Centering Self and Systems:

Returning Joy & Hope to Resilient (and Resolute) Clinical Teams

Ellen L. Singer, MD, FAAP, FACP, CPCC
The Foundation for Medical Excellence
Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization Summit
Pendleton, OR
September 21, 2023
esinger@tfme.org

Disclosures

Disclosure Statement

I have no conflict of interest to disclose

Creating Resilient Culture: The Steps

Stabilize the foundation

Know the "play" (and the players)

Follow the money

Predict the trendlines

Build connections – with self, team and community

Creating Resilient Culture: Learning Objectives

To honor where we have come from

To honor and hold space for where we are now

To name some of the drivers of distress

To begin a new dialogue – with self and colleagues

To review ideas for small changes that may evoke transformation

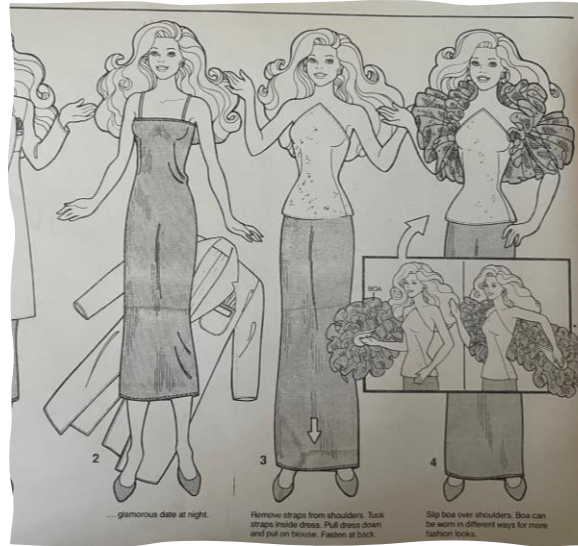# The Lens of Time

Who we were and are

Where we work

What demands attention

What needs attention

Who are we becoming

Where we can go together

Placeholder for audience response

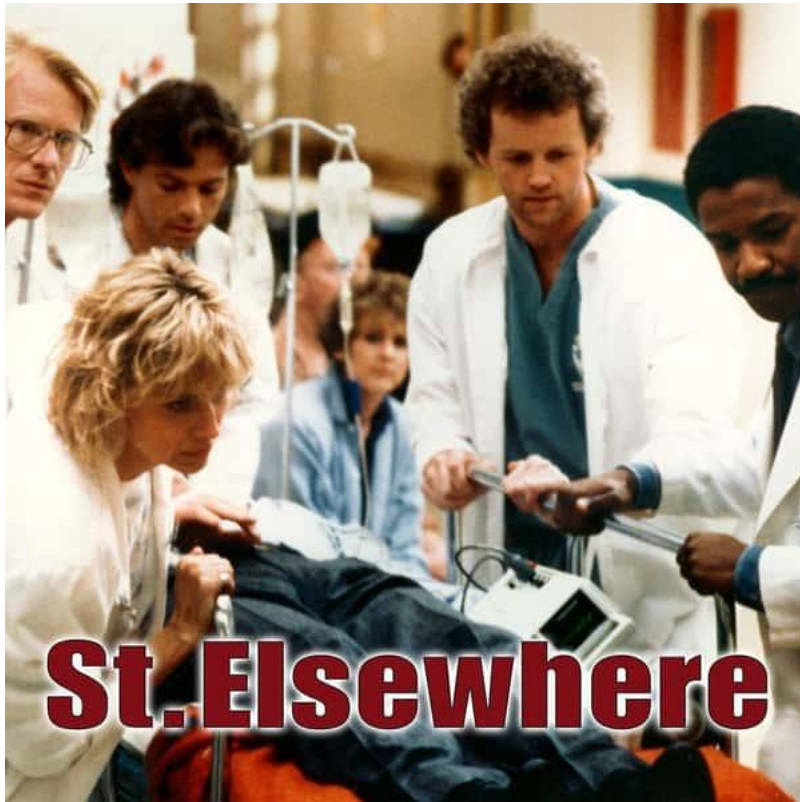What is your memory of health care in the 1980s-1990s

What's your memory of health care in the 1980s-1990s?

1980s "throwback"
What we saw...

St. Elsewhere

BREAK FREE

"Parenthood is like pro ball: there's ten times more going on than you expected."

For birth control information call your local clinic.

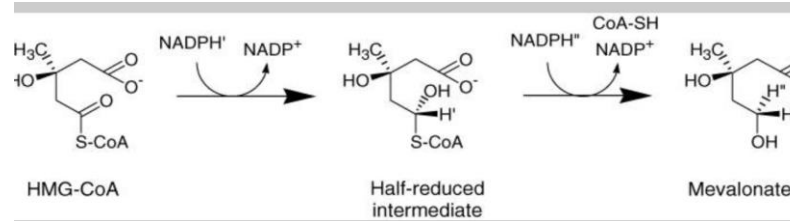Julius Erving
Philadelphia 76ers

1980s throwback
Some of what we did...

HMG-CoA → Half-reduced intermediate → Mevalonate

Placeholder for audience response

What are the foundational elements in healthcare?

Lessons from the 1980s
Burnout or Resilience in the 2023 "reboot"

Physician burnout by specialty

Medscape, 2023 Physician Burnout & Depression Report, 1/27

"Burnout" is characterized by these factors:

Emotional Exhaustion

Depersonalization/Cynicism

Loss of Personal Accomplishment/Agency

"Resilience" is characterized by the individual ability to maintain a healthy, psychological state in the face of adversity or risk and capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development

Maslach, C.; Jackson, S.E. (1981). "The measurement of experienced burnout". Journal of Occupational Behavior. 2 (2): 99–113. doi:10.1002/job.4030020205

Werner, E. (1993). Risk, resilience, and recovery: Perspectives from the Kauai Longitudinal Study. Development and Psychopathology, 5(4), 503-515. doi:10.1017/S095457940000612X

The 2023 "Post Pandemic" Reboot
What is here in this moment?

