



**PHYSICIAN HEAL
THYSELF: USING
MEDICAL IMPROV TO
ACHIEVE WELLNESS**

Gina Trimarco

J. Burton Banks, MD

Presenters

Gina Trimarco—

- Founder/CEO, Carolina Improv Company
- International keynote speaker and best-selling author
- No disclosures to report

Burt Banks—

- Family physician
- Program Director, Grand Strand Family Medicine Residency (Myrtle Beach)
- No disclosures to report

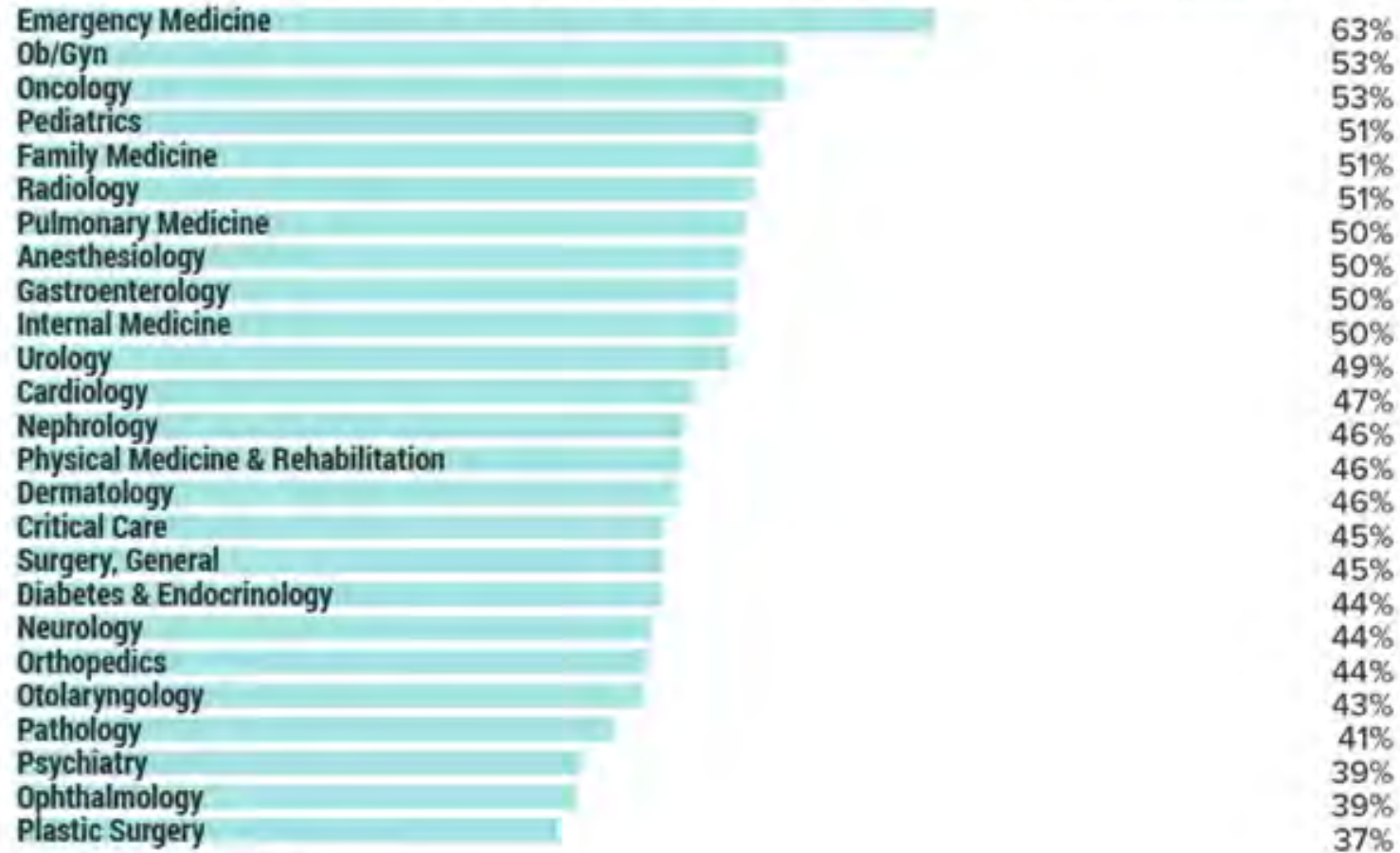
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **At the conclusion of this presentation, the participant should be able to:**
 - Identify qualities that contribute to physician wellness
 - Describe how medical improv can enhance physician communication, teamwork, and job satisfaction
 - Describe ways to incorporate medical improv into private practice and personal life



Why are there concerns about Burnout?

