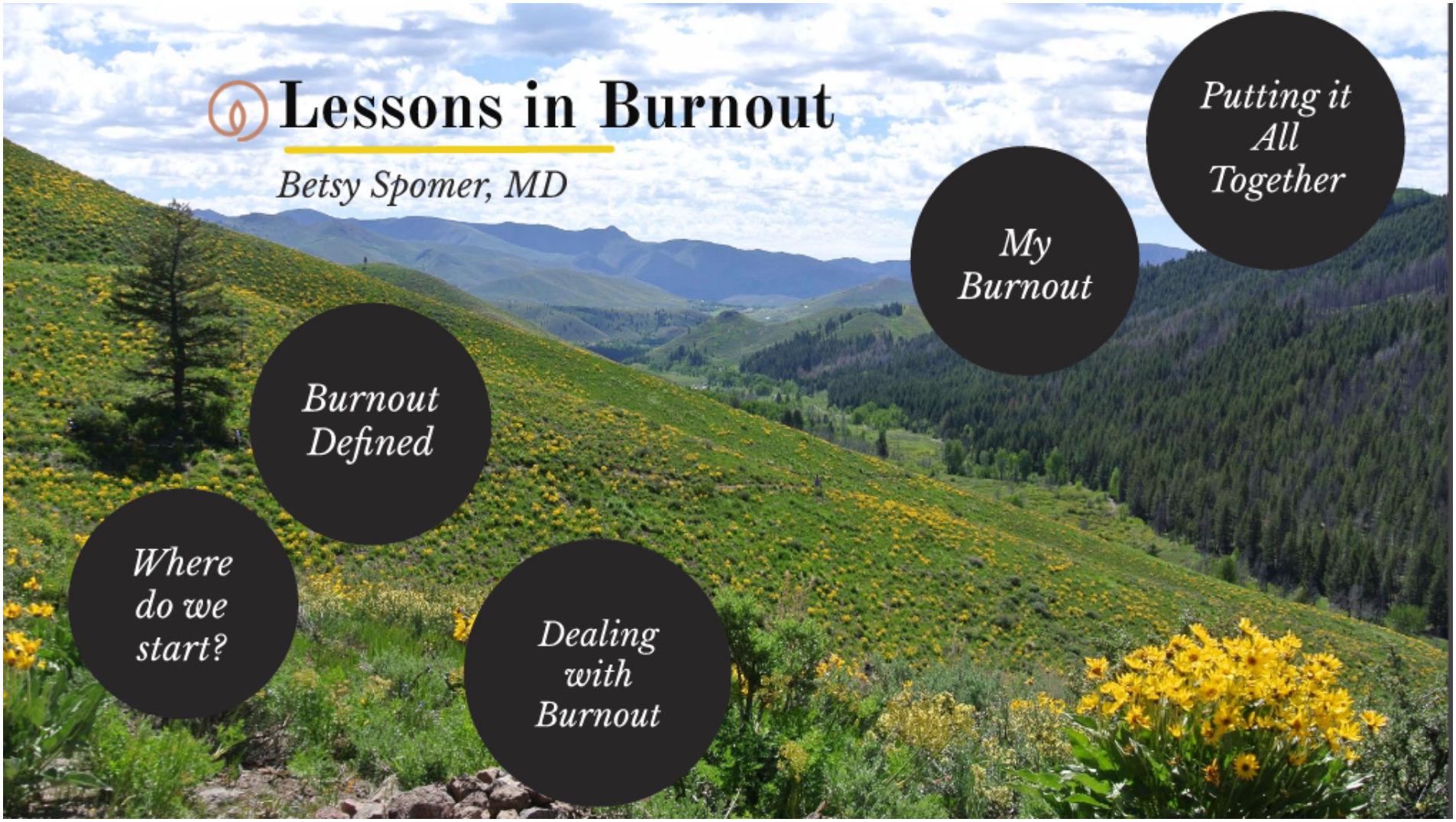

Lessons in Burnout
Betsy Spomer, MD
Putting it All Together
My Burnout
Burnout Defined
Where do we start?
Dealing with Burnout

Objectives:

- What is *BURNOUT* & why are we talking about it?
- The lessons that *BURNOUT* has taught me
- Putting together the pieces of the *BURNOUT* puzzle

Disclaimer:

- Life Coaching business

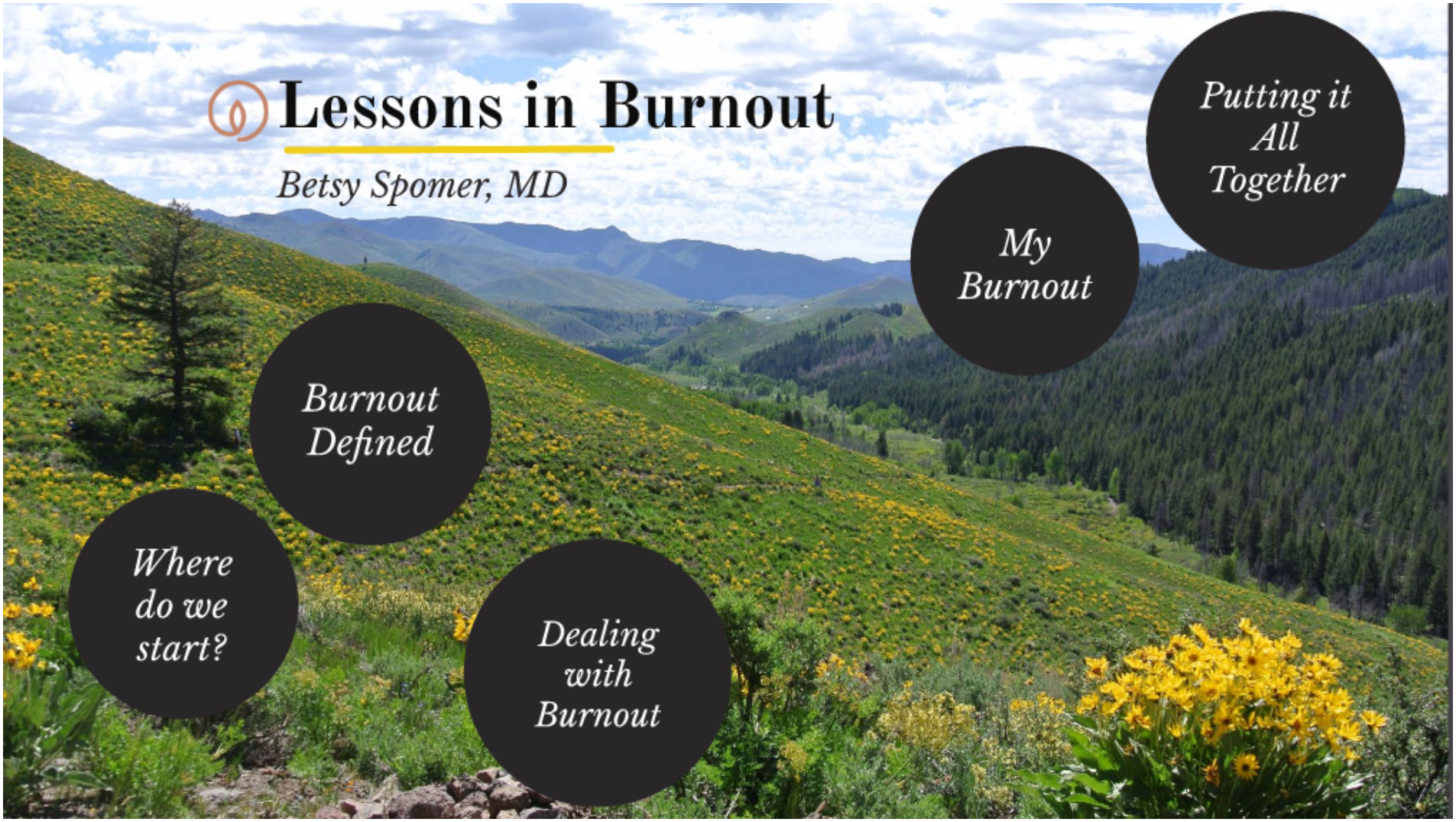
- This presentation is not meant to be a recommendation for any specific burnout treatment or prevention modality, including life coaching

"Humor is the great thing, the saving thing. The minute it crops up, all our hardnesses yield, all our irritations and resentments flit away and a sunny spirit takes their place."