Characteristics of Complex Systems
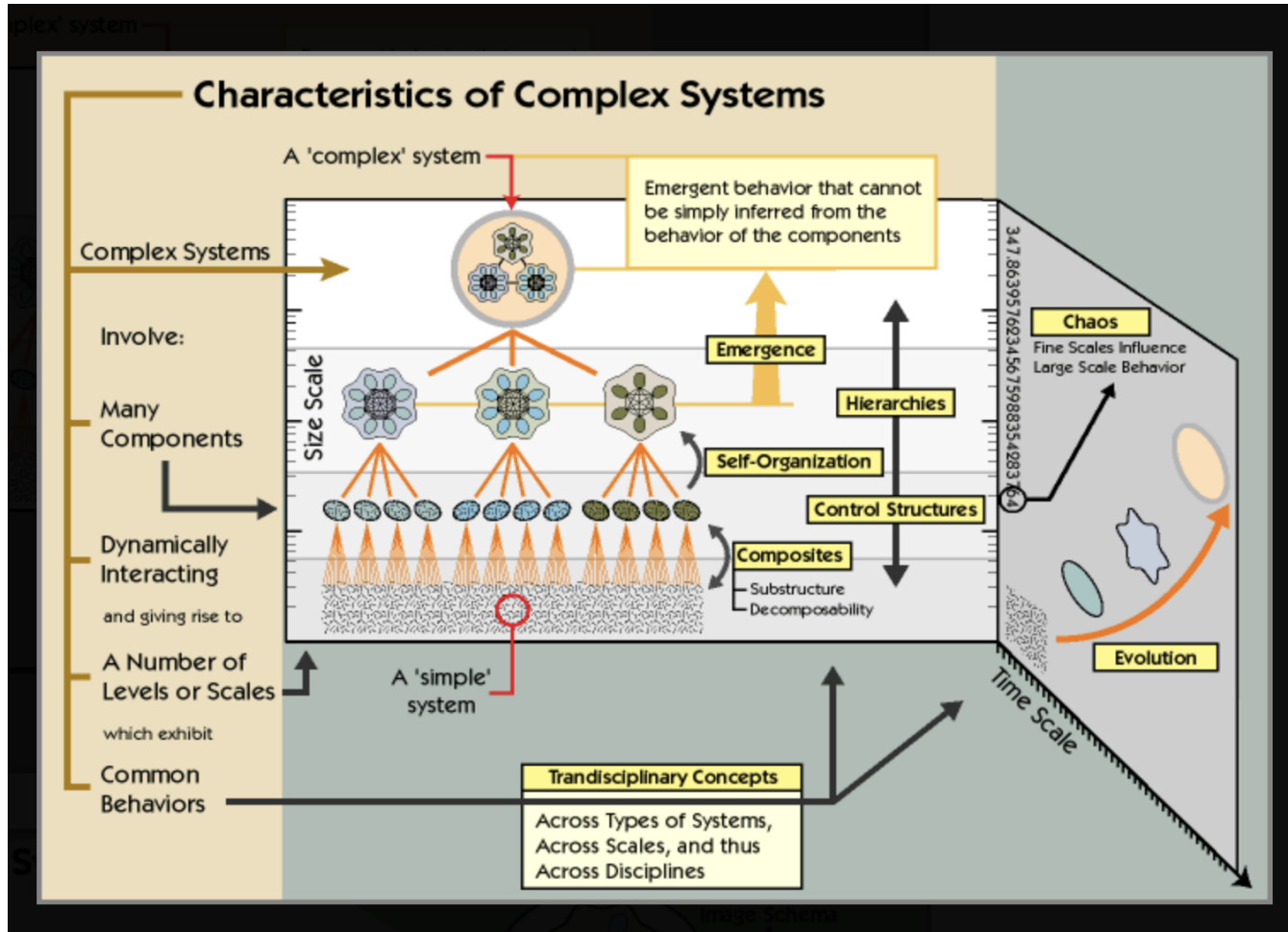
Convoluted Finances

Complicated Job Roles

Competing Demands (for attention, time)

Consistent Demand

Constant Scarcity (staff, appointments, time)

Curtailed (but not lost) Creativity

What can we do to build adaptability into our systems? For individuals? Teams? Communities?

Follow the Money:
The Never-ending Cost Curve
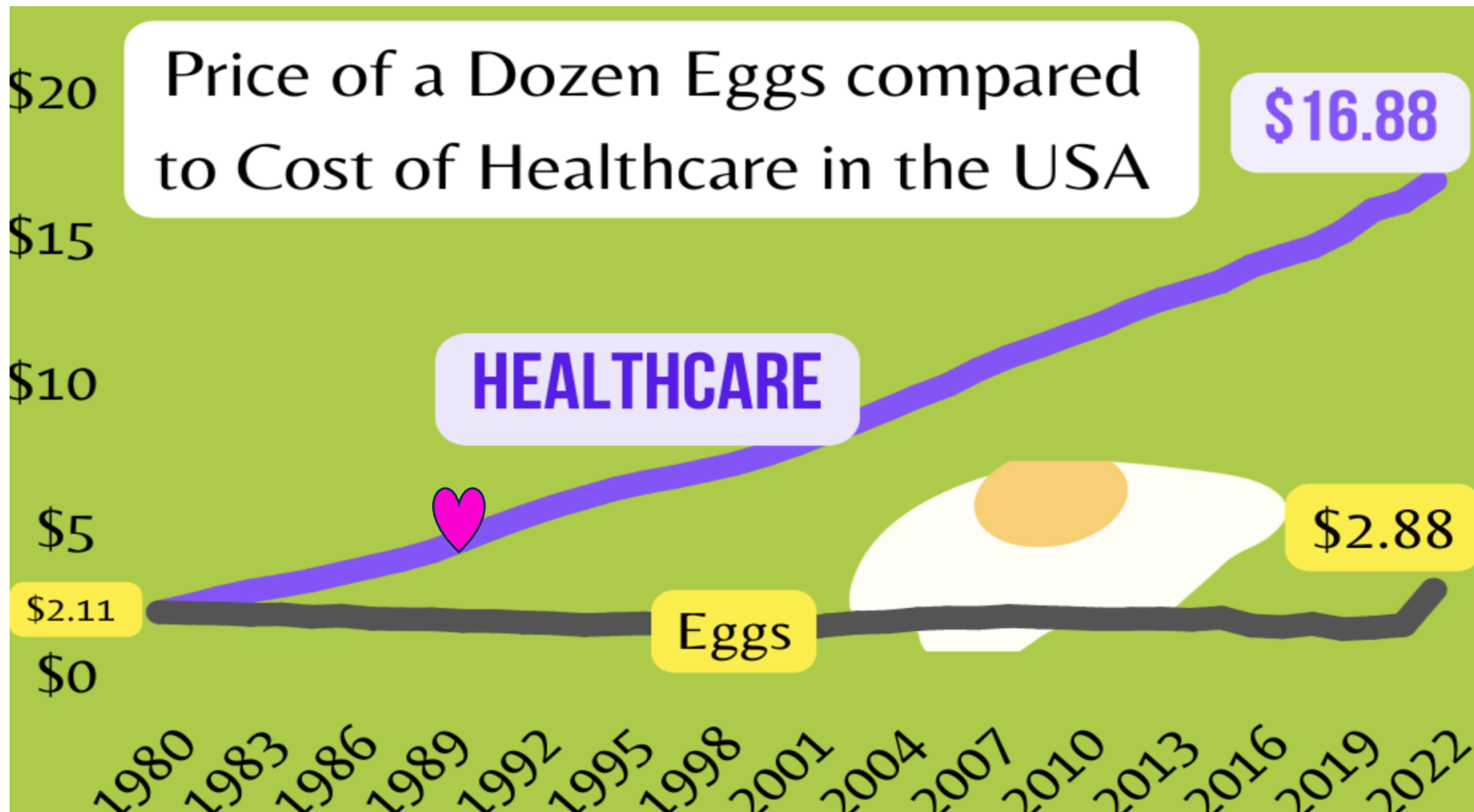
Follow the Money:
The Never-ending Cost Curve

