to make a difference. We want to feel significant, like what we are doing matters. We want to feel that we matter. So why is it that, too often, we don't?

I believe the primary reason is that we are not actively connecting to our patients and really feeling their pain. In order to care *for* our patients, we have to feel a level of compassion for them that is effective and really does make a difference. To do this, first and foremost, we must show up at the bedside fully present and establish a real connection with our patient. And the reason we don't do *this* is because it goes directly against what we have been told to do, which is to keep a safe and professional distance.

Don't get close; don't get involved with your patient. It will destroy your objectivity. You won't be able to tolerate feeling their pain. It will overwhelm you. You won't be able to think straight. This is what we have been taught, and now I am telling you something different. I know what I am saying sounds wrong, if not outright crazy. If empathizing with our patients, connecting to them and their pain, is what leads to compassion fatigue and burnout, how then can getting closer and stepping more fully into their pain do us anything but harm?

For the answer, let's look at some eloquent, exciting neuroscience from

researchers Matthieu Ricard and Tania Singer. They show us, using the MRI scanner, that when we empathize with someone who's in pain, the area of our brain that registers suffering, is activated in the same way and at the same location as the person we are empathizing with. Their definition of empathy is "the mindful act of resonating with another's suffering" and their research shows that empathy is both physically stressful and emotionally painful. Sounds bad, right? So I must be wrong.

While I agree that the experience of empathizing with others is unpleasant, uncomfortable, almost intolerable and painful, feeling empathy is not the problem—it's when we don't move beyond empathy. I call this "stand-alone empathy." By that I mean the experience of empathizing without a connection to the patient, or without empathy being a stage in a larger process.

Think about it for just a second. Empathy in and of itself is a state of emotional suffering. If you are exposed to malady after human malady all day, every day that you work and you feel bad for (*care about*) each of those humans, but you do not actively do anything (*care for*) to move out of the experience of feeling bad, then you are just suffering all day, each and every day you work. Suffering obviously has negative emotional and physical effects. No wonder this sort of daily experience of 'stand alone empathy' leads to the dysfunctional emotional state we call fatigue and burnout.

So what is different about what I am saying? I am saying that when we step away from stand-alone empathy by stepping directly into that painful empathetic place with our patient, truly connecting, and tolerate standing with them there for just a moment in time, it is a means to a spectacular end.

Singer and Ricard's research is so exciting to me because they go on to

illustrate for us exactly how we reach this truly spectacular end. The research shows us that when we step into that painful empathetic place *and bring the component of compassion into our experience*, it's as if a dam opens, and every atom of suffering becomes soaked with an atom of loving-kindness. It is here that the uncomfortable physical and emotional experience transforms into something much different. This change in our brain is so huge that it can even be documented in the MRI scanner. What the scans show us is that when the component of compassion is activated, all the areas in the prefrontal cortex and limbic system that handle distress, fear and pain become deactivated and the dopamine-rich wholesome centers, the ones that generate positive emotive states, get activated instead.

I am saying to you, and this research is showing you, that there is no such thing as *compassion fatigue*—that what we are really suffering from is the effect of stand-alone empathy: an overload of the empathetic pain and suffering centers in our brains that results in fatigue and burnout. Compassion fatigue should be re-named “empathetic overload.” To put the distinction very simply, stand-alone empathy is feeling someone else's pain and just thinking and feeling how awful it is; compassion is feeling someone else's pain and actively wanting things to be better for them.

This research is clearly demonstrating that compassion fatigue is a myth and that what we are being taught about getting too close as a way to protect ourselves and be better caregivers is actually making us suffer. What is at the heart of this myth of compassion fatigue is that we haven't been taught how to move past the pain of empathy and into the positive experience of compassion. Compassion is what moves us past the pain point and generates within us the courage and resolve to do whatever we can to soothe that suffering. Effective compassion says *I feel for you*. Cognitive compassion says *I understand you*. Motivational compassion says

I want to help you.

It was the Dalai Lama who said, *“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”* It is through authentic compassion that we change the neurochemistry in our brains that will allow us to feel relief, to feel better, and more importantly to do better—it is what generates resiliency within us. To reach this level of functioning and well-being requires our full presence and engagement, as well as genuine empathetic connection to our patient, who will benefit with a change in his or her neurochemistry as well.

As humans, we have the unique ability to generate an endless supply of compassion. In medicine and nursing today, compassion of this intensity is an untapped resource. It is here, in the experience of mindfully generating compassion for another that we generate in our own brain the milk of human kindness that bathes our own gray matter, and that of our patients, in a specific mix of positive neurotransmitters. This is what makes our patients, their loved ones, and us ourselves feel better, do better and be better. This is how and where we make a difference that really matters.

This is how we not only escape the effects of empathetic overload and burnout, but also enlarge our capacity as humans to be intimate and to be comfortable in that intimate connection. This is where we lose our cynicism and begin to see all people as deserving of human dignity. This is where we become interested in life again and regrow our self-esteem. This is empowering. This is energizing. This is ultimately significant and extremely satisfying. Turning on our compassion is what generates all the good feelings we crave as a result of our efforts to provide True Care.

The only way that we can feel this way is if we are willing to let go of our fear of connection and our belief that getting too close to our patients will consume us, weaken us, and make us less effective as professionals. In

fact, connecting to our patients is the only way we can say and do the things that will actually make a difference for them and for us. This connection that I am talking about is genuine, authentic and truly professional. This sort of emotional experience is one we need not fear.

It is time to dismantle modern medicine's biggest lie. We have to find the way to let go of the myth that getting too close will destroy us. We need to take the opportunity to have what we have always wanted right now by removing the distance we have created and activating our ability to generate and deliver compassionate True Care.

DELIVERING TRUE CARE

The question now is how do we generate and deliver True Care? In my books *Back from Burnout* and *Care 101*, I've described in detail the process of delivering the intangible substance of True Care. Here I would like to share with you a condensed version of that process so that you use the rest of this book to help bring you to a place of generating and delivering True Care to your patients, your co-workers and your family.

By focusing on this process and injecting it consistently into what you are already doing, you will be making yourself feel better and better because you will be continuously improving the neurochemical mix that infuses your brain, and this will improve the condition of your brain as well. Soon you will find that your efforts to care for others have begun to burn away years and even decades of the negative effects of stand-alone empathy fatigue and burnout.

And if you're thinking that you don't have time to add another process to

your day's work, don't worry. We move through this process in the energetic, intangible world of human thought and emotion, inside our personal stream of consciousness. Because we are doing the work in our consciousness, it does not substantially change or increase the time required for the physical actions we are doing. It is the change in our internal energetic state that makes our care effective and mutually satisfying.

These are the six stages in the process for generating and delivering True Care:

1. **Presence:** Show up and get fully present. Look at the thoughts going on inside your head and put aside the ones that don't have to do with what's going on right now—those distracting thoughts of the work that's waiting for you or unfinished business at home. Now focus on the patient in front of you. Give him or her your full and undivided attention.
2. **Connection:** Connect with your patient. Introduce yourself and ask the patient's name. I often ask patients to tell me something about themselves that will help me remember who they are. Sometimes I shake their hand or touch their shoulder. I make eye contact as I ask what's going on with them, how are they feeling, where is their pain?
3. **Focus:** Make your patient's needs your focus. Put his fears, concerns and needs in front of your own. Show him some real human dignity. Remember, you are human too, and both of you deserve human dignity and human kindness.
4. **Empathy:** Start to imagine what this situation is like for her, what

it would be like to walk in her shoes. Feel your patient's pain as if it were your own. Stay in this uncomfortable empathetic place with her until you feel things change—without offering to fix anything.

Don't be afraid; this will not overwhelm you or drain you, because you're not going to stay here long. Here you don't DO anything, you just BE with your patient. You will feel it when this empathetic connection is established. (You will feel it because the neurochemistry in your prefrontal cortex is changing, just as we saw in Matthieu Ricard and Tania Singer's MRI research.)

What you are feeling is real, and it is uncomfortable at first. You are establishing resonance with another's state of suffering. The suffering areas of your patient's brain are now the same centers in your own brain that are becoming active. You really are feeling your patient's pain as if it were your own. Then something happens on the other side of your stethoscope: your patient recognizes that you are feeling, at least to some extent, what he or she is feeling about the situation—that you understand the anguish or pain.

This realization causes a shift in the quantum energies you are sharing. It shifts for you both, and you will sense it—or perhaps even hear or see it: a sigh, a sob, a relaxation of breathing, a softening of a fretful look, a slowing of the pulse. It is here that both of your neurochemistry begins to change and because of this you both begin to feel relief.

5. **Compassion:** Now, you make the conscious decision to leave this painful place you share with your patient by turning on your own

compassion. Feel your own desire for things to be better for them; for them to feel better, for the pain to lessen, their fear to dissipate, their anguish or their despair to soften. You do not yet speak or *do* anything. You just *be*. You are still only working with your thoughts and emotions, using your heart and mind. *Your compassion is nothing more than your desire that things be better for them.*

Making the conscious choice to activate your own compassion causes dramatic changes in your own neurochemistry. This stage of the process will enlarge you, energize you and empower you. This is where the transaction of care occurs. This is where your mind affects matter, specifically the grey matter in your prefrontal cortex, and all the dopamine-rich feel-good life-enhancing centers light up like a Christmas tree on real-time MRI scanning, just as Ricard and Singer showed. You are in effect using your heart and mind to generate the milk of human kindness (a special recipe of neurotransmitters) in your own brain, and this process, somehow, probably through the scientific principle known as resonance, makes you and your patient both feel better.

This stage of the process is where you get to feel on a visceral level that what you do matters and makes a difference. This is the cure for your own empathetic overload and for the professional and personal burnout that ultimately results if your empathetic pain-and-suffering neural circuitry stays activated for too long.

6. **Action:** Finally, once you feel full of your own compassion, move on to the practical physical matters that will help make your patient's situation better or at least more tolerable.

That's it, simple really. Do not let this six-stage breakdown make you think that this is difficult or time-consuming. It is actually quite natural and can happen in only seconds—almost instantaneously, really, as one-stage cascades after the next. The best part is that giving care this way not only changes everything for the patient—you benefit as well. To give care this way actually feels good. You don't feel drained and stressed. You feel empowered and so does your patient.

Stage four, the empathetic connection, is the defining stage for True Care, and the stage that diverges from all the medical training you've had. It's what makes the difference between customer service and real satisfaction—between the tools I am giving you and every other process you may have learned—because it asks you to get emotionally involved. Staying professional and detached, even if you say and do all the right things, just won't work. None of this is possible if your focus is on staying “clinical”; warm and polite, but detached. **Satisfaction will only come within reach for us when we get fully present and engaged with the thoughts and emotions of our patient in the energetic world.**

Stage five, turning on your own compassion, is the “Holy Grail,” the be-all and end-all solution for you to feel good (again) because you care. But make no mistake; it only works if you are willing and able to execute the first four stages. Can you, are you willing to, freely enter another's pain and suffering without first “fixing” it? When you choose to emotionally connect to the suffering before fixing it, you will have everything you ever wanted to feel as a result of your decision to become a caregiver. It is very simple—but it's not always easy.

REFLECT

Although it is not always easy to give True Care, I have found that it is always easier to care when you are clear about your desires and motivations and your mind is freed from the big lie of needing to keep your distance from those you came to care for. This is why I created my company Clear2care: so that I could share with you the tools, perspectives and wisdom I have learned on my own journey back from burnout. My deepest held purpose is to help you find your way back from burnout to a place where you are fully connected to that pure, uncorrupted desire to care, make things better and change the world one patient at a time, that desire that burns within the core of your being. Most of the tools and perspectives I have developed are in my book *Back From Burnout*, where I use the mnemonic R.E.F.L.E.C.T. to describe the framework I created to help lift myself up out of the debilitating effects of burnout, and into the place where I truly want to deliver True Care.

