CORE SKILL #1: MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is the gentle effort of paying attention on purpose, non-judgmentally.

Do you ever feel exhausted and not quite present?

Taking care of complex patients, teams, and organizations can make physicians become exhausted, burned out, and they report becoming “Mindless” -- not present and not Mindful. Practicing Mindfulness in one’s life (being) is a strong antidote to the difficult work and environments of Medicine (doing).

Having the awareness of what you are feeling and your state of mind gives you choices, so you can decide what is truly best for yourself and others, in a particular moment, before you act.

Even one mindful pause per day can lower your stress.

TOOLS

**Mindful breathing:** Tune into your breath, not changing anything, just feeling the sensations of breathing. Follow 1 complete breath cycle with your full attention. Work up to a few minutes at a time of mindfulness practice. Notice when thoughts come, then simply go back to the breath. Don’t judge! You can try attending to any other sensation in this way: touch, hearing, vision, etc.

**Mindful eating:** One meal a day, eat 1 or 2 bites silently and mindfully. See yourself slow down, relax, and enjoy the pleasure of eating.

**Mindfulness with family:** With your spouse or child, take a moment when they are talking to gently mindfully look them in the eyes and really “see” them. Just a few seconds, so it’s loving and warm.

**Mindfulness at work:** Next time you are going from one patient to the next, pick one sensation to feel for 5 or 10 full seconds. This could be the coolness of the doorknob into the next patient room or the texture of the curtain as you open it to see your next patient.

**Getting started:** Pick 1 way to practice mindfulness (simpler is better) and pick a time of the day and amount of time that you can definitely manage every day for a month. Even if only 10 seconds, try it and see what happens by the end of the month.