Total national health expenditures as a percent of Gross Domestic Product, 1970-2021

18.3%

Peterson-KFF
Health System Tracker

Follow the Money:
Deferred and Delayed Care due to Cost

Percent of adults (age 18 years and older) reporting delaying or going without medical care due to costs, by selected characteristics, 2000-2021
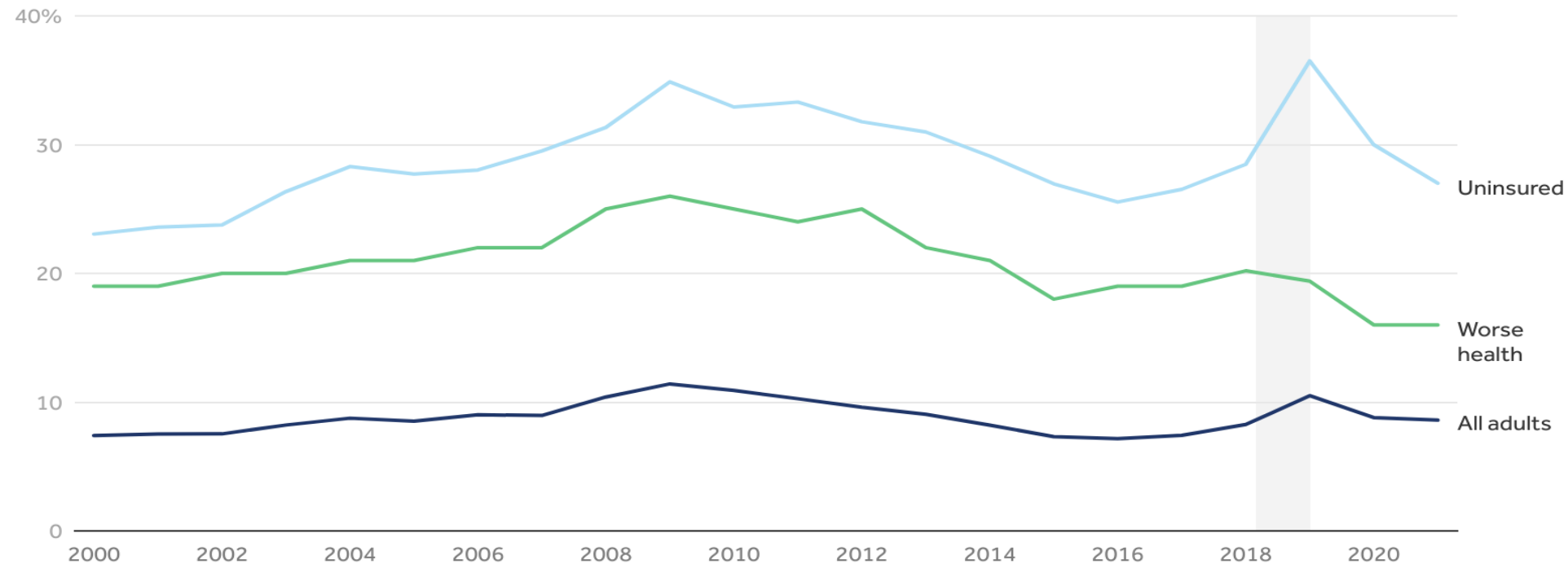
Note: Gray region represents the CDC redesign of NHIS. Changes from 2018 to 2019 are at least in part due to the NHIS questionnaire redesign, the updated weighting approach, or both, in addition to any actual change over time

Source: KFF analysis of National Health Interview Survey data

Peterson-KFF
Health System Tracker

Follow the Money:
The Duplicated Medical Student Debt Curve
(and the impact on primary care recruitment)