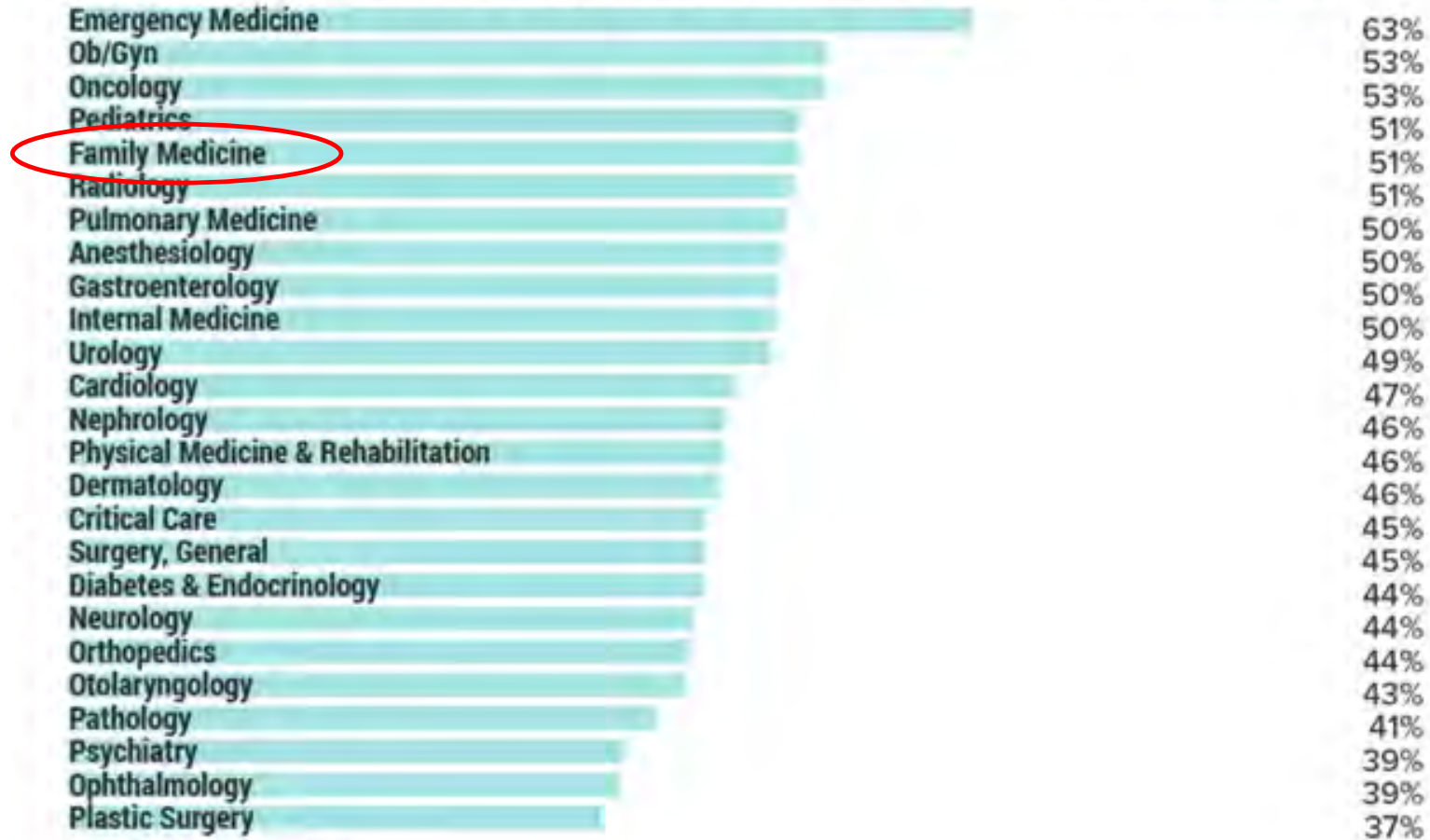
Which Specialties Have the Greatest Burnout Rates?



Not all specialties are shown.

Why are there concerns about Burnout?

Which Specialties Have the Greatest Burnout Rates?



Not all specialties are shown.

