

Reclaiming Your Time and Energy

# A PA'S GUIDE TO --- SUSTAINABILITY

# OBJECTIVES

**01**

## **Understand Work-Life Balance**

Define work-life balance and identify common barriers clinicians face in achieving it.

**02**

## **Learn Practical Strategies**

Implement actionable strategies to improve work-life balance and prevent burnout.

**03**

## **Create a Personalized Plan**

Develop a tailored approach to integrate balance into both personal and professional life.

# MEET TRACY

Formerly burned out PA

Curly girl

Drinker of tea

Surgery PA-C

Skier

Runner

Biker

Swimmer

Triathlete

Career Coach & Podcast host

Energetic

Occasionally exhausted

Wife

*My mission is to create a more sustainable, equitable, and fulfilling future for the PA profession...*

Daughter

Mother

Friend

**Human Being**

*one person at a time!*

Sister



# BURNOUT IS **NOT** A RITE OF PASSAGE

It's not proof of your ability or dedication.

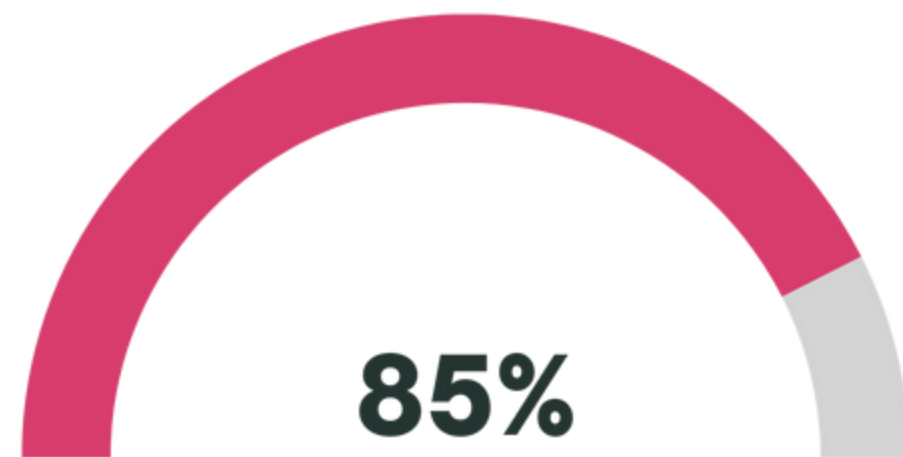
It's a warning sign.

*If you change nothing, nothing changes.*

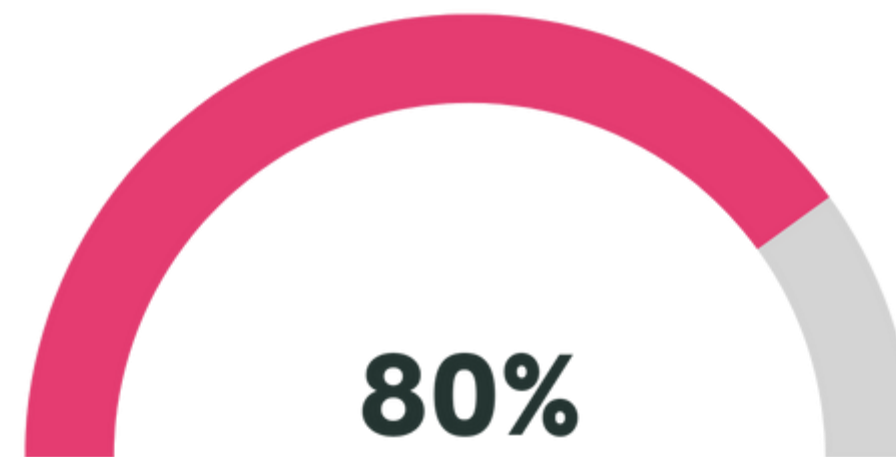
**A SUSTAINABLE, FULFILLING  
CAREER  
IN MEDICINE  
(WITHOUT BURNOUT)  
IS POSSIBLE!**

# PREVALENCE OF BURNOUT IN PAS

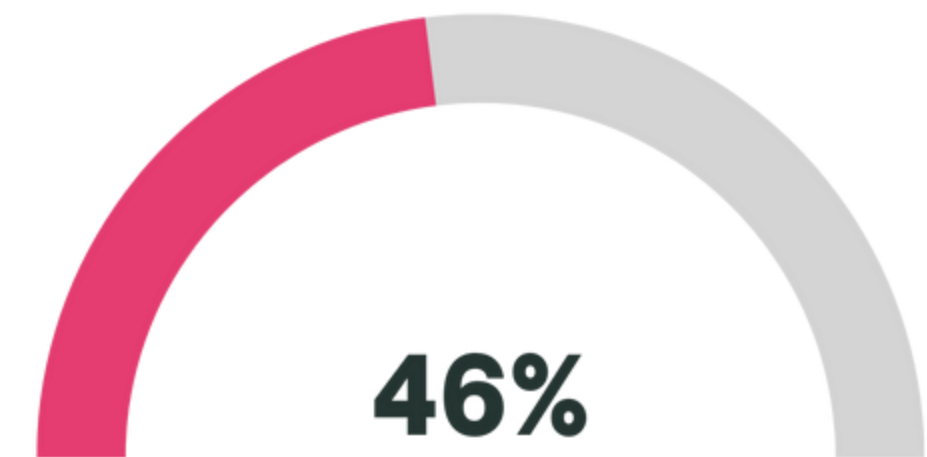
Burnout and dissatisfaction are common.  
PAs appear at higher risk for burnout than others.



of PAs experience burnout



PAs believe burnout is an inherent aspect of the profession



PAs experienced work exhaustion

ASH Clinical News, "Many Factors Contribute to Rising Rates of Burnout"  
Wolters Kluwer, "Burnout a 'growing problem' for physician assistants"

# THE CONTINUUM

**BURNOUT**



**SUSTAINABILITY**

The opposite of burnout isn't simply "not burned out"  
-- it's **Career Sustainability!**



01

WORK-LIFE  
BALANCE

**THE MYTH:  
WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

# WORK-LIFE BALANCE



Work matters more

Static

Perfectly balanced

**Exactly equal**

A horizontal yellow brushstroke with a textured, painterly appearance, serving as a background for the text.

**WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

**LIFE-WORK INTEGRATION**

# LIFE-WORK INTEGRATION

Values-Based Living

Constantly Changing

Seasonal in Nature

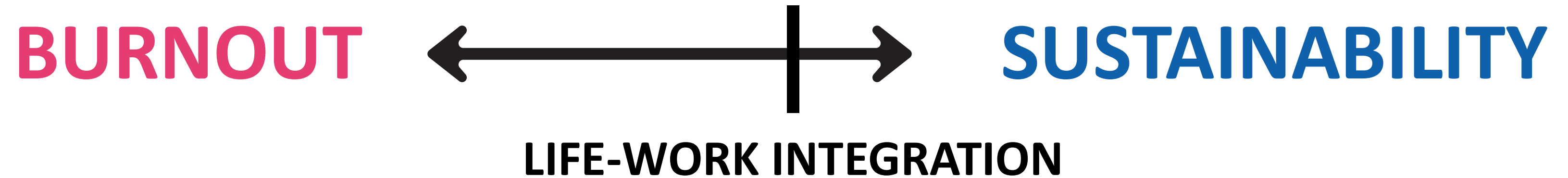
Adapts with You

Unique to You!

Living in Alignment


**Comes & Goes**

# THE CONTINUUM



Life-Work Integration & Career  
Sustainability

# CAREER SUSTAINABILITY

Career Sustainability isn't just a buzzword -- it's the key  to longevity in medicine.

- Integrating work into your life in a way that feels fulfilling, balanced and supports your well-being.
- Assess **where you are** on the burnout-to-sustainability continuum.