Mark Twain, "What Paul Bourget Thinks of Us?" [13]

Research shows that *humor* is an effective way to counter stress:[16]

- It builds resilience (our ability to bounce back from difficulties),
- Provides a way to bond with others,
- Helps us look at things in a different way,
- Normalizes our experience, and
- Keeps things from appearing too overwhelming or scary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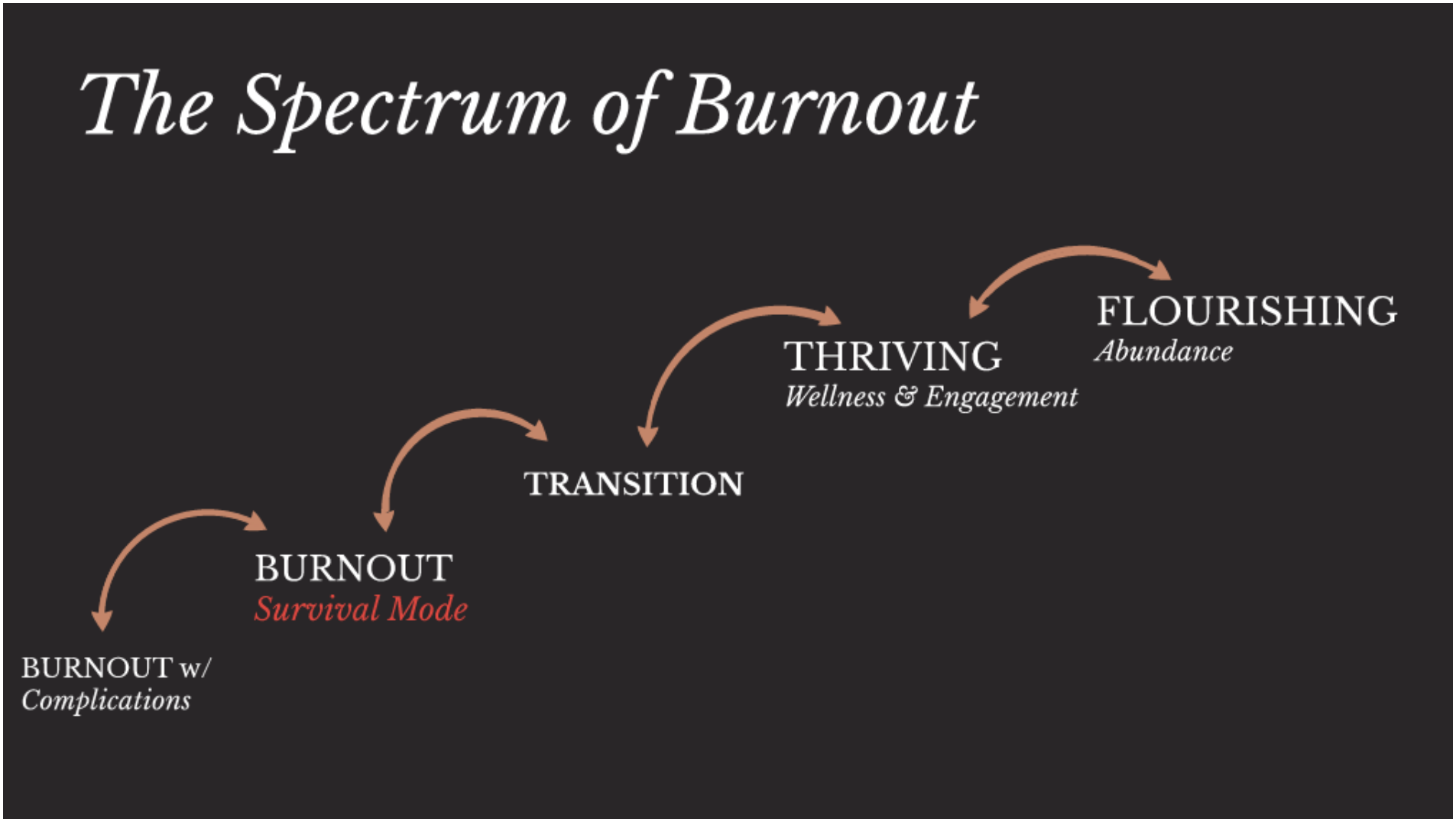
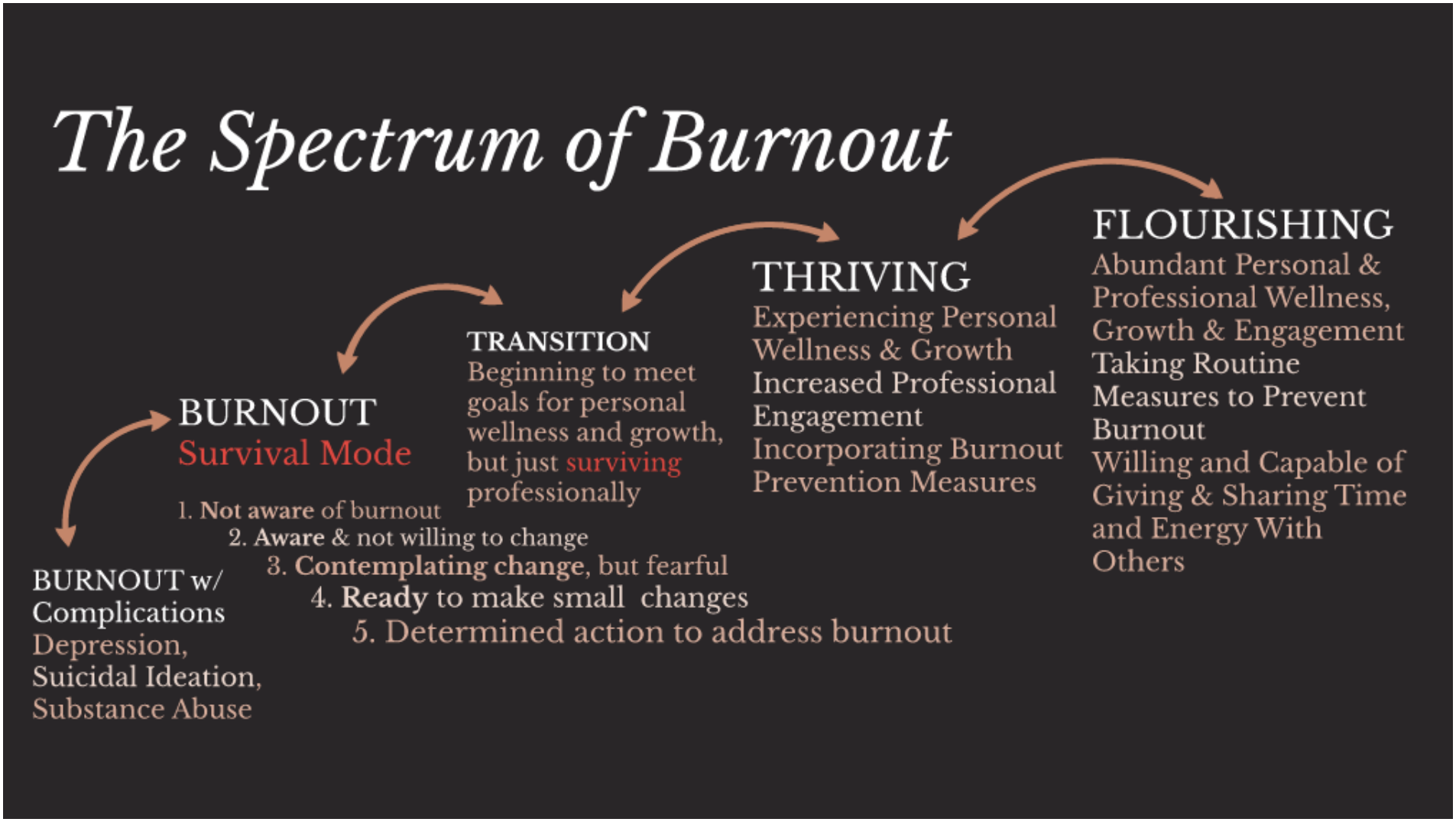
Burnout Defined

- Physical and Emotional Exhaustion
- Feelings of Cynicism and Depersonalization
- Low Sense of Personal Accomplishment

Why are we talking about Burnout?