Physicians with Depression

Percentage of Physicians Who Are Depressed

Clinical depression

(ie, severe depression lasting some time, not caused by a normal grief event)

27%

Colloquial depression

(ie, feeling down, blue, sad)

63%

Other

4%

Prefer not to answer

6%

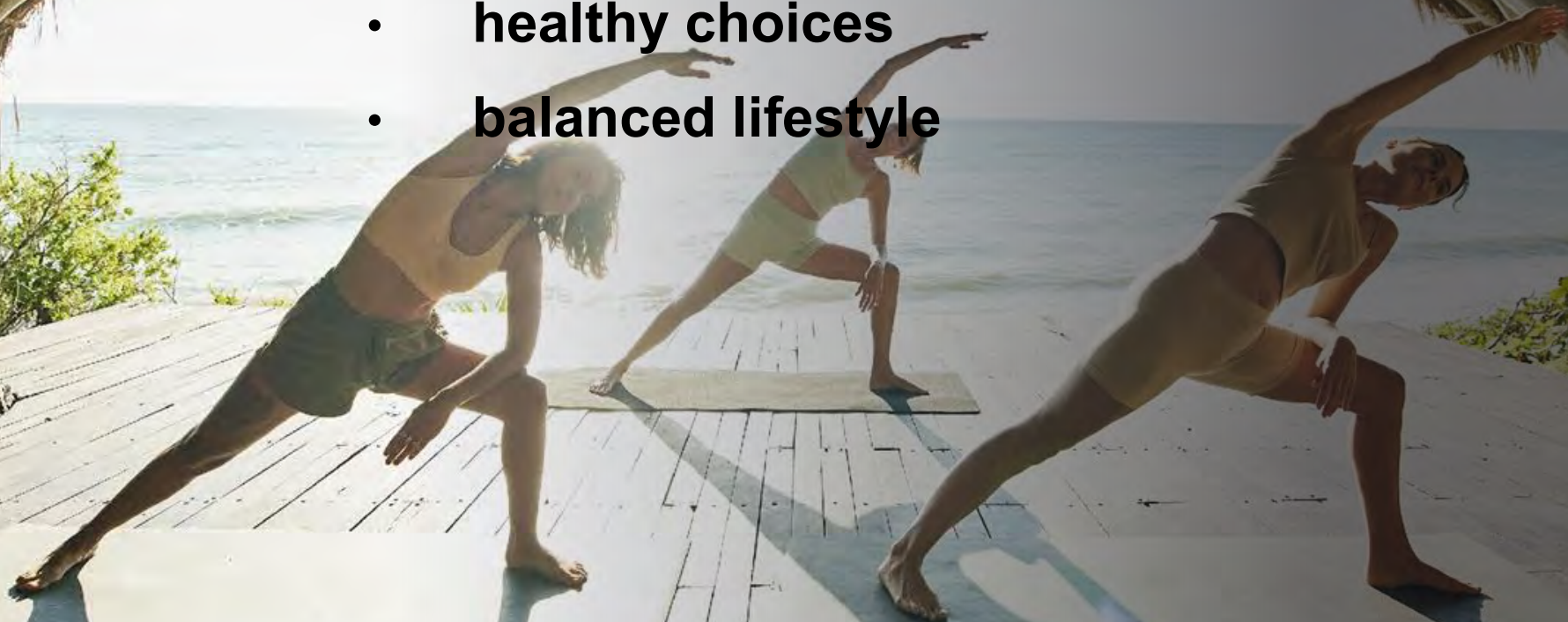
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Wellness