If we really want to cure ourselves from burnout, to erase the years of empathetic overload that living medicine's big lie has caused us to suffer, then we must truly commit to generating and delivering True Care, to treating others with human dignity and respect, to giving, caring and sharing with our patients, in every case, no matter what. Right now, most of us find it easier to generate and deliver True Care for sick patients who really need our help, and we find it easy to generate and deliver True Care for patients when we step "inside the emergency" where everything is suspended except our desire to care, make a difference and save the day. But there will always be difficult, demanding, entitled, arrogant and otherwise challenging patients who push our buttons and make it difficult for us to care.

It will take time to master the process, but you will find that the more

difficult the process and the more effort required, the more satisfaction you will generate. In those particularly difficult cases where our patients or their family members are disrespecting, mistreating, blaming or hollering at us, we are going to naturally want to slip back into our old ways. We may want to shut down emotionally, run away or engage in a passive-aggressive fashion, but we must find a way to hold on, because falling back into our trauma and drama won't help us find the way to truly care and help these patients.

The principles of human dignity and love your neighbor as yourself, which means feeling their pain as if it were your own and generating and delivering True Care, are actually the most effective when we are challenged beyond what we think is possible. These tools are most effective at healing us from the negative effects of standing in empathetic overload when we choose to use them with the people and the patients we love to hate. We will know when we are on the edge of real personal healing when we feel our righteous indignation bubble up, and we feel like if we don't say something, if we don't put "that one" in their place, we are going to die. When we use the REFLECT process, it is not we who are dying, it is the piece of us that holds "the big lie" about getting too close to our patients that we bought into and incorporated into our belief system—that's what is dying.

It is when we feel like it is killing us not to say something, but we make the conscious decision that we are going to use the tools, take the time out and find the way to truly care no matter what, that we will generate the most satisfaction, biggest personal transformation and healing for ourselves and our industry. This is some incredibly challenging work. There is nothing more rewarding or fulfilling, but we have to know that we must let go of our old way of thinking. Anything else, anything less, just won't work.

We've already learned that the way we have been keeping our distance causes us to drown in empathetic overload; it only leads to exhaustion, frustration, anger, cynicism, isolation and victimization. In the most challenging cases, our old methods lead to complaints to the administrator, letters to the editor, and lawsuits of all flavors and varieties.

If we are to take responsibility and be the cause of something better for our patients and ourselves, we must dig deep, stand tall and bravely go to the deeper levels of human connection that can and will create a new paradigm in medicine. Here is where those of us at the patient's bedside will now be the cause of a new, wholesome, meaningful and powerfully healing experience. We have the power to create a new and improved healthcare industry that we can feel proud to be a part of, because with these tools, no matter what, we will always find the way to generate and deliver the sweet intangible commodity of True Care. We cannot settle for less, not if we truly want to become the doctors, the nurses, and the people we really want to be.

I believe that as humans, not only are we are hard-wired to care, we are also hard-wired to continuously want something better. Physiologically and energetically, humans can never feel fulfilled or fully actualized when we settle for anything. When we settle, we always get less than what we thought we were settling for. If we are to heal ourselves from burnout, we can no longer settle for less than what we came here for in the first place. We came because we had a pure and uncorrupted desire to care, to make a difference and change our world. We will only be effective, happy and fulfilled when we actualize this desire and nothing less.

While it is difficult in the heat of the moment, we have to get to the place where we know that doing anything different is better than falling back into our old habits and going on the way we have been. I, and those I work

with who are experienced in the process, have come to realize that even with the REFLECT process, we don't ever get less reactive around challenging clinical situations; we simply become more leery of engaging our old patterns. We become more afraid of automatically reacting and engaging any old pattern or behavior for we know that number one, the situation will turn out badly, and number two, anything less than sticking to the plan and finding the way to generate and deliver True Care just won't work.

You too will come to learn that it is through the challenges we encounter that we will grow, change and develop certainty in this process that will lead us to authentic satisfaction, as well as bringing real healing and wholeness to our broken selves.

When we see to it that the big lie is dismantled and the myth dies, we will once again be able to have a healthy emotional experience of our lives and our careers. We will see ourselves as whole and holy again. We will be ready, willing and able to enter into that intangible sacred contract to truly and actively care for those in need. We will be able to make good on our desire to help, to heal, to console and to improve the lives of others. We will have come back from burnout.

The seven steps in the framework of REFLECT are used to help heal ourselves from burnout and empathetic overload. These seven steps help to repair our broken dreams and lives and rebuild us as "whole" and emotionally competent again. It is from this place of wholeness that we can generate and deliver an endless supply of the milk of human kindness. From this holy place we can generate the intangible stuff of True Care that will sustain and enrich us so that we can fulfill the desires that brought us here in the first place.

Following are the seven steps in the REFLECT process. A deeper

understanding of each step can be found in *Back from Burnout* and in my workshops and seminars.

THE SEVEN STEPS OF REFLECT PROCESS

1. **REMEMBER what you came here for.** Reconnect with your desire to care. Remember what you want from your work: the feeling good that comes from truly caring for others.
2. **EARN your satisfaction.** Realize you are responsible for your own satisfaction and that for it to last, you have to earn it.
3. **FORMULATE your plan.** Recalculate the transaction of care using the Perfect Equation. Free yourself from your hidden agenda
4. **LOOK at your position within the transaction of care:** are you the cause or the effect? Reframe your position inside the interaction with your patient.
5. **EVALUATE your results.** Recognize what you bring to the encounter. Is your giving care effective? If not, go to step six and begin again.
6. **CIRCLE BACK to the beginning. If you're not being effective, remember what you want and execute the first five steps of REFLECT again, with this same patient.** Regroup when the encounter is over so you can do it all again. Remember your desire is to care. Look for a fresh opportunity to care again.
7. **TAKE CARE of yourself.** Restore and renew yourself by applying the quantum skills you've learned to energize and elevate every part of your life. Apply the tools of transformation so that you can transcend your present limitations.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

In the following chapters I have included, for each of the seven steps of the REFLECT process, some of my previous Shots of Satisfaction containing personal experiences and insights that relate to that step. What I have found on my journey back from burnout is that when I, or someone else on the journey, share our experiences, it empowers us to move on. That is my hope in sharing these Shots with you.

Later, when you find yourself in a difficult clinical encounter, where patients are pushing your buttons or you are finding it challenging to care, you can always refer back to these Shots to help you reengage the process and on the path back from burnout to True Care.

R

REMEMBER WHAT YOU CAME HERE FOR

Reconnect with your desire to care. Remember what you want from your work: the feeling good that comes from truly caring for others.

HIGHER AND HIGHER

“The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers.”

--- M. Scott Peck

As I walked down the hill to the entrance of the department, I couldn't help but notice the sign above me that said, “EMERGENCY CARE CENTER.” As I got a little closer I saw another banner proclaiming: **Our number one concern is “YOU.”**

These signs implied that when I walked through the doors I would find care inside. These signs did not say “emergency diagnosis” or “treatment” inside. These signs did not say “X-Ray machine and electrocardiograph inside.” Nor did they say “IV's and medicines here.” It is clear that anyone walking through the doors of this hospital will expect to find care inside. But where does the hospital get the care they are advertising?

Care can only come from one source; an emotionally competent human. As nurses, doctors, mid-level providers, secretaries, registration personnel, housekeepers and security servicemen, no care exists inside the hospital,

until we show up to work. Care isn't found in a medicine cabinet. When we deliver care, it comes from within ourselves.

Our brains and our hearts are the only tools we need. We know we want to care. And we know the steps it takes to provide care. We must show up fully present and connect; make their needs more important than our own; enter a state of empathy and stay there until we fully comprehend what it is like for them, and they somehow get that we understand or feel their pain; then finally turn on the compassion and speak or act from there.

Sometimes, no matter how much we may want to care, it can be difficult. The reason we have such trouble really caring exists within our brain chemistry. You see, as humans, our words and actions are determined by our brain's two battling components, both fighting for control; our emotional system and our cognitive system.

I have spoken about the fact that the pre-frontal cortex is the place where our cognitive thoughts can affect the grey matter of our brain. This is the place where the unique qualities of choice and free will exist. When we experience empathetic thoughts, all of the cortical centers of dysphoria light up. And when we experience compassionate thoughts, all of the wholesome life enhancing euphoric centers light up. This is why caring actually feels good.

Our brain's automatic knee-jerk emotional system is the oldest most primordial portion of our brain. It's called the limbic system and is centered in the amygdala. In other words, our thoughts and our emotions are usually at war with each other and rarely aligned. It is almost as if conflict is our natural state of being.

Our amygdala is in constant and close communication with our five senses

and our internal organs, including our adrenal glands, and is responsible for dry mouth, rapid heart rate, and tense muscles in our freeze, fight or flee responses to danger. The limbic system is responsible for plenty of our patient's visits to the "EMERGENCY CARE CENTER" where we are expected to deliver True Care to them.

In truth, our limbic system is responsible for the modern day anxiety and panic attack, where conscious awareness of the problem does not exist. In other words, our amygdala and our limbic system do not always operate in our best interests when our challenges and choices are more complex.

Unfortunately, when the volume is high, and the acuity is high, we begin to feel the stress. When things begin to feel like we are losing control, our limbic system is automatically activated and we can find it oh so difficult to care. This process is biological. Stress causes our primordial system to generate cortisol, when the stress reaches a critical point, even the smallest challenge can trigger an amygdala response, a knee jerk response, where instead of caring, we behave like a "jerk." This process is automatic, it's human, and none of us are immune. Social scientists in the past decade have named this process "emotional hijacking."

Emotional hijacking can affect our performance and decision making anywhere, anytime. But this can be especially detrimental for us when we are trying to create satisfaction for ourselves (and others) at work. When we behave like a jerk, it is impossible for us to truly care. Being aware of this process is great, but not enough to shut it down.

To stop ourselves from being emotionally hijacked by anyone in our stressful healthcare environment (our patients, their family members or our co-workers), and gain back our control so that we can care, make a difference and change our world, we really have to stop, take a deep breath

and REMEMBER why we came here in the first place. Our primary mission is to generate a deliver True Care.

Some days are tougher than others, but this week I worked one of the most gruesome shifts of my entire career. It was as if someone opened a gate somewhere and a flood of very sick patients was unleashed. The squads were rolling in like there was a special parade of human pathology and pain going on.

Let's just say that those of us working that shift saw things no one really wants to see, situations that are just awful and even repulsive. Children who have fallen through the cracks, patients with horrible injuries, and those forgotten ones from the nursing homes, who's quality of life is obviously already abysmal, who have succumbed to the ravages of end stage illnesses. In addition, there were plenty of coughs, colds, stomach ailments, cuts, scrapes and bruises to look after as well.

The department was "almost" overwhelmed, and the staff was hyper-stimulated and doing their very best to keep up. The stress level for all of us was at that critical threshold, where we all felt we were barely just holding on and holding it all together. We all felt like rubber bands stretched to the limit that could snap with just a little more tension.

It's in times like these that we find that if we do hold on through the adversity or challenge, especially when we don't feel that we have the strength or we just don't feel like it period, that if we make it through the storm, there will be a feeling of accomplishment or satisfaction laced with meaning and purpose waiting for us in the end.

I learned a valuable lesson in this storm about gathering the strength to give just a little bit more. Try this. Raise your arm as high as you can. Got

it? Now raise it just a little bit more, and again, move it just a little higher. How is it that you are able to reach even higher than you thought possible?

