

32. Raising Awareness on Physician Burnout  
with Dr. Diana Londoño



**FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT**

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**Michael:** Well, welcome back to Doctors Living Deliberately. Hey, Arpita. How's everything this morning?

**Arpita:** Oh, it's good. How about you, Michael?

**Michael:** Doing great and super excited for our guest today. Why don't you tell everybody who's here with us today.

**Arpita:** So today we are lucky to have Dr. Diana Londoño with us. She is a board certified urologist. She's also the founder of Physician Coach Support where doctors can get confidential peer support seven days a week. Welcome, Dr. Londoño.

**Diana:** Thank you so much for having me. This is so exciting to see two amazing people, humans, coaches doing this together. I think this is just an amazing platform and just lovely to see you guys doing this. It's so exciting.

**Michael:** Absolutely. We're so excited to have you here with us. Well, we actually know you very well, but we would love if you could tell people a little bit about yourself and your journey. Give us a little bit about your background.

**Diana:** I'm a urologist in Los Angeles and you know, as many of us in medicine, you know, have gone through burnout and it looked very different each time. And even, you know, as I went through it and looking back, trying to identify the whys, and for me the whys were different each time. And I think just learning about it, reading about it, understanding like the human brain and how everything works, you know, to me it just really has sort of be a little more clear, like either it'll start with chronic, you know, stress, if you call it stress, fear, or worry that it's just, you know, incessant and it won't stop and you don't find a place, a time to sort of stop that cycle of that sympathetic and really move it to more parasympathetic. And then it really starts leading you to those feelings of burnout, those symptoms of burnout, which can manifest very differently for many people. And I think sometimes it's challenging to know you're in it. And I think it's important sometimes to talk about how it manifests in different people so that you could be like, whoa, I kind of am feeling that, or I didn't realize that's what it is. And really normalize, have conversations about it so you can identify it and then do something about it. Because if you don't know you have something, then you're not gonna do anything about it. So awareness is always the first step. But as I went through burnout twice you know, one of the ways the second time I got sort of out of it was learning about coaching, coaching principles, which again, are about awareness to start, and then realizing how your mind is so powerful and those thoughts, you know, which are stress, worry, fear really lead to, you know, disease and obviously anxiety, depression, but like in the body it will also manifest physically.

**Arpita:** When you were, and that's amazing. Having the awareness to be able to, at the first, you know, onset of burnout, picking up on that, but then also the second time around. Can you speak a little bit about what made you kind of recognize what the first episode and then how it changed maybe a little bit with the second episode and kind of what transpired there?

**Diana:** Yeah, the first episode I just felt really foggy in my brain, like I couldn't think. And that's from chronic stress or worry, where you literally cannot process information like that prefrontal cortex, it shut off with

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stress. And so you can't make decisions and that's why burned out people make errors because you cannot, you know, process like that logistical part of your brain. And that's how it just really manifested where I couldn't decide what to do with something simple and a decision I had to make. And it really scared me cuz I'm like, I can't decide what to do for something simple that we do all day. And so that's why I went to the doctor and you know, they really, you know, was like, here's Zoloft and I, this started therapy and Zoloft for a short time until I just felt much better. And it was really needed at the time because I just had, again, that chronic worry, stress that really shifts your neurotransmitters and how you feel. And so it was important for me to do that at a time.

And the second time I didn't feel foggy or, you know, like I couldn't decide. But I just was really one, very negative about my whole outlook, everything just looked terrible. Also, I was feeling like the physical manifestations of stress in my body. And so I was not sleeping well, grinding my teeth. I like developed you know, asthma and I had GERD and I had chest pain that was debilitating and joint pain. So like the whole body was really showing signs of chronic stress that was just not stopping chronic fear or chronic stress. So sometimes it can manifest that way. Sometimes some people manifest in anger, just very reactive. I didn't have that, but you know, you're just always edgy, reactive, and that's because you're in like fight or flight, literally, like you're fighting, you know, because you're in stress mode and you don't stop it.

**Michael:** I think you're making excellent points here. And I just wanna point out what you're saying is that people have this idea of burnout, that it looks one way. That they think that burnout appears, oh, I, I don't have burnout because I'm not frustrated at work, but the truth is that burnout can show up in so many different ways and it doesn't have to show up the same way even in the same person. And so just having that awareness and knowing that you can be affected by the daily stress of, you know, of doctor life. And that that stress can be affecting you in various ways, at different points in your life and at different times. And so I, I think that's a critical point. I just wanted to kind of make sure we focused on that a little bit because I think, you know, you are living proof that that is the reality of it and that there are different ways out of this. But tell us how coaching was so critical in helping you get through burnout.

