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# Mindfulness & Wellbeing

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# Curiosity

And avoiding premature mental closure...

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# What personality characteristics make an exemplary physician ?



How may these same characteristics become problematic?

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## *Psychological strengths of physicians*

- Thoroughness
- Commitment
- Perfectionism
- Healthy skepticism
- Altruism, stoicism, hard work
- Caring
- Rationality
- Self-criticism

## *Psychological vulnerabilities of physicians*

- Over-compulsiveness
  - Over-commitment
  - Inability to admit mistakes
  - Need for certainty
  - Neglecting self-care and family
  - Compassion fatigue
  - Emotional distance
  - Self-deprecation
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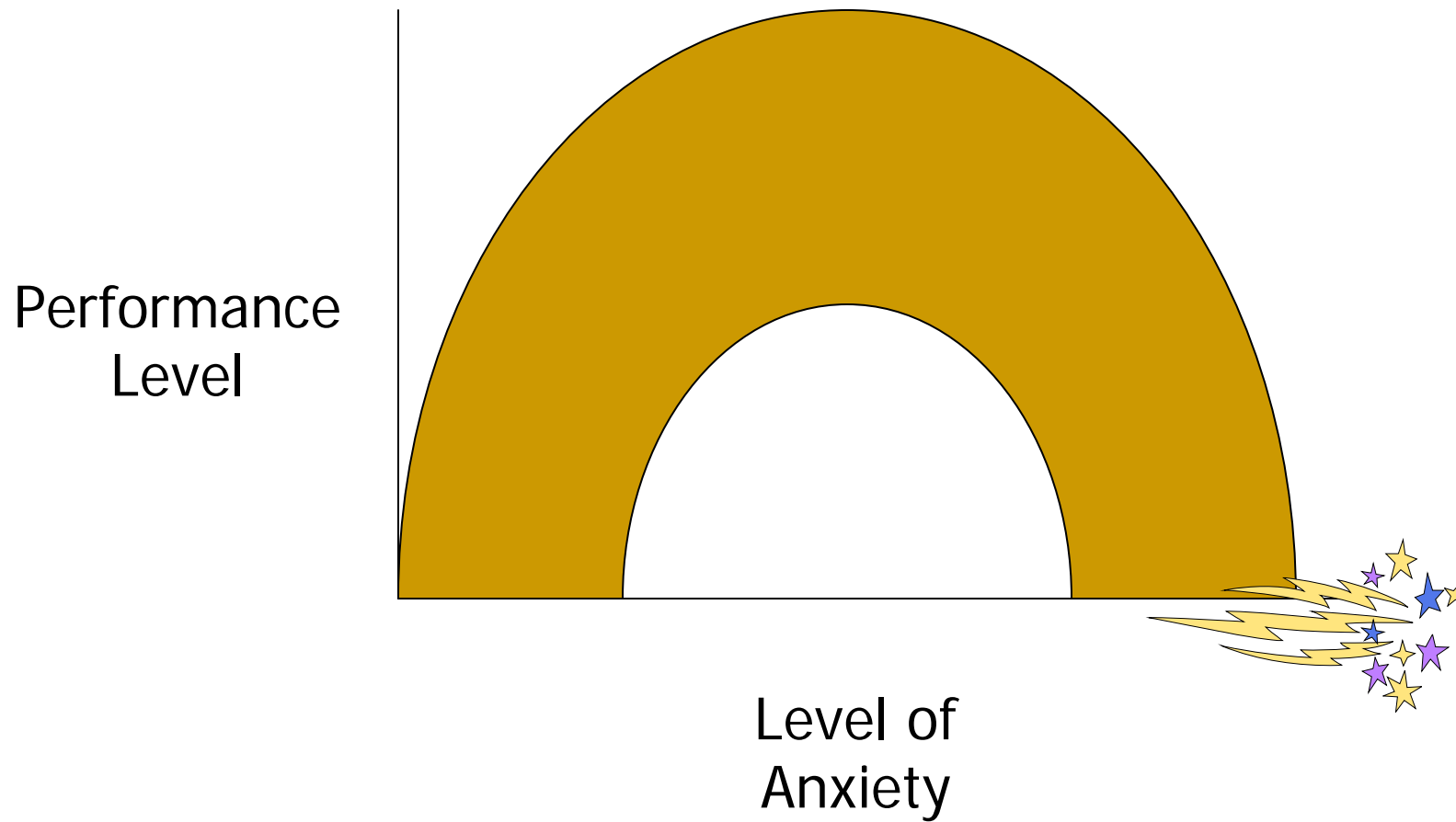


