
Dear -- and --, as I mentioned, *The Places You'll Go* is one of my favorite Dr. Seuss books. I think this is because, like all his books, it is whimsical, fun, joyous, yet also introduces little kids to the idea that the world is not perfect, it has its ups and downs, it can be a scary place, yet almost always we can find our way through its challenges. Using the text as the spine of your project was inspired, and the photos and pictures applied it perfectly to the medical school journey. As you all embark on the next phase of your journey, I thought the message of "follow your passion" was especially a propos, because on the surface the last thing residency seems to be about is "your passion"; yet if you don't find a way to keep a spark of your passion alive, residency can feel very bleak. Your specialty chart was full of funny comments and also captured well an essence of each one. This was a creative, delightful effort which I hoped helped all of us get in touch with and want to spend a little more time with our inner child. Thank you! Dr. Shapiro

Dear --, --, and --, I really enjoyed your collage "flags." I thought there was great symbolism in the form you chose – there was something fragile and vulnerable about the way they were suspended on the line, like laundry flapping in the breeze. Although unintentional, it was so significant when they "fell," like leaves from a tree (which also evoked seasons, one of the themes of your project). Things do fall apart, especially in residency, but by working together, and remembering to giggle, you can put the pieces back together. What a perfect message about teamwork and keeping a perspective.

The seasonal theme was very well-matched as a way of capturing this very eventful final year. Fall expressed that tumultuous feeling of never having enough time; winter captured something of the grimness of the interview trail; spring brings the joy of Match Day and the hopefulness of new beginnings; and your brief embrace of "summer" was whimsical and fun-filled, a well-deserved respite before residency.

--, thanks for sharing that this project was a lot of fun, it certainly looked as though it was. I hope you all can continue to find joy and pleasure in activities that allow you spontaneity, creativity, and imagination. This is one really good way to balance the demands of residency. Good luck to you all!
Dr. Shapiro

Hi --, --, --, and --, Thanks so much for your collection of artwork. Each one of you did a wonderful job of capturing some essential aspect of medical school. --, I'm always happy to see someone choosing family medicine, and you represented its essence beautifully – it's all about the relationships. Thank you for sharing your go-to topics of family, work, and sports to connect quickly and meaningfully.

--, your sketch encapsulated a terrible and beautiful truth about medicine – some lives are saved and some are not; and sometimes we can't help feeling that maybe God or the universe got these outcomes backwards. Nevertheless, as you suggested, we usually know so little about others that it is not your place to judge, but only to do what you've trained to do, which is to heal.

--, you made such an important point – the healthcare system dehumanizes the patient but it also dehumanizes the physician. I really liked the way you portrayed this by representing the physician

through the implements, technology and tools they use to diagnose, treat, and sometimes cure. Your reference to “life-sustaining treatment” was terrific because we are so used to employing this term in relation to patients, not recognizing how necessary it is for physician wellbeing as well.

Finally, --, your collage was a wonderful representation of your theme :”What I Never Knew as a PreMed.” The theme of idealism vs. disillusionment is a powerful one in medicine. Cynicism and disappointment are related to burn-out. There are indeed many losses throughout medicine – of naivete, sometimes of friends, of enjoyable hobbies and activities. There are many negative experiences – attending pimping; constant evaluations and exams. As we discussed, the key perhaps is figuring out how to hang onto your early passion and commitment *on the other side of* actual experience. Hopefully, it is both/and – many losses but also many gains; many sorrows but also many joys.

All very thoughtful projects. And thanks for taking the risk to create art – once you get past self-consciousness, it’s fun; and it often helps us express what we want to say and what we didn’t even know we wanted to say. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Dear --, --, --, and --, the tree metaphor is an excellent one for medicine and medical education. There is the trunk of core knowledge, values, and principles that you all share. Then there are the branches, representing different specialties and emphases. Finally, there are the different colors, which may express the individual personalities that each student brings to the study of medicine. I and others noticed how well the colors you chose blended and harmonized, although this was not consciously planned, which suggests that your friendship permeated the project, even unknowingly! The metaphor of a tree works so well because it is not a static thing. Trees are living, growing entities. They pass through different phase of sapling to maturity. They bend with the wind, thrive in sunlight, and withstand storms. Sometimes they are more vulnerable than others. Sometimes they lose limbs, but they grow new ones. Trees do not stay the same. They grow, they change. All of these qualities are great parallels for a career in medicine – indeed for life! Above all, future doctors, we love trees and know how crucial they are for our future health and wellbeing. I hope your future patients will remember you are their trees, which shelter and protect them, and treat you accordingly. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Dear --, --, --, and --, I loved the way you developed the theme of this project, Misconceptions and Corrections. It was really nice to learn where each of you is headed, and especially what is precious to you in your chosen specialty. In its totality, your project showed great reflection and thoughtfulness.

--, your piece challenged one of the most pervasive myths third year students encounter which is that they are the least important part of the medical team. It breaks my heart that some students never seem to realize this is far from the truth. As you pointed out, in fact students have a very important, a critical role on the team, which is to take time to plunge more deeply both into the patient’s story and the medical details. This information and understanding can make a real difference for the patient.