Average Medical School Graduate Debt Over Time

$239.7K
$218.3K
$203.0K
$157.1K
$154.6K
$99.2K
$85.2K
$64.4K
$38.5K
$13.5K

1978   1988   1998   2008   2018

● Average Debt   ● Adjusted for Inflation
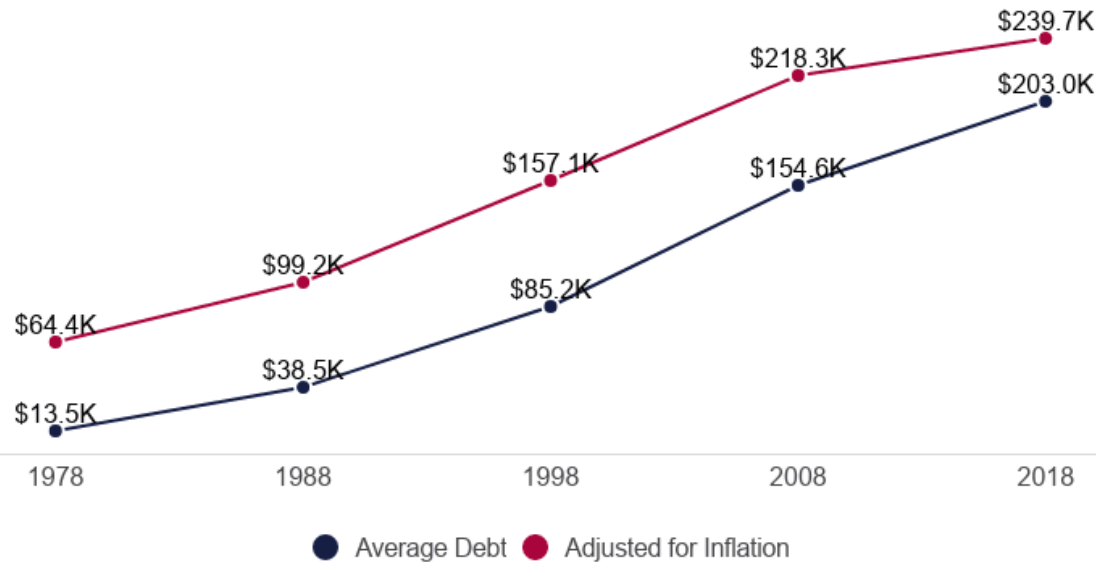
Source: AAMC

Primary Care Wages and Medical School Costs Relative to 2002
(© 2018 DOCTOREDMONEY.ORG)

- Internal Medicine
- General Pediatrics
- National Wages
- Family Medicine and GP
- Private Medical School
- Public Medical School

2005   2007   2009   2011   2013   2015   2017
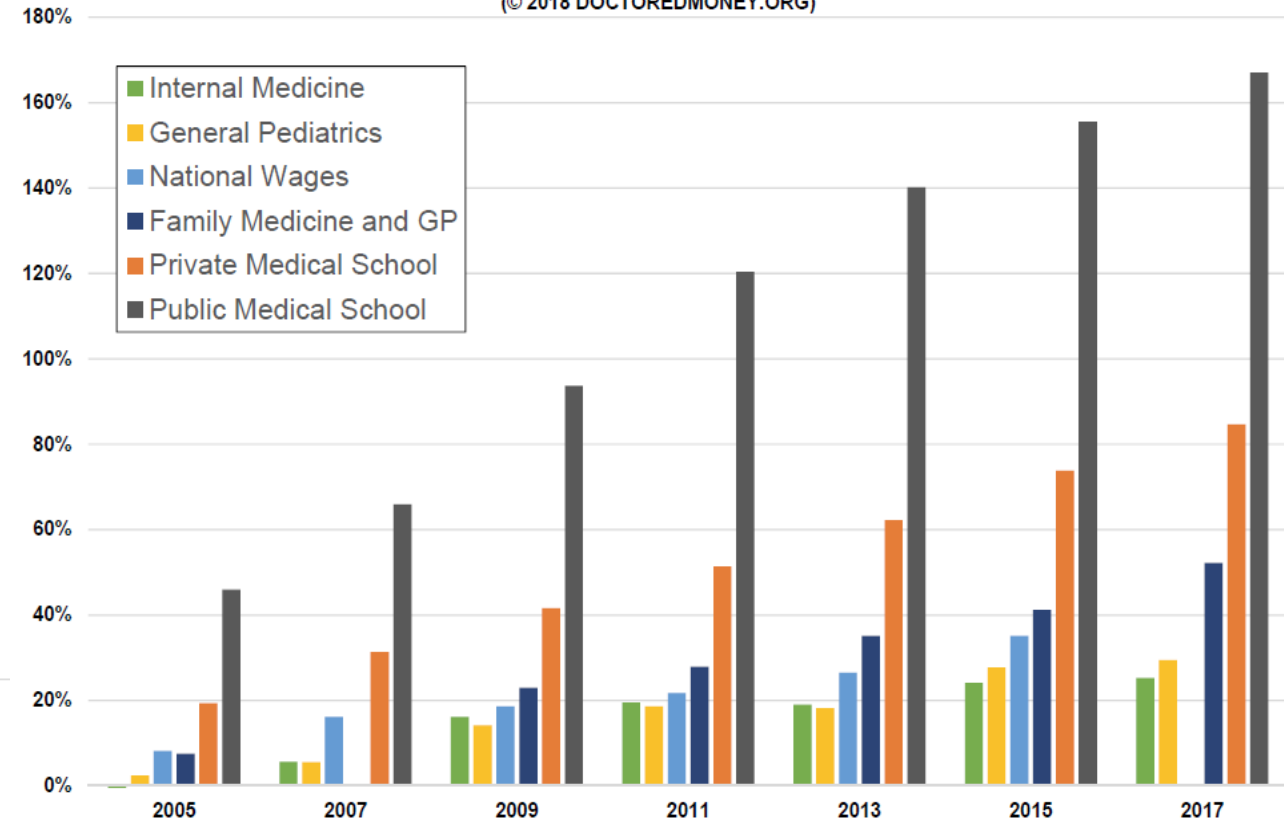
Follow the Money:
Financial Risks to Rural Health Systems
(and the impact to specialty and surgical care)