- 40-60% of physicians report symptoms of burnout
- Early retirement, depression, suicide, substance abuse
- Patients are dissatisfied, less compliant, and experience worse outcomes
- Many doctors are hanging on by a thread- barely surviving


The Spectrum of Burnout
BURNOUT w/
Complications
BURNOUT
Survival Mode
TRANSITION
THRIVING
Wellness & Engagement
FLOURISHING
Abundance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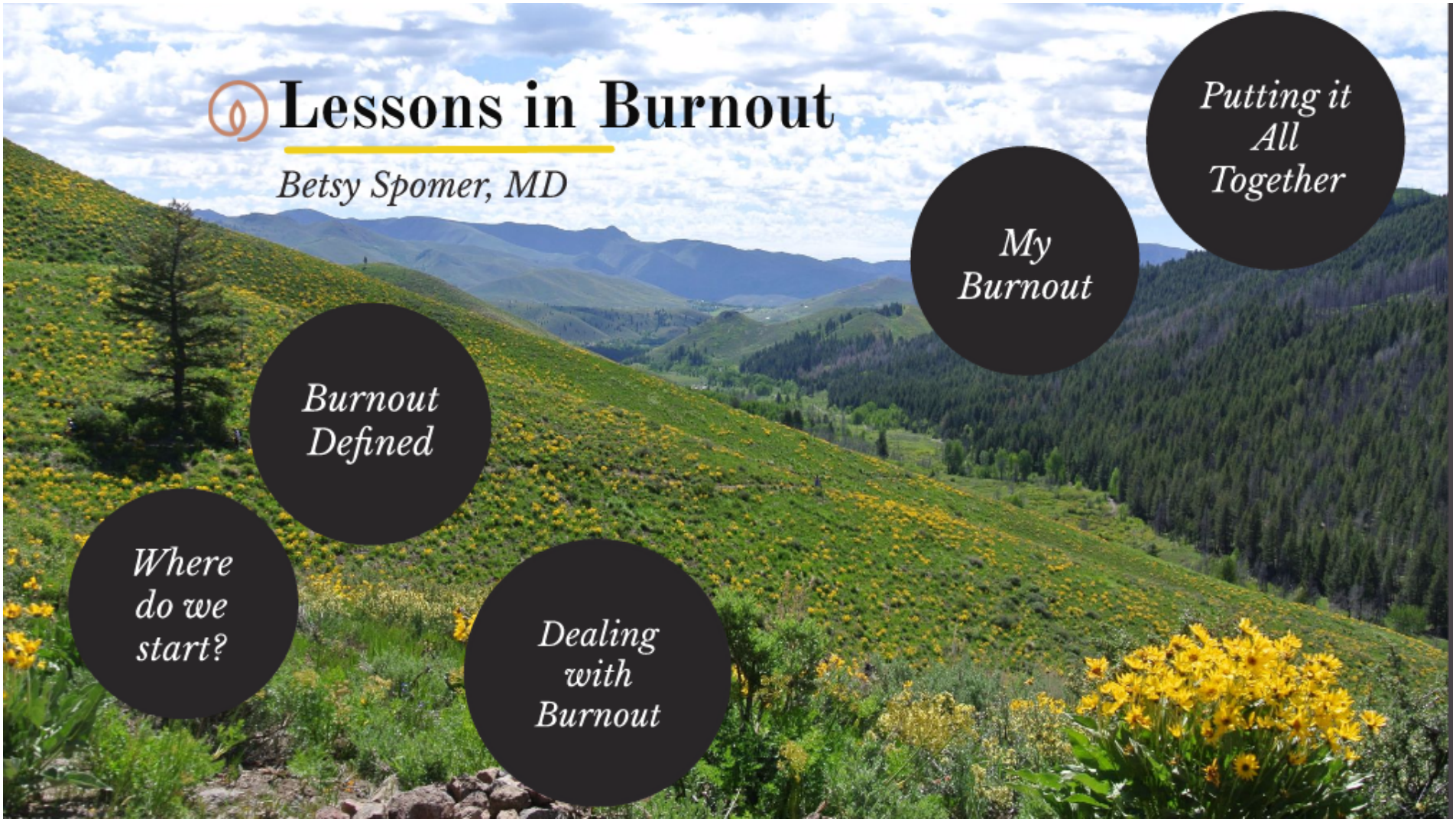
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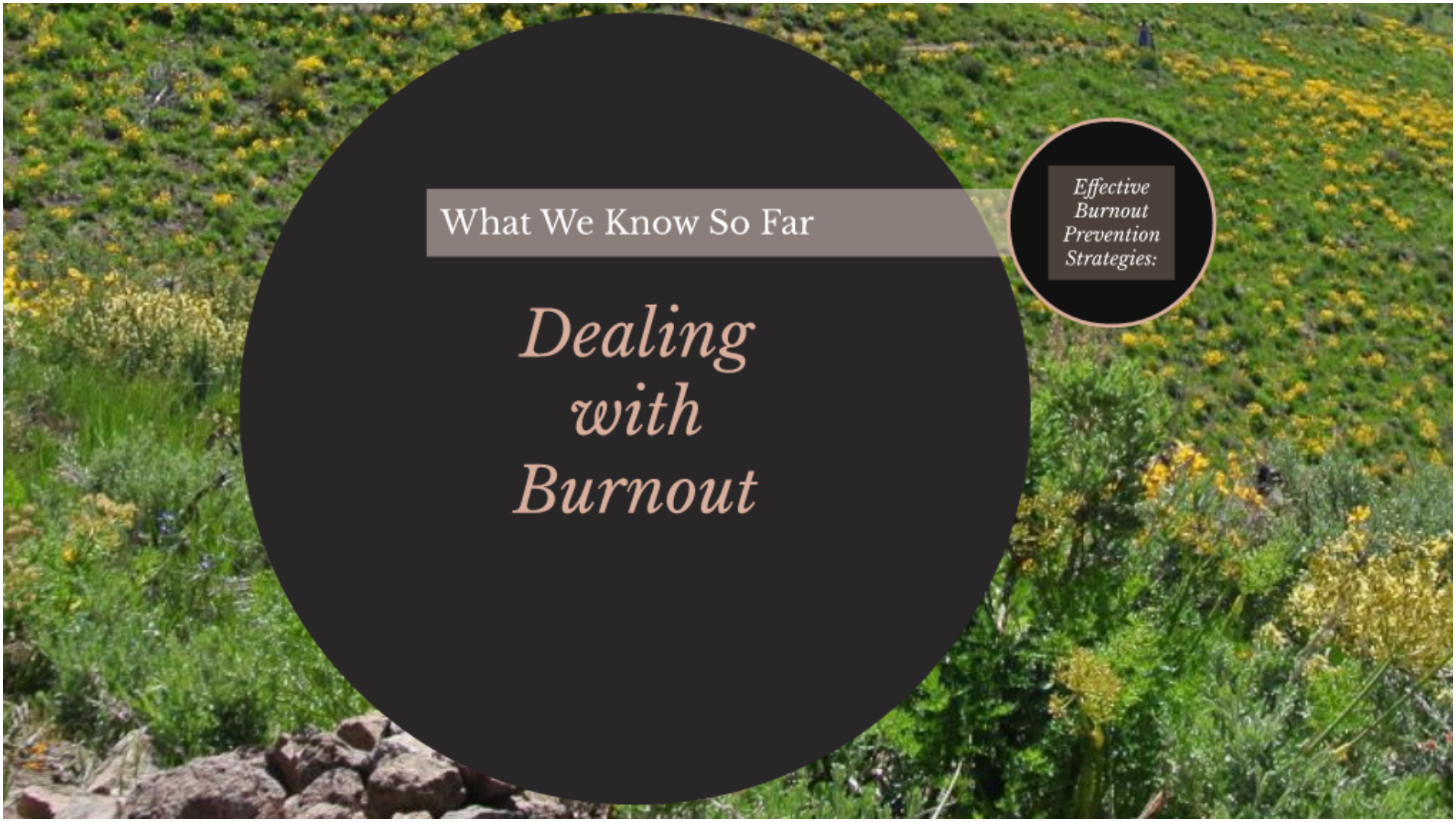

What We Know So Far
Dealing with Burnout
Effective Burnout Prevention Strategies:

