

## Poster: From Coping to Thriving: Finding Our Own Agency in a Challenging Cultural Milieu

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### Objectives:

1. Recognize physician self-care as analogous to that of elite athletes
2. Understand the importance of physician health in our roles as Tribal Leaders
3. Apply the Law of Diffusion of Innovation to personal and systems change, to move medical culture away from shame and isolation, toward self-efficacy and unification.

### Who Are We and Why Are We Here?

- We answered the call to care for people in need, to help them heal.
- We honor the privilege and responsibility of this sacred contract.
- We harbor intrinsic meaning and motivation for the vocation.
- Yet, healthcare systems increasingly separate us from our core mission.
- We struggle with frustration, cynicism, burnout, and loss of meaning.
- Medical culture shames and isolates us, tells us we are weak, for feeling distressed.
- ❖ We attend conferences on physician health seeking connection.
- ❖ We seek strategies to rekindle the fire we felt in our hearts when we started our training.
- ❖ We seek the wisdom and counsel of fellow healers, and the fellowship of the like-hearted



### We Are Elite Athletes

- Specific and highly developed skill set
- Trained and honed over years of practice
- Continual discipline to maintain
- Goal oriented, always striving to improve
- Member of a team (think *Olympics*: Swimmer, Swim Team, Team USA, Olympic Village)



### HOW ELITE ATHLETES CARE FOR THEMSELVES:

#### **Fuel & Train**

- » “Regular people diet and exercise. Athletes fuel and train.” –Melissa Orth-Fray
- » Our bodies are our vehicles. Elite athletes’ vehicles require premium fuel and meticulous maintenance.
- » We struggle with the same challenges as our patients—time, motivation, discipline.
- » We have an opportunity to walk the talk, and practice what we preach. Every good lifestyle choice, no matter how small (apple instead of candy, stand rather than sit), is a step of intention toward health.

#### **Rest & Recover**

- » Chronic sleep debt increases risks for diabetes, obesity, impaired immune function: GET MORE SLEEP.
- » Rest and recovery are integral for sustaining long term performance and injury prevention—ie burnout.
- » Take your allotted vacations and *really* disconnect. The world will still function (temporarily) without you.
- » Broaden your methods: 15 minute walk, 10 minute meditation, 5 minutes of journaling—unwind, unload.

#### **Manage your stress**

- » How do you know when you are ‘stressed?’ How/where does stress manifest in your body?
- » What are your existing resilience practices? How quickly do you abandon them when things get busy?
- » Exercise mindfulness: Live in the moment; breathe deeply; speak and act intentionally, not incidentally.
- » We are no different from toddlers—easily emotionally hijacked when tired, hungry, over-extended.
- » Elite athletes use the disciplines above to manage their emotions and stay focused.

### Cultivate positive relationships

- » Coaches, teammates, trainers, psychologists, equipment managers—no athlete succeeds alone.
- » We thrive when we feel seen, heard, understood, accepted, loved, and safe.
- » It is only when our relationships are strong and we feel connected, that we can truly care for ourselves, our patients, and our teams.
- » Who is your support network, and how do they hold you up?
- » Who do you support, and why/how does this fulfill you?

### We are the Team Captains—the Tribal Leaders

- Most of us live in what Logan et al describe as a Stage 3 Tribe. Our attention is focused on ourselves—our own performance and success, whether we feel acknowledged for our contributions, and how we are perceived by others. The mantra for people living at this stage is, “I’m great; you’re not.” Tribes at this stage function poorly.
- Recall your experience as a medical student on different rotations, learning from supervisors in each specialty disparaging others, expecting you to play along. You were like a child in a family feud.
- Physicians stand at the intersection of health and leadership. Like it or not, we are the tribal leaders in medicine. As such, our moods and attitudes are contagious, and can infect whole organizations. *This why self-care is so crucial—imagine having to work for the tantruming toddler all day, every day!*

**Cultural Map**  
The Five Stages of Culture

Stage	%	Behavior	Relationship to people	Language
5	2%	Innocent Wonderment	Team	"Life is great"
4	22%	Tribal Pride	Stable Partnership	"We're great"
3	49%	Lone Warrior	Personal Domination	"I'm great"
2	25%	Apathetic Victim	Separate	"My life sucks"
1	2%	Undermining	Alienated	"Life Sucks"

From: Your Leadership Style, by Logan, et al. © 2008, Westwood Group

### HOW EXCELLENT CAPTAINS CARE FOR THE TEAM:

#### Appraise: Prioritize self-care

- » Like on an airplane: “Put your own mask on first.” Tribal leaders know that to effectively care for others long term, they first need to be healthy themselves.
- » Practice awareness and management of your emotions, and prevent emotional hijacking, so as to be emotionally available to our teammates and tribe members.