https://ruralhospitals.chqpr.org/Data1.html
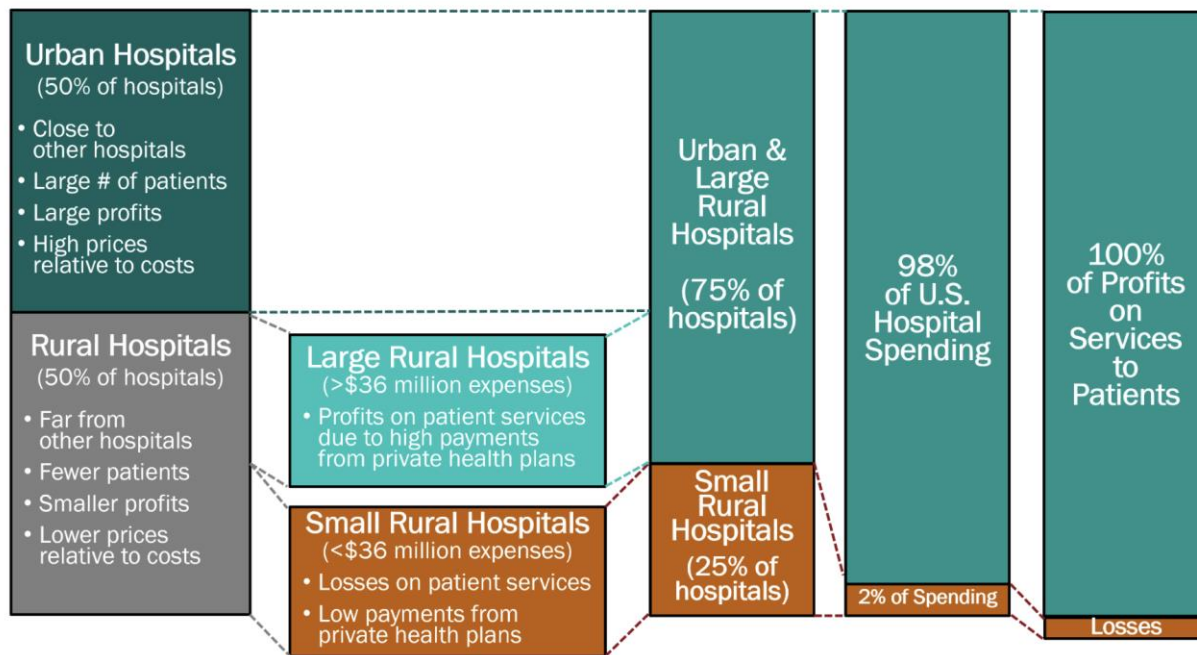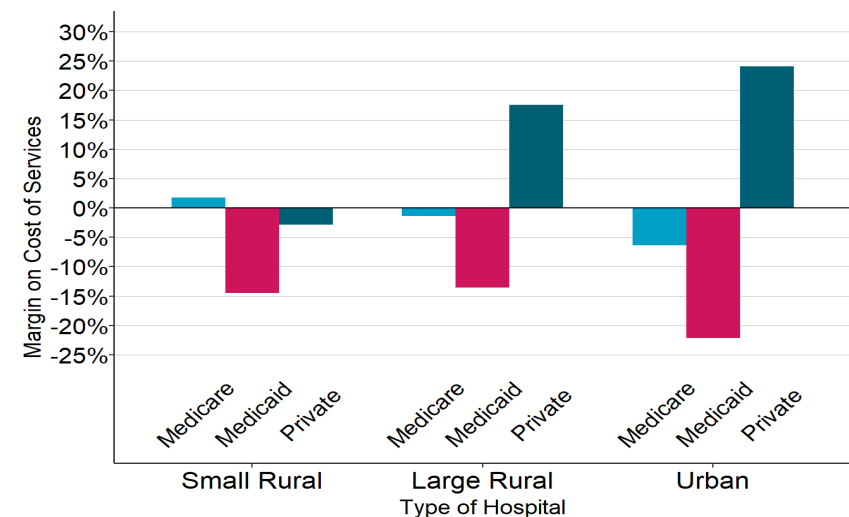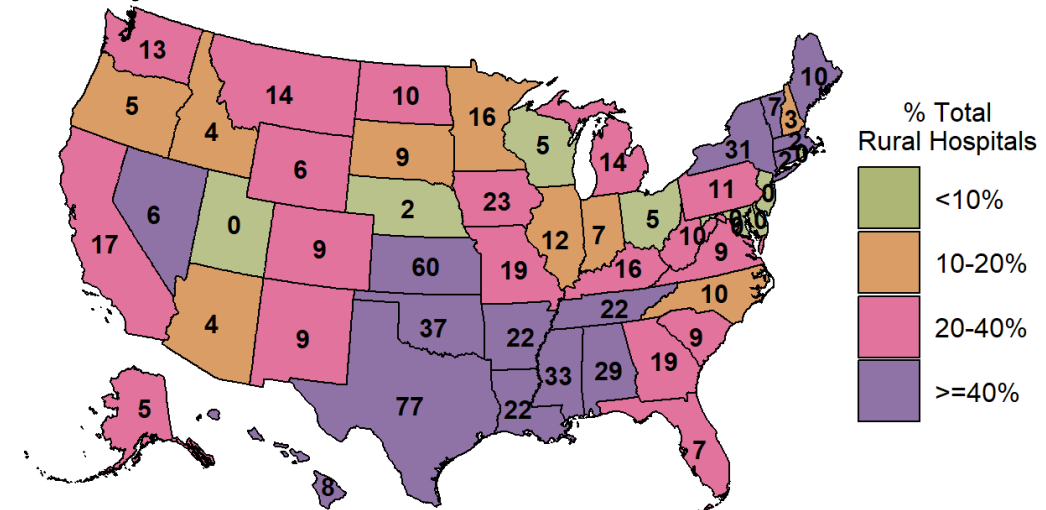
A Changing Workforce