# WHERE DO YOU FALL?

## CLINICIAN SUSTAINABILITY EVAL

Take the Clinician Career Sustainability Quiz:  
[tracybingaman.com/sustainability](https://tracybingaman.com/sustainability)

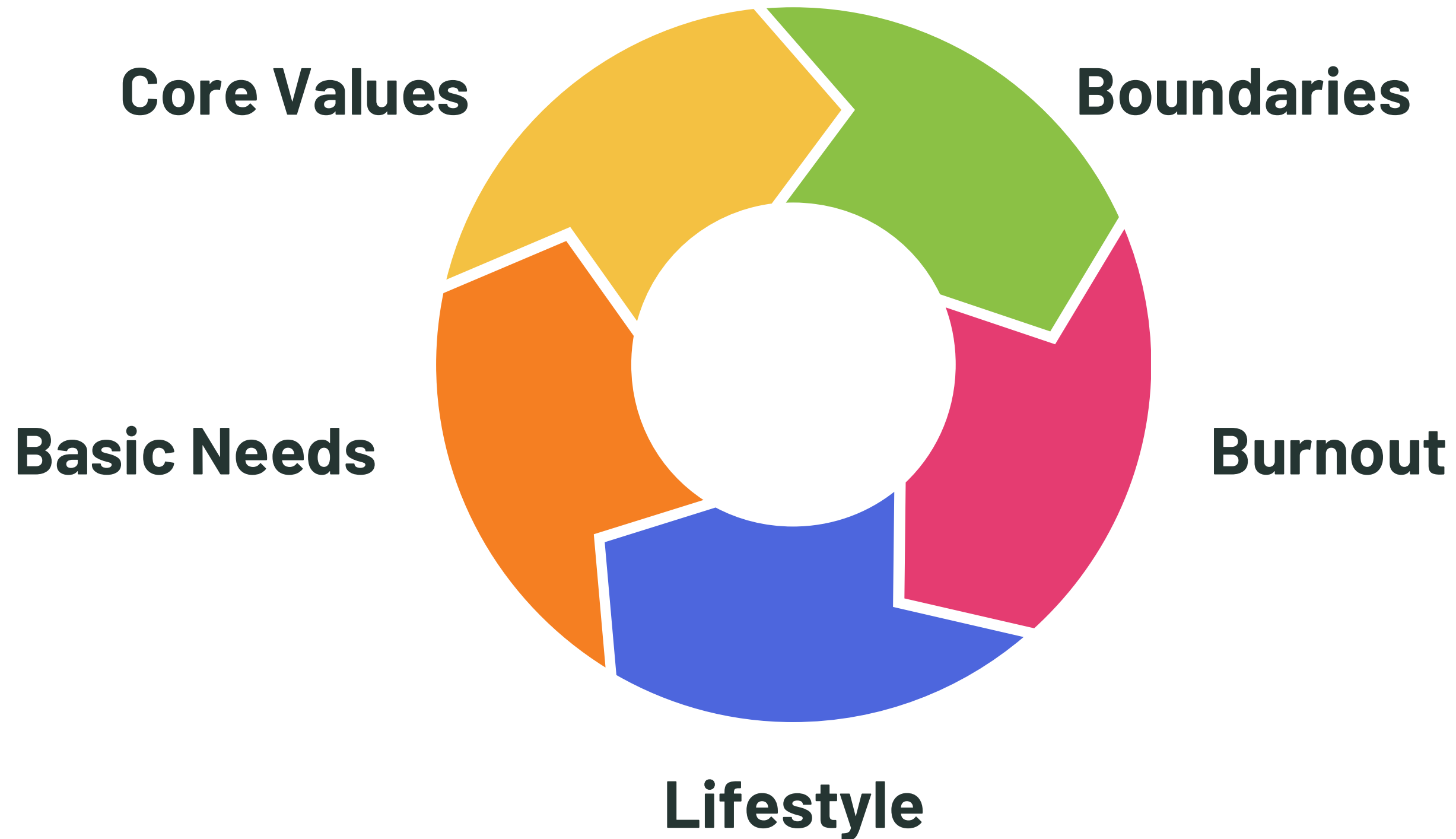




02

PRACTICAL  
STRATEGIES

# CAREER SUSTAINABILITY



BASIC NEEDS



**SELF-CARE**

**BASIC NEEDS**

# BASIC NEEDS

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Start meeting your basic needs now -- one at a time.

# MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

**Self-Fulfillment**

**Self-Actualization**

Achieving one's full potential, including *creative* activities

**Psychological Needs**

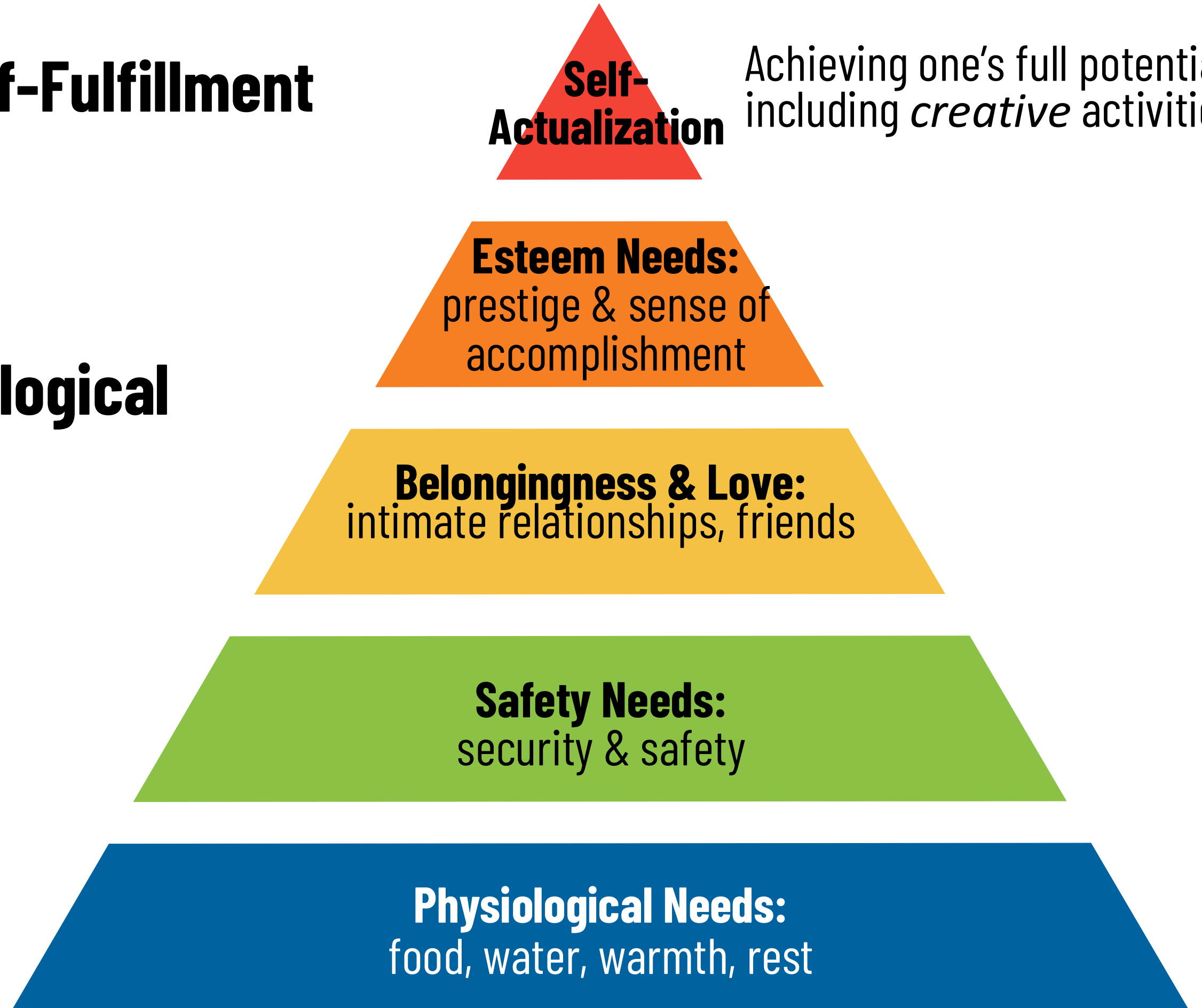
**Esteem Needs:**  
prestige & sense of accomplishment