**Diana:** I just, before, I don't think I had this concept of like awareness, you really don't. You're living a non-conscious life. You just go on about, but you don't realize the power of what you're focusing your thoughts on. And that really kind of helped me think like, what am I putting my attention to, my intentions, you know, what am I focusing all the time and how is things that I'm thinking about changing how I feel? You know, and the coaching one-on-one. You know, what you are thinking, to how you feel, and then that's how you then act and get that result. But I also think there's also a different part of coaching too, that, or another aspect that is not in coaching per se, that is like, sometimes there's just a feeling. Sometimes you just feel it in your body and it's not precisely with a thought that may be conscious and that is more of like the intuition. And it's a different realm, but I think it all goes together. You have to start someone with awareness and thinking about the conscious part, and then maybe dive in deeper later or at some point to the unconscious or the intuition or the body, because that also gives you a lot of information. But coaching was just a way to learn about the first sort of step to really understand just the power of our thoughts and, and really dive deeper a little bit more after that.

**Arpita:** Yeah. I think part of the irony is that you would think as physicians we would clue into it, right? Can realize that this is burnout. But what happens is, I think with physicians is we go back to our traditional methods, or at least maybe our generation of physicians do. When my husband was in burnout, I remember he

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went through literally different medical readings and that to trying to figure out and diagnose himself with what was going on. Like he did not think that this was burnout because he didn't know what burnout was. So part of it is just having the awareness that this exists. And it's so vague with how it can present. And so that's, I think unique, that even physicians are just not able to recognize that a lot of time of what is wrong. I just don't feel right. Something is not right, but I don't know exactly what it is. I can't put my finger on it. I think that is really, really important.

And then like you were saying, the embodiment a lot, we are taught as physicians that don't feel your feelings, push away the feelings of hunger, of, you know, exhaustion, whatever it is, because right now you have to focus on working. And so we have essentially unlearned how to feel. And so when those feelings come up that are negative, we just don't even know what's causing it and why it's there. So awareness a hundred percent, like you said, is key, I think in terms of recognizing what's coming up for us and then why, why is it coming up? So.

**Diana:** I think the body's so intelligent and it's telling us like something's not right. We just don't feel right. And then we have to sort of pause and realize our head and our mind is not disconnected from our body. It's really okay. If the body's how it's manifesting first, then yeah, then you can start thinking about the why. But you can't just ignore it and be like, oh no, no, it's fine. Just push through it and be robots. And we don't have feelings cuz we do have feelings and especially many empathic people, how you perceive the world is by feeling first, and then you think. You feel something and then you think about it. And I think sometimes that subset of physicians are a little bit more affected because we really perceive the world by feeling and that tends to be shut off in medicine, and that's kind of shutting off a big part of who you are. And and that really does affect a lot of physicians that way. When that sort of is told, like you should not be, you know feeling that you should not be expressing that and empathies then to view the world, experience it by feeling an expression. And, and so that is challenging for that subset of physicians. And of course there's another subset that's more logical, but then have to think, realize, you know, we cash it off the logic from the body and the brain and the, the rest of us.

**Michael:** Right. Well, tell us a little bit about, so you found coaching and I could only assume you experienced some incredible benefit from that, and then you went on and decided to become a coach and start physician coach support. Tell us a little bit about that journey.

**Diana:** Yeah, I decided instead of just getting coached, I realized I think I need coaching. And then I thought, okay, should I just do a program with somebody or maybe should I just become a coach? Because I thought, well, you know, it's a little more money of course. But there's just a skill that I can use and, you know, education's kind of priceless in a way. Like you always have that education. So if you have a skill of learning how to write or you have a skill of being a coach, you can always use that skill. So I thought, okay, let me learn in case I can use it for others. It's definitely more for me that I want to do it, but if I can learn these skills, I think that would be valuable. So that's why I became my coach.