Figure 12. Percentage of U.S. medical school graduates by sex, academic years 1980-1981 through 2018-2019.
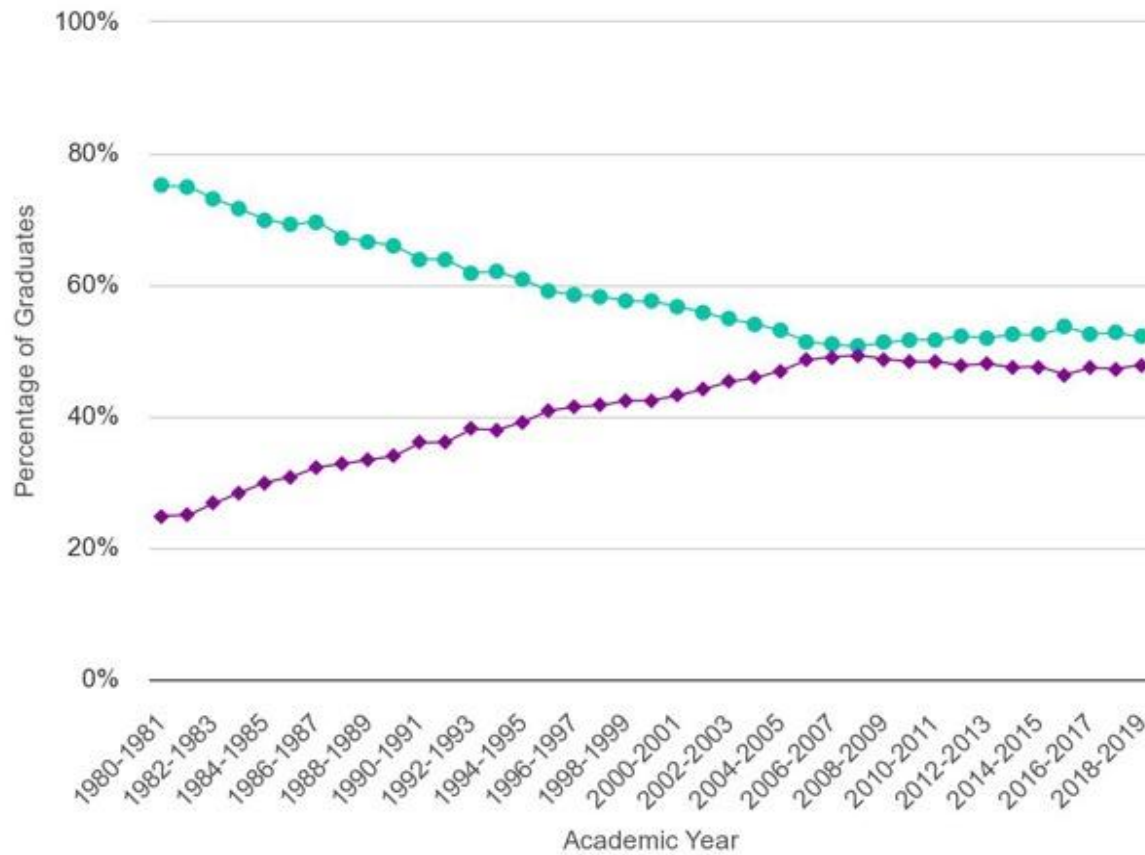
Click on legend item below to add or remove a line from the report.

◆ Female ● Male

Source: AAMC Data Warehouse: STUDENT as of Aug. 16, 2019.

Doctors' Glaring Pay Gap

Across the board, women physicians in the U.S. make substantially less than their male counterparts.

Men   Women

Average annual compensation for patient care

Source: Medscape Physician Compensation Report 2019

▽ HBR

Incongruence: Between Artifacts and Espoused Values in Medicine

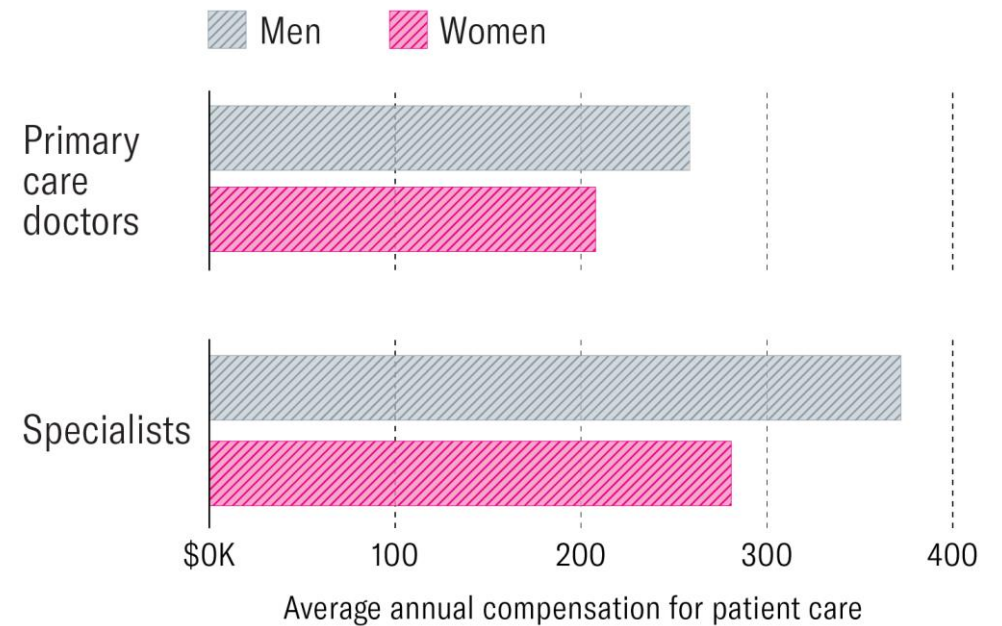| Domain	Espoused value (what we say)	Artifact (our behavior)	What it reveals
Culture of our organizations and health care system	Physicians are professionals (we trust them)	Preauthorization and excessive documentation required to justify billing and prevent malpractice suits	We do not trust you
	Physicians are our most highly trained and expensive workers (we should maximize their efforts)	Excessive clerical burden and ineffective use of time	Your time is not valuable
	High-quality care is our top priority	A delivery system that drives fatigue and burnout which erode quality of care	Economic priorities are more important than quality
		Focus on relative value units/volume/net operating income	Commoditization of physicians and patients
	We value patient autonomy, shared decision making, and tailoring care to individual needs	Visit lengths and limited staff support preclude shared decision making and tailoring care to individual patient needs	Economic priorities are more important than patient agency
	We believe in social justice and fair distribution of resources for our patients and communities	Organizational tactics that tailor access to optimize payer mix and care for highly reimbursed medical conditions rather than patient need	Economic priorities are more important than social justice assumptions

