

AOD FINAL PROJECTS 3/14/18

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Dear --, --, and --, thank you for your poem and slide show “Budding Doctors.” (Nice word choice btw - -; I like the various meanings of budding, as in reproduction, showing promise, and sprouting, all of which apply to you as young doctors). I found the metaphor of a seed to be a particularly good one because, as your poem expressed, it contains “everything it needs,” yet also requires help from proper water, soil, light, and gardeners. I was particularly touched by the “gardener-mentors” you described. --, every time I hear you speak (which hasn’t been often enough), I’m struck again by your wit and vulnerability. Thank you particularly for sharing the childhood physician who believed in you and who helped you embrace quirkiness (this honoring of who we are was repeated over and over in the session). --, I loved hearing about the faculty who guided you on your path, which reminded me of the grace with which strangers can of to reach out and help us (this pretty much defines a doctor, at least initially!). --, it was very moving to get to know a little about your father, whose determination, tenacity, and sacrifice (of which I’m sure there were many) paved the way for your own journey into medicine. Thank you for honoring your gardeners. Dr. Shapiro

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Dear --, --, --, and --, I really appreciated your project, not only as a project, but because it helped me see and think structurally about AoD through students’ eyes. This was so valuable, and will help guide how I develop and emphasize certain themes in the future.

Resilience is an essential quality in all humans, and especially necessary for physicians to survive and thrive doing what they initially love. --, it was both brave and generous of you to share something of your personal story, and to learn of the strong women in your life who supported you even when they did not always understand you. Through perseverance, through reflection, you have embraced your own strength and thus carry on their tradition. I thought your presentation embodied --’s comment about owning vulnerability as a way of cultivating resilience. When we embrace who we are (which includes all our struggles), we become less afraid of facing the challenges the future holds.

Balance is a goal we prate about constantly, and are only just beginning to take seriously. --, I thought yours was a much-needed voice of reality, reminding us that we have not resolved the tensions between work-life balance, and that despite what our institutions, organizations, and programs tell us, often the “balanced” physician is judged as selfish or uncommitted, and punished for setting boundaries. These obstacles should not make balance seem hopeless, but require resilience (☺) to surmount. Remember that these ideas of balance, altruism, commitment, health and wellness are all contested which means in part you will have to define them for yourselves.

--, thank you for tackling the trite yet core topic of communication. I appreciated your quote that our biggest problem is our illusion that communication has taken place. People talking is not necessarily communication, although it is often charted as such! This led to your awareness that true communication is much more listening than talking; and more than that, how we listen (with

attention, respect, imagination, caring) matters. To really understand communication, we need reflection, a kind of meta-awareness of what happens when two people try to exchange thoughts, feelings, information, and connection. I think you made clear how complex communication is, and how worthwhile it is to understand it.

Finally, --, you reminded us that all physicians are advocates in some shape or form. It was clear how important advocacy has been to you in terms of fulfilling your vision of what a physician needs to be. It is so heartening to see young physicians like you in family medicine and other specialties recognizing that the doctor's role extends beyond the clinic walls. Doctors should care about all the social issues that contribute to health and illness – in other words, all social issues. Once physicians become more aware of the interlocking webs that influence all of us, they will be able to use their power wisely (thank you, --) and exert influence that work toward promoting health for all.

Thanks so much for summing up the goals and hopes of AoD and illuminating the way forward. Best,  
Dr. Shapiro

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Wow, -- and --, this was a presentation of great artistry and great emotional power. --, over the past many months, I have indeed discovered that you are a strong, authentic writer, with a unique voice that is not afraid to speak its truth. --, it was lovely to learn of your use of music as a healing force in many contexts. Medicine is not the only way to heal, and sometimes patients suffer from things that medicine has no power to cure, but music can soothe. And music is healing not only for patients but for their doctors as well.

--, it took great courage to share the story of your experience with your friends, and with your own genetic inheritance. What I found so compelling is that while you were attending to patients in the hospital, you were caring for and supporting your two friends as well. Incredible. Yet also, it is just doing what people do – helping others through suffering, and doing what they can to care for themselves. As we talked about, I understand a bit about the burden of genetic inheritance, and it can be a heavy one. I am impressed beyond words by how you have owned this, taken responsibility to do what you can do, and then used your own circumstances to develop a loving, laughing compassion-in-action that did not run from the hard conversations and celebrated the small victories. The lesson you learned – be there physically, emotionally, spiritually, clinically, selflessly – for all those for whom you care, including yourself.

This presentation continued the theme that emerged this session of owning, even embracing and celebrating who you are, with all that entails. By making your preventive visits to the Cancer Center a part of your story today, you reinforced that message. I think you made all of us a little less afraid of the parts of ourselves we may be tempted to hide. Thank you! Dr. Shapiro

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So... pens, backpacks, and shoes. There was a great collection of linked stories written about the Vietnam War called "The Things They Carried," that showed how soldiers in that war were defined by the objects they carted around in war. As you showed us, even the most mundane of objects is not simply a "thing" but a trigger of memories, even a talisman, something endowed with almost magical properties (such as the ability to resituate you in an experience). Objects can embody our hopes and fantasies (--'s little used pens), but accompany us (we carrying them – our trusty backpacks – or they carrying us – our increasingly dilapidated shoes) uncomplainingly wherever we need to go. As -- said, they see us through "good times and bad." They do not judge us, but they are there to witness our failures and successes, our sorrows and joys.

In one form or another, all of you learned something from your objects. --, you learned that what we anticipate experience to be is rarely how it turns out; and that the lessons you learned weren't always the ones you thought you needed to learn (something to keep in mind as you enter residency); --, from your backpack's continuity, you learned something about presence and mindfulness, and taking things as they come. -- and --, from your humble shoes, you learned to walk the path wherever it leads, and to keep going (even if you need to buy a new pair of shoes). Your objects remind all of you, as you said very well indeed, where you have been and where you are going. Thank you! Dr. Shapiro