**Belongingness & Love:**  
intimate relationships, friends

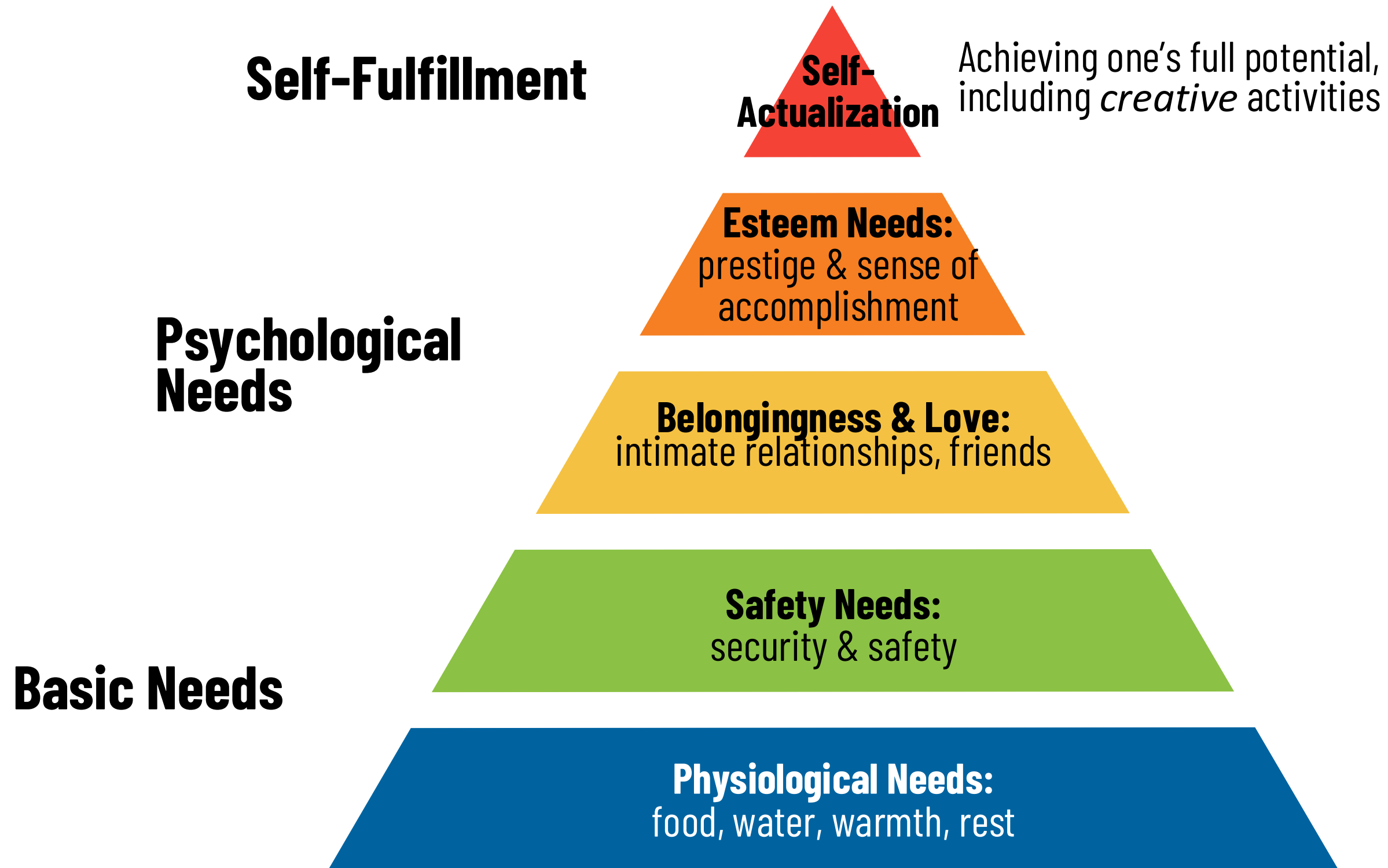
**Basic Needs**

**Safety Needs:**  
security & safety

**Physiological Needs:**  
food, water, warmth, rest



# MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



## MY NEEDS

- Serving
- Creating
- Skiing, Running, Biking, & Swimming
- Connection
- Safety
- Sleep
- Food as Fuel
- Rest

# CORE VALUES



YOUR CORE VALUES ARE THE  
COMPASS THAT KEEPS YOU  
MOVING IN THE RIGHT  
DIRECTION.

Susan David, Ph.D.

# IDENTIFY WHAT TRULY MATTERS

**Define Your Non-Negotiables:** What do you value most -- both in and out of work? What are you *not* willing to sacrifice?

**Core Values Exercise:** Pinpoint what fulfillment *actually* looks like for you, not what you've been told it should be.

**Fulfillment First:** You can't design a sustainable career if you don't know what you're aiming for.

# WHAT ARE YOUR CORE VALUES?

## Resources

[Ep. 272: Time, Money & Energy - Which Do You Value Most?](#)

The things you prioritize above all else. Living in alignment with these values = the key to a full, calm, peaceful life.

BOUNDARIES

SET CLEAR LIMITS, SAY NO,  
DELEGATE AND RE-NEGOTIATE  
YOUR WORKLOAD AND  
COMPENSATION

# BOUNDARIES

Boundaries aren't about keeping things *out* of your life.

Boundaries help you to stay **in** your life!

## Types of Boundaries:

- Digital
- Work/Life
- Email
- Notifications

# ELEMENTS OF A BOUNDARY

Aligned with Your Values

Meet Your Needs

Clearly Communicated

Enforced Firmly (and Kindly)

Well Thought Out

[Ep. 215 The Anatomy of a Healthy Boundary](#)

# 3 KEY NEGOTIATION STRATEGIES



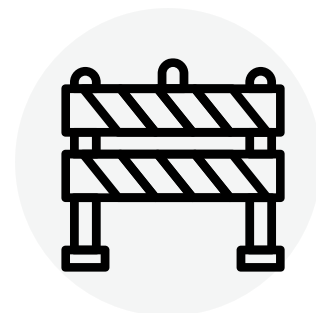
## **Know Your Value**

Otherwise... you wouldn't work there!



## **Ask For More**

Get in the habit of advocating for yourself.



## **Set Boundaries Early (& Often)**

Avoid work overload & burnout before it starts.



# KNOW YOUR VALUE

Your skills, training, and potential have value—so don't sell yourself short.

## Resources

AAPA Career Central Article:  
[Know Your Numbers -- How and Why Tracking Your Productivity Matters](#)  
[Ep. 220 - 5 Reasons to Know Your Revenue Numbers](#)

# KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

## **Take Control of Your Data**

Accuracy and transparency, rather than relying on your employer.

## **Avoid Murky Information**

Prevents misunderstandings and ensures you are properly credited for your work.

## **Apply Data for Leverage**

Advocate for compensation, workload or added support.

## **Spot Trends Early**

Identify shifts in patient volume, calls, revenue, allowing you to act proactively.

## **Be Ready for Negotiations**

Someone someday will ask you to prove your worth. Having data strengthens your case for raises and staffing changes.

# ASK FOR MORE

Most employers expect you to negotiate, but many providers don't.

If you don't ask, you're leaving money, better schedules, and better benefits on the table.

*Capital N vs. n negotiation*

## Email Phrases:

- “I’d love to take on that extra shift— what is the overtime pay rate or shift differential for me taking on more hours?”
- “Since I’ll be leading this project, let’s discuss a title or pay adjustment to reflect the additional responsibility.”
- “I’m excited about the opportunity, in order for me to continue to provide exceptional patient care, I would need X (another MA, another room to see patients, dedicated administrative time).”

# SET BOUNDARIES EARLY

It's easier to set boundaries from the beginning than to try to rewind and build them later on.

## Email Phrases:

- “I’m happy to stay late occasionally, but I’d like to set clear expectations about my regular hours.”
- “I have found I am charting at home regularly, I’d like to discuss adjusting my template to leave time for charting during the day, blocked admin time, but would also be open to being paid hourly for the charting I’ve been doing at home.”
- “That’s beyond my agreed-upon role—when can we revisit my compensation?”
- “Before committing to additional responsibilities, let’s discuss how we can adjust my workload.”

# GUILT-FREE GUARDRAILS

Guilt-free  
It's *not* your job

Yes, even if you are the best person to do it....  
you don't *have* to be the one to do it.

Holding boundaries isn't selfish, it's  
sustainable.

BURNOUT

# IDENTIFYING BURNOUT

Burnout can be a slow burn.

You cannot know you're burned out if you aren't sure of the diagnostic criteria.