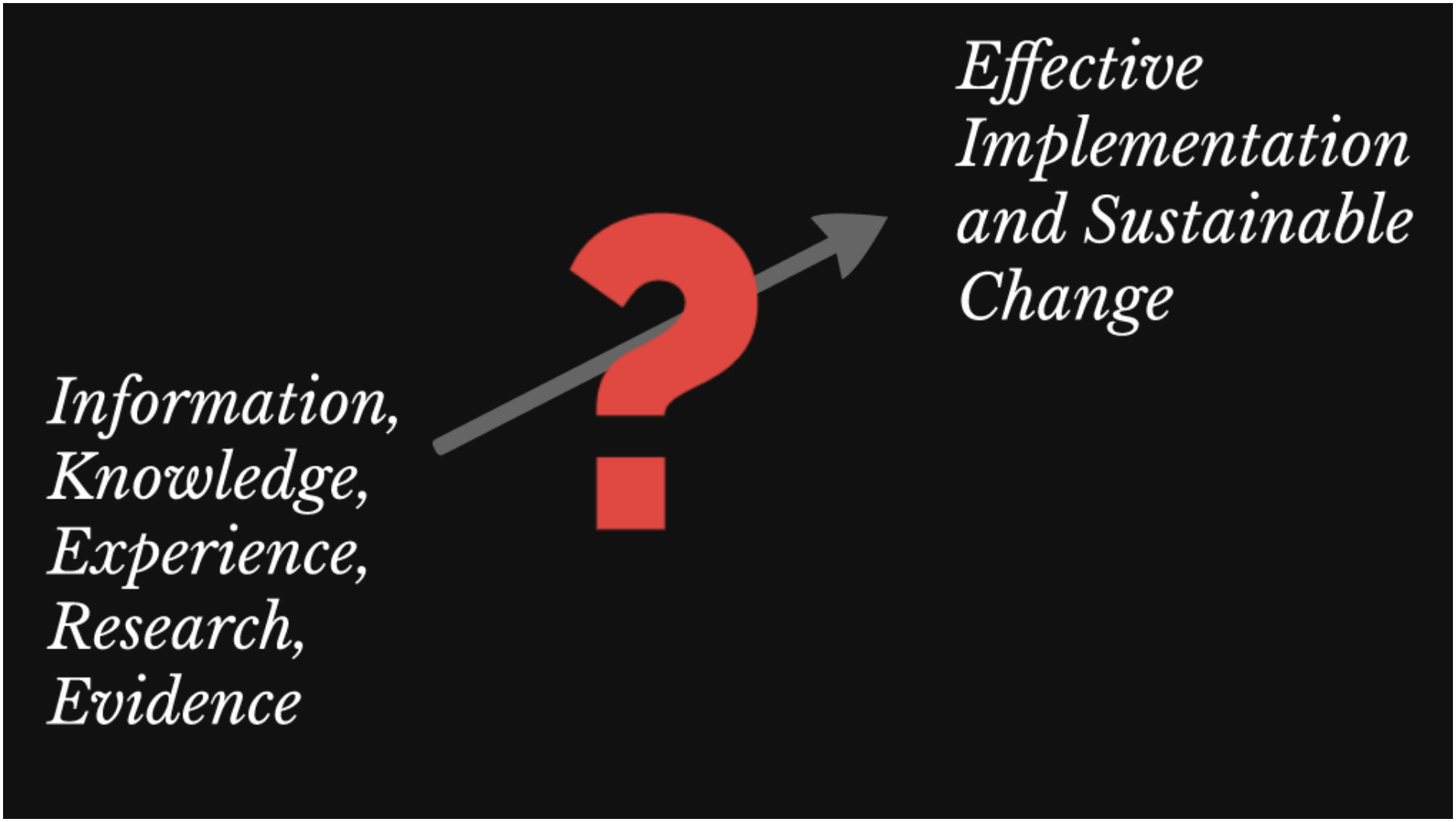
Burnout Treatment and Prevention (condensed version):

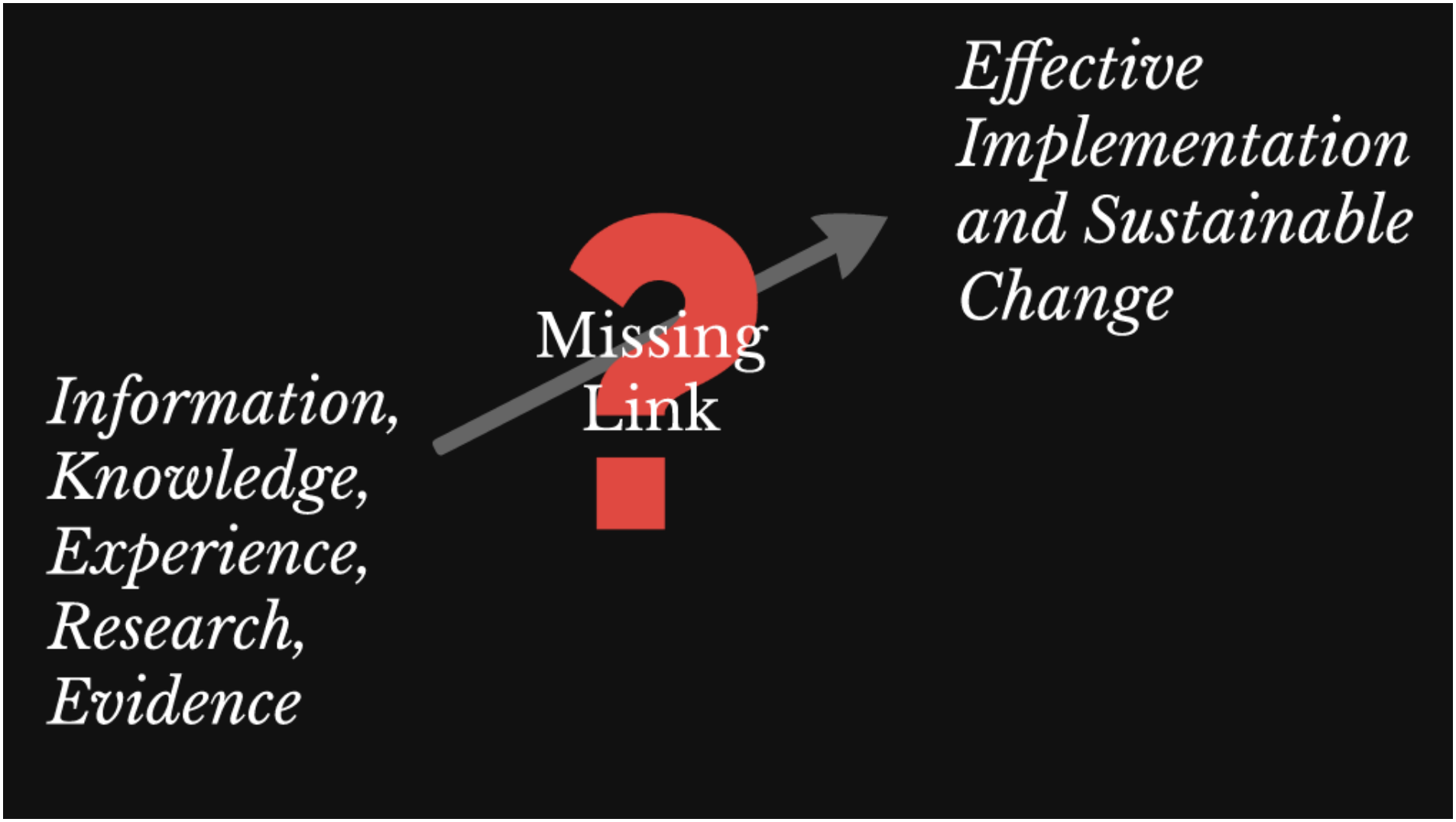
- Sleep 7 hrs. per night on average
- Eat regular, well-balanced meals
- Exercise regularly
- Practice mindfulness (yoga, tai chi, meditation)
- Have strong social network