We all came to these jobs on the front lines of medicine not for the money or the fame; we came because we wanted to care. Reconnecting to that original, pure, uncorrupted desire to care, and acting on that desire, can provide amazing real-time benefits for us and, better yet, for others. Generating the good feelings for ourselves that come from our caring effectively is one sure-fire way, for us to save our own day.

Let me explain; that night the next chart I picked up was an almost trivial complaint at first glance. When I went into the room, I met someone with a simple problem, but they were from out of town. They were flying to somewhere else in the morning and needed their problem fixed really fast. They were almost desperate for relief. I travel quite a bit and I thought, wow, that would stink if that happened to me!

I actually went out of my way to see them quickly and to get them out fast. I asked them for their insurance card and faxed it, and the prescriptions they needed, to the local 24-hour pharmacy. First I spoke to the pharmacist to expedite the process so that all they would have to do is go to the drive-through, hand them their credit card, and then they could be on their way. I really did not have the time to go through all these extra steps, but I made the time.

My patient not only felt my care, they felt they had received special care. I knew that my care made a difference for them, and changed their world. The prescriptions I wrote that would provide the cure, actually paled in comparison to the energy contained in the care I extended to them.

Don't get me wrong, I was happy to see their smile at getting such great

“service.” But generating this sort of satisfaction energized me and empowered me to lift my arm even higher. I felt better, and my stress seemed diminished, simply because my pre-frontal cortex was all lit up and dripping with the feel good neurotransmitter we know and love, dopamine. This new neurochemistry I created for myself enabled me to extend myself even further that shift, to go out of my own way to do even more for my other patients and the staff that I was working with.

There was still sickness, pain, stress and angst in the Emergency Department, but my own experience of that reality had changed. I felt so good as a result of taking the high road, that I actually felt high, and I was able to extend myself to my co-workers and my other patients in ways that I would have thought impossible just a few minutes before.

Action: If you find yourself drowning in stress at work this week, go outside yourself and perform a random act of True Care for one of your patients or a co-worker. Just give a little extra. Surprise them. Impress them. Watch what happens to you! See if you aren't the one who benefits the most.

If you stretch yourself just a little bit more, then you will feel a rush of energy. You will feel empowered, accomplished and satisfied. You will most definitely know that you matter, what you do is important, and that what you do, well, it changes peoples' lives.

The very best part of all of this is that we get to feel incredibly good as a result of our efforts to truly care.

CARING EFFECTIVELY MAKES US ALL FEEL BETTER!

“There can be no happiness if the things we believe in are different from the things we do.”

---Freya Stark

I have been talking about intangible energies of thoughts and emotions. Turns out the best things in life exist in Einstein’s unseen quantum world where everything is relative and nothing is linear. While we may not be able to detect these energies with our physical senses, we swim in a world of energies all the time. As long as we are breathing, thinking and feeling, we are creating energies that are broadcast into our environment.

We looked at the ways we can be emotionally hijacked by negative, stressful people or situations. I would like to go a little deeper and examine the scientific principle of emotional contagion, or the way our feelings and moods infect others and the way the feelings of others can infect us! The limbic system combined with our cognitive system work together to generate our conscious experience of mood.

Paul Ekman, a PHD at the University of California in San Francisco discovered that the facial expressions for seven emotions—anger, fear, sadness, disgust, surprise, contempt and happiness—are the same across all cultures around the world. Research shows that if you spend enough

time with people, their emotions will rub off on you.

Ever noticed how we feel happy around happy people, sad around depressed people, or even agitated when we are around anxious people?

Why and how does this happen automatically? There is a human process, active from infancy, which causes us to imitate the facial expressions, postures, and voices of the people around us. Different expressions trigger certain moods, the same moods experienced by the person we mimic. The process happens so fast that we have no conscious awareness of it. An interconnected network of cells in the brain that make up the Mirror Neuron System or MNS governs this mimicry of ours.

According to David R Hamilton, PhD, the MNS is a bit like a high-definition camera that observes and records every detail of people's facial expressions, body language, pupil movements and even vocal tones. So if you are hanging out with someone who is happy, and their happiness is written all over their face, so to speak, your MNS will record their displays of happiness, but it will also signal the same displays in you. Your MNS gives you the power to know what others are feeling!

In other words, your MNS will then activate the muscles in your face and generate a smile, which will then create endorphins that make you feel happier too. However, in the quantum world of energy, negativity exists as well, so we are just as likely to catch someone's bad mood and negative attitude. And given the fact that our patients in the emergency department are often anxious, frightened, depressed, sad, or even angry, we are swimming in some big negativity.

Worse yet, we all know intuitively, that a negative co-worker can pollute the entire department and create an even more toxic work environment. A negative physician or charge nurse can make a workday miserable for all of us. Complaining can make us all feel powerless. Trash talking can

generate contempt.

So what can we do? How can we stop ourselves from being infected with a negative emotional contagion? There is no way for us to turn off or disable our MNS. It runs in the background, just under our awareness, all the time, in every interpersonal human interaction during our day. First of all, knowledge is power. Simply being aware that we have a Mirror Neuron System functioning 24/7 can help us understand how negativity in our environment affects our mood.

When we see a co-worker acting out, we can offer a more positive solution. If they continue to act out, we can ask them to stop, before we allow them to infect us. If they can't stop, we can choose to walk away. We can make it a personal rule not to participate in the negative behaviors of others. More importantly, we can reconnect with our original pure uncorrupted desire to care, and to make a difference for others.

We can embrace the MNS for it allows us to be empathetic, and feel what our patients, their families and our co-workers are feeling. When we connect to them and feel their pain, their distress, their disease, we can choose to feel compassion for them. Then all the positive feel-good dopamine centers in our pre-frontal cortex will light up and we will then be able to speak or act from there and say or do something positive that will change things for them.

We can broadcast our care, our compassion, and our pure desire to make things better into our energetic environment by staying positive, happy and enthusiastic about our mission. Everyone coming into the hospital expects to find care. But we are the only ones who can generate that care. So we must take care of ourselves, do everything we can find and carry happiness around with us all day.

This is our energetic immune system, and this will keep us safe from emotional contagion and hijacking!

Action: Aristotle said, “Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.” When we find a way to stay positive, we can slowly but surely improve the mood and morale of the entire department.

Our co-workers will become more resilient and more able to generate the caring thoughts and emotions they need to be effective givers of care.

What we think matters. How we feel matters. All the positive energy we share or give away to others in our environment really makes a difference. Be the change you want to see in (y)our department and (y)our world.

E

EARN YOUR SATISFACTION

Realize you are responsible for your own satisfaction and that for it to last you have to earn it.

sat·is·fac·tion, [sat-is-fak-shuhn]

Satisfaction is the realization of a desire. It is synonymous with happiness, feeling good and everybody wants more. Satisfaction happens when you get what you want. It is elusive, slippery, fleeting and dynamic. Satisfaction is transient, ever changing, and it is definitely not stagnant. It is difficult but not impossible to sustain the feeling of satisfaction. It starts with a desire for something, but since our desires are constantly changing it makes it hard to maintain a continuous feeling of satisfaction. Feeling continuous satisfaction is a continuous process. Sometimes we relate it to a physical object but it is never the object itself.

Satisfaction is achieved or created through work, and as a result, contains a strong sense of accomplishment. No one can give you satisfaction, **never**, it comes in an amount proportional to the amount of work or effort the earner expends. Satisfaction is created when one achieves their dreams and achieving those dreams allows us to feel important in the big scheme of things. This allows us to feel that we matter in the world and in our lives. Satisfaction allows us to feel

empowered, accomplished, or actualized as a result of the process required to earn or create it. You cannot fake satisfaction. It has to feel authentic and true.

Satisfaction has little to do with the actual physical surroundings of the human being. Satisfaction is an internal state of being; it feels pleasurable and is individualized. It is not tangible, it cannot be perceived by any of our five senses. While satisfaction is difficult to define, it is instinctually and instantly recognized when it is achieved by the human heart and mind. Satisfaction exists inside the world of human thought and emotion. It exists in only one place, the mysterious world of personal human consciousness. It exists in Einstein's unseen quantum world, (the world of energies), and therefore must be an energetic phenomenon.

job sat-is-fac-tion, [job sat-is-fak-shuhn]

Job satisfaction is a reflection of how happy or content you are with your job. Job satisfaction is an affectionate response to the thought(s) of your job. Job satisfaction is a pleasurable emotional state that results from an appraisal of one's job. If you have job satisfaction you feel good at work, you are happy to come to work, you like what you do. Your time flies while you are at work. You find what you do energizing rather than draining. You have energy for the rest of your life when you leave work. You feel that what you do specifically makes a difference; you feel that your personal work makes a difference. Satisfaction in general and job satisfaction exists inside our personal and collective worlds of thought and emotion.

WALK WITH ME, TALK WITH ME

"The value of an idea lies in the using of it."

---Thomas Alva Edison

One of the best attending physicians I ever worked with was a doctor I met when I was still a resident in training. This guy was always running from one task to another. Whenever I needed his attention, instead of stopping to listen, he would say, "Come, walk with me." He would grab my elbow and hold onto me as we moved to the patient's bedside and I presented the case.

When he was on duty the department ran smoothly. People worked harder for him than for anyone else. Everything was good whenever he was working—and he was always working. He definitely got more from life and more from the people around him. He left a big impression on everyone he came in contact with.

His secret for living a successful, engaged, and meaningful life was "Action". We've been exploring the ideas of happiness and satisfaction. We've seen that the only way we can be satisfied, fulfilled, and happy at work is to reconnect with our pure, uncorrupted desire to care and have that care make a difference for another. We have explored the different things in our environment that derail us from executing our primary mission. We have discussed the ways in which we can be emotionally hijacked, and the ways emotional contagions can work against us. We

know that successfully executing the transaction of care, and feeling compassion for another ultimately makes us feel great, because it causes all of the dopamine rich feel good centers in our pre-frontal cortex to light up. So why are we not feeling better yet? What is the wisdom hidden in the “walk with me” approach to life?

I think Shawn Achor said it best: **“You can study gravity forever without learning to fly.”** We can be busy our whole day at work, starting IV’s, charting, ordering or giving medications or treatments, but none of this will actually bring us happiness, fulfillment or engagement, unless we get busy with the work of True Care.

If you are ready to fly high on life, consider this. Successful people take immediate action to implement their plans and ideas. Unsuccessful people rarely implement anything they learn. Great people rush to action! Small people think about it. This “taking time to process your plans” decreases the chances of getting anything done. If you don’t do it right then and there, it’s probably never going to happen.

If I have not convinced you by now, our only hope of feeling better, and having happiness, fulfillment and lasting satisfaction is to actualize our pure uncorrupted desire to care. The cure for our disgruntlement and lack of satisfaction at work is to realize that settling for the status quo, continuing to operate in the same old ways, will never turn on the dopamine generators in our brains.

The simple truth is that if we choose to connect with our desire to care whenever it presents itself, then we can feel good about what we are doing and who we are. Only when we rush to action can we generate meaning, purpose and significance in our lives. The moment you take your time to

think about it, you disconnect yourself from happiness and engagement.

If you don't commit to action now, you will wait yourself into failure. You will miss the opportunity to feel good, and it might not come around again. This is one of the reasons we are all drawn to the emergency, where we do not have time to think! The same way that one second can make the difference between life and death, one second can also make the difference between death and life, hell or real lasting happiness.

Start your day thinking about what you want, and how you will get it. Then, during every encounter with a patient or co-worker, ask yourself, "What is one thing I can do right now?" and rush to take that action no matter how big or small. Don't waiver. Remember (y)our power lies in realizing that (y)our thought, (y)our action, can turn things around. In this moment, can you do more than you are doing right now? Then do it!