Incongruence: Between Artifacts and Espoused Values in Medicine

Domain	Espoused value (what we say)	Artifact (our behavior)	What it reveals
Professional culture	Self-care is important	Excessive hours, work always first, and often do not take care of ourselves (diet, exercise, sleep, and preventive health care)	Self-care is not important; short-term productivity is more important than sustainability
	Prevention is better than treatment	We do not attend to our own health needs	Physician health is not important
	To err is human	A professional culture of perfectionism, lack of vulnerability, and low self-compassion	Physicians expected to be superhuman
		Belief that mistakes are the fault of the individual and are unacceptable	We have not yet internalized many of the lessons of the quality movement that errors are inevitable in complex systems
	Fatigue impairs performance	Excessive work hours; work even when ill	We do not believe this adage applies to physicians or we are too arrogant to admit it does

Complexity and Care Delivery: Added Costs
Who bears the cost of this?
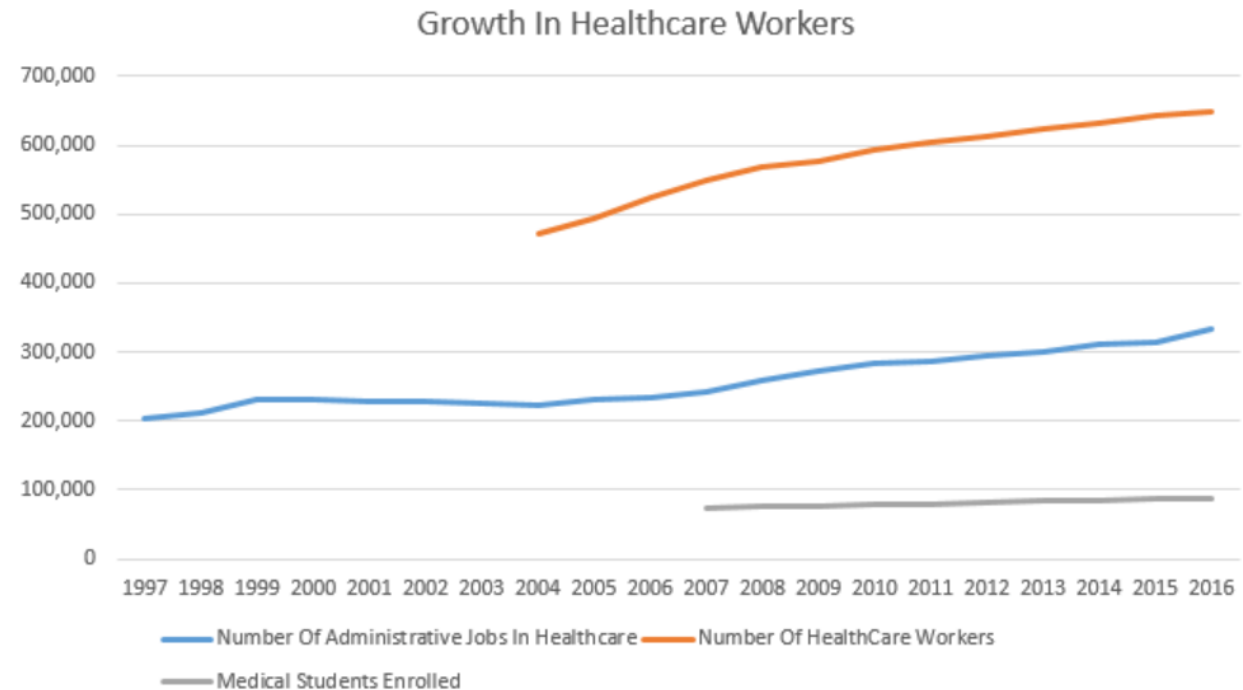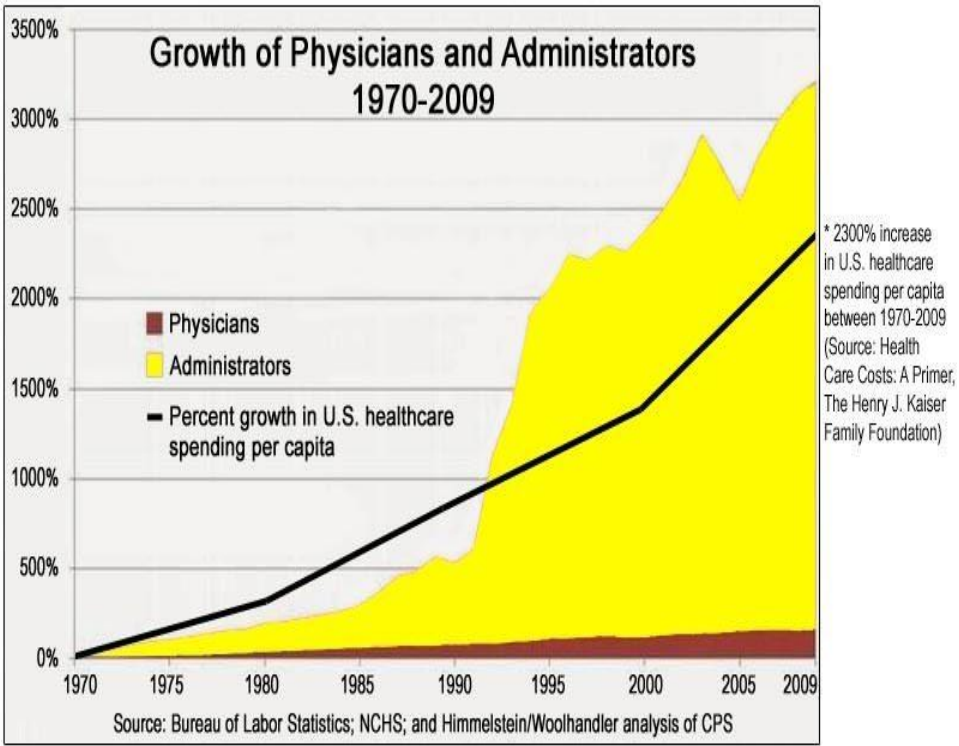
Data from the Kaiser Family Foundation

We end up with a "Work Around"

- Organization Change / Expansion
- Multiple Leadership Teams with Conflicting Expectations

Inherent Cultural Disconnect Widens

↑ Stereotyping
↓ Understanding

- High Staff Turnover
- Physician Burnout
- Lack of Motivation to Innovate or Educate

Tension Builds via

- Ineffective Communication
- Perceived Loss of Control
- Lack of Formal Leadership Training for Clinicians

Effective Collaboration & Organizational Excellence Around Shared Goals / Values

SOCIAL STRESS   ORGANIZATIONAL PUBERTY   MATURATION

Keller EJ, Giafaglione B, Chrisman HB, Collins JD, Vogelzang RL (2019) The growing pains of physician-administration relationships in an academic medical center and the effects on physician engagement. PLOS ONE 14(2): e0212014.
https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0212014
https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0212014

How do we prevent a crash?