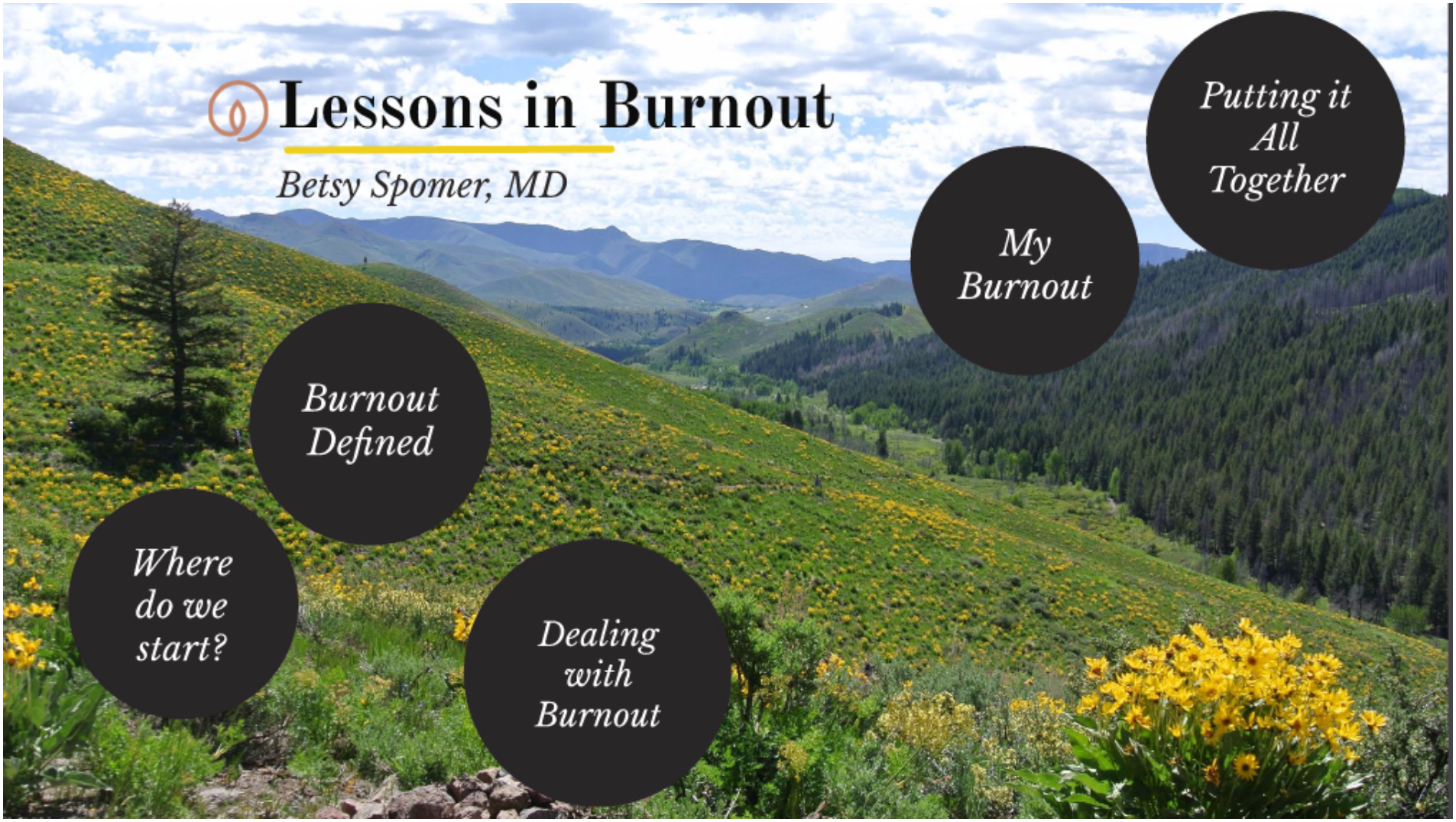
Why does this seem so hard to do?

Why does this seem so hard to do?

By definition, a burned out person is not capable of adding one more thing to his/her plate- they are exhausted... spent... done.


Effective Implementation and Sustainable Change
Information, Knowledge, Experience, Research, Evidence


Effective Implementation and Sustainable Change
Missing Link
Information, Knowledge, Experience, Research, Evidence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Lessons
Learned From
Burnout

Lessons Learned From Burnout

"My Body Is Wise, I Need to Listen to IT"

- Physical exhaustion is a late sign that I need to make some changes in my routine
- SLEEP is Key to my recovery
- Proper and regular nourishment & hydration is necessary
- Exercise is vital
- I do NOT have endless physical reserves

Phyical Exhaustion...

...does NOT breed confidence

"I Can't Get Out Of Burnout The Same Way I Got In...

- working harder
- bucking up
- toughing it out
- "*willing* myself out of it"...

...I need to think differently"...

Using My Mind to Change My Brain

SELF-DIRECTED NEUROPLASTICITY: I have the power to change my brain for the better

"We can grow and develop the happiness and other inner strengths that foster fulfillment, love, effectiveness, wisdom, and inner peace."

-Rick Hanson, "Hardwiring Happiness"[3]

Look at this experience from a different angle or perspective

- Take a sabbatical
- Go for a nature walk
- Ask you kids what they think
- Pray or Meditate
- Go Up in a Hot Air Balloon
- Laugh & Play
- Travel
- Do Mission work
- Go to the Garden

Compassion: sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it

- Improve patient's immune response
- Lower blood pressure and heartrate
- Decrease stress response
- Turn on genes for protein synthesis and tissue healing
- Contribute to positive emotions and memories in our patients

"The health professionals who flourish, even in a broken system, are those who choose to love their work, regularly express appreciation and gratitude, perform daily small acts of kindess, and have self-compassion."

Robin Youngson, MD - "A Time To Care"17

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Self-Compassion

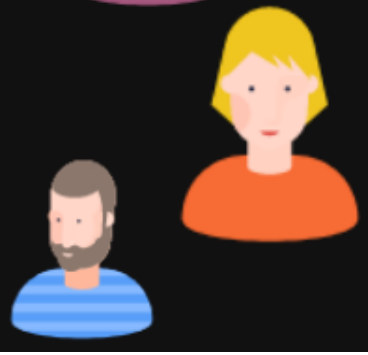
- Give myself permission to seek & accept support and guidance
- Create boundaries around my time
- Find people who will support me and my commitment to wellness
- Prioritize compassion both for patients and myself

Laughter is Indeed Good Medicine

The Way Out Of Burnout is Together

"As lonely as burnout felt, and as much as I wanted to isolate myself, ultimately my ticket out of that place was actually *my tribe*."

Like most mammals, we are a social species that depends on our relationships with others if we want to survive, reproduce, and flourish



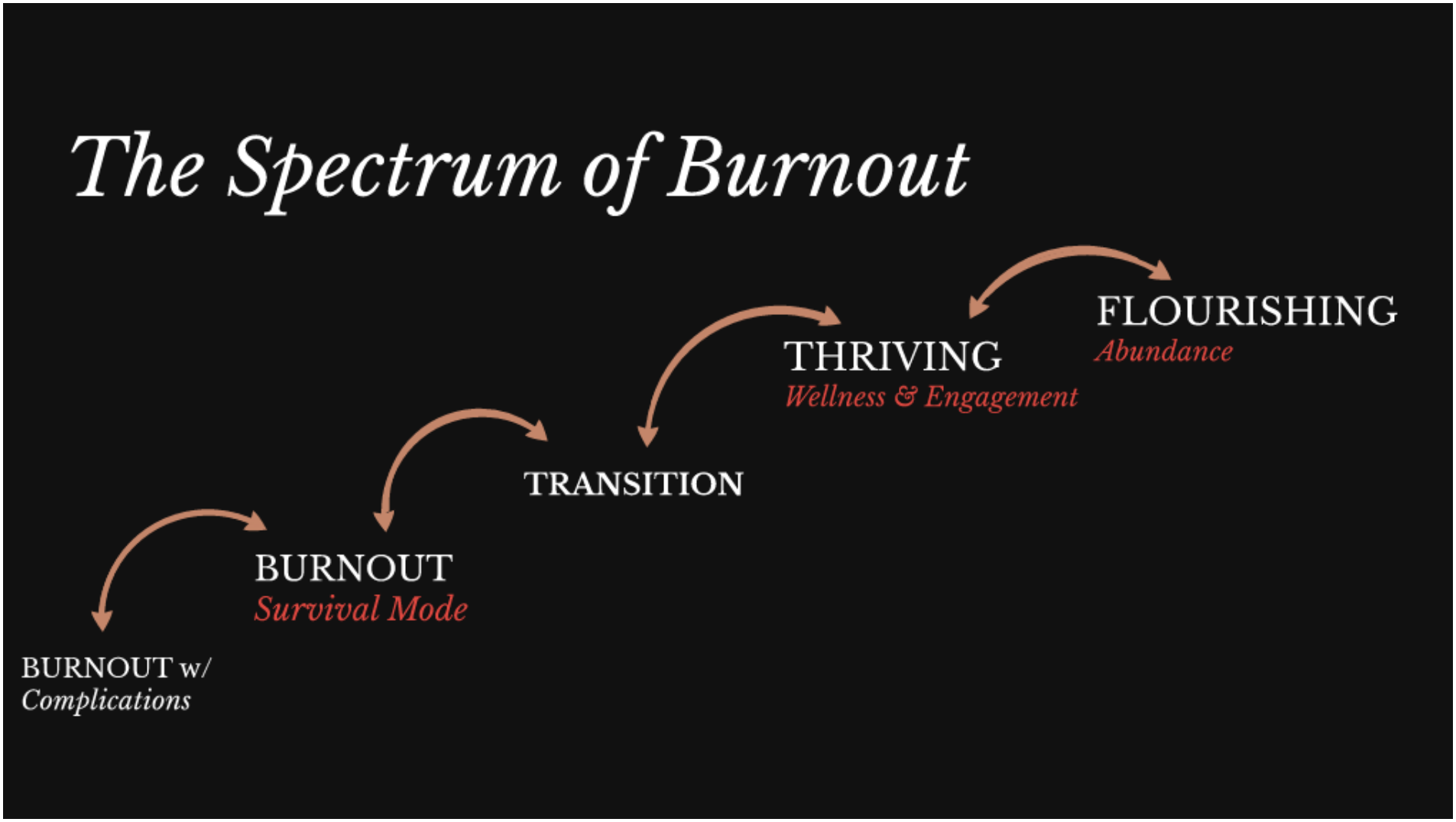
Tribe: *a collection of people united around a cause; sharing common goals, interests and passions and caring enough to do something about it*

Who is my Tribe?