# BURNOUT ISN'T

Exhaustion

A failure

Depression

Your fault

Self-limiting

Job dissatisfaction

A little fatigue



# BURNOUT IS

Disillusionment

Lack of control

Chronic stress

Unfortunately common in medicine

Subtle

Serious

# TRIAD OF CLINICAL BURNOUT



**Emotional Exhaustion**



**Depersonalization**



**Reduced Sense of  
Personal Accomplishment**

# TRIAD OF PERSONAL BURNOUT



**Feeling Overwhelmed**



**Exhausted**



**Wondering if you are  
Doing Enough**

# BURNOUT RISK FACTORS

Identifying as female

“Younger age”

Higher student loan balances

Young children

Having a partner who  
isn't a HCW

# BURNOUT RISK FACTORS + NCCCPA DATA

Identifying as female

Female = 70.6%

“Younger age”

Under 50 Years Old = 79.5%

Higher student loan balances

Masters or Doctoral Degree = 83.7%

Young children

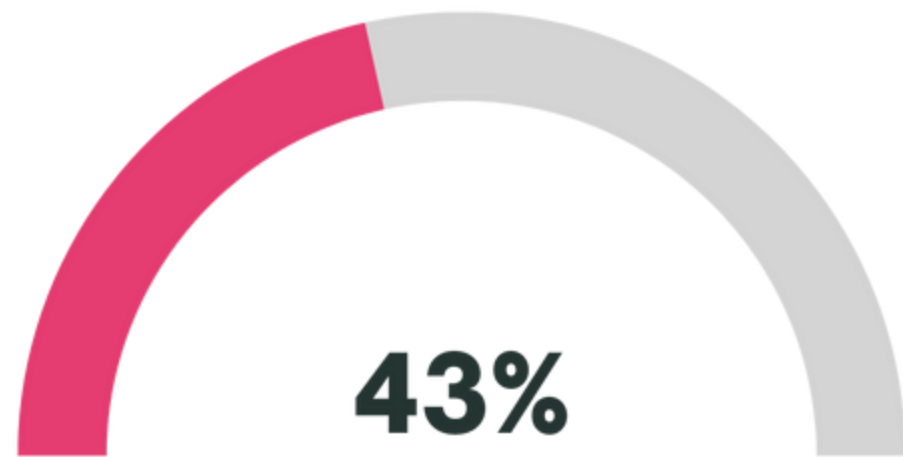
#1 reason not practicing clinically is family responsibilities = 34%

Having a partner who isn't a HCW

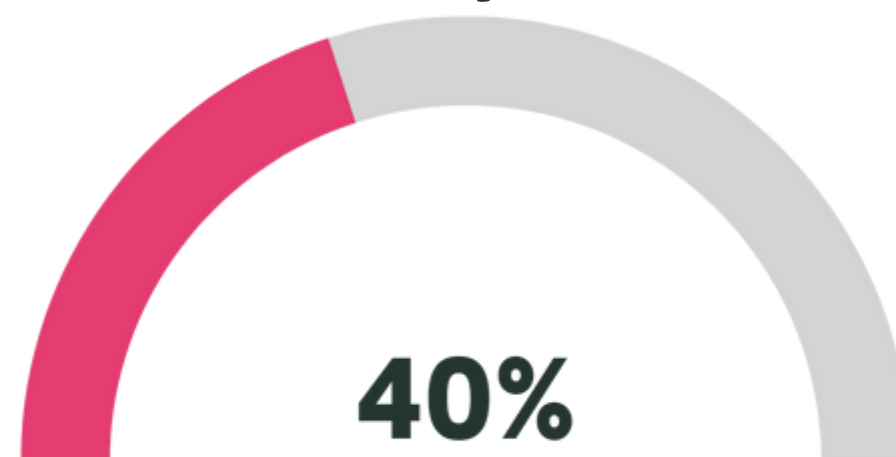
Connection with those who “get it” matters anecdotally

# WHY THIS MATTERS...

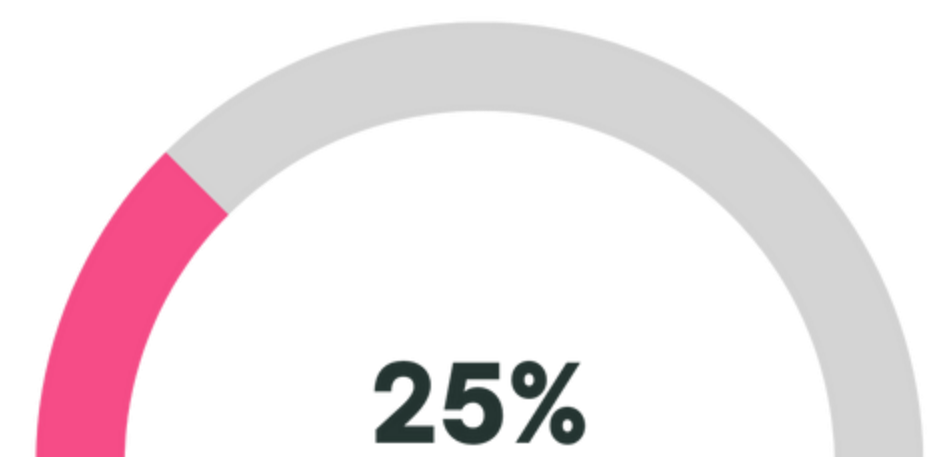
2022 NCCPA surveyed PAs and found that 8.7% of PAs intend to leave clinical practice in the next 12 months (up from 5.6% in 2018) = **15,000 PAs this year**



Feelings of Professional Burnout



Not Paid Enough Given Workload & Responsibilities



Work Would Interfere with Ability to Care for Family

03

CREATE YOUR  
PERSONALIZED  
PLAN

# 5 STEPS TO YOUR SPECIFIC SUSTAINABLE PLAN

- 1 What do you need?
- 2 Perform an audit
- 3 Identify the mis-match
- 4 Implement small changes
- 5 Commit to long-term change



STEP 1 - WHAT DO  
YOU NEED?