Always be in a place where you can ask yourself about the situations that are presented to you. Don't worry about what others are doing- or not doing. Never focus on or compare yourself to others. Their happiness and satisfaction are their concern!

Action: Be on the lookout for opportunities to feel good and create happiness in each and every interpersonal encounter that presents itself today. Make it all about the other guy. Rush to act fast, move fast, walk with me, talk with me.

"Get 'er done!" Experience your best self!

F

FORMULATE YOUR PLAN

Free yourself from agenda. Recalculate the transaction of care using the Perfect Equation.

[We give **True Care**] + [Our patient receives **True Care**] = [Quantum Satisfaction]

This is the perfect energetic equation, our formula for success at work, the way we create job satisfaction, patient satisfaction and what I call the mutual satisfaction you generate for yourself and your patient in the quantum world of energy: QUANTUM SATISFACTION, OR SATISFACTION ON BOTH SIDES OF THE STETHOSCOPE.

When we give and our patient receives our True Care, the circuit of energy created effects a change in our patient and in us. Value is added to both parties, meaning and purpose are generated; both of our worlds are changed. This is the stuff you crave. This is your heart's desire as a hero of healthcare. This is your end game. This is what it is all about. This is what you were looking for when you came to this profession. This is the best part of your workday, and this is why you keep coming back for more. This is genuine, authentic and lasting Quantum Satisfaction.

WHEN YOU CAN LET GO OF THE “KUDOS,” YOU WILL FIND YOURSELF SURROUNDED BY THEM

“I think people confuse fame with validation or love. But fame is not the reward. The reward is getting fulfillment out of doing the thing you love.”

--- Claire Danes

Recently, a man from a Healthcare Heroes seminar challenged me about the concept that we earn our satisfaction ourselves. He believed that others could give us satisfaction as well. He told me he gets satisfaction whenever he hears a “thank you.” But I suggested the “thank you” just meant someone else witnessed him earning his satisfaction and commented on it. He wouldn’t get the “thank you,” if he didn’t earn it.

“Thank you” means that our empathy, compassion, tolerance, or act of human dignity or kindness changed the situation – and changed the patient simultaneously. The “thank you” means that the receiver is aware of the change as well and that there is gratitude for your efforts on the patient’s behalf. It means you earned your satisfaction and you get to keep it.

Still, often times, we gauge our level of satisfaction on the feedback we receive. Someone once said to me, “It wasn’t such a bad day, I got three ‘thank you’s and only one ‘F-you.’” But we know, internally, when we had a

good day, when we did everything humanly possible to make things better for someone else, it really doesn't matter if we receive external validation.

If we come to work to hear "Thank you," and "Wow, you are amazing," and then don't hear those words and thus have a "bad day;" we make it impossible to create satisfaction for ourselves, because our satisfaction is dependent on someone else. Since we can't control others, we will be doomed to bad day after bad day, no matter how hard we work.

Action: Today, remind yourself, what you really want. State your objective, and then earn your prize. Write down your goals on an index card: Today I want to care for my patients, their family members, and my team. Then let go of the kudos. Every time you get a thank you, let it go. When you get to the point where you can truly let go of the kudos, then it will be yours.

THE POWER OF DISCERNMENT

“Discernment is God’s call to intercession, never to faultfinding.”

--- Corrie Ten Boom

One of the things I love about the Emergency Department is that there are so many genuinely sick people to take care of, and it is so easy to want to help them. Still, I notice that many of us tend to pass judgment on those patients whom we feel could be doing better. Typically those patients fall into one of three categories: those who create their own misery, those who refuse to help themselves, or those who carry a sense of entitlement with them. However, judgment is never really a good thing in our line of work. While judgment might allow us to feel better about ourselves temporarily, it comes at the expense of another, causes us to treat others poorly, and always leads to chaos.

Discernment is a better tool for us to use in the process of truly caring for others. Discernment is seeing what is—without passing judgment. Discernment is powerful. It allows us to make a difference for another, effect change, and create mutual satisfaction. We do good work when we discern who is most sick and in need of immediate help, who is being honest—and who is pulling our leg. We use discernment to help us to follow our sixth sense or gut feeling about who is genuinely sick—even if their labs and x-rays are normal. When we discern that our patient does not have the capacity to do any better, we immediately feel compassion for

them—and then as we help them, we see how we can do better ourselves.

Action: Today when you find yourself in the midst of judging anyone – a patient, co- worker, spouse, child, or even someone in line at the grocery store – stop. Instead of judging the behavior, try understanding that person. What is it that makes the person act in a manner offensive or irritating to you? Perhaps then we can interact with compassion and care rather than anger and frustration.

YOU AMAZE ME

"Don't be afraid to be amazing!"

-- Andy Offutt Irwin --

This past Tuesday night, I was watching the nursing staff during clinical shift. It was one of those shifts, you know the kind, where the pressure keep building. More and more patients presenting to triage, squads coming in left and right, staffing levels falling as the night moves on, really sick patients, really high acuity, and the clock was moving, moving ever so slowly.

The pressure was almost too much and I was personally starting to shut down. I felt like I was never going to catch up. I was starting to worry (about me). I was starting to feel like complaining because my focus was turning in on me. Therefore, I paused, and, I looked at those around me. That is when I noticed exactly how special nurses and healthcare workers could be. I noticed that each person, in that situation, has a special talent or way of being that they automatically default to that allows them to rise to the occasion and meet the challenge. Those people that were working with me inspired me to do better, to do more, and to be my best.

Some just went and made contact with all their patients to let them know they had not been forgotten. Others took the initiative to add on additional

tests based on the results that had just come back. Others just went to their co-workers to ask, “what do you need,” “what I can do for you,” “how can I help you?” Some told a short quick funny joke that broke the tension. Each one of them was actively engaged in the process of making it better, for somebody, somehow, someway.

All of us have a special talent, something that we are naturally good at, and something that we just seem born to do. In order to foster that special gift or talent, we need to focus our efforts on doing that particular thing better every day. Life is sort of like walking up the down escalator. If you do not work hard to climb against the downward motion of the escalator, or if you stop working, rest, or take a breather, the escalator carries you down. You end up being ineffective, unfulfilled and depleted.

We must all constantly exert effort to create for ourselves ways in which we can care for others and feel personal satisfaction because of our effort, in a job well done. We must constantly reassess our performance and ourselves. Each day, we simply need to strive to take better care of our patients, each other, and ourselves, in the ways we already know best to do. When we care for others, and we place their needs in front of our own, and we make a conscious effort to meet their needs, at the moment, we can't help but create satisfaction in the quantum world.

Our efforts to care will allow us to feel satisfaction. We will feel energized. All the people in our immediate environment will feel that authentic “True Care” and soon the small effort to do our best will inspire others to do the same. The small difference you make will create big differences for not only you, but also all those around you. You become part of the solution. You make a difference for others and yourself as well. You make the world a better place.

ACTION: Make a list of the things at which you are good. Pick one or two

that you can improve on this week while in the ED and notice the change around you. Notice how small openings create bigger ones.



LOOK AT YOUR POSITION WITHIN THE TRANSACITON OF CARE

Are you the cause or the effect? Reframe your position in the interaction with your patient.

HAS YOUR OPERATING SYSTEM BECOME CORRUPT?

"We all make the mistake of believing that something 'out there' makes us afraid, angry, depressed, anxious, and so on. In truth, events 'out there' are only triggers. The cause of every emotion is 'in here,' which means that inner work can heal it."

--- Deepak Chopra, The Path to Love

It seems all computer operating systems become corrupted over time, no matter how many times you run optimization software or virus scanners. Degeneration causes our systems to malfunction and ultimately to crash.

Even in biological systems, replication errors generate corrupt or flawed copies of DNA that are responsible for diabolical diseases like cancer, heart disease, AIDS and the universal process we call aging. Our immune systems are operating continuously but do not always catch and eliminate these genetic flaws.

We fight against aging and disease with all our resources and we continue to search for the fountain of youth, yet the degenerative process continues and death inevitably occurs. When our time comes, we all will want to know that our lives were good and meant something, and that we made our mark by leaving the world a better place than we found it.

When I was doing the research for my book, *Back from Burnout*, I learned that we all came to healthcare because we share a built in desire to care and make things better for others. I also learned that through our compassionate caring, we feel better- and that we can actually see, on real time MRI scans of our brains, the positive effects of our compassionate care.

Feeling compassion for another, wanting to ease another's pain and suffering, wanting to improve things for others, causes all of the dopamine rich feel good centers in our pre-frontal cortex to light up. We intuitively knew this when we enrolled in medical or nursing school, and cutting edge medical research now validates this. The ultimate truth is that caring for others makes us feel good.

When we signed up, all we said was that we wanted to care and make things better for others. We said nothing about needing to receive anything in return. Just caring for others generates satisfaction and happiness and we came to healthcare knowing that we would feel better simply because we cared. However, in the time that has passed since we signed up to care, our operating system, our caring system has degenerated and become corrupt so we are not getting the results we were looking for.

When we work with a corrupted system, we find ourselves disgruntled and unhappy, complaining about the system, complaining about others on our team, and those we care for. We have attached demands and conditions to our caring. We came here to care and make a difference but we complain about lack of respect, no appreciation, money and benefits. We complain about how our patients have unrealistic expectations and are so entitled, yet we unrealistically feel entitled to flawless teamwork, dream schedules, great pay and endless benefits.

We believe and say we come to give care, but in reality, because we are

blind to the fact that our software contains flaws, we actually are on the take. We look to take appreciation, accolades, camaraderie, awesome salaries, fantastic benefits, and flawless teamwork. At the same time, we also want to take in the feelings that we are important, that we are making a difference and that we matter. It is when we are on the take, looking to get before we give by attaching conditions to our giving care, that our satisfaction is seemingly out of our own control.

Why would we keep working with a flawed system? The answer is simple. It is the easy way out. When we do this, we can blame our misery on everybody else. We no longer have to be responsible for our own satisfaction. Our misery is not our fault. We get to be a victim of everybody and everything. Yet all that we have really done, by continuing to use our corrupted operating system, is to become the creator of our own dissatisfaction. In reality, by not regenerating our system, we are actually making things worse.

From this vantage point it is really simple to see why this just is not working, why we are so miserable, burned out, and why so many of us feel resentment and are quitting. We can also see why our patients and their families are dis-satisfied with the care they are receiving. When we enter the transaction of care with our attachments, with our need to take, we actually subtract care out of the transaction and are really calculating, what's in it for me? We are doomed to a life of misery in healthcare if we do not get this concept.

No wonder we don't feel good at work and there is not enough feel good satisfaction on either side of the stethoscope, our operating system, and our caring program has become flawed. If we give only so that we can get, we will never ever allow ourselves to feel good by doing what we came to healthcare to do, to care and make others feel better. If we don't debug our

system of its attachments, we will never turn on the feel good dopamine rich centers in our pre-frontal cortex. We will never become the superhero we are destined to be.

We need to continually ask ourselves, am I the cause of a new and better experience of reality for my patients, their families my co-workers and myself, or am I the effect of another's foul mood or bad day? I am the effect of a broken or flawed system? What operating system am I using? We can only create satisfaction for ourselves if we know beyond any shadow of a doubt that we, are the single cause of our own satisfaction.

To reboot our system and ignite change, all we need to do, as caregivers, is to reconnect to our built-in desire to care and remember that we can create satisfaction for ourselves and others, if and only if, we move our attachments out of the way and act from our pure and simple desire to care for and make others feel better.