And then as we were going through the training as coaches you know, it's just like practicing how to put catheters or IVs or whatever you're practicing how to use the skill of helping others. And we needed to find people to coach. And I thought, well, if we need to find people to coach, to learn this, and people are really in a really bad place and we can maybe help them you know, how can I use what I'm learning to help others and

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pay it forward? So that's why I founded a physician coach support, which, you know, both of you have been part of. And I'm really so grateful. So many physicians that really are willing to help their colleagues, you know, they're willing to volunteer, and you know, when you're feeling like life is bad and you just think about people are willing to do that when they're very busy. They have their own business or practice and they're doing that for others. You know, that really has to give you some hope and, you know, just some good feeling in your heart that there is good in this world. But yeah, I founded it because I thought people need hope, people need support, and why not use what I've learned, you know, to help others. I didn't wanna perhaps do coaching one-on-one as a program myself for me, but I wanted to really use it as a platform for others to come and, and help more people.

**Arpita:** Mm-hmm. And I think that's a testament too, like that physicians are willing to put some time into this to help support other physicians and just kind of get the word out there, you know, make people more familiar with what exactly coaching is and giving them that experience of being able to do that. And I think that that's really important with what you're offering there.

**Diana:** Yeah, and I think it's just, you know, we are facetious, we understand it's not like a social worker or somebody else. And even for institutions that have coaching within their own program, sometimes many people feel safe to just come, you know, to an outside, let's say, place to do this, to just talk about things. And you know, it is just like that support or that moment that can sometimes just, you know, quickly shift your mindset and get you at a bad place. And then maybe you start realizing, no, I really wanna do this long term. And then there's all the profiles. People can look up those coaches or other coaches to really, you know, do more of a long-term transformation because it's just like the gym. If you go once, well, it's nice, but you really wanna continue that as a lifestyle and do it more to really get the benefit. It's just like, if you don't know where to turn, if you want it to be somewhere where it's confidential, not in your institution, you know, you come here and you can get that support and, you know, it's confidential and it's a peer and, you know, there's no judgment about, you know, anything you wanna talk about. You could keep the camera off, you could keep it on. You know, it's just really to help you.

**Michael:** You can't understate the impact of talking to another physician. Right? So, you know, I remember before I started coaching, having just like you were saying, all of these kind of thoughts about what my career in medicine looked like, what it should look like and what my personal career looked like. And I got into a coaching experience where I got to hear other physicians talk about their experiences and they looked just like mine. And for the first time, I felt normal, right? Because you put all this judgment on yourself. You, you know, you're kind of in it by yourself and you don't really see everybody else going through things, you know, and their experiences. And there is just something about being able to talk to another doctor who has had similar experiences. We've all been through, you know, medical school and residency and all of our training programs and the individual experiences may be different, but the summation of those experiences tends to be very similar. And there's just something about talking to another doctor about what we've been through that just that process in and of itself provides so much healing. And at least that's what it was for me. And it sounds like that's what it was for you too.

**Diana:** Yeah, normalize the experience. I mean, just like lifting that weight off your shoulders, like letting it go. And just realizing we're all human and we all have these similar things and you sort of take away the superhero cape and the perfectionism cape that we all have everything together and everything's perfect and it

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really isn't. And you know, one thing is, you know, probably social media and what you put out there, the other thing is real life. When we all have struggles, we all have challenges. We all, you know, have illness or death or, you know, kids, there's so much stuff that we have and it's just nice to be like, oh, you too, you, you know, somebody was rude to you too. Like, you know, we can all relate and have that compassion, that empathy for each other.

**Arpita:** And I just wanna like, add to that too, that we tend to, yes, we all have had the struggles, but we don't also wanna compare to each other because what might be painful for me may not be painful for you. And I don't wanna compare my level of maybe challenges or traumas that I've had in the past that, or maybe say, you know, it's not, I don't have anything, any real issues compared to these other people. They've had some real traumas. Each person has their own pain points. Each person has things that are painful for them, and I think that's what's important with coaching. It's just recognizing that we want to address that. We wanna make sure that we're helping people feel comfortable speaking about whatever they have coming up for them, even if they might, when comparing somebody else think it's no big deal. It really is. If it's impacting you in a negative way, it's a big deal. And that's something that, that you wanna be able to talk about. So, Diana, tell me a little bit about, I guess if you had to talk about what is some of your favorite things to coach on? What would you pick for your areas of specialty that you love to really, really work on with your clients?