Steps to Creating a Resilient Culture

Stabilize the foundation

Know the "play" (and the players)

Follow the money

Predict the trendlines

Build connections – with self, team and community

Steps to Healthy Work and Systems

Are you a guardian or a trader? And why?

Guardians:

"Superior/inferior" label

Value hierarchy and loyalty

Exert prowess and expertise

Are obedient and disciplined

Adhere to tradition

Make rich use of leisure

Treasure honor

Traders:

Shun force, be honest, dissent

Collaborate and compete

Respect contracts

Are industrious, thrifty, optimistic, efficient, inventive

Respect contracts

Come to voluntary agreements

Matheson DS, Kissoon N. A comparison of decision-making by physicians and administrators in healthcare settings. Crit Care. 2006;10(5):163. doi: 10.1186/cc5028. PMID: 16959045; PMCID: PMC1751052.

Steps to Healthy Work and Systems
Be intentional with self and others

For you

Know yourself – both what rewards you and your hot buttons

Use your time wisely and well

Get your work done efficiently. Work down your back log. Do today's work today.

Set boundaries around "24/7/365" work and hold to them

Take advantage of resources

Oregon Wellness Program
https://oregonwellnessprogram.org

Oregon Physician Coach Collective
https://oregonphysiciancoaches.org

Steps to Healthy Work and Systems
Be intentional with self and others

For systems and teams

Delegate work wisely
Don't assume that adding another person makes the job better or easier
Gather with intention
Design meetings that work – don't overpack agenda. "Flip" the work if needed
Allow time for debate and conscious decision making
Highlight values statements in budget priorities. There will always be scarcity
Praise in public, provide meaningful feedback, recognize effort daily
Celebrate abundance

Steps to Healthy Work and Systems
Abundance is the opposite of scarcity

For you

Honor and celebrate the significant role you play for your patients, colleagues and community

Do your job with integrity

Allow moments to reflect on what touched your spirit or your soul – during the day and everyday

Have fun – laugh, dance, smile, dress up, take photos, build community

For systems and teams

Create and reiterate a vision - -why we're here, who are we here for, why we do what we do.

Tell that story everyday – and more than once per day

Start small changes, then build on these – scale at a rate that works

Trust the people

Change is constant -- "Be like water"

Brown, Adrienne: "Emergent Strategy" AK Press 2017

Steps to Healthy Work and Systems
Follow the Money (and use it wisely)

For you

      Know your value

      Negotiate your value

      Know your contract

      Track your finances

      Save for now, save for the future, spend on what you need

For systems and teams

      Budgeting is a values based – make it so

      Invest in relationships as well as technology

      Simplify the problem solving and limit "rework"

      When investing in external customer upgrades take the time to simplify internal workflows

      Meetings are expensive, so are interruptions. Be thoughtful about these.

      People are not "vending machines". Recognizing effort with $ only goes so far

Steps to Healthy Work and Systems
Watch the trendlines. -- these will change

Stay ahead of legislative and payment changes in rules

Avoid technical solutions to adaptive challenges

Sensibly adopt new technologies (e.g. ChatGPT)

Simplify workflows --focus on internal customer service

Subtract (and don't add) agency problems

It's a 24/7 information economy – set reasonable limits and expectations

Steps to Healthy Self & Systems
May each day be a good day!

Say thank you -- often, unprompted, daily

Embrace change and learn from it
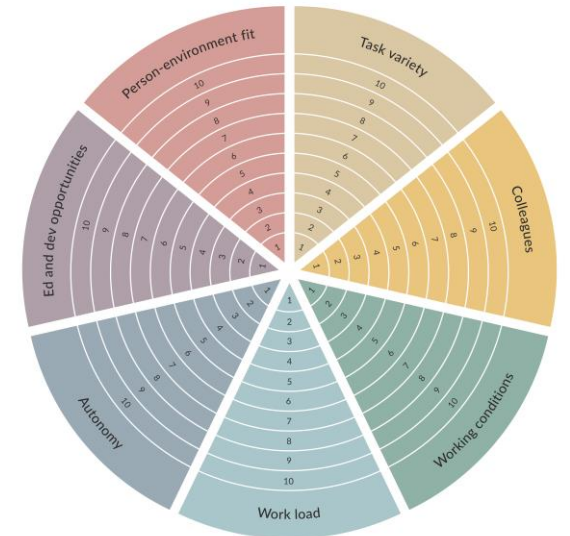
Lean into complexity (and simplify when you can)

Consider a counselor and /or a coach if you are feeling "stuck"

Celebrate something every day!

https://pro.positivepsychology.com/opt-in/resilience-pack/

THE JOB SATISFACTION WHEEL

Roelen, C. A. M., Koopmans, P. C., & Groothoff, J. W. (2008).
Which work factors determine job satisfaction? Work, 30, 433-439.

PositivePsychology.com

National Chai Day | September 21
#CelebrateEveryDay

Suggested Readings and Websites

Birsel, Ayse "Design the Long Life You Love" Running Press Adult, 2022

Eyal, Nir "Indistractable" BonBella Books, 2019

Haifetz, Ron et al "The Practice of Adaptive Leadership" Harvard Press, 2009

Parker, Priya "The Art of Gathering" Penguin, 2020

Scott, Kim et al "Radical Candor" St. Martin's Press, 2019

Stone, Douglas et al "Difficult Conversations" Penguin, 2010

      (new edition coming soon!)

Web Resources

https://www.thewholephysician.com (The Drive Time Debrief Podcast)

https://coachingforleaders.com (Coaching for Leaders Podcast and more)

https://conscious.is (The Conscious Leadership Group)

https://www.leaderfactor.com (Psychological Safety Training & Transformation)