- My husband, family and friends
- Physician colleagues
- Nurses and Staff
- My employer
- Patients

Call on My Tribe:

- Tell friends and family what I am dealing with
- Consider adding a professional to my tribe (counsellor, advisor, coach)
- Accept help when generously offered
- Reconnect with those people who care about me, and want the best for me- including my patients
- Ask my employer to actively participate in my burnout recovery plan & ask them to follow-up with me to check on my progress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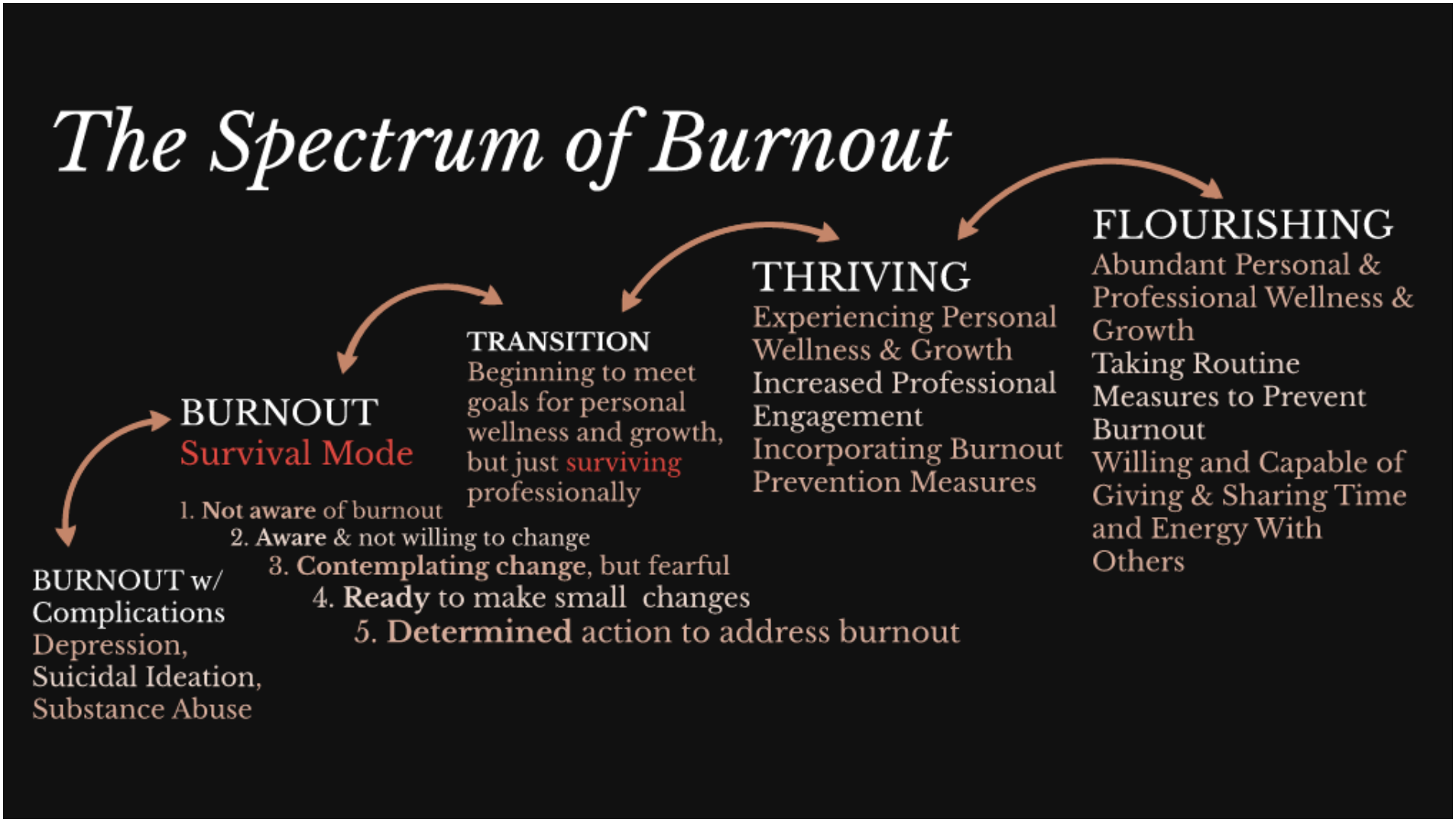
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Faith and Spiritual Practice

Looking at burnout through a spiritual lens was an opportunity to identify the true meaning and purpose for my life AND to build resilience

> *"In the context of a world in which people are often valued for what they produce rather than who they are, spirituality can provide an important sense of meaning and purpose."*
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> –Mary Van Hook, professor in Social Work; "Resiliency and Spirituality: A Framework for Assessing and Helping"[14]

