



LIFELINE

Meeting the unique needs of physicians and their families



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Physician Peer Coaching: It's Not Just for Medical School Anymore

"Watch one, do one, teach one" is how you learned to do most procedures in medical school. That's because physicians not only prefer learning from other doctors--they learn better when peers are doing the teaching, coaching and mentoring.^{1,2}

EHR adoption is a case in point. Every EHR vendor provides onsite and offsite training in the basics of using their programs--but many physicians remain frustrated and slow in their efforts to chart electronically.

According to a recent article in *EHR Intelligence*, an increasing number of healthcare organizations are taking advantage of physician coaches who work one-on-one with physicians to apply EHR in their integrated clinical workflow and overcome challenges to their knowledge.

Trainers are still used to teach the technology, but physician coaches are used to share shortcuts and address practical issues physicians encounter in their clinical workflow.

"A physician coach is going to understand what the physician is trying to do and the implications if he or she can't get it right," says Deb Wood, PhD, senior consultant for Physician Wellness Services.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TRANSFER

Peer coaching isn't just effective for transferring technical skills, it's also effective for learning how to:



- Communicate more effectively with patients, peers and administration³
- Address sources of frustration or anger at work
- Handle grief and loss
- Overcome challenges in managing administrative or other practice-related tasks
- Improve relationships at work and in your personal lives
- Balance the demands of family and practicing medicine

Peer coaches aren't psychotherapists who look deep in your past to understand your problems today--they look at what's happening today that's making you want to quit your job tomorrow.

RELIEVE STRESS TO PREVENT BURNOUT

Physician peer coaching is particularly helpful for addressing stress and burnout--for physicians who can admit that stress is getting to them.

"There's broad recognition that stress is a problem," says Alisa Duran, MD, associate professor of medicine at the University of Minnesota. "Most doctors don't see how it's affecting them personally.

"There's a stigma associated with asking for help," says Duran. "It normally takes some sort of crisis for a resident to seek help."

As a result, many doctors don't seek help until it's too late. "It's almost impossible to retain a physician who's totally burned out and hates coming to work each day," says Michelle Mudge-Riley, DO, MHA, a physician peer coach for Physician Wellness Services.

TRANSFORMING YOUR OUTLOOK & CAREER: HOW PHYSICIAN PEER COACHING CAN HELP

While mentoring is considered an essential component of many business careers, it's rarely made available to doctors and surgeons in practice--even though having a mentor is strongly related to overall job satisfaction according to a 2005 study by the University of Pennsylvania Medical School.⁴

That's why free, confidential physician peer coaching is available to you as part of your Physician EAP plan. Tell us your needs and we'll pair you with a physician peer coach who can meet with you by phone or, in some cases, in person--whenever it's most convenient for you.

Your physician peer coach will provide an empathetic ear, help in resolving short-term problems--and provide referrals to additional resources as needed. You'll get the assistance you need to build the career you want and recapture your joy in practicing medicine. Physicians often consult our peer coaches when they are experiencing:

- Unusual levels of stress
- Increased frustration or anger at work
- Grief and loss
- Challenges in managing administrative or other practice-related tasks
- Communication difficulties with other staff members or administration
- Relationship issues at work and their personal lives
- Difficulty balancing the demands of family and practicing medicine

Peer coaching can help with:

- Support and empathetic listening
- Non-judgmental insights on work-related issues
- Finding balance between work and personal life
- Practice-related advice and feedback
- Assistance with personal goal setting

Peer coaching does not provide:

- Physician/patient relationship
- Prescriptions or medication management
- Psychiatric or psychological evaluation

Your Physician EAP benefit offers not only free peer coaching for the number of sessions included in your plan, it also includes telephone consultation with our senior consultants--available 24/7 by calling 1.877.731.3949. Your benefit also includes free, face-to-face counseling with master's- and doctorate-level professionals for every member of your family.

"Many physicians who've benefited from peer coaching become champions of it for their peers," notes Mudge-Riley. "As physicians, we have to normalize asking for help. We all need it. We all benefit from it. There's no reason to be ashamed of taking advantage of it."

¹ Entezama Pouya, Franzblau Lauren E., Chung Kevin C., "Mentorship in surgical training: a systematic review," HAND, March 2012

² Hoover, E.L. " Mentoring surgeons in private and academic practice." Archives of Surgery, June 2005

³ Yedidia MJ, Gillespie CC, Kachur E, Schwartz MD, Ockene J, Chepaitis AE, Snyder CW, Lazare A, Linpkins M Jr., Effects of communications training on medical student performance, JAMA, September 2003

⁴ Wasserstein AG, Quistberg DA, Shea JA, "Mentoring at the University of Pennsylvania: results of a faculty survey," Journal of General Internal Medicine, February, 2007.

Physician Peer Coaching: Case Studies

Here are a few practical ways in PWS physician peer coaches have helped physicians address career challenges:

Case Study 1: Fed up with Medicine A physician considering leaving medical practice contacted PWS physician peer coach Michelle Mudge-Riley, DO, MHA. He wasn't sure he'd saved enough for retirement and wasn't sure with his skill set what career track he should pursue.

"I didn't try to talk him out of leaving medicine but listened to his concerns and frustrations about his demanding workload and personal challenges," says Mudge-Riley.

Once he'd discussed all his challenges and options, the physician decided his best course was to redesign his practice and call schedule in a way that left him more time to pursue other interests and achieve better work/life balance.

With a little coaching on communication skills, he was able to advocate more effectively for himself. By taking advantage of the financial planning resources available through PWS, he was able to create a retirement plan. In a few brief sessions, he was reengaged and happy with his career choices.

Case Study 2: Worried About a Lawsuit A physician from a large healthcare organization was experiencing heightened levels of anxiety over a malpractice suit and wanted to talk to someone who had lived through the same experience.

The physician spoke to a PWS physician peer coach who listened to her problem and helped her "normalize" her emotions, educated her on what to expect in the litigation--and worked with her on a plan for self care. The doctor reported that she found this support very helpful and stated she would have been uncomfortable reaching out to a colleague at her place of employment.

The Physician Concierge: When "Do It Yourself" Won't Do

Independence and self-reliance are core strengths for most physicians--but are you overworking those skills? Few people have less free time than doctors, so why waste it doing things you could so easily delegate to the Physician Concierge?

Here's a perfect example of how we helped a physician moving to a new state. She called to talk to a physician peer coach about the wisdom of--and stress resulting from--her decision to uproot her family. In addition to the emotional issues surrounding the move, she faced a number of practical problems.

The peer coach suggested delegating those tasks to The Physician Concierge. With one call, the physician was able to find:

- Emergency day care for her 10-month old (Although she was hiring a nanny, she wanted a back up for day care.)
- A cleaning service for biweekly, thorough cleanings
- An interior designer to help her decorate her new home
- A 24-hour gym near his office and their home for her husband

Whether you're planning a vacation, event, business meeting or date, The Physician Concierge can help you find tickets, make reservations and smooth the way. There's almost no domestic chore or service we can't source. Sure, you can Google many of these things for yourself--but we provide a level of vetting and coordination physicians rarely have time to do, from scheduling to arranging for payment.

Next time you're overwhelmed by the number of things you have to do, make a list of all the ones you're least interested in doing and send it our way.