Dynamic and continuous process

- **self-awareness**
- **healthy choices**
- **balanced lifestyle**



Wellness



**PHYSICAL
WELLNESS**



**EMOTIONAL
WELLNESS**



**SOCIAL
WELLNESS**



**INTELLECTUAL
WELLNESS**



**SPIRITUAL
WELLNESS**



**ENVIRONMENTAL
WELLNESS**



**OCCUPATIONAL
WELLNESS**

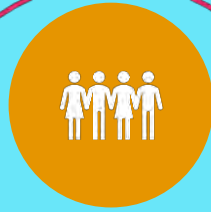
Wellness



**PHYSICAL
WELLNESS**



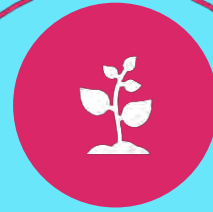
**EMOTIONAL
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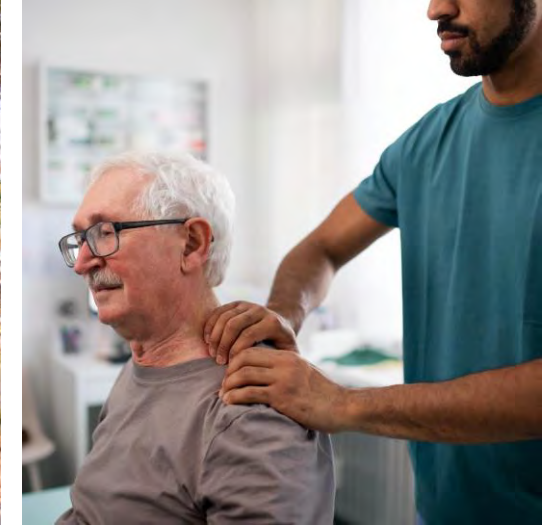
**ENVIRONMENTAL
WELLNESS**



**OCCUPATIONAL
WELLNESS**

- Feeling engaged and empowered with good boundaries
- Maintaining physical health: Rest, Diet, Exercise
- Having confidence in self, the system
- Working to change the system
- Ensuring effective communication
- Taking time away from work and leaving work behind
- Being present in the moment

Developing and Maintaining Wellness





PHYSICIAN WELL-BEING AND PATIENT CARE

- Clinicians who care for themselves
 - Provide better care for others
 - Less likely to make errors
 - Less likely to leave the profession
- Habits to promote well-being and resilience need to be cultivated across the continuum.
- A healthy practice environment will lead to improved health care for all, both providers and patients.

How Do Physicians Address Wellness?

- Exercise
- Talking with family and friends
- Sleep
- Isolation
- Music
- Junk food
- Alcohol
- Meditation
- Binge-eating

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A Unique
Approach...

Medical Improv

What is “Improv”?



- A form of theater, often comedy
- Unplanned and spontaneous
- Create stories and dialogue collaboratively as the scenario unfolds
- No prepared script
- Can be used as training tools for businesses
- ***Applied Improvisation*** focuses on
 - communication skills
 - collaboration
 - creative problem-solving
 - leadership

Applied Improv



Improvisation Ground Rules

“There are no mistakes, only opportunities.” - Tina Fey

- For Improv to succeed, rules and structure are required. Within them, anything can happen.
- You can look good if you make your partner look good; everyone is a supporting actor.
- Improv is conversation; listen and respond.
- Make statements instead of asking questions.
- Funny happens.
- Focus on the Here and Now.
- Say “Yes, And...” literally and philosophically.



What is “Medical Improv”?

- Emerging field adapting “improvisational theater principles and exercises to enhance...communication, teamwork, and cognition.” (Watson and Fu, 2016)
- A specialized form of *applied improv*
 - focuses on process rather than performing
 - impacts the hard-to-teach “soft skills.”
- Does not replicate full patient encounters (i.e. Standardized Patient Scenarios)
- Separates communication and professional skills through specific, focused exercises and targeted discussion.
- **After participating, physicians report increased comfort levels when forced to “go off script”**



Photo from Mahoney, 2020

Soft Skills

Soft Skills: “desirable qualities...that do not depend on acquired knowledge: they include common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive, flexible attitude.”
(Collins English Dictionary)

- **Examples of Soft Skills:**
 - **Empathy**
 - **Flexibility/Adaptability**
 - **Positive Attitude**
 - **Confidence**
 - **Communication Skills**
 - **Collaboration/Teamwork**
 - **Time Management**
 - **Acceptance of Feedback/Criticism**
 - **Critical & Design Thinking**

Challenges in Teaching Soft Skills

- Requires **self-awareness**, acknowledges **need** for change, and **desires change**.
- Requires commitment and daily practice in an engaged and protected environment.
- Skills involve human behavior and feelings, which are varied and unpredictable.
- Not only do our own feelings influence personal behavior, but other people's feelings and behaviors impact ours.
- Becoming more assertive can feel emotionally risky.
- Active listening requires sharing power.
- **Medical Improv can impact all these areas.**





Why utilize Medical Improv?

- The practice of medicine is unpredictable and fluid. ***Clinicians must improvise!***
- Improves communication skills as a clinician and decreases miscommunication issues in the healthcare system
- Develops Spontaneity
- Increases Flexibility
- Improves Active Listening
- Fosters Empathy skills
- Enhances the physician-patient relationship
- Reduces job-related stress and burnout
- Decreases litigation risk

Why Medicine and Improv?