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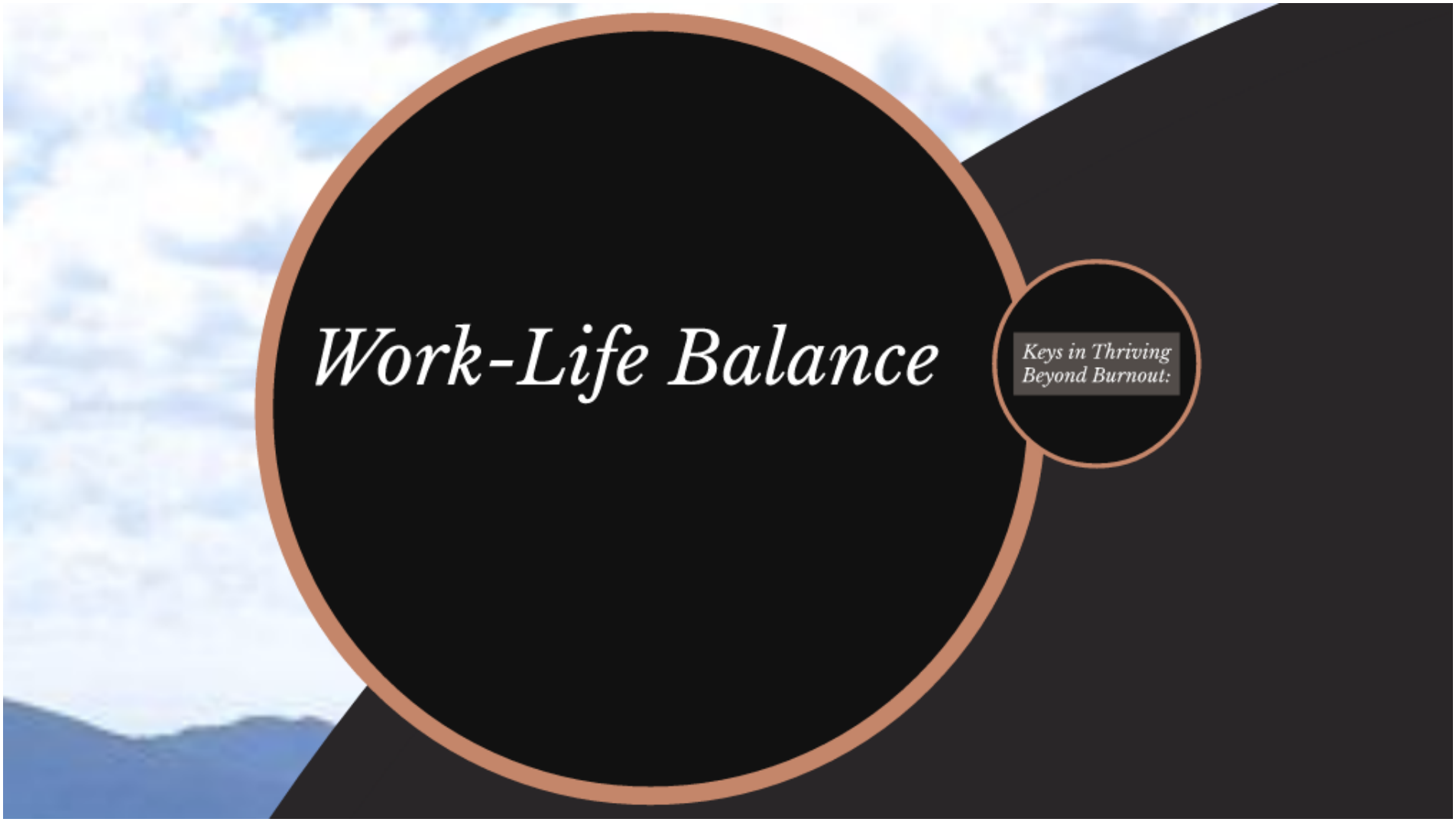
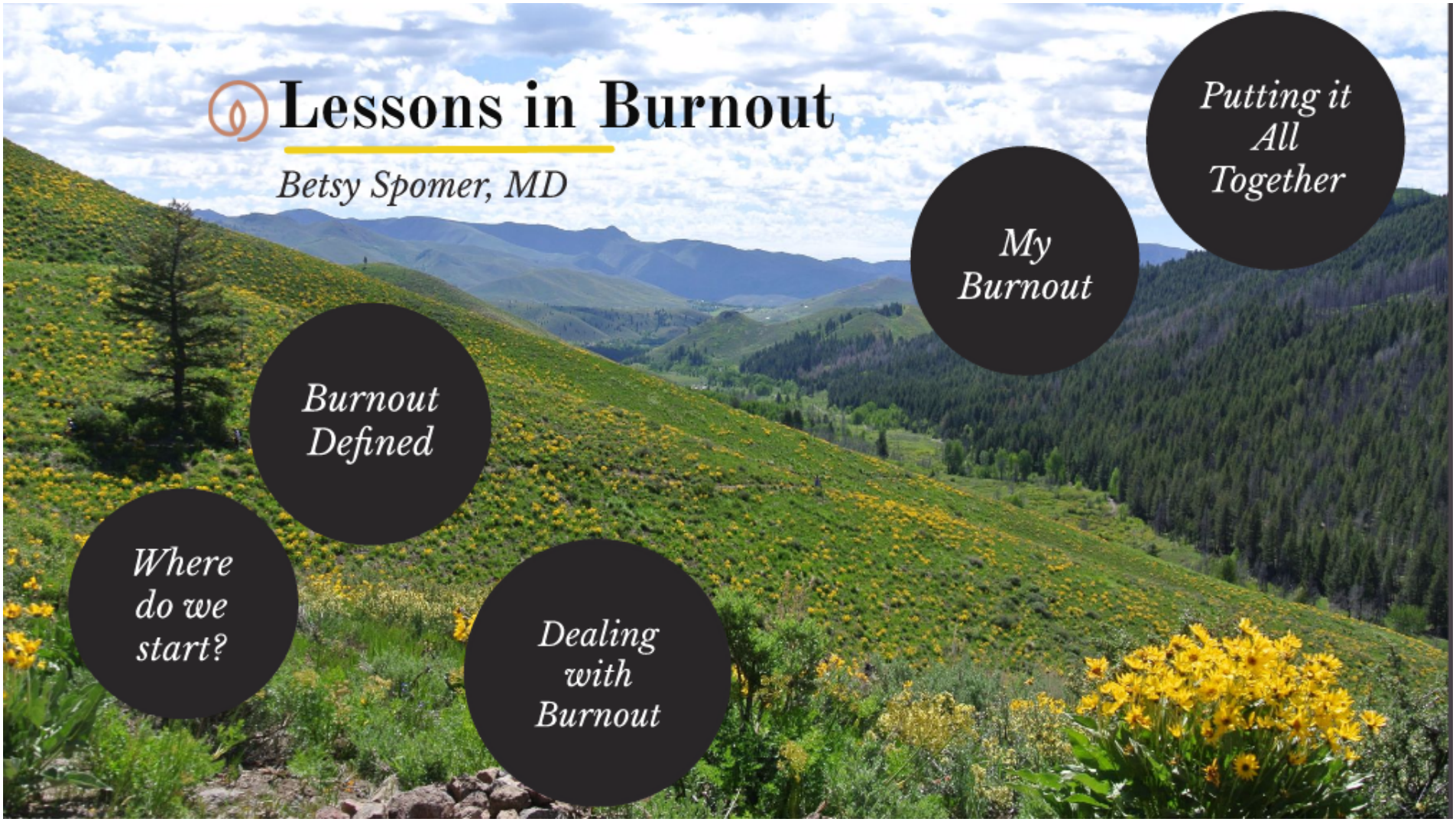

Work-Life Balance
Keys in Thriving
Beyond Burnout:

Keys in Thriving Beyond Burnout:

- My body
- My brain and the way I think
- Kindness and compassion
- Laughter
- My tribe
- Faith and spiritual practice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Putting the Pieces Together
Humor
Research
Compassion
Neuroscience of Change
Leadership
Wisdom & Experience

