

Mama Said There'd Be Days Like This: Overcoming Burnout and Fostering Resiliency

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I. Introduction—Why is this topic so important?

- Professional disappointments and career setbacks occur at every level
 - Medical school, residency, throughout career as faculty
- Contributes to feelings of depression/burnout
 - Burnout reaching epidemic levels
 - Emergency physicians and residents at high risk
- Good news: many doctors thriving!
 - What can we learn from these resilient physicians?

II. The Resilient Physician: Refocusing our Recruitment Efforts

- As Dean Becker, CEO of Adaptive Learning Systems, notes “More than education, more than experience, more than training, a person’s level of resilience will determine who succeeds and who fails. That’s true in the cancer ward, it’s true in the Olympics and it’s true in the boardroom.”
- The Military Experience...building a resilient workforce
 - The Millennium Cohort Study
 - Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System
- Three characteristics of a resilient candidate
 1. Optimistic Realism
 - Optimism and neuroplasticity: rewiring the brain
 - Facing down reality: training for survival
 2. Search for meaning or just a common value system
 - Believe there is a higher purpose to what they do
 - Unifying values and strengths
 3. “Ritualized Ingenuity”

III. Resiliency Issues Specific to Residency Training

- Residency challenges
 - Match Day, senior resident/nursing conflicts, patient death, autonomy struggles, failed research projects
- Importance of team-building/bonding
 - Residency retreats

- Dedicated humanism education
- Chief resident selection
 - Disappointment can lead to residents “checking out”
 - Momentum changer for the program
 - Keep residents engaged by having them champion or direct another area of program (EMS, ultrasound, wellness)

IV. Fostering Resiliency Throughout Career as Faculty

- Four characteristics of resilient physicians
 1. Value the Physician Role
 - Recognize unique privileges/rewards that come with being a doctor
 - Connect with patients—aim for at least one/shift
 - “Vicarious resilience”
 - Providers gain resilience from patients who embody everyday survival
 2. Celebrate small successes
 - Look for “wins” on every shift
 - Often most rewarding patient encounters low acuity
 3. Maintain sense of control
 - Internal vs. external locus of control
 - Controlling schedule/hours ideal
 - Set limits on non-clinical time
 - Control attitude on shift
 - Stop asking, “why now?”
 - Avoid wishful thinking
 4. Strong social support
 - Personal, professional support critical
 - Acts as buffer from stressors
 - Protects you emotionally and physically
 - Providing support can be even better for you in long run than receiving support