--, you also chose a widespread misconception, i.e., that students should know EVERYTHING! You portrayed so well that fear of being beaten down by unrealistic expectations. Instead, you discovered that in medicine everyone is always learning, and that is a fundamental strength of the profession.

--, you worried that medical students would be ignored or worse, embarrassed and pimped by cruel attendings and shaming residents. In reality, you found supportive residents and attendings interested in teaching. You learned a crucial lesson which will be true throughout your career – i.e., never be afraid to ask for help, and the awareness that collaboration is the core ingredient in medicine.

--, your insights about honoring emotion lie close to my heart. In my view, physicians MUST care and feel something about their patients, otherwise they are just technologists. A mentor of mine talked about “steadiness and tenderness,” advising that a ideal physician must have the emotional steadiness not to be swept away by the plight of the patient, but also the emotional tenderness to *care* about that plight. There is no research that says physicians who feel something for their patients provide less quality care; indeed, just the opposite. Patients who perceive their physicians as empathetic are more satisfied, trust their physicians more, and even can have improved clinical outcomes. Feelings are not nearly as much of a problem in medicine as their absence.

I really enjoyed your reflections, thank you all. Dr. Shapiro

Dear Redesign Team, I really liked the way you reformatted the human body; and just as you said in the introduction, while each of you had an individual message, in the end it all came together to represent a complete, human medical student/physician!

I am still pondering the symbolism of a bowel full of books, --, but appreciated your explanation that “there is a lot to digest” 😊

--, arms also seem symbolic to me because your arms and hands do so much in medicine – holding medical tools, entering medical information in the EMR, researching latest treatments, and not least, touching patients. Thank you for sharing the meaning of the Chinese characters – they imparted a valuable lesson: sometimes we must risk more to learn more.

Haha, --, coffee often seems to be the medical student’s best friend. You have so much to do, so much to learn, and so very little time that coffee becomes an essential companion! Your reflections on the seriousness of the commitment to medicine were very thoughtful; as was your honest admission of the strangeness of having people look up to you, even at a relatively young age. Indeed, a lot of responsibility lies ahead, in terms of both professional and personal life. I suspect that like a cat with nine lives, you will shoulder those responsibilities with grace and humility.

It was a truly sweet image, --, to think of you with your blueberry muffin hiding out for a few minutes in the Tower sunshine where no one could find you. A great samurai warrior is said to have claimed, “With a sip of tea I stop the war.” It is so important to take these little respites from the pressures of life. They enable us to come back refreshed and recommitted.

And --, as soon as I saw that building, I knew I recognized it. One of my daughters went to Duke, and it is truly an idyllic environment. I hope you will flourish there in all ways, a fully actualized and complete resident!

Thank you guys, a very creative imagining! Dr. Shapiro

Dear Team Reflection, your project was a memorable evocation of the past 4 years. --, you represented with authenticity how hard it is to keep the happy, optimistic (and pretty naïve!) attitudes that students start with in medical school; and how, for you uplifting movie quotes provided both consolation and inspiration.

--, I liked your quotes, and how you recognized that the best way to survive the preclinical years was to continue doing things you enjoyed. It's easy to lose sight of this truth that doing what you love sustains you, and I encourage to carry that insight with you into residency.

--, I appreciated the honesty with which you named the darkness and confusion of third year, the moral distress that arises when you can't always do what's best for the patient, and the fear of losing oneself to the worst aspects of the healthcare system. I had never heard the Verghese quote you included – the clinical years represent a transition from pre-cynical to cynical – but unfortunately that is often true, as students decide that those “worst aspects” are “real medicine.” I would push back a bit by saying, they *can be* real medicine, but they don't have to be, and it is up to us to make sure that idealism, compassion and justice, not cynicism and disillusionment, drive healthcare reform.

Finally, --, I loved your memes, they captured with mordant humor so many “truths” of medicine. I particularly liked the one about “fine,” when everything is crumbling. Definitely can relate!; and the one about residency being a dark place. In the end, you expressed your gratefulness to your peers, and that is what will help you survive next year and beyond – the relationships with your fellow residents, family, friends, and patients will sustain you and bring you joy.

Great project, thank you all! Dr. Shapiro

Dear Team Poets, I am so glad that, due to technical difficulties, you all provided the perfect note to end on. Your poem was by turns funny (I loved --'s funny pictures and --, your before and after cat), true, and moving. I heard repeated sighs and sounds of recognition as you proceeded through the iconic medical school experiences. Each verse embodied the essence of the preclinical and clinical years in a way your classmates really identified with. For example, --, your evocation of Tamkin I'm sure brought back memories of the many lectures, most of whose content is long forgotten but regarding which many emotions linger. The poem in its totality was perfect, in fact so perfect that there was nothing more to add. You managed to return to your classmates through a poem all that they had shared together over the past 4 years. Wonderful! Dr. Shapiro