**Diana:** Yeah, I think boundaries are huge. I think in medicine we have a challenge with boundaries and it's kind of fun for me to do it because you know, it's like something that people sometimes never thought of. Like just saying, no, you know, or no thank you, or no but, you know, like how to frame it. First is getting the fear out of saying no. I think that's the first step of just actually saying the word and practicing and then just coming, you know, sort of with scripts of how to actually in real life and, you know, in your job or you know, in your office, wherever, how to say things, you know, so that you can get to that goal that you want but still saying no and putting your needs first. I think that's, you know one of my favorite things to sort of talk about and I, I mean, we just coaching, just kind of poking holes in the beliefs, like really why? You know, like, why do you think that? And just kind of going a little bit deeper of, you know, why people are stuck in that certain thought and really diving a little bit deeper and getting to that at some point, that aha moment. Like, oh, you know, like, why did I really anchor my whole belief in that? But yeah, I think for me, boundaries are the most interesting. And I think where we kind of can get the most value because by starting with boundaries, you really are protecting yourself, your energy, you know? And then that way you're not depleted because you're saying yes to everything. And we tend many people in medicine to sort of be the people pleasers or like afraid to say no. We live in like the fear, fear, fear and sort of shifting like get out of the fear-based decision making and start with like love-based decision making when you like, have love for yourself to then say no. That's a good shift. And to me that's the fun part of, of coaching in that respect.

**Arpita:** Yeah. Yeah, that's very good. Boundaries are very important, I would say. And if you had some final tips or any advice that you'd wanna give, what's your take home from today's episode in terms of coaching and just building awareness?

**Diana:** I think awareness is the first step. Realizing, you know, burnout can manifest in so many different ways, and it's not one cookie cutter away, but if you're starting to feel things like really just pay attention to the feeling hopefully it'll lead you to like what's going on and be curious and realize many of us are going through things so, also the solution may not be, you know, the same for everybody. And maybe it's therapy, maybe it's

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coaching, maybe it's a mentor. Maybe it's taking time off, maybe, you know, it's many different things and it has to be right for you. You know, because somebody else is doing a different way, well, that works for them. So realize you're unique. Listen to what feels right for you, and you know, then just really try to take care of yourself by putting those boundaries, you know, saying no. So you can say yes to yourself and realize you're worthy of, you know, care and support and really think about it from a love place and not from I'm afraid, because that won't get you to a better place if you're always in fear.

**Michael:** I love all of that so much. I mean, just you know, the focusing on being curious, right? And allowing yourself not to kind of judge yourself for how you're feeling, right? Like, why should I be feeling this way? Or, you know I'm trained to do this, I should just be able to carry on. But instead of, of sitting in that, allowing yourself to be curious, why am I feeling this way? What's going on for me? And doing it from a place of love, just like you just said. I think that's so important. That's incredible. Thank you.

**Diana:** Yeah. Yeah. I mean, sometimes, you know, you just are in a funk and you're like, I'm in a funk and it's gonna pass and stop judging. Like, oh, what's wrong with me. I'm in a funk. Well, you're in a funk. You need time. You just, you know, think something's going on. You know, let it pass to the happiness is, you know, two points between two points of sadness. So it's gonna come and go. Just allow it and you know, don't be so judged, like you said, with yourself when that's happening. And yeah, just be curious and you know, try to figure out why you're feeling that.

**Michael:** This has been such a great conversation. Thank you so much for being here. Dr. Londoño, why don't you tell everybody how they can find you, physician coach support, all the things.

**Diana:** So you can go to [www.physiciancoachsupport.com](http://www.physiciancoachsupport.com). It's, you know, free, confidential platform via Zoom. You can make an appointment seven days a week. So if you're a physician or no physician that could benefit, go there. There's also many resources of other platforms that are for support for physicians. So if one doesn't fit, you know, use another. We're there for really helping you find the one that helps you. And you can just find me on any social media platform, Diana Londoño MD. You know, Twitter or LinkedIn or Instagram and just my website, [DianaLondoñomd.com](http://DianaLondoñomd.com) you can find out more there. And yeah, just reach out to us. We really you know, love what we do and we wanna support you.

**Michael:** Absolutely. And I want another plug for following you on social media because you're always so energetic and fun and lively and dancing and all the things. And so it's great. You get to learn a lot, but you have so much fun, you know, kind of introducing people to these ideas and so I wanna encourage people to go and find you and learn all the things.

**Diana:** Thank you so much and thank you guys for doing this. I'm so excited for your podcast. It's gonna be so much value for for so many. So thank you guys for doing it.

**Arpita:** Thank you. Thank you for coming today.

**Michael:** All right, thanks so much. You have a great rest of the day. Bye bye.