**WHAT ARE YOUR CORE VALUES?**

**WHAT ARE YOUR NEEDS?**

# WHAT ARE YOUR CORE VALUES?



# WHAT ARE YOUR NEEDS?

## Self-Fulfillment

### Self-Actualization

Achieving one's full potential, including *creative* activities

**Esteem Needs:**  
prestige & sense of  
accomplishment

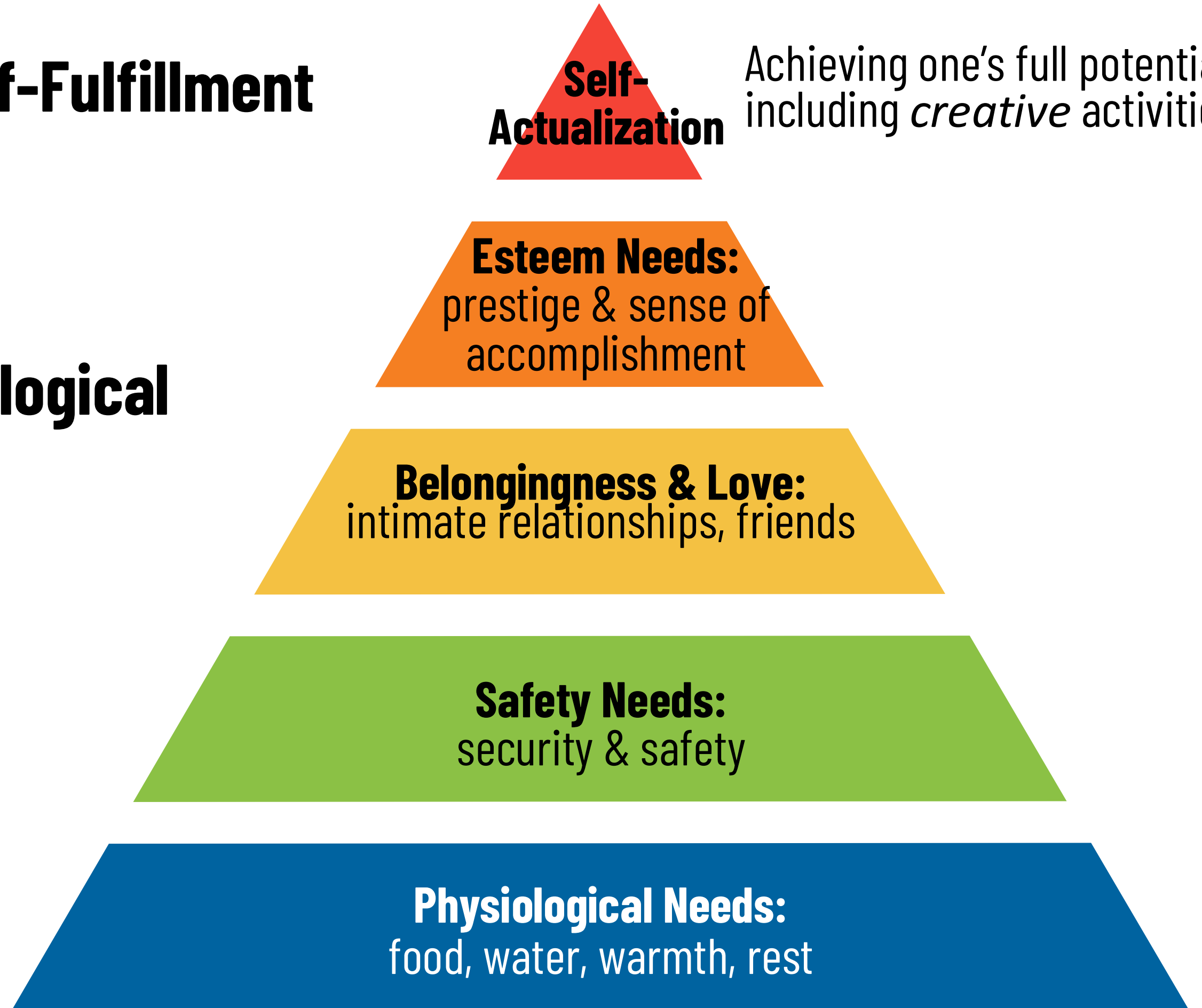
## Psychological Needs

**Belongingness & Love:**  
intimate relationships, friends

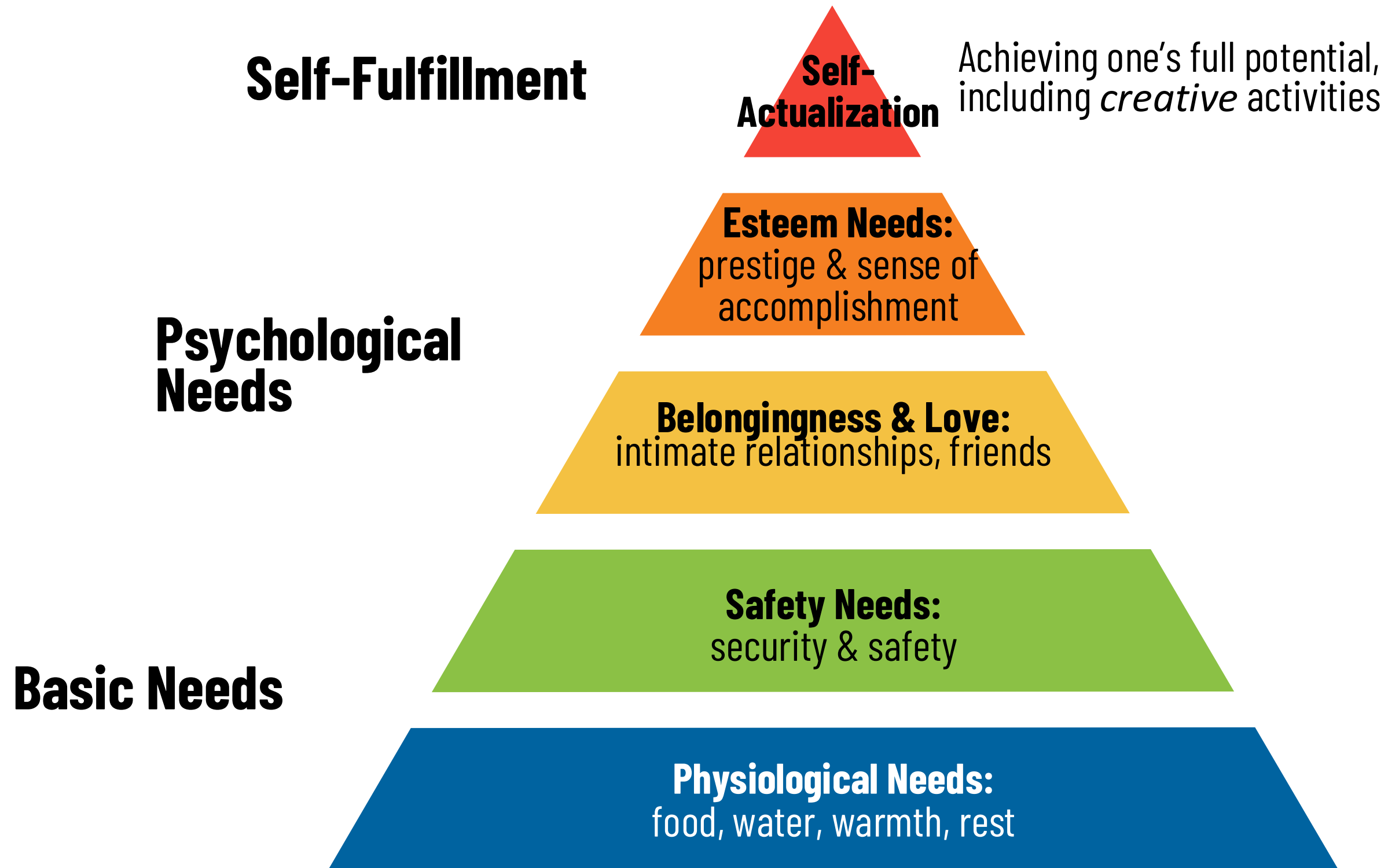
**Safety Needs:**  
security & safety

## Basic Needs

**Physiological Needs:**  
food, water, warmth, rest



# MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



**WHAT  
ARE  
YOUR  
NEEDS?**

# STEP 2 - PERFORM AN AUDIT

# AUDIT YOUR LIFE

Time, Energy, Money

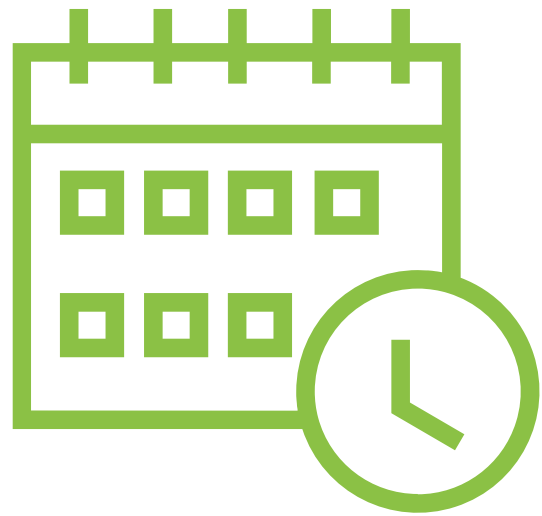
What is draining (or giving you back) your time?

What are you spending your money on?

What's helping boost your income?

What is draining (or boosting) your energy?

# PERFORM A TIME AUDIT



Take a look at a day in clinic, a shift, or even a week of time... where do you spend your time?

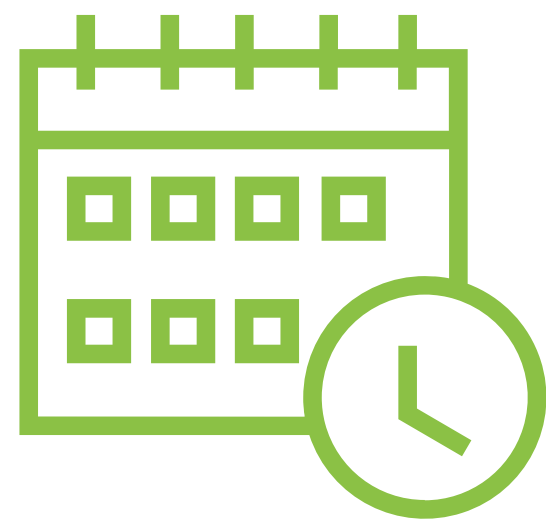
## Identify

- Tasks that are particularly time-consuming
- Tasks that you dread
- Tasks that are energy-vampires
- Tasks that could be delegated
- Where you are spending the most time
- Where you can improve your efficiency
- What items need a *system* to take up less time



# TIME AUDIT ACTIONS

If **time** is your greatest currency right now and your time audit reveals that you are simply working *too much*... you've got two choices:



## 1 - Part-Time Pivot

If you can make the finances work, get your ducks in a row, and adjust your work hours, part-time schedules can be *life-giving* to burned out clinicians.