#### Empathize: Speak the team’s language(s)

- » Members of a given culture can only comprehend the language of the cultures directly above and below them. We cannot take someone from Stage 2 directly to Stage 5.
- » Think of your favorite teachers—they were able to relate to learners at all stages of development—at all stages of tribal culture—and lovingly lift us to the next stage.
- » *“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” --T. Roosevelt*

#### Inspire: Lead by example

- » Effective leaders reject victim mentality, take responsibility for our actions, and model accountability for fellow tribe members.
- » When we captains can take our own mistakes in stride, as learning opportunities rather than shameful horrors, we make it safe for our teammates to do the same.
- » Everybody is then free to take more risks, voice more ideas, offer more of their authentic selves as a contribution to the whole,
- » Because they see us, their leaders, the ones who set the tone for the group, doing it, too.
- » Key here also is leading *out loud*—excellent captains *articulate and coach* the methods of self-awareness and self-management that help us all succeed.
- » By inspiring individuals to pursue personal excellence, leaders create a supportive milieu for collaboration and collective achievement.

### **Motivate: Empower team members**

- » Effective captains (coaches, leaders) recognize team members' strengths and potential, as well as areas for improvement.
- » Rather than shaming teammates for mistakes or deficiencies, good tribal leaders provide feedback and encouragement, and opportunities for practice and development.
- » They take into account each team member's personal goals, and help to align them with those of the collective—excellent captains connect individuals to the whole.

### HOW EXCELLENT CAPTAINS ELEVATE TEAM MORALE (TRIBAL CULTURE):

#### **Project the Mission**

- » Like a Bat Signal! Embodying it with crystal clarity themselves, true captains and leaders project the core mission of the group: illuminating shared purpose and the common path forward in service of the Mission.
- » Excellent leaders walk among the group, casting the beacon to the front. Any team member need only look up to affirm the ideal with confidence, passion, and integrity.

#### **Focus on the Endeavor, not the Outcomes**

- » We can only control what we do—attitudes, protocols, practices—not others' reactions, not their outcomes. Think smoking cessation, glucose control, blood pressure, patient satisfaction. We cannot control these. But do we do what we say we will do? Do we conduct ourselves according to our own tribal mission and values?
- » Exceptional leaders uphold a tribe's intrinsic drive toward self-defined excellence, rather than allowing external incentives and artificial benchmarks to dictate conduct.
- » When we work together to do the right things, aligned with our core values and shared mission, the right outcomes will inevitably result.

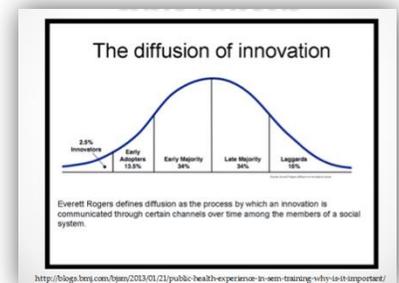
#### **Focus on All of Us Together, not any one alone**

- » Effective leaders forsake "I'm great," and embrace "We're great." It's not about any one person's success or failure, *least of all* the leader's.
- » The health and success of the group depends on the strong connections among its members, each with a unique and acclaimed contribution to make.
- » The strongest leaders tend the glue that sustains those connections. They are not the glue themselves; they simply spread it.

### Why Tribal Leaders Need to Connect

**Law of Diffusion of Innovation:** "The process by which an innovation is communicated, through certain channels, over time, among the participants in a social system. This process relies heavily on human capital."

- We, conference attendees, are the innovators and early adopters in the movement toward a kinder, healthier culture in medicine.
- Sometimes it feels lonely, as if we are the only ones in our organizations called to restore our profession to its primary purpose and wisdom, which is vital human relationships.
- As we commune here around this common virtue, we recharge. We share a common language, cross-pollenate ideas. We inspire one another to stay on the path.
- We amplify our common voice.
- As the conference ends, we carry our new affiliations home. We apply fresh strategies to connect with yet more early adopters, and multiply our supportive networks.
- Slowly and steadily, the majority converts, as one by one they realize the benefits of advanced tribal membership: connection, mission, agency, and fulfillment.



## Be the Change Agent for Culture in Your Tribe

- Get clear on your personal mission and how it manifests most authentically.
- Immerse your psyche in the calling, the vocation.
- Articulate it. Model it. *Exude* it.
- Invest: Fuel, Train, Rest, Nurture, and Cultivate positive relationship with yourself.
- Take the returns and re-invest in others. Mentor, Coach, and Lead by example.
- Project your mission so everybody can see. Align it with the best in those around you.
- Call out everybody's personal excellence and aim it in service of the shared mission.
- Commune with the Tribe often. Have patience. Change takes time. Stay on the path.



## Recommended Reading

1. Logan et al, *Tribal Leadership*, 2008, Harper-Collins
2. Sinek, Simon, *Start With Why*, 2011, and *Leaders Eat Last*, 2014, Penguin
3. Zander & Zander, *The Art of Possibility*, 2002, Penguin
4. Bodenheimer & Sinsky, From Triple to Quadruple Aim: Care of the Patient Requires Care of the Provider, *Ann Fam Med* November/December 2014 12(6): 573-576
5. Sinsky et al, In Search of Joy in Practice: A Report of 23 High-Functioning Primary Care Practices, *Ann Fam Med* May/June 2013 11(3): 272-278
6. Ekleberry-Hunt et al, Changing the Conversation from Burnout to Wellness..., *J Grad Med Educ*, Dec 2009 1(2): 225-230

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