Today is the best day to reboot and reconnect to our original pure uncorrupted desire to care. We can reconnect to having our efforts to care and make a difference for another, to make the world a better place and begin again to generate our own feel good satisfaction, one patient encounter at a time.

Action: Today we have the opportunity to install a fresh copy of a renewed flawless operating system. With a reboot, now when we come to give, while being careful not to take and making the effort to experience empathy and then compassion for another, our True Care will turn on all of the feel good centers in our brain and simultaneously makes things better for others and ourselves.

This re-commitment to give care without attachments, to come to give without expectation, creates a new "WIN-WIN" world of healthcare where

everything is better! We can create a world where we have to power to generate real and lasting satisfaction on both sides of the stethoscope. By rebooting, we generate quantum levels of satisfaction.

Our refreshed operating system will reignite us and give us new eyes to see that for you and me, we have no choice but to care unconditionally and that the receiving is in the giving. Always look to give and find ways not to take. We will all be better, do better and feel better!

BAD MOOD MONDAY

"We can let circumstances rule us, or we can take charge and rule our lives from within. We are at our very best and happiest when we are fully engaged in work we enjoy It makes everything else in life so wonderful, so worthwhile."--- Earl Nightingale --

There is a close link between satisfaction and happiness. Can you imagine a situation where you feel happiness without also feeling satisfied? Can you think of a time that you felt satisfaction without being happy? We know, deep down inside, that we must create satisfaction for ourselves. I have been thinking about our barriers that prevent us from feeling satisfied both at work and in life.

We mistakenly believe that what is going on outside of us in our environment determines our level of satisfaction. This is not true. Satisfaction is not an external but an internal feeling. Satisfaction lives inside each of us. Satisfaction lives in the quantum world. Our feelings of satisfaction and/or happiness have little to do with what is going on around us.

As caregivers, we know that creating satisfaction is easy when we practice generating and delivering True Care. In order to give real care that our patient will feel, we have to run the polarity of energy through our system towards others. By putting the needs of the other in front of our own, we

give away our energy. That is what they feel in the quantum world. Others feel our energy and investment when we care for them and it makes them feel better. This is how we create QUANTUMSATISFACTION.

Sometimes we find it hard to give. This usually happens when we feel less than satisfied with ourselves. When we are not satisfied, we begin to complain. Once we go down that road, satisfaction is impossible because by definition we are thinking only of ourselves. We are running the energy through our own system inward by thinking only of ourselves. Running our energy in this way produces negative emotional states, and causes us to feel bad. When we complain, we are taking energy from others and focusing it on ourselves alone.

Now, think about our patients who complain. Think about the patients we call needy. What do we say? “Be careful, that one will suck you dry.” “That one will suck the energy out of every living cell in your body.” Think about a co-worker who always complains or someone else who is very controlling. About whom are they really thinking when they act? They are only thinking of themselves! It is all about them! Whenever someone around us is acting this way, we notice it and we do not like it. This sort of behavior pushes our buttons. Think about our angry patients who complain loudly and act out when they feel that things are not going their way. When they are acting out, it is clear that they feel no personal satisfaction or happiness.

What makes anyone angry? Generally, it is fear of the unknown. People get angry when they feel that they have lost control. People get angry when they feel things are not going their way. Angry people always blame someone or something for their anger. Angry people blame others for their lack of happiness. Picture someone blinded by rage, seeing nothing

but red, in the process of vowing to have his or her revenge. They are unable to function. When rage blinds us, we can see nothing else. We are stuck in our anger.

Because we are good people, we choke our rage down. We suppress it. We hold onto and prevent others from seeing it. This sort of anger weighs us down and prevents us from creating satisfaction and happiness for ourselves. When we are resentful or when we blame others for our anger, our hearts become hardened and heavy. Anger weighs us down. Anger destroys everything that a person has, not just parts of them. The main reason we usually hold onto anger is our pride. If we do not find a way to transform our anger, it will consume us and destroy every aspect of our lives. I know and understand the power of anger. My name used to be "Crankie Frankie!"

Think about the polarity of energy flow in the system of someone who is angry. Anger is the ultimate complaint. The energy flow is inward and the angry person is in reality only thinking of them self. Anger is a selfish state of being. It is the most extreme of all emotions. Anger is all-encompassing and highly destructive. Ultimately, it is mostly destructive to the one who is angry. When you are happy, satisfied and on top of the world; nothing bothers you. When you are in a bad mood, however, you are resentful, irritable, reactive, and ticked off. Is it any wonder that someone who is wild with anger cannot function, make decisions, or move forward in their day?

When a person is intensely angry, their day is nothing but a series of poor choices and bad decisions. The same is true for someone who is just a little angry, "just" in a bad mood, feels let down by others, let down by life, or depressed and sullen? Like the angry individual, this person directs their energy inward. When he or she goes to work, even though it appears

that they are functioning, making decisions and doing things; how many of those decisions are good decisions.

How many good decisions can the individual make from a place of resentment, low-grade irritability, and frustration? How many choices will ultimately create some sort of chaos down the road? The ultimate enemy of satisfaction and happiness is doubt. Whenever we feel like things may not be "OK", we "loose it!" Whether it is instantaneous road rage, some low-grade irritability, resentment or a grudge, the feeling comes from a doubt that we can handle what life throws at us. To be truly happy we must first see how we are hurting ourselves by being self-centered and holding on to our bad mood. We must look within to discover what part of our pride or ego has us totally fixated on ourselves with thoughts of "what about me?"

Anger is born of pride. The antithesis of anger is humility. How do we overcome anger? It is simple. We are the lucky ones because every day many people come into our world and give us the opportunity to care for them. Our patients and our co-workers continuously give us the opportunity to step outside of ourselves and put our anger and our resentment aside. They offer us a chance to put their needs in front of our own. They provide us a chance to be great people and become larger than our ordinary selves by really caring for another. Our patients and our co-workers actually give us the opportunity to do the heroic, to make a difference, and change the world.

When we are humble enough to make the person for whom we are caring more important than ourselves, we change the polarity of the energy running through our system. We automatically start to give and share with them. When energy flows through us, we feel good. That is why we like to care for sick patients. Caring for others makes us feel good, satisfied and

happy. That is why every time I write a discharge note, I start with, "Thank you for allowing us to care for you today."

ACTION: Let go of your "what about me" mentality and make it about someone else instead. Realize that when you make others more important than yourself, you are actually caring for yourself. The kindest thing you can do for yourself is to practice 24-7 True Care.

This is the fastest way to bring you out of a bad mood. This is the quickest way to let go of resentment, anger and frustration. You will instantly find peace, forgiveness, happiness and satisfaction. Today, make it about somebody else!

Go-Ahead! Make your day!!!

E

EVALUATE YOUR RESULTS

Recognize what you bring to the encounter. Is your giving care to others effective? If not, go to step six and begin again.

DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

Some of the biggest challenges in relationships come from the fact that most people enter a relationship in order to get something: they're trying to find someone who's going to make them feel good. In reality, the only way a relationship will last is if you see your relationship as a place that you go to give, and not a place that you go to take.

--- Anthony Robbins

This is true not only in our personal lives; it also applies to the relationships we develop with our jobs and the colleagues and patients that we encounter there. We all want to feel good. The problem is that we do not realize that when we take from others, the good feeling is short lived and does not last. To get that lasting good feeling, we must first give to others. Often, giving to others can be difficult or challenging. Unfortunately, human nature is to take the path of least resistance -- the easy way out.

Most of the time, we choose to do what is easiest for us to do. While that can make our day flow comfortably, it will ultimately block us from achieving greater levels of fulfillment. It is in doing those things that are a stretch or uncomfortable for us that we have the most impact. Doing what is difficult is challenging. Doing what is difficult requires us to exert

personal effort to overcome our natural tendencies, to overcome our human nature. Exerting that effort is what allows us to create personal satisfaction for ourselves.

While it is wonderful to spend time with and be pleasant to the patient who is naturally complimentary and appreciative of the care we are giving. It is easy. While that is giving True Care, how much effort does it require? Was there a challenge involved? Does it really increase our level of joy? If you are honest, your answer is no, and you know that patient probably would have left happy anyways. In that situation, we do not really make anything different. We do not really change anything. We do not really create anything. Satisfaction is already there and the world stays the same.

Thankfully, every day we see patients who challenge us. Our natural tendency is to avoid them. The problem with that approach, is that it causes them to feel that we do not care. This makes them even more challenging. It is by taking the opportunity to connect with that difficult patient (by showing and having them feel that we truly care), that we find the opportunity to earn the most joy and create the most satisfaction for others and ourselves. Those difficult situations are where we can find that "diamond in the rough!"

Those challenging situations allow us to really stretch and grow. Those challenging situations allow us to perfect or people skills. That is when we can really improve the lives of others. That is when we make the greatest difference. That is when we change the world. The truth is that by exerting the effort to overcome a challenge, the opportunity arises to earn or create the most satisfaction for ourselves. Overcoming a challenge makes us feel good.

A friend of mine asked me a really deep question recently: She said, "You know, my family is my universe. But what if there is someone in the family

who is mentally ill, or on drugs, and their behavior is constantly challenging? How do you deal with that?" My answer surprised even me.

I told her this is something that I am seeing more and more often. The problem is that we live in a society that is broken. Many of us are dealing with issues that push us to our limits - from joblessness to hopelessness, to mental illness, emotional instability, family meltdowns and addiction. In these times of crisis, many turn to alcohol, to drugs, and sometimes they just have a total breakdown. But these souls are still here among us, and we want to care for them. We want to help them, because we know it is the right thing to do. Still, this does not make the situation any easier to navigate. These broken souls are angry and they know how to push our buttons so that we become angry too.

It was the late Bernie Mac who said, "Yeah, my sister's on drugs. Some of your family members are probably messed up too...What am I supposed to do? Allow these kids to go to the state or some foster home? Naw, that ain't right... I am trying to do the right thing, and sometimes, the right thing may not be the right thing. Well, I am gonna do the right thing".

It is very difficult to deal with these seemingly helpless souls. But when we are confronted with an individual in crisis, we must remember that the person in front of us did not wake up that morning and look in the mirror and say, "I am going to do less than I am capable of today." Believe it or not, this may be their best moment. It does not matter if they are alcoholic, on drugs, demented, psychotic or mentally handicapped. No matter what it is that renders them incapacitated, they are broken and doing their very best. And you can rest assured, you would not be standing in front of them if you did not want to care, and if you did not already have the capacity to care for them.

It is up to you to dig deep and find a way to connect with them. Feel their

pain as if it was your own. If you can reach that place, you will find the word or action that will allow you to express the care you feel for them, and treat them with human dignity.

The reason we find this so difficult, is that as humans we are uncomfortable entering into someone's pain without having a solution for them. That is why we are so quick to give advice - to avoid that uncomfortable place where we feel their pain. This is because we know we are not immune to the challenge they are facing.

We fear that entering their pain will consume us, overwhelm us, drain us, and deplete us. But if you make the effort, you will find the exact opposite is true. Finding your way to connect with them, to empathize with them, comfort them, console them, and reassure them, will actually energize and empower you. When they feel just a little bit of relief, you will too. Share your strength, your courage, your optimism and your humanity with them. You will end up with more.

We live and work in very challenging times. We are constantly being confronted with these difficult situations and there is no end in sight. We must remember that these folks may be doing their best. And it is in our best interest to find a way to care for them. As caregivers, as mothers, as fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles and cousins, it is in our DNA to care. We are called to care, and the only way we can feel satisfied at the end of the day, is to do the real hard work - the extraordinary physical, emotional and spiritual work - that will bring about the unexpected and the miraculous result. This is the synthesis of all the great spiritual wisdoms: Love thy neighbor as thyself.