Putting the Pieces Together

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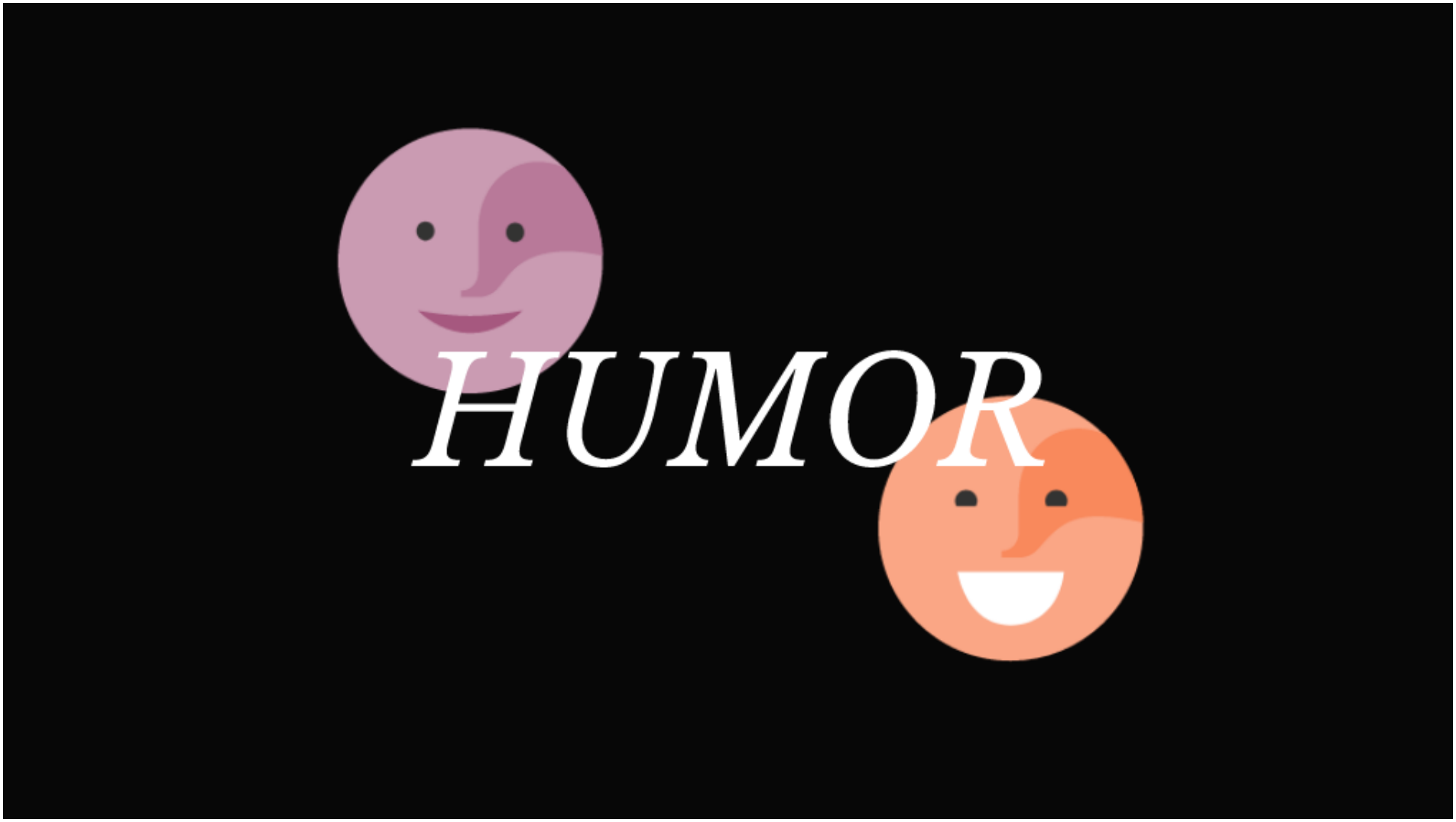
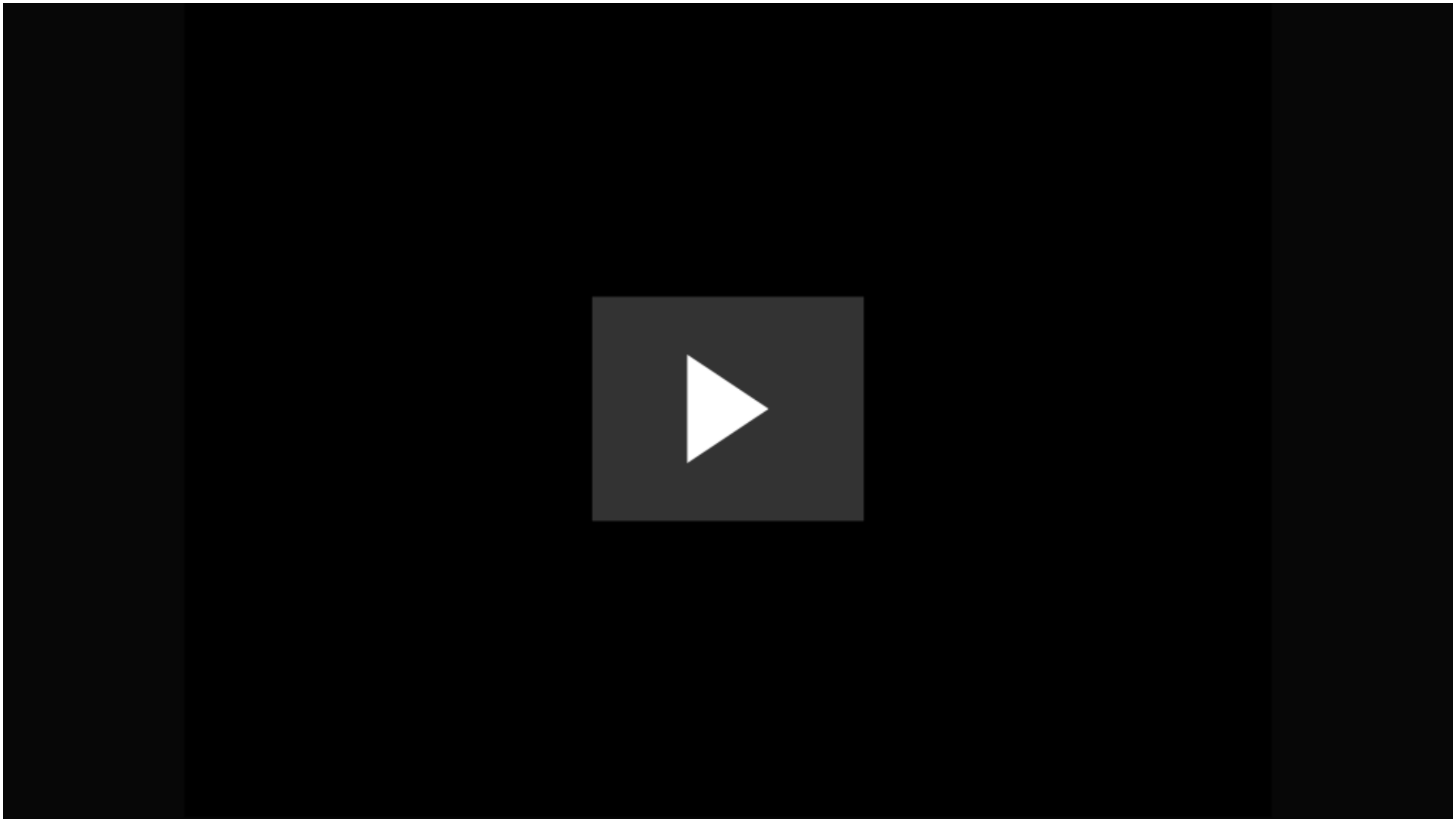

HUMOR

Let's Make It a Beautiful Day!



THANK YOU!

Betsy Spomer, MD

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betsy@soulhoneycoaching.com
www.soulhoneycoaching.com

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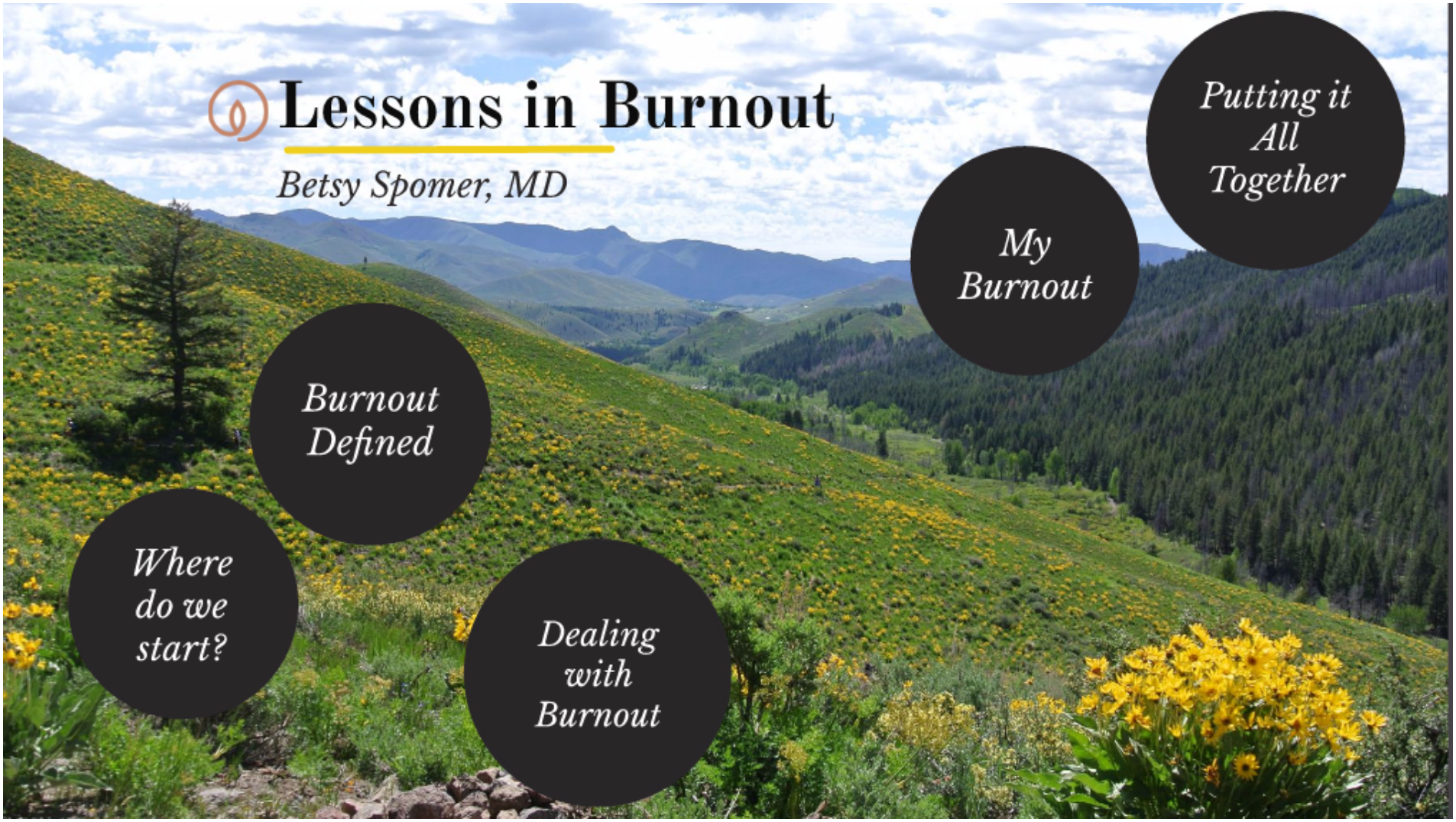
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