Guide to Part-Time Transition at [www.tracybingaman.com/part-time](http://www.tracybingaman.com/part-time)

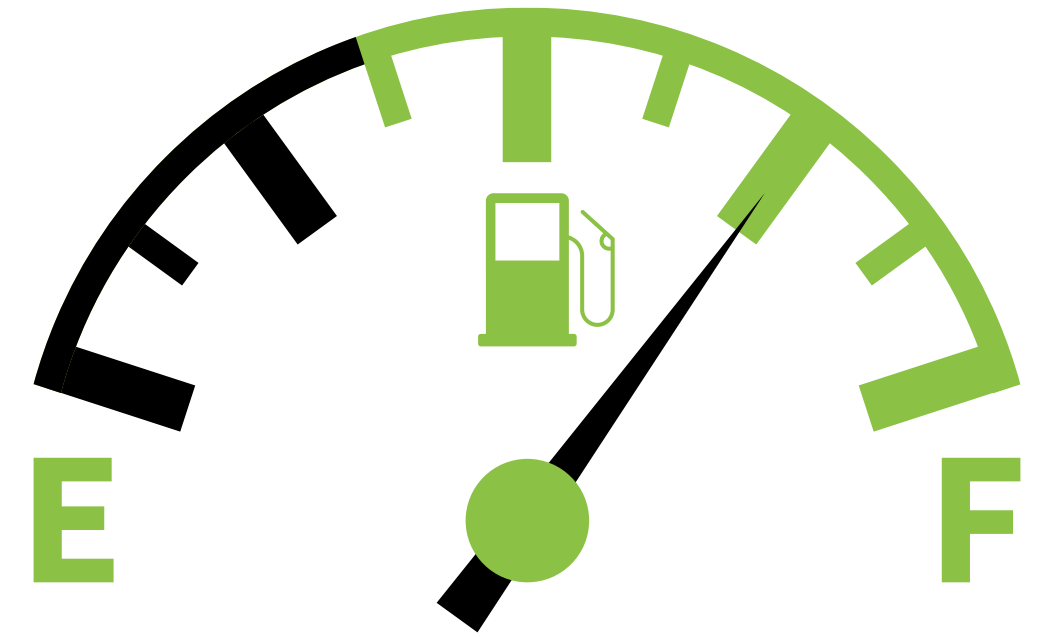
## 2 - Boundaries

*Actually...* everyone needs better boundaries... yes, this means *you!*

# PERFORM AN ENERGY AUDIT

It's not about managing each minute, but rather managing and maintaining your energy.

**High vs. Low-Energy Tasks** -- determine which tasks to place at which times of day



**“Golden Hours” method** -- When are you at your best? Use that time for high energy/high focus tasks.

# ENERGY AUDIT ACTIONS

If **energy** is what you need more of during this season, evaluate every action with a critical eye:

**Am I the only person who can or should be doing this?**

If not, it's a prime candidate for outsourcing or delegating—whether to a team member, support staff, spouse, or even to a tool or automation.

**Is this necessary?**

Or is this simply something that I *think* I should be doing?

This helps you challenge assumptions or outdated expectations you've placed on yourself. If it's not essential or aligned with your current goals, it might be time to ditch it altogether.

**What story am I telling myself that makes this feel more important than it needs to be?**

This digs into mindset. Are you attaching guilt, perfectionism, people-pleasing, or identity to this task?

Can you shift the story and lighten your load?

# PERFORM A CASHFLOW AUDIT

Evaluate income sources &  
outgoing expenses

Assess debts, debt-to-income  
ratio, investments

Identify all income sources



## Identify

- What is your monthly cash flow?
- Are you in the positive, break even or negative?
- What is extra draining on your finances?
- What are your sources of income?
- What are opportunities to outsource, costing you money but saving you time?

# CASHFLOW AUDIT ACTIONS

If **money** is your greatest currency right now, how can you improve your financial independence?



## 1 - Decrease Expenses

What would you be willing to sacrifice in terms of monthly budget, lifestyle expenses, and cost of living items if it gave you back more time and energy?

## 2 - Increase Income

Can you work smarter, not harder, to increase your income and diversify where your income comes from?

[www.tracybingaman.com/gig](http://www.tracybingaman.com/gig) for 48 cash flow generating side gig ideas for clinicians.

# EVALUATE YOUR RESOURCES

Time, Energy, Money

Where is the disconnect between  
your core values and your needs?

*This is the source of your burnout.  
Rectifying this = sustainability.*

# SET BOUNDARIES

To protect your Time, Energy, Money

STEP 3 - IDENTIFY  
THE MIS-MATCH



WHEN YOU KNOW YOUR **NEEDS & VALUES...**

AND YOU'VE AUDITING YOUR LIFE (**TIME, MONEY, AND ENERGY**)...

THE MIS-MATCH BETWEEN LIFE & VALUES =  
YOUR SOURCE OF BURNOUT

# **BURNOUT HAPPENS WHEN:**

- 1. WORK DOESN'T ALIGN WITH NEEDS AND VALUES**
- 2. STRESS SUPERCEDES COPING MECHANISMS**

# COMMON BURNOUT CAUSES IN MEDICINE

- 1. Productivity pressures** – Seeing more patients with less time.
- 2. Lack of boundaries** – Saying yes to everything, working extra hours unpaid.
- 3. Too much work, not enough people** – Staffing shortages increase workload.
- 4. Administrative overload** – EMRs, charting, compliance—all taking time from patient care.

# COMMON BURNOUT CAUSES IN LIFE

- 1. Unreasonable expectations** - You are aiming for perfection & you've forgotten that you are a human being (not a human doing).
- 2. Lack of boundaries** – Saying yes to everything, taking on extra tasks, volunteering, going above and beyond.
- 3. You stink at asking for help** - There are people who are willing and able to assist, but you haven't reached out.
- 4. No mechanism to rest or reset your stress** - You are living in fight or flight & you don't have a good way to manage stress or moderate your nervous system.

# THE BAD NEWS

The same characteristics that got you into school,  
landed you that job & made you an exceptional  
employee...

Are the characteristics that pre-dispose you to  
burnout.

# THE GOOD NEWS

These are modifiable risk factors!

IF YOU WANT TO RECOVER FROM  
BURNOUT...

YOU NEED TO KNOW **WHY** YOU  
BURNED OUT.

ONCE YOU KNOW **WHY** YOU ARE  
BURNED OUT...

YOU CAN IMPLEMENT CHANGES TO  
ADDRESS THAT SOURCE



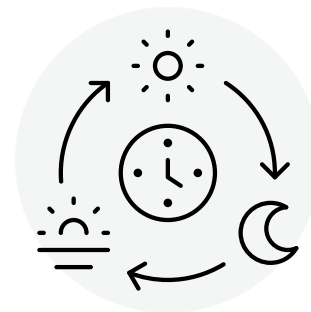
STEP 4 -  
IMPLEMENT  
SMALL CHANGES

# 3 LIFESTYLE CHANGE STRATEGIES



## **HABITS**

Small, consistent actions you do automatically that support your goals and well-being.



## **ROUTINES**

Intentional sequences of habits or tasks that create structure and stability in your day.