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# Noticing and paying attention

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# Anxiety Response Curve



# A problem with multi-tasking

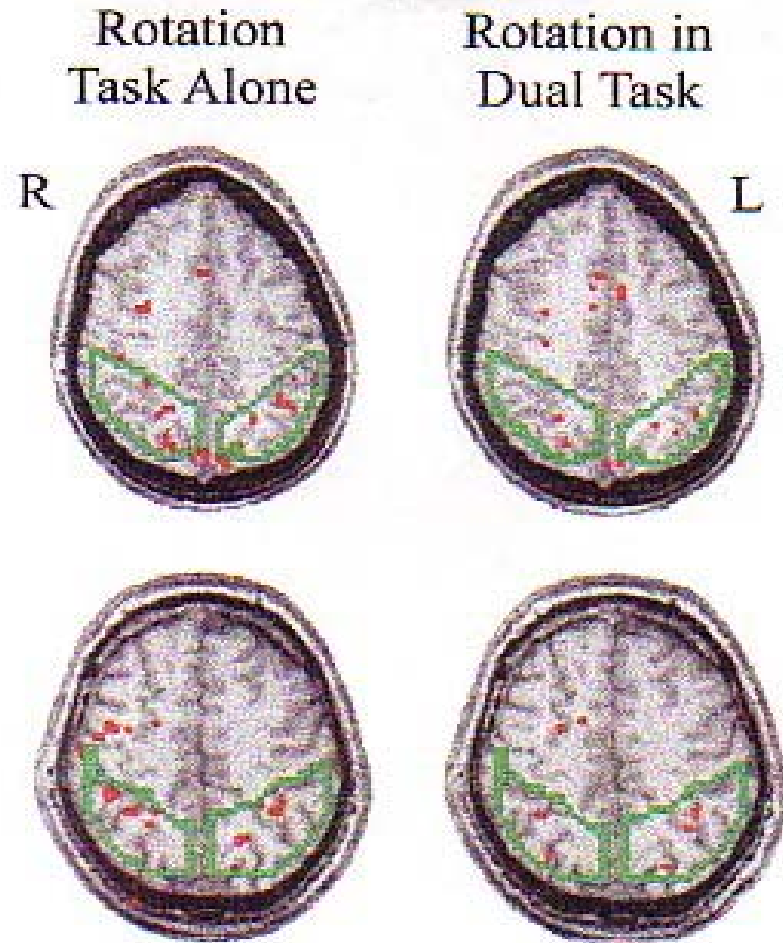


FIG. 4. Thresholded fMRI brain activation images (superimposed on structural images) comparing the single task mental rotation condition (left-hand column) to the dual task condition, for the slice showing most parietal activation, in two participants. The number of activated voxels in the parietal ROIs decreases from the single task condition to the dual task condition.

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# Burnout

Found in 25% - 60% of practicing physicians / residents / med students

- **Emotional exhaustion**
  - Emotionally overextended and exhausted by work
- **Depersonalization**
  - Negative, cynical attitude, treating patients as objects
- **Sense of low personal accomplishment**
  - Feelings of incompetence, inefficiency and inadequacy

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# Common causes of burnout

- Overwork
- Sleep deprivation
- Low control / high responsibility
- Inadequate support
- Lack of self-awareness
- Imbalance between personal and professional life

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# What is Mindfulness?

