The Purposeful *Doctor*

FREE TOOLKIT

The ICU Reset

Five short resets for the hardest moments of a shift. Built in the ICU, and made to work anywhere in healthcare.

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START HERE

Why a reset, and why this small

From 2013 to 2020 I worked pulmonary and ICU together, close to 80 hours a week. The advice I kept hearing was to take care of myself on my days off. The problem was that the damage happened during the shift: a code that went badly, a family meeting with no good news, the next admission arriving before I had taken a breath.

These five resets are what I use in those moments. None of them need a quiet room, an app, or more than a few minutes. You can do most of them at a workstation, in a supply room, or in your car, without anyone knowing.

They will not fix staffing or charting, and they are not meant to. They are meant to stop one hard hour from becoming a hard day, and a hard day from following you home.

Use one, not five. Pick the reset that matches the moment you keep running into. One tool used on a real shift teaches you more than five you read about.

Practice it once when it is easy. Run it on a calm day so your body knows the steps when the day is not calm.

Keep the card. The last page is a pocket card. Print it, fold it, and keep it on your badge or in your locker.

Tell one colleague. Resets spread fastest when someone says, "Try this with me."

RESET 1

90 seconds

The 90-Second Reset

Use it between patients, before a hard conversation, or any time your heart is still racing from the last thing.

1. **Stop.** Stand still and take your hands off whatever you were doing. Name what just happened in five words or fewer, silently: "That code went badly."
2. **Breathe.** Breathe in through your nose for four counts and out through your mouth for six. Do it four times. The longer exhale tells your nervous system the emergency is over.
3. **Ground.** Press your feet into the floor and put one hand on something solid. Notice three things you can see and one thing you can hear.
4. **Set an intention.** Choose one word for how you want to walk into the next room: calm, kind, clear. Then go.

> A stress surge starts to settle once you stop feeding it, and slow breathing with a longer exhale helps it along. This reset gives it a short window on purpose, so you do not carry the surge into the next patient.

RESET 2

2 minutes

The Post-Code Reset

Use it after a death, a code, or a withdrawal of care, especially when there is no debrief. Think of it as the huddle your unit did not give you.

1. **Pause before the next task.** Ten seconds of stillness. If you can, say the patient's first name to yourself.
2. **Breathe out longer than in.** Four counts in, six out, three times, with one hand on the counter or the bed rail.
3. **Say the true sentence.** "I did what I could with what I had." You are allowed to grieve and to believe it at the same time.
4. **Find one person.** Before the end of the shift, tell one colleague, "That one was hard." You do not need to explain more than that.

RESET 3

30 seconds

The Doorway Reset

Use it at the door between one patient and the next, when you are switching from a crisis to a routine visit.

1. **Hand on the door frame.** Let it mark the line between the last room and the next one.
2. **One slow breath out.** Let your shoulders drop as you exhale.
3. **Leave it in the last room.** Silently: "That room is done. This person gets a fresh start."

RESET 4

3 minutes

The Handoff Home

Use it between the parking lot and your front door, so the shift does not come home with you.

1. **Close the chart.** Before you start the car, name the one thing from today that is still open. Say it out loud or type it in your phone.
2. **Hand it off.** Decide where it lives until your next shift: a note for tomorrow, a message to a colleague, or a decision that it was never yours to carry. Then say, "Handed off."
3. **Name one thing that went right.** Small counts: a clean IV start, a family that felt heard.
4. **Arrive.** Before you walk in, take three slow breaths and choose one word for how you want to show up at home.

RESET 5

5 minutes

The 3 am Reset

Use it when the shift is replaying and sleep will not come.

1. **Do not check the time again.** Turn the clock away.
2. **Breathe out longer than in.** Six counts out, ten times.
3. **Hand it off in your head.** Picture writing the shift on a sticky note and handing it to the oncoming team: "It is handed off until morning."
4. **Get up if you need to.** If you are still awake after twenty minutes, keep the lights low and do something quiet until you feel sleepy.

YOUR POCKET CARD

Cut it out, fold it, keep it on your badge

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90-Second Reset	Stop. Breathe 4 in, 6 out, four times. Feet down, hand on something solid. One word for the next room.
Post-Code Reset	Ten seconds still. Breathe out longer than in, three times. "I did what I could with what I had." Tell one colleague.
Doorway Reset	Hand on the frame. One slow breath out. "That room is done."
Handoff Home	Name what is still open. Decide where it lives. One thing that went right. One word for home.
3 am Reset	Clock away. Six counts out, ten times. "Handed off until morning." Up after twenty minutes.

Where to go next

Free · Purpose Quiz. Two minutes to see which of five areas is draining you most: thepurposefuldr.com/purpose-quiz

$17 · Break Free From Burnout Masterclass. Three resets and a four-step framework, on demand.

From $29 a month · Rounds Society. Monthly coaching and a community that is open day or night.

> If you are in crisis, call or text 988 (Suicide and Crisis Lifeline). Physicians can also call the Physician Support Line at 1-888-409-0141. These resets are education and self-care tools. They are not medical or mental health treatment.