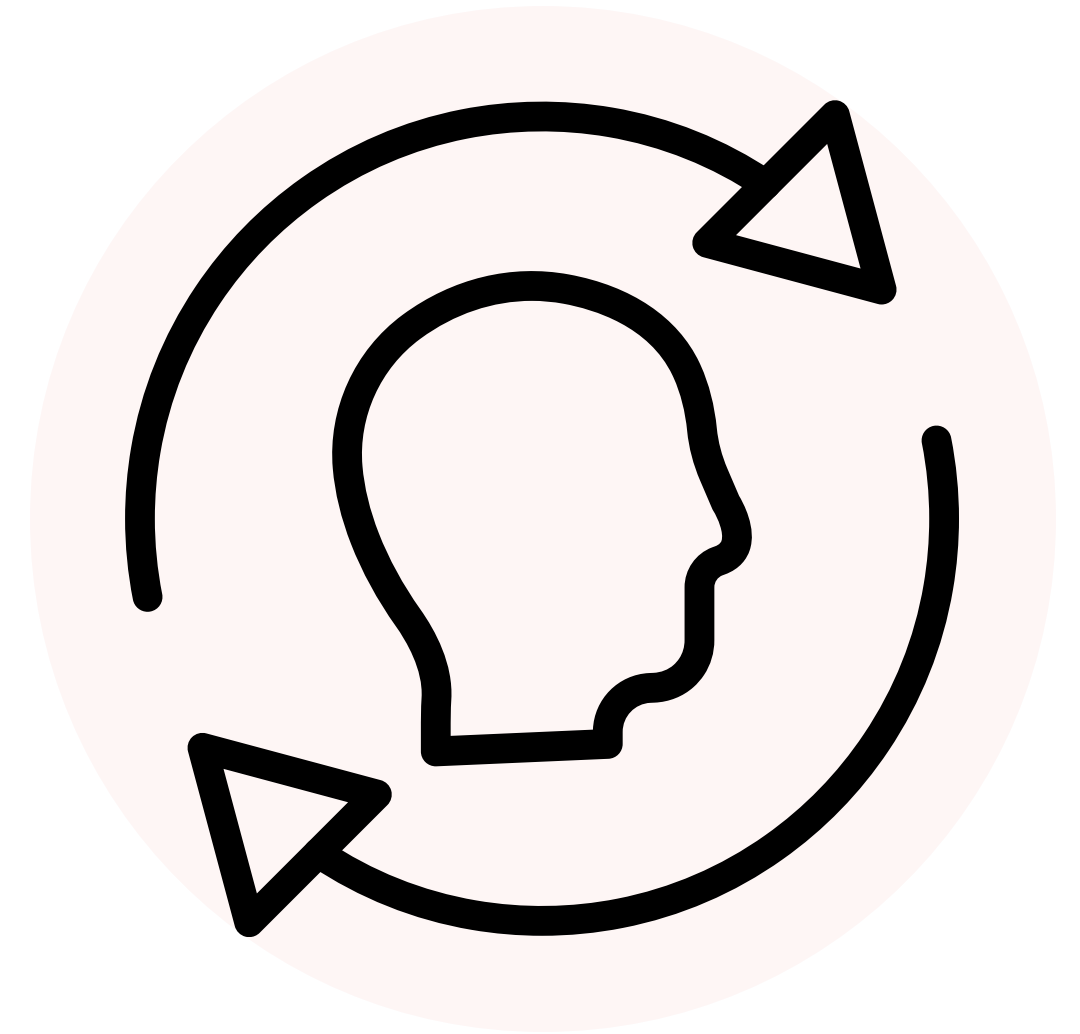
## **CHECK INS**

Regular moments of reflection to assess what's working, what's no, and where to adjust.

# HABITS

Small, consistent actions you do automatically that support your goals and well-being.

Whether exercise, healthy food choices, the way we deal with requests at work, patients or charting, habits are incredibly powerful tools!



# 4 ELEMENTS OF STRONG HABITS

## [Atomic Habits](#)

by James Clear  
(Clear 2018)

### **Make it Obvious**

Set clear intentions and cues for your new habit.

### **Make it Easy**

Reduce the friction and make the habit as easy as possible to do.

### **Make it Attractive**

Use temptation bundling or make the habit something you look forward to.

### **Make it Satisfying**

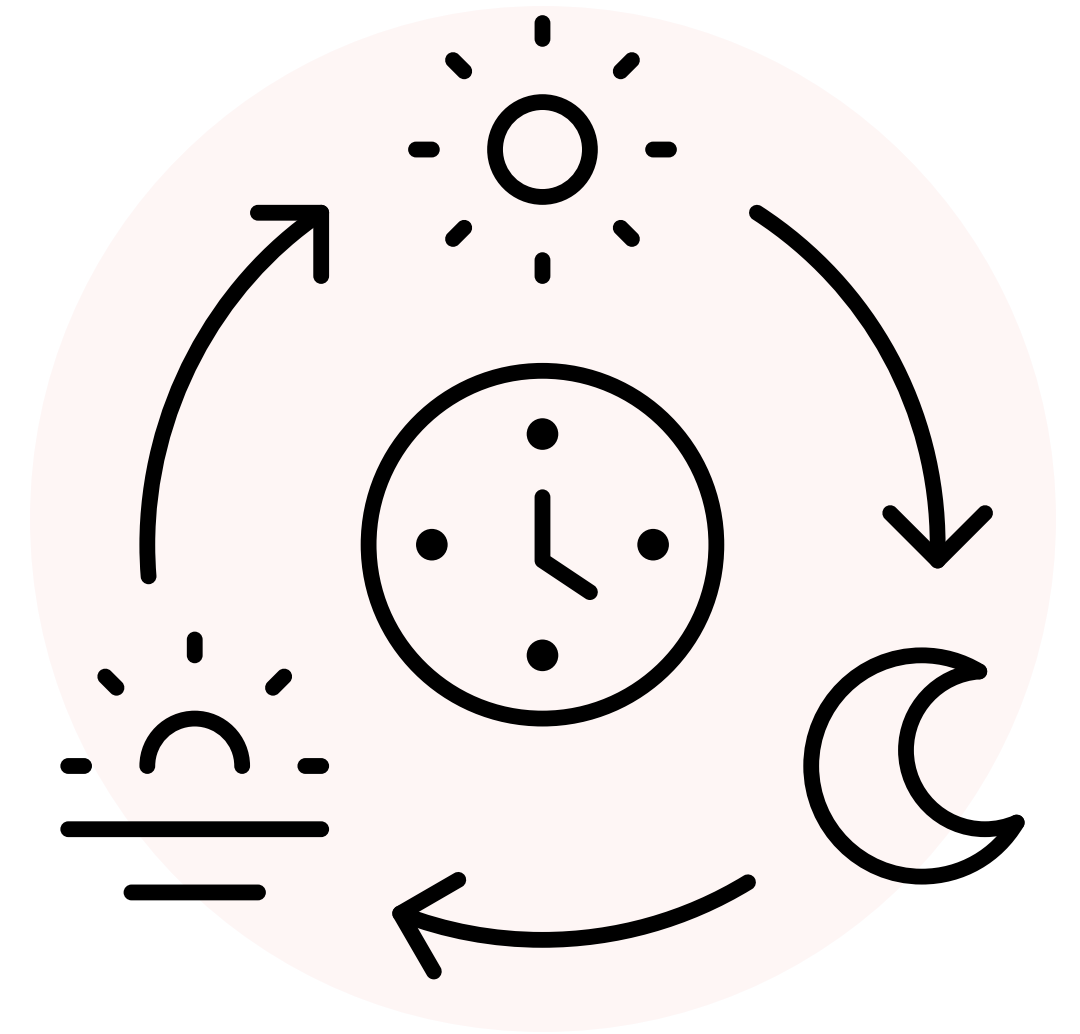
Provide an immediate rewards to reinforce the habit.

