Self-Reflection Case Studies

In each scenario:
1.   Read the scenario below
2.   Identify the areas where signs of stress could indicate burnout
3.   Identify two tools or strategies that could be applied by a resilient nurse to moderate
4.   Discuss areas where management specifically could mitigate burnout or make changes

Scenario 1:
A flu outbreak has occurred affecting the entire department. Most of the patients are exhibiting symptoms and many staff have called out sick as well. Everyone is working extra and is tired. Dr. Goldberg, who is notoriously difficult to work with and does not work well under stress, has received a 10th patient, 89 year old female, who arrives via ambulance. The family says the patient was sent by her primary to be admitted for confusion, however the ED has not as of yet received a call. The nurse drops standing orders for altered level of consciousness and obtains catheter urine along with blood tests. In talking with the family, the nurse learns the patient may have had a recent unwitnessed fall, and anticipates a computed tomography (CT) scan. This however is not under the nursing protocol orders, so the nurse approached Dr. Goldberg who responds, "You can see I am very busy, put through whatever you want." Reluctantly the nurse orders a CT scan of the head without under "verbal order." The CT is completed and one hour later as the results come back, Dr. Goldenberg approached the nurse stating, "You ordered the wrong CT and now I have to put in another scan unnecessarily exposing the patient to more radiation, please do not enter orders for me again."

Scenario 2:
The department has been busy all day. Your nursing team is experiencing a consistently moderate to high workload. You observe a fellow member of the nursing team who appears to be overwhelmed appear not don gloves before starting an IV. The nurse continues to draw blood and give medication without gloves or cleaning the hub. He is visibly upset and sighs loudly when the patient asks for a warm blanket.