Empathy and Difficult Conversations

- ✓ Improv increases emotional intelligence (*Improvised Intelligence*) through self-awareness, active listening and intentional observation

Interprofessional Teamwork

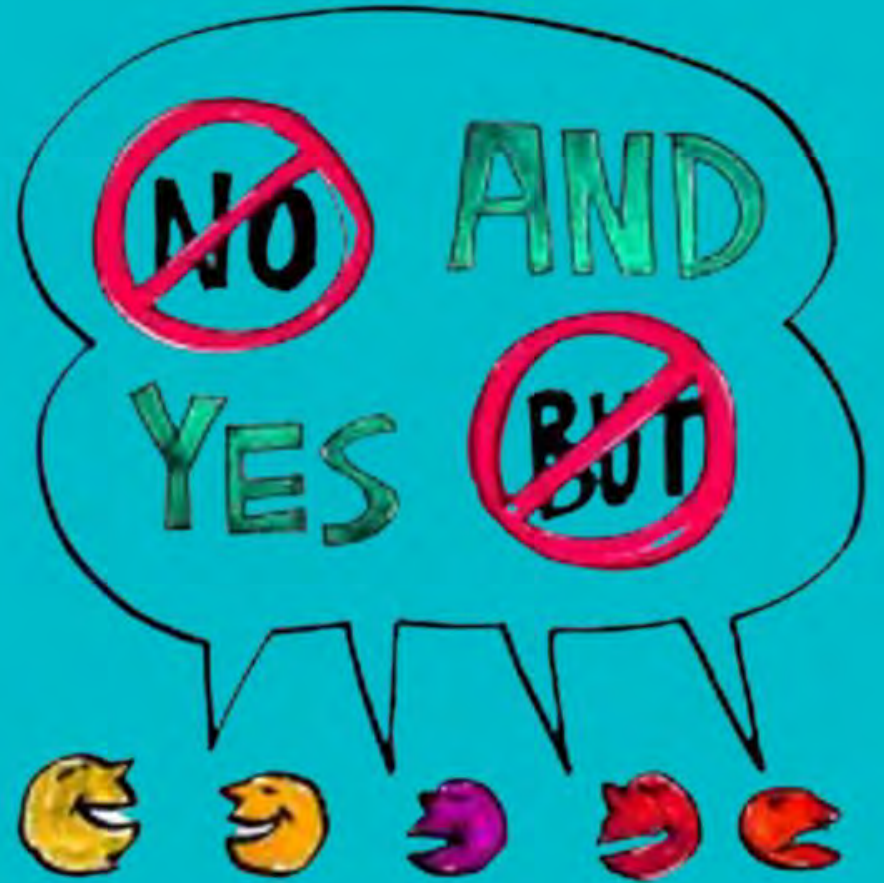
- ✓ Improv improves camaraderie and communication skills, thus enhancing effective team collaboration, leadership, and conflict resolution