# ROUTINES

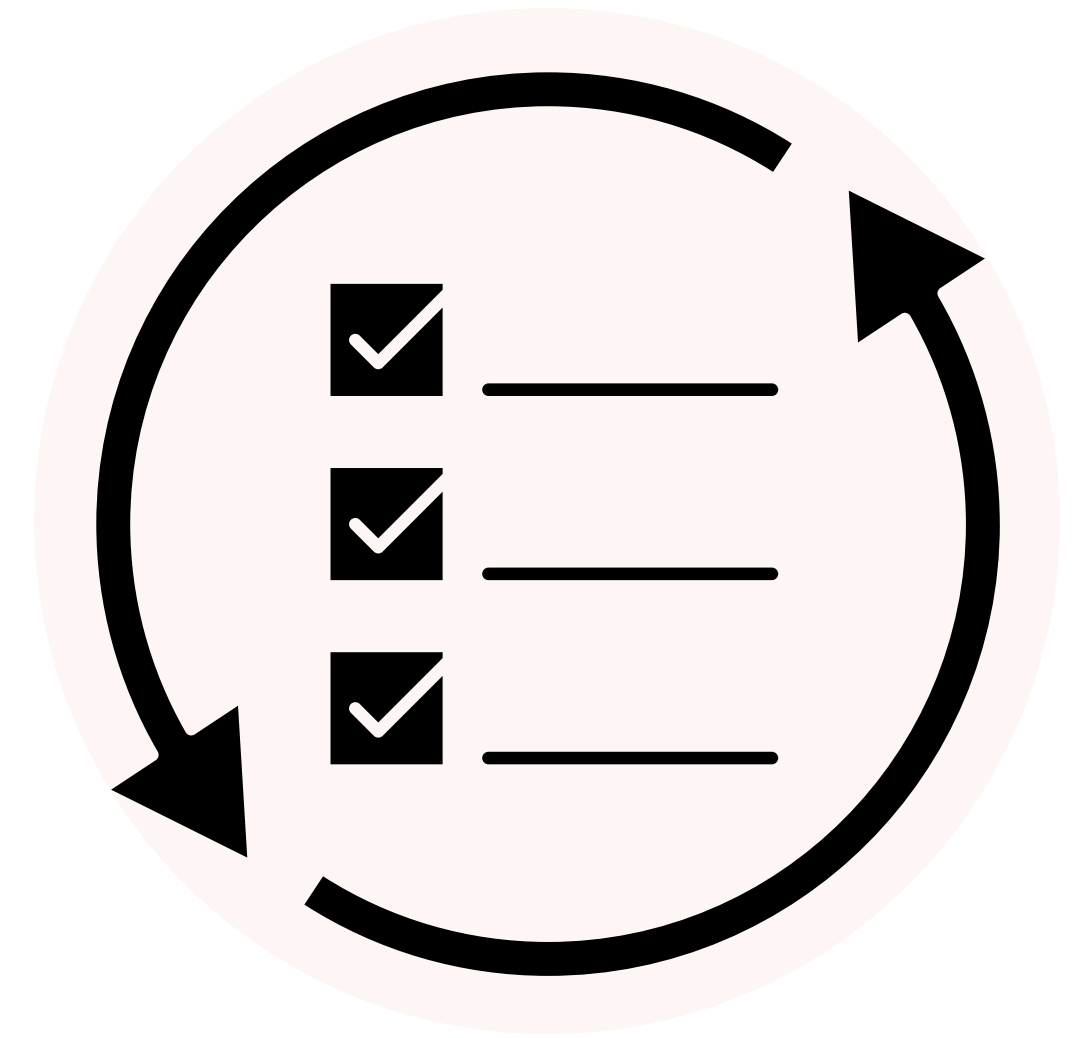
Intentional sequences of habits or tasks that create structure and stability in your day.

If this, then that.

Tying an existing habit or routine to add or habit stack another positive habit on top of that one.



# IMPLEMENTATION INTENTIONS

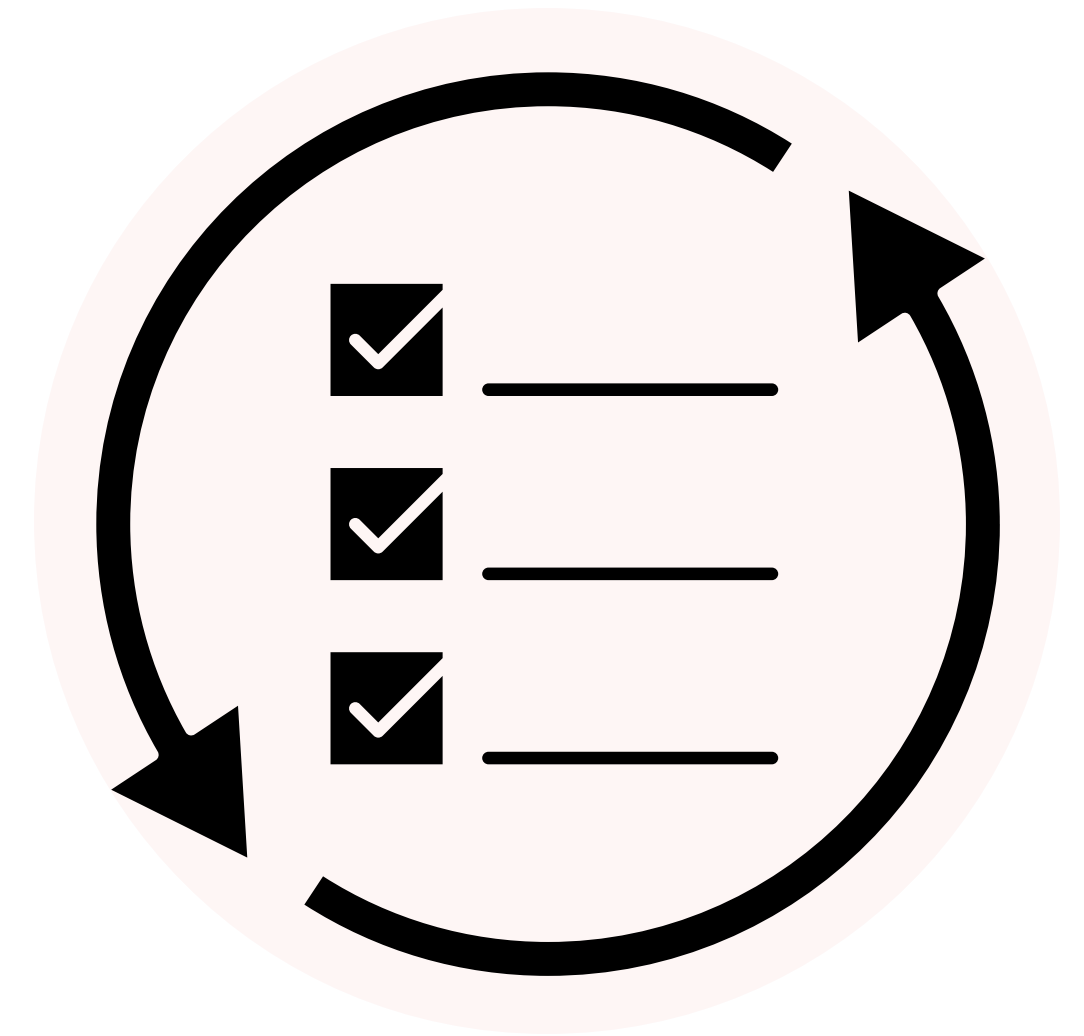


Take a “wish” to make it an action.

From “it would be nice” to making sure it happens regularly.

# IMPLEMENTATION INTENTIONS

Studies show that establishing work (and personal) habits increases **work engagement** and **goal progress** by making behaviors *automatic* and *reducing cognitive effort*.



*Trenz & Keith (2024) Journal of Occupational  
& Organizational Psychology*

# IMPLEMENTATION INTENTIONS

## **INITIATING ACTION**

Plan when and where you will do the thing...  
I will [DO ACTION] at [TIME] in [LOCATION].

## **STAYING ON COURSE**

Identify obstacles & create a plan to handle them...  
If [THIS HAPPENS], then I will [DO THIS].



# IMPLEMENTATION INTENTIONS

I will finish my notes after each patient before starting the next visit.

If I get interrupted, I will ask the person to wait until I'm finished charting.



# IMPLEMENTATION INTENTIONS

When someone asks me to do extra work (schedule, project, orienting, precepting a student), I will check my calendar and take at least 2 days to reply.

If they need an answer that day, I will decline, unless I'm 100% sure I have the bandwidth to take on the project.



# CHOOSE TWO HABITS OR ROUTINES

Aim for incremental, ongoing changes.

Change 2 things at a time.

Focus on making those small changes part of your lifestyle.

STEP 5 - COMMIT  
TO LONG-TERM  
CHANGE

THESE CHANGES AREN'T  
A CHECKLIST,  
THEY ARE A RHYTHM OF LIFE.

# LIFESTYLE CHANGES

This cannot be temporary.

Unless it becomes a lifestyle change, a daily part of life, automatic and systems-based, you will slip back into burnout tendencies.

# ACCOUNTABILITY

Coach, Colleague, Calendar

Have something in place to help you stay aligned with these new habits, systems, and check ins.

# CHECK INS

Regular

Scheduled

Periodic

Objective evaluation

(score on a scale of 1-10)

of how you are doing



# REFERENCES

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Burnout & Career Sustainability Coach  
The PA Is In Podcast Host

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Helping Clinicians Create Sustainable Careers,  
Pivot to Part-Time Practice  
& Build Thriving Businesses

**persistent**  
— PROVIDER —

The  
**PA is in**

Podcast

**evidence-based**  
— BUSINESS —



# RESOURCES

More Information

[www.tracybingaman.com](http://www.tracybingaman.com)

Sustainability Quiz

[www.tracybingaman.com/sustainability](http://www.tracybingaman.com/sustainability)

Pathway to Part-Time Group Coaching

[www.tracybingaman.com/pathway](http://www.tracybingaman.com/pathway)

Part-Time Transition Guide

[www.tracybingaman.com/part-time](http://www.tracybingaman.com/part-time)

Side Gig Guide

[www.tracybingaman.com/gig](http://www.tracybingaman.com/gig)

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