Action: The tool you want to reach for in any difficult situation is the **TIME OUT** tool. This tool, when you use it, will always allow you to generate a thinking, feeling, compassionate, and empathetic response that will

effectively generate the True Care that changes everything.

When you look at your position inside the patient encounter and the transaction of care, and you realize that you are the effect and not the cause, when you realize that you are not being successful at creating satisfaction for yourself, this silver bullet will take down every dragon in your path—every obstacle of resentment, judgment, anger or fear—and let you transform yourself to become someone’s healthcare hero.

Here is how the **TIME OUT** tool works.

A situation occurs. As you’re reacting to it, **STOP**, recognize your automatic reaction and stop yourself.

REALIZE that the situation is not the obstacle; the obstacle is your reaction to the situation, your reactive thoughts and emotions that are getting in the way of your giving True Care.

IDENTIFY the reactive thoughts and emotions inside you and choose to inject new thoughts and emotions that match your desire to give True Care.

Now **SPEAK** or **ACT** from this new internal quantum reality and effectively give your True Care.

TONY THE TIGER GREAT!

“Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve.... You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”

---Martin Luther King, Jr. 1929-1968

When someone at work today asks you, “How are you?” What will you say? Are you down like “Eeyore” or Grrrreat like “Tony The Tiger”? Will you grumble or will you roar? Well, it depends on what you see in your work environment. Truth be told, we both know that Eeyore and Tony could be working in the same emergency department and be faced with the same circumstances and the same people and the two of them would see things totally differently.

If you feel like Eeyore but you want to feel like Tony, what can you do to feel better? What do you need to do to change? The first step is to realize that true change does not necessarily involve changing the situation or circumstances of our lives, it means finding a way to perceive the situation or circumstance differently. In other words, our reality does not change, we change, and this causes the experience of our reality to change. It is with this new perspective that we see opportunities we did not see before,

and we take advantage of these opportunities to change our circumstance or situation. There is real magic in this realization for all of us. If I want my inner “Tony” to emerge, I need to change the way I see my environment, so I can free my inner tiger. Changing my thoughts and emotions in the realm that Einstein called “The Quantum World” opens the lock and allows me to get out of my cage.

Once I am out of the cage I can do the work, say the words, and perform the actions that will change my world. Only through action can I create real change or make an impact on the world. Without the quantum work of inner transformation from Eeyore to Tony, nothing is really possible except the old status quo: No personal satisfaction. No job satisfaction. No engagement. Just another day.

We can start by asking ourselves what we want to feel while working in the Emergency Department. Why did we get dressed and head to the hospital in the first place? When I ask you this question, you tell me it is because you want the “warm and fuzzy.” You want to know you cared and that your care made a difference: That you genuinely helped someone feel better. When I ask you why this isn’t so, you sound and look like Eeyore.

You tell me the system is broken; the management does not understand; it’s so busy you don’t have time to spend with your patients; your co-workers are lazy; the patients are demanding and ungrateful; blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Well if you want to feel like Tony, if you want to feel great, change the way you see your situation and think about your circumstance. That warm and fuzzy you crave, is the demanding patient, the lazy co-worker, and the broken system. I know it’s hard to believe, but inside each and every encounter there is a warm and fuzzy just waiting for you. All you have to

do is seize the opportunity to exercise True Care!

Just showing up at the hospital is just not enough to get you the good feelings you crave. You have to manifest your desire. The only way that you can do that for yourself, is to go into that place where the system is broken, you are working a nurse short, your co-worker is lazy and the patient is unreasonable. Do the inner quantum work of seeing the situation differently. View each encounter as an opportunity to get what you want.

This is the real superpower of the bedside caregiver. When you take advantage of the opportunity and exercise True Care, by putting the needs of your patient or your co-worker before your own, and through connecting and empathizing until you can feel their discomfort. Then, when you say or do something from the place of compassion, you change not only the patient's world, you change (y)our world.

Here is the magic formula: When your situation looks bleak, you feel caged and there seems to be no way out, step inside your head and do the quantum work of changing the way you see and feel about your situation. Look for the opportunity to go grab a quick warm and fuzzy. This will unlock your cage and let your tiger out. Once out and about and on the prowl, you can busy yourself with grabbing even more warm and fuzzies for yourself. You can live your passion. You can teach your lazy co-workers how to get the warm and fuzzy for themselves. Soon everything will look entirely different and you will feel empowered and supremely satisfied.

You are today's modern healthcare hero and you have the ability to take control of your life and your reality. All the happiness, satisfaction and sense of accomplishment, meaning, purpose and significance you crave is right in front of you. It's everywhere. It is in all the negative situations you find around you. You just have to go in and get it. But you can never do that for yourself, if you don't learn to make the inner transformation from

Eeyore to Tony, so that you can see it and feel it differently.

If what you want is the feel good that comes from caring, but you spend your whole day complaining about the system while you are charting, starting IV's and giving medicines, you are doomed to feel bad. Why? Because you are completely missing the hundreds of opportunities, both big and small, to truly care, to rise above the ordinary and be extraordinary. You are totally missing your chance to be someone's hero.

Action: Go inside and find a way to act on your pure and simple desire to care. When you make the effort to care, and your patient feels your care, both of your worlds will change. See if that makes you feel Tony the Tiger grrrrreat! See how your desire for more increases! When you want more, you will find a way to be more, do more and have more. It's that simple, really! Now go for it! Be Great!

C

CIRCLE BACK TO THE BEGINNING

Regroup when the encounter is over so you can do it all again. Remember your desire is to care. Look for a fresh opportunity to care again.

OPEN UP AND SAY AHHHHH...

"Self-absorption in all its forms kills empathy, let alone compassion. When we focus on ourselves, our world contracts as our problems and preoccupations loom large. But when we focus on others, our world expands. Our own problems drift into the periphery of the mind and so seem smaller, and we increase our capacity for connection, or compassionate action."

---Daniel Goleman, Social Intelligence; The New Science of Human Relationships

I believe that it is our confusion around empathy and compassion that is causing us to suffer and burnout in medicine today. It seems that we use the words empathy and compassion interchangeably, but they are radically different, both energetically and physically.

While Compassion is the sympathetic consciousness of another's distress with a desire to alleviate it, Empathy is the intellectual identification with our vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts or emotions of another.

In our clinical work, often we care for patients who are in a painful situation (physically, emotionally or both) where they are experiencing real pain and as a result their suffering. When we empathize with them, in

order to be effective caregivers, we must become fully present and connected with them. Once we establish this relationship with them, we have made their needs more important than our own. We begin to imagine what it might be like for them, and slowly we begin to feel their pain. If we do this correctly, we are in fact resonating with another's suffering. In this mindful connection with our patient, we actually begin to physically feel our patient's pain as if it were our own.

Matthew Ricard has shown us that the areas of our brain that register suffering are activated in the same way, and at the same locations, as the person with whom we are empathizing. Standing in this empathetic connection with our patient is both physically and emotionally painful, and I believe that this is the reason why we have all bought into the myth that connecting to our patients, getting close to them, is a "bad" thing to do clinically.

This process is painful and bothersome, and many of us are afraid to go to this place because we feel that it will overwhelm us. While empathizing in this powerful way with our patients may seem scary, when we do, our patients can feel it and tell that we are willing to stand with them in their pain and we take just a little of their pain away from them and their burden is lessened, their load is lightened. We both know when we've reached this step in the process of caring, both the giver and the receiver of care, share a brief moment of recognition. While this feels good for the patient, and we may be happy that we have reached this point in the process, the empathy we have created for our patient is still activating the areas in our brain that registers our own pain and suffering.

Clinically, we have not been taught how to move from this painful place. If we stay in this place of stand-alone empathy, without activating our compassion, we will feel bad, drained and powerless to make a difference.

This, I believe, is the reason that many caregivers burnout, or suffer from post traumatic stress disorder, similar to that of the patients that have fallen victim to illness, trauma or addiction. We must learn how to effectively move from a place of painful empathetic connection, to one of compassionate connection with our patient. Doing so is surprisingly simple, all we have to do is turn on our own compassionate desire to alleviate their pain and suffering.

Turning on our compassion doesn't require us to change what we are doing, nor does it require any more of our time. It just requires that we consciously choose to activate the process. By moving beyond empathy, to acknowledging the pain and suffering of another and accepting it as if it were our own, we energetically have taken a small piece of that pain away from our patient. Once we make the conscious choice to turn on our own compassion, this mindful act of ours, we both begin to feel better both physically and emotionally. Turning on our compassion for another, our desire for things to be better for another, actually heals us all, makes us all feel better.

You see, Matthiew Riccard has shown us that when we move from empathy to compassion, there is a rather significant change in our brain that can be seen in the real time MRI scanner. It turns out that, flipping on our compassion switch in our brain causes the areas in the prefrontal cortex and limbic system that handle empathy, distress, fear and pain to deactivate, while simultaneously turning on all of the dopamine rich wholesome centers that generate positive emotive states. These wholesome centers actually enrich the neurochemistry in our own brains and we become empowered, while our physical and mental capacities are enlarged.

Engaging our own compassion for another erases all the negative effects

we experience from the empathy of feeling another's pain. And, since we have already taken a piece of that pain away from our patient during the process of being in connection and empathizing with them, through compassion, we effectively, dissipate or evaporate some of the pain they were carrying. Once our own compassion has been activated, we have already cared effectively and made a difference for our patient.

This already makes us feel powerful, and it is from this new place of personal power, where we feel the full force of our own compassion, that we can move on to the practical physical matters and say or do something that will actually make our patient's situation better. Practicing medicine or nursing by employing this six stage process, where we get present, we connect, we focus on their needs, empathize with our patients situation, activate or compassion and finally say or do something compassionate is actually the cure for our own collective PTSD and burnout in medicine and nursing. This is what we came to our careers to experience and when we do not activate this process for ourselves, our patients are left feeling flat and empty, we feel powerless to make a difference and we in effect, shortchange or hurt ourselves.

Compassion cannot fatigue. Jai Card tells us that: "compassion is ever renewing energy. The more compassion you extend, the more fueled with energy you are. It does not get depleted. Compassion is it's own generator of energy and carries you forward in life. Compassion does not take, it only gives." Compassion is the common denominator of all humanity.

Our concern for ourselves is what separates us. Our concern for each other is what joins us, connects us and unifies us. When we experience this phenomenon for ourselves, it is like a breath of fresh air, and just for a moment, we can exhale and relax in to the ahhh...

Action: Turn on your compassion, your desire to relieve another's pain

and suffering. While this may seem like a huge process, it is actually quite natural. You can do it while you are doing what you are already doing, and it adds in no time. It does add in real value, for your patient, but mostly for you.

This practice of mindfully choosing of our thoughts is the one thing we actually have the power to change, that in effect, then changes everything. Go ahead, care, make a difference, change (y)our world and save the day! Be someone's hero! The world needs you more than ever now.

GOING UP!

“The kind of commitment I find among the best performers across virtually every field is a single-minded passion for what they do, an unwavering desire for excellence in the way they think and the way they work. Genuine confidence is what launches you out of bed in the morning, and through your day with a spring in your step.”

- Jim Collins

Every day, in every situation, we are given the opportunity to choose happiness. The secret to choosing happiness, in work and in life, lies in our conscious choice to invest our energy into the process, rather than to have our happiness dependent on the outcome. The idea is that it's not whether we win or lose, but how we play the game. In every choice we make to say something or do something, one of two things happens. We either gain energy or we lose it.