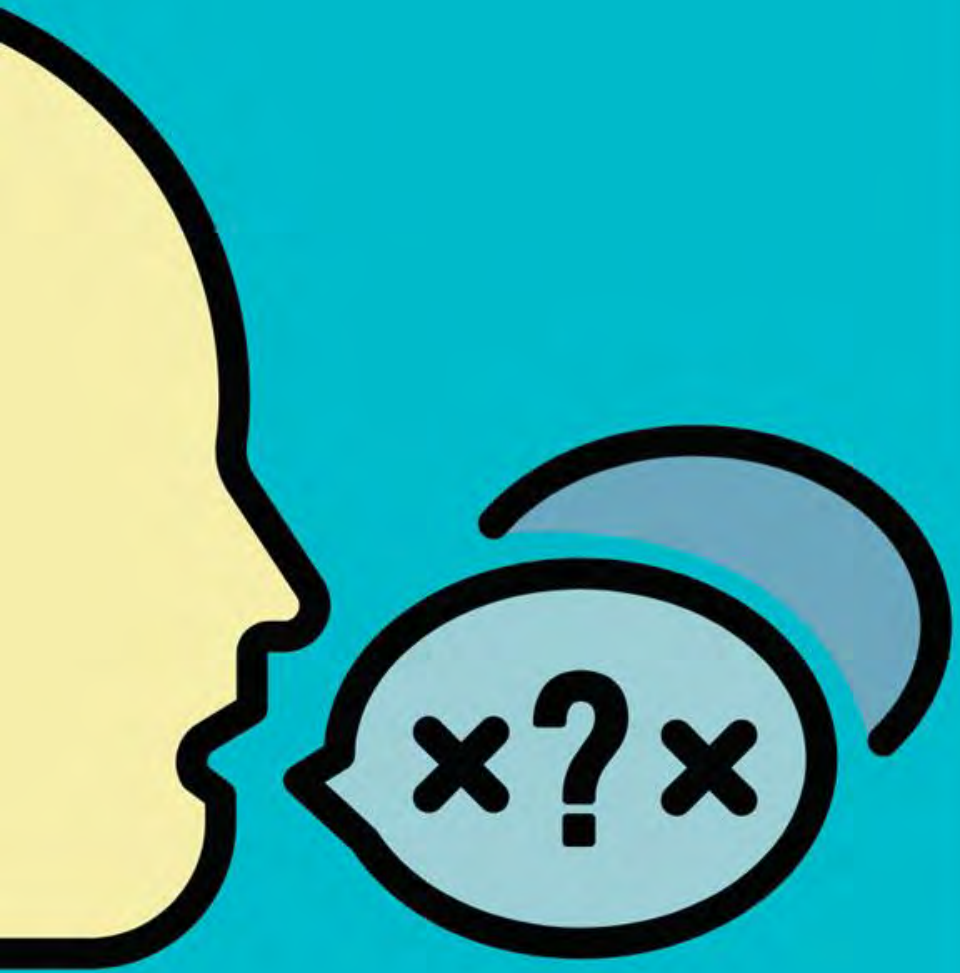
Physician Wellness

- ✓ Improv inspires the practice of mindfulness, positive/growth mindset, and self-awareness, leading to increased confidence and decreased anxiety

Acceptance vs Agreement

(without judgement)





Literal "Yes, And"

- **Communicate**
... deeply with your eyes, ears and intuition
- **Validate**
... without judging by repeating what was said
- **Collaborate**
... to co-create a mutual solution

Literal Yes, And Exercise

Gina: Hilton Head is beautiful.

Dr. Banks: Yes, Hilton Head is beautiful AND I love it here.

Gina: Yes, you love it here AND our spouses are happy to join us.

Dr. Banks: Yes, our spouses are happy to join us and we should do something nice for each of them.



How To Literally Yes, And

In pairs ...

- One of you make a statement to begin
- The other will say “Yes,” followed by repeating your partner verbatim, then ...
 - Say, “And”
 - Add a new statement
 - Allow your partner to say “Yes”, etc.
- Rinse & Repeat

Tips For Success:

- Keep everything in statement form
- Say the first thing that comes to mind
- Do not worry about the conversation making sense
- Avoid the words “but,” “however,” and “although”





Clinical "Yes, And" Scenario 1

You are meeting a patient for a followup visit and you would like to talk to them about their blood pressure control. The patient would like to speak about a new job they just started, instead.



Clinical "Yes, And" Scenario 2

You would like to speak with your boss/department chair/program director about realigning some of your specific clinical responsibilities. The supervisor would like to speak about their vision for the overall clinical department.



Clinical "Yes, And" Scenario 3

You are meeting a colleague to talk about how to collaborate on a research project. The colleague would like to speak about a challenge going on at home instead.



Gina Trimarco

(843) 597-6393

Gina@GinaTrimarco.com





Burt Banks, MD

(843)692-3497

Jerry.Banks@hcahealthcare.com

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- Watson K and Fu B. 2016. Medical Improv: A Novel approach to teaching communication and professionalism skills. *Annals of Int Med*, 8(165), 591-593.

Medical Improv Resources:

- *Academic Medicine*: “Perspective: Serious Play: Teaching Medical Skills With Improvisational Theater Techniques.” (Katie Watson)
- *Academic Medicine*. “Teaching Medical Students to Communicate With Empathy and Clarity Using Improvisation.” (E Kaplan-Liss, et al.)
- *Education for Primary Care*: “‘Thinking on my feet’: an improvisation course to enhance students’ confidence and responsiveness in the medical interview.” (Robert Shochet, et al.)
- www.ImprovDoc.org
- *Medical Education*: “Improving medical student communication skills through improvisational theatre.” (Ari Hoffman, Brynn Utley, and Dan Ciccarone)
- *Medical Humanities*: “Telling the Patient’s Story: using theatre training to improve case presentation skills.” (Rachel Hammer, et al.)
- www.MedicalImprov.org
- *JAMA*. “I Feel Witty, Oh So Witty.” (DA Misch)