

FM REVIEW 2014 23 COMMENTS

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR I:

This essay tackles an important and much-neglected subject, how to deal with anger and frustration toward colleagues and patients; and how to teach these lessons to learners. However, in order to thoughtfully and deeply consider each of these topics, the essay requires extensive revision. Please pay particular attention to the comments of reviewer 2, as these will be quite helpful in restructuring the essay. Below are summary points of some changes that should be made in submitting a revision.

1) The opening mini-story about resident A is powerful. It is disappointing when it is not revisited. Please close the loop here. Did you discuss this incident with the resident, and if so, how? What were the lessons taught?

2) Similarly, resident A had the good fortune to be present when you confronted your radiology colleague in a professional manner. She asks you, "How did you stay so calm?" The reader wants to know the answer too, so let us know.

3) Don't spend so much space on the medical details of the flashback - I think you may be justifying why your request was appropriate, but that is not the purpose of the essay. The main point in this case is that the radiology residents behaved in a disrespectful and unprofessional manner. Please figure out a way to highlight this and let the rest go.

4) Similarly, you want to highlight that although you specifically asked the radiology resident to talk to your patient and explain her situation, he did so in a cursory and unhelpful manner. Bring this forward more succinctly, and also indicate how or whether you planned to address this issue with him (or with your own resident) as well.

5) In your final paragraphs, please return to the original excellent questions you raised in the introductory paragraph. Give readers some insights about how you manage these situations, both as a clinician and as an educator. These concluding paragraphs need to summarize your own learning and insights in a way that is easily accessible to the reader.

6) Think about a different title - I'm not sure what the phrase "friend and foe" really means, while "professionalism and anger" sounds very abstract and theoretical. The title is what will draw in the reader. Try to come up with something more compelling.

7) Try for a more narrative style - as if you were reflecting on this question of working with emotions with a