When we make a positive choice, we gain energy and we feel empowered. When we pick the salad instead of the burger, when we go the gym instead of lying on the couch, we feel like we've won. We beat our laziness. We win each battle by injecting energy and effort into the process of choice. By

thinking and behaving in this way, we gain even more power to make positive choices for ourselves, to make better decisions, to make the right move when another challenging situation occurs. As we invest more effort into the process of making better choices, our next steps become clearer.

We are able to see where we need to go in terms of our health, our relationships, family, community, business, finance, and even in our spirituality. With each positive choice, we gain confidence in ourselves and we feel a sense of accomplishment. We start to feel more resilient and self-assured. We feel like we are on top of our game, on top of the world.

When we go the other way, when we choose the burger instead of the salad, we lose energy and we feel lazy. We lose our motivation to get off the couch and get to the gym. We reach for a beer to relax and the next thing we know, it's late the next morning and start the day already feeling defeated. Our energy spirals downward. We feel disappointed in ourselves; we feel we have lost something. We become demotivated, vulnerable and fragile. We start settling for less. We feel like we are just holding on, just getting by. The smallest amount of chaos or challenge can completely overwhelm and defeat us. One negative choice can snowball into depression and, in extreme cases, despair.

A friend of mine used to always tell me that life is like a downward escalator. Think of what it would be like to be traveling upward on an escalator that was going down. You would have to constantly be injecting more energy, or exerting more effort, to overcome the downward motion of the escalator to actually get to the next level. The minute you stop exerting yourself, the escalator will carry you down to the bottom. Life is the same way. We can only get to the top if we inject more energy into the situations we encounter in our everyday lives.

Murphy's law, and the quantum mechanics involved in thermodynamics,

tells us that our lives will be disorganized and chaotic unless we continually inject energy into the system. Universal law says that if we want more order in our life (less chaos) we must invest more energy into our life. We only get more out of life if we are willing to invest this energy by putting more effort into making better, more positive, pro-active choices.

There is a caveat, however: We can never be attached to the outcome. Our investment and our focus have to be in and on the process. When we live this way, our outcomes will be incredible. Our lasting satisfaction and happiness comes from our investment in the process, in our life, and in our effort of putting our energy into the caring of our selves and others and thereby making a difference. Our happiness lies in each step of the process towards losing the weight, saving the money, lifting the weights, or going after the girl.

Our happiness cannot be dependent on the goal (when we lose weight, when we have money, when we get the girl). It must be on the process, the work or the effort. Only when we have happiness and joy within the process of going after something, will the things we want finally show up in our lives.

Action: Throw in the white towel. Surrender to the fact that even though there are no free lunches, no get-rich-quick schemes and no easy-way-outs, you have the power to choose your happiness right here, right now. We all want more out of our lives and the energy we need to inject into our lives to get it is none other than the energy of “life” itself. We can be extraordinary people living extraordinary lives if, and only if, we are willing to choose to do the work to exert the extra energy into each and every choice or situation we routinely encounter in everyday “life” to overcome the destructive forces of entropy, chaos or disorganization and

overpower the constant downward motion of the escalator.

We need to see each choice we make as a pivotal one. Injecting energy takes us up, lifts us higher, gives us wings, makes us more powerful, successful and self actualized. Anything less and we are automatically going down. Where do we get the energy we need? From the first choice we make to do the work... energy generates more energy. Just as the receiving is always in the giving, our happiness and satisfaction lie in our effort to do the right things, say the right words, be the better person, and do our very best. The accomplishment and the glory are in the process of watching the pounds fall off and the six-pack develop.

Right now, this moment, surrender to doing the work of becoming someone better than you are today. Live and Love the process. Become someone new. Reinvent and recreate your life. Inject True Care into each and every choice. This will make you feel good right now and get you to wherever you want to go. We have to give our ALL in order to have it ALL!

SOME DAYS, NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE WANT TO CARE, IT CAN BE SO VERY HARD TO CARE

"To love means loving the unlovable. To forgive means pardoning the unpardonable. Faith means believing the unbelievable. Hope means hoping when everything seems hopeless." --G.K. Chesterton

By now, you all know that Father Henri Nuyen is a personal hero of mine. Through his writings, I've discovered what I believe is the most important tool for caring. It is a failsafe method that utilizes the quantum energies of thought and emotion and allows us to make a difference for those we care for. Father Nuyen's practice consists of five phases: presence, connection, empathy, compassion and action.

The problem I have is with phase four: empathy. This can sometimes be extremely problematic and difficult. Even if way down deep I authentically want to care, certain types of individuals, or more specifically certain types of behaviors, simply push my buttons and bring out the worst in me. I bet all of you can identify.

This past week, in my clinical work, I met some of the most difficult people I have ever come across. It was as if someone sent them all a special invitation to come see me personally in the ER. Migraine Martha, Bath Salts Bruno, Arnold Alcoholic, Battered Betty, Cocaine Carl, Toothache Tony, Alice Abdominal Pain – ALL THE TIME, even Billy the Bad Boy came

to see me! Naturally, they all showed up at the same time, at the worst time, when the ER was busy with traumas and STEMI heart attacks, and of course, when I was the only doctor on duty!

I firmly believe and teach the favorite uncle rule: Treat everyone you care for the way you would want others to CARE for your Uncle Paul. This is nothing but a restatement of “The Golden Rule” or “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Everything revolves around the concept of human dignity. Do unto others as you would have done to you.

I most certainly love the ideas the late Bernie Mac extolled in his hit TV show where he “did the right thing,” by taking in his sister’s children when she was too addicted to drugs to love them. He did not judge his sister or make her more of a problem in his life. He simply realized that she was “messed up” and that she was doing the best that she could. He saw her as she was, empathized with her situation, felt compassion for her, and then acted from there.

Bernie did the right thing, even when it wasn’t easy, because it was just the right thing to do. He did not make it about himself; he made it about others. We all believe in these concepts. We all want to embody them in our clinical work. But I must be honest and admit that I had a hard time this past week with getting out of my own way so that I was clear enough to care.

The hardest pain to feel is for those we feel deserve it least: Those individuals who we feel are obviously the cause of their own pain. Addiction is the one of the hardest diseases to deal for this very reason. A person with mental problems, a personality disorder, or psychosis is not someone we easily identify with. We don’t see ourselves falling into the same situation, so we don’t see them as victims of disease. We blame them for their pain. We want them to take

responsibility for their lives. We want them to solve their problems for themselves.

We want Battered Betty to leave Arnold Alcoholic. We want Cocaine Carl to stop choosing to do drugs. We want Billy the Bad Boy, whose psychiatrist has told him he has Oppositional Defiant Disorder, to respect and obey his parents.

We really do want all of these individuals to do better, to be better and to feel better. But sometimes, we treat them with human dignity while expecting to be treated the same way. Our care for them has a hidden agenda. Our implied demand is: We will care, if you treat us with respect.

This is not True Care. This is not acting with human dignity. This is performance-based entitlement. This is the disease of co-dependency. This is the basis for addiction. This is making our happiness dependent on another's behavior. This is our own version of "bad thinking." The reason these types of patients push our buttons is because they show us where we are irresponsible in our own lives, where we are out of control, where we don't take full responsibility for our own hurts and disappointments.

It is easier to treat a person with human dignity who has cancer or an accidental injury because we see them as victims and feel sorry for them. We are not really feeling their pain. We are treating them how we would want to be treated because we see how easily it could be us.

Feeling another's pain does not mean being a pushover. It means that you are willing to see and feel their hurt and give them what they really need with love and compassion. When we think we are being mistreated for being the good guy, it means that we are being nice in order to be liked and treated well. There is absolutely no care or love there because it is care

with expectations. This is like bad parenting. This is how parents “spoil” their children. We need to say “no,” set limits and practice “tough” love with human dignity just because it’s the right thing to do.

Everyone, including addicts and psychotics, can feel our energy. We need to be aware of our judgments and preconditioned attitudes toward them, and be especially sensitive to the ways these “bad thoughts” prevent us from feeling empathy for them. Only then will we be able to help them and make a difference. This is where we need to flip the polarity switch and make it about their needs, and then move onto the next phase, which is compassion.

Compassion doesn’t mean being nice or giving them what they want. We clearly have to stay connected to their need to be told “no” and have a firm limit set. We cannot fall into thinking that by caring we will cure them or they will behave differently. It means that we need to know that by feeling empathy for them, that they will feel our care and at some point in the quantum timeline, it will make a difference for them. By doing this, we make things better for ourselves in the moment.

ACTION: Here's a little trick my friend Benjamin taught me this weekend. I don't know exactly how effective it is, but my hunch is that, at the very least, it will allow me to be the empathetic person and the compassionate doctor I really want to be. The next time one of these irritating problematic people show up in life or at work, try this simple visualization.

You know how great it is to put a six-month-old baby in your arms, a one-year-old child on your knee? You love to bounce them up and down, to see them smile and giggle, and tell them how cute and lovable they are. Why? Because we see the beauty of their soul and the potential they have

to live a great life and become amazing individuals.

Today, when that challenge shows up, wrapped in drama and dysfunction, remember, they were once precious infants, full of beauty and potential. Imagine bouncing them on your knee. See them as little babies for whom things have gone badly. How could you not feel empathy with them now?

Even if they do not notice, this will change things for you internally. This will change your consciousness. This will allow you to feel good. You will realize their mistreatment of you is not about you. It's about them. And from this new perspective, you will be able to make it about them. This will change your world. Practicing this tool will SAVE YOUR DAY and allow you to be the healthcare hero you are destined to be.

T

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Restore and renew yourself by applying the quantum skills you've learned to energize and elevate every part of your life. Apply the tools of transformation so that you can transcend your present limitations.

SAME OLE, SAME OLE

“To succeed in life, you need three things: a wishbone, a backbone and a funny-bone.”

--- Reba McEntire

It may be impossible for us truly to taste happiness and satisfaction unless we have been through a desperate situation in life. When I was diagnosed a second time with cancer, I wanted the hand of God to reach out of the sky and take the cancer out of my life so that I would not have to deal with all that it entailed. I was desperate, willing to do anything if only God would change things for me.

God did not change things for me, but He did push me to change myself as I went through the process of personal tragedy, loss, pain and suffering. It was that internal change that allowed me to live another day. Today, it is clear to me that I am different, a changed man. I now know happiness. I know peace. I know fulfillment.

At the time of my diagnosis, my prayer was backwards. Our prayers should always be for God to give us the inner strength and wisdom we need to move through that process of personal transformation that leads us home. Today, I know one thing to be absolutely certain: If you do not have what you want in life, you simply have not worked hard enough to achieve it.

As Reba says, you first need a desire for something better, then the will to do whatever it takes to achieve it, and finally a keen appreciation for the irony of life, the paradox of being human. It is always true that if you do the work of inner change, what seems to be the biggest curse can be transformed into the most awesome blessing.

If you find yourself in a place where you have less than you desire, refuse to be a victim of circumstance. See the better situation you want for yourself and commit to doing whatever it takes to get there. This will require you to do something different. You will need to take action to become someone different - no more "same ol', same ol'."

There is a disparity between what we have and what we want. There is a disparity between who we are and *who we want to be*. This is a disparity between who we are now and who we would be if we were to actualize our full potential. Almost all of the sadness, depression or emptiness we feel in our lives exists because of this disparity—because of the fact that we are not yet who we aspire to be.

This is not exactly new information. Humans have known about this for quite a long time. There is a Native American legend about a grandfather speaking to his grandson, who is angry because a friend hurt him. He tells his grandson that he has been angry too.

This wise elder goes on to tell the boy that there is a “fight” going on inside of him, a terrible fight between two wolves. One wolf is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego. The other wolf is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith. He tells his grandson that the same fight is going on inside the boy and each and every other person too. His grandson asks him, “Which wolf wins, Grandfather?” He replies, “The wolf you

choose to feed.”