**Moment to moment nonjudgmental awareness.**

**Clarity**

**Nonconceptual, nondiscriminatory**

**Flexible**

**Empirical**

**Oriented to the present moment**

**Stable**

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# The Goals of Mindful Practice

- Becoming more flexible, attentive, curious and aware.
    - Enhance awareness of intra-personal environment & inter-personal behavior
    - Enhance awareness of stress & how to respond
  - This will help:
    - avoid burnout
    - provide better patient care
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# Mindful practice

Moment-to-moment purposeful attentiveness to one's own mental processes during every day work with the goal of practicing with clarity and compassion

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# One can one be mindful of:

- The body
  - breath, contact, movements, technical skills
  - bodily sensations as a clue to state of mind
- Feelings and emotions
  - pleasant and unpleasant sensations (the “sinking feeling”)
  - sadness, anxiety, heaviness, acceptance
- Thoughts, attitudes, beliefs
  - state of alertness/attentiveness/distractedness
  - “holding on”/“letting go”
  - cognitive processes (decision-making, “reflection”)

# Mindfulness and clinical practice

- **Attentive observation**
- **Critical curiosity**
- **Beginners mind**
- **Presence**



- **Quality of care**
  - **Noticing**
  - **Clinical reasoning**
  - **Technical skills**
- **Quality of caring**
  - **Compassion**
  - **Empathy**
  - **Ethics**
- **Well-being**
  - **Adaptability**
  - **Self-care**
  - **Self-monitoring**

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# Mindful Communication: Bringing Intention, Attention, and Reflection into Clinical Practice

Krasner, et al. Association of an educational program in mindful communication with burnout, empathy, and attitudes in primary care physicians. *JAMA* 2009, 302(12): 1284-1293.

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## Study participants

- 70 Primary care physicians
- 54% Male, 46% Female
- 49% Internists, 41% FP, 10% Peds
- 71% suburban , 25% urban
- 15.9 years in practice

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# Correlations with mindfulness training

- Burnout
  - Emotional Exhaustion  $r = -.32$   $p < .001$
  - Personal Accomplishment  $r = .33$   $p < .001$
- Mood Disturbance:
  - Total Mood Disturbance  $r = -.39$   $p < .001$
  - Tension  $r = -.31$   $p < .001$
  - Depression  $r = -.34$   $p < .001$
  - Fatigue  $r = -.32$   $p < .001$
- Personality:
  - Conscientiousness  $r = .29$   $p < .001$
  - Emotional Stability  $r = .25$   $p < .001$
- Empathy
  - Perspective taking  $r = .31$   $p < .001$

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# The ideal and the threats ...

- The ideal

- To self-monitor during everyday medical practice
- To practice more effectively, safely and efficiently
- To realize greater well-being during medical practice.

- The threats

- Feeling overwhelmed in the face of suffering
- Premature closure during clinical reasoning
- Dealing with errors – real and perceived
- Chronically feeling fatigued and burnout

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# Responding to challenge: Reaction, survival & growth



- **Unhealthy reactions**

- Unhelpful behaviors that you feel “you can’t keep yourself” from doing

- **“Survival skills”**

- These may help you get through a tough time, but may be destructive if habitual (avoid being *proud* of these)

- **Growth; healthy coping and changing**

- Important to your long term development as a physician and as a person
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# Research on physician satisfaction suggests:

- Adopt a **healthy philosophical attitude** toward life
  - Not taking yourself too seriously, simplifying, balance, self-forgiveness
- Find **support** in the workplace
  - Good mentoring, setting limits, administrative support
- Engage and find **meaning**
  - Sense of self-worth and self-efficacy
- Develop **healthy relationships**
  - Time with friends and family, supportive partner, support group
- **Take care of yourself**
  - Exercise, nutrition, treat depression, avoid intoxicants, vacation
- Cultivate **self-awareness**
  - Meditation, support groups, narrative writing

*Source: Shanafelt TD et al. 2003 and 2005, Horowitz 2003*

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# Paying attention

Learning to notice

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# Home practice

- Every day, find 2 brief opportunities during the work day to stop briefly, take a breath and pay attention to the moment
  - Notice the things in your environment you are reacting to
  - Notice any bodily sensations, thoughts and emotions
- Take 2 minutes each morning and 2 minutes each evening to mindfully breathe. Perhaps do 20 breaths – 10 in the morning, 10 in the evening. Increase as tolerated.

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“The secret of caring for the patient is caring for oneself while caring for the patient”

L. Canbid



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Be Well

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# Healing Skills for Medical Practice

Churchill & Schenck Ann Inter Med 2008;149:720-724

- Do the little things
  - Take time
  - Be open and listen
  - Find something to like, to love
  - Remove barriers
  - Let the patient explain
  - Share authority
  - Be committed
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