None of us wants to feed the wrong wolf. We all want to be great doctors, great nurses, great mothers, great fathers, great brothers and sisters. We all want to be great people. We all want to be the best possible version of ourselves in any given moment. No one gets out of bed in the morning, looks in the mirror and says, *I am going to hold back today, do less than I am capable of.*

Man as a species is evolving. The times they are a-changing. To many, it is becoming obvious that the purpose of our lives is to bring these two selves, the present limited self and the best possible self that we aspire to be, closer together in any given moment and over time. This is the process of becoming self-actualized, happy, powerful and satisfied with who we are.

We all know we should exercise, but we don't. When it comes to exercise, then, we have fallen into the knowing-doing gap. Simply talking about it does nothing, changes nothing and definitely creates nothing. Brooding about how messed up things are, or how messed up we are, fat, unhealthy, stuck in a bad job or relationship—this is not action. Thinking or dreaming about change is not change. Action is the only way out of where we are now. Action is the only way out of *who* we are now.

Our dissatisfaction comes from the fact that we are not living our highest life, that there is still a disparity between who we are now and who we want to be. We have the opportunity to ask ourselves, *Who is it that I want to be and what actions do I need to take to get me there?*

Action: Today and everyday, perform at least one action that will transform you and allow you to transcend your present limitations, so that you can have what you want. So that you can be the person you want to be. As these actions accumulate over time, you will find that your

limitation will disappear and you will be someone new, who has everything they want.

BURNING DESIRE

*“Desire is the starting point of all achievement, not a hope, not a wish, but a keen pulsating desire which transcends everything.” ---
Napoleon Hill*

Happiness requires authenticity and is obvious to everyone. When we are truly happy, others can tell right away. While you may be able to fake an orgasm, like Sally did when she met Harry, you can't fake your happiness. We are happy when the desires inside our heart match the life we are living. Happiness exists in us when we see the results in our lives we are looking for as a consequence of the energy, the effort and the actions we have invested in our process.

In other words: We are happy when the sincere desires we hold inside us, that image of our best selves, match the actions we do on the outside. To be happy, requires our lives to be coherent and congruent to our desires, thereby free from pretense, affectation, or hypocrisy. In reality, we can only fool ourselves. I can wear all the black I want, because when I look in the mirror it seems so slimming, but I will never really be able to hide the 30 extra pounds I am carrying around my midsection from you. I might be able to hide it from me, but not from you. You can see it. Just as you can also see when I am really happy.

For each of us, there exists a gap between our some of our deepest desires and what we are experiencing which is, in effect, a disconnect between who we really are and who we are actually being. I see myself as compassionate, yet I get irritated when you ask me for help. I say I want the salad, but I choose the burger. Why am I not making the better choices that will let the hot, passionate, vibrant, lean and muscular doctor inside this fat and lazy body be seen? Why don't I make the proactive choice in the moment? Why don't I figure out a way to take that chaos out of my life?

I know what the right choices are, yet I don't always seem to make them. Am I the only one who has this problem? Too often, we settle for too little and until we come to the deep and profound realization that this is what we are doing in the moment, we will never be able to do use our knowledge to make the choices that match our true selves. Don't stop smoking for your health because you don't want to get cancer. Don't stop drinking because you are afraid to get cirrhosis of the liver. Don't stop gambling because you are afraid to loose all your money. This approach of fear of consequences is never, ever, successful.

The better approach is to ask yourself, is this who I really want to be? Is this the best self that I know I really am? Am I being true to my deepest desires for me? There is so much more that we can have in life than that stupid cigarette, that fancy apple martini, or a weekend in Las Vegas and too often we settle for five minutes of a high or a weekend fantasy of fun instead of going for real and lasting fulfillment. Until we all recognize this settling for less in our behavior, we will not be able to stop the chaos, the garbage, the frustration, or the underlying unhappiness we have (with ourselves) for not living up to our potential..... none of the negativity or frustration we feel will not stop. It is just simple cause and effect.

The truth of the matter is, living our best life is all about our desire to be

our best selves. How much do you want for yourself? How big is your heart's desire? Truth be told, I have been personally struggling with happiness right now, which is probably why I am discussing it here. I see that I am not being the man I want to be. In many areas of my life, I am falling short and at the end of the day, I come up empty. Recently I talked about choosing happiness by making the choice to invest our energy, the energy of life itself, into the process of life, thereby becoming the cause of our happiness rather than be dependent on our outcomes or the stuff in our lives.

This week I really got that when I settle for less from myself, I am giving up my power to create my happiness. I personally will not be successful unless I want more and my intentions and actions match my heart's desire. I will be successful when I understand that I can have so much more. I will be successful when my desire to care , to make a difference in the lives of others, is big enough that I can actualize it and actually change the world. My intention cannot be to make money, be special, or feel like a man. Those sorts of desires are not big enough to get me to the place I want and need to be. My intention has to be to fulfill my highest self, to make a difference in the lives of others, to give and to be the one who really cares, and to be authentically happy.

In order for all the good things I want to happen to me, and more importantly, for me to really be the good and decent man I want to be, I have to recognize that I live in two different realities: The world inside my head and heart and my daily reality. I have to begin to choose actions for myself that create a greater resemblance between these two realities that I exist in on a daily the basis: The reality that my heart and my soul want me to be living, and the world that I have actually created for myself (the reality I am actually living).

Everywhere that we are stuck, everywhere where we say one thing and do another, we need to remember that the only solution to get unstuck is to amp up our desire to be our best self. We need to want it more, to want it so bad that it hurts. If we really want to live successful lives, we need to want be our best self that we can be, to do and create more.

We need to remember that we already have a greater capacity than we are using and that we can choose to bring out our innate abilities to have more in daily our lives. Until we get this, we will not be able to stop ourselves from making bad choices, choosing the lesser of two evils, and we will not be able to recover or come out of the chaos. I have to put effort and inject energy into my process so that the outside will look a little more like what I see on the inside. In order for the good things to happen to me, these two pieces of me have to become more unified, more like one another. I have to bring the inside out!

We all need to identify those areas in our lives where we need to bring these two versions of ourselves together as one. We all need to remember that we can create what it is that we really want for ourselves, when we work to make the outside match the inside. This is what it means to be self actualized, and how we truly have lasting fulfillment and happiness. We all need to refocus our efforts to live our lives in a way that reveals the better version of our selves we carry around on the inside. We need to become aware of where we are settling for less and make different choices in our lives so that our dreams, desires, aspirations, wisdom, understandings about life, and our connection to others, will actually be in harmony with the way that we are living and conducting our lives.

We need to create congruence and coherency by becoming more of our authentic selves so that the good things can happen to us and for us.

When we create greater unity within our inner and outer realities so that our choices and our actions manifest our authentic inner best self, when we feel this union, we can begin to happily walk our talk. The more energy we put into this process, the less fragmented and disjointed our two worlds will become and we will begin connecting the dots so that we can finally live the big picture we see for ourselves.

Action: Bring the inside out! Commit to doing something that can close the space and bridge the gap between your two worlds, the world inside (who you want to be) and the outside world (who you actually are). Lets walk our happy talk! Find that one place where what you continually say or do is in direct opposition to what you think or believe about yourself. Recognize your hearts true desire and get what you really want by making the needs of your heart more important than the immediate circumstance and give yourself some old fashioned True Care.

Invest your energy to make what you want and what you are doing the same! When we can give True Care to our fondest dreams and desires, we will find it easy to live from our passion and create the world we dream of living in. When we actualize our inner-selves, we will be making this world a better place.

THE CURE FOR OUR BURNOUT

I believe that caring for others should be the most emotionally rewarding job on the planet. I believe that extending True Care to others should make us feel incredibly good. I believe that doctors, nurses and all healthcare workers come to their positions and careers with a built-in pure, simple, uncorrupted desire to care, to make a difference, to make the world a better place, one patient encounter at a time.

I also believe that these naturally altruistic men and women are wounded, hurting and in need of help. And I don't believe they—we—need to hurt any more.

I firmly believe, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that our falling victim to compassion fatigue—more properly known as empathetic overload—and ultimately burnout is the direct result of our collective belief in the myth we are taught: that getting too close to or connecting with our patients is bad for us, and worse yet, bad for them. We are warned that if we get close and emotionally involved, we will lose our objectivity, we will not be able to make good decisions, and we will make mistakes. Nothing, absolutely nothing, could be further from the truth.

Once we can see this belief for what it is, a big lie, and we look beyond it, we will be able to see that the cure for our dis-ease and emotional dysfunction, the cure for empathetic overload and burnout, is not to take a step back to maintain our professional distance. We will be cured when we are able to take a step *forward* and connect deeply to the hurting human in front of us, by stepping directly into their pain and suffering and feeling it as if it were our own. This sort of empathetic connection is not only professional it is therapeutic and healing. Establishing a state of harmonic resonance with others' suffering, creating this moment of shared

humanity with our patients, and then mindfully moving into a state of compassion is what changes things for both of us inside this caring connection.

Inside this compassionate connection is where the transaction of care occurs. This is where the effects of burnout are erased and we feel the full power of our giving. This positive change that we create within ourselves is energetically transmitted to our patients. This change in us is what makes them and their loved ones do better, feel better and be better. This is how and where we make a palpable difference that really matters. This change inside us is where we find the satisfaction we are looking for from our efforts to care. I firmly believe that this is the cure for the empathetic overload we call compassion fatigue. I believe that once we step inside this connection, burnout never needs to happen—and if it does happen, there is a clear path back to being a joyful and fulfilled human once again.

You see, we are broken and we long to be whole again. Whole and holy are not that far apart. Did you ever notice that after someone dies, everyone remembers only the good? After dying, people's status is elevated and suddenly they are seen as holy. After someone's death, it seems as if any negativity is transformed and all that anyone can see is the "good" stuff that person represented to us. The good survives death.

If we want to be whole again, we have to let our collective belief in the big lie of professional distance die too. To go to our next level as doctors, nurses or caregivers of any stripe, we have to realize that this same principle applies to the process we must now move through together: we will only be able to see the good that we can do when this belief we hold within us is dead.

We must see to it, individually and collectively, that the big lie dies. We must dismantle this myth that coming close to patients and connecting to

them, feeling their pain as if it were our own, is bad for us and bad for our patients. Once the “big lie” is dead, when the lie no longer shapes our thoughts and actions, we will be able to see how good we are and can be and how much good we can do. We will feel whole again.

I know that what I am asking you to do here goes against everything we have ever been taught, everything we believe, our world view and the current paradigm around care. But we have to realize that this lie is what has shaped that worldview and that paradigm. It is this lie that has made us suffer. When we dismantle the lie and it no longer controls us, only then will we become whole again and able to experience the healthy, rich emotional life we seek, as care givers and as people.

NEXT STEPS

I hope this little summary has gotten you excited about what is possible for you in your career and you life, especially if you already recognize that you are suffering from the effects of empathetic overload or burnout. You can find much more detailed information in *Care 101* and *Back from Burnout*, but the information included in the pages of this book should have, at the very least, gotten you started on the path to totally transform your experience of practicing medicine or nursing for the better, simply by injecting the intangible substance of True Care into what you are already doing every day.

Please come visit me at www.Clear2care.com. There you will be able to find lots of resources designed to help you come back from burnout. You will also find my weekly blog and the archives of the Shot of Satisfaction. Come back often, for I am constantly adding new material that you can access for free. There you will also find links to my other books and products, and in the very near future, you will be able to sign up for an in-depth online course for healing compassion fatigue and burnout called *The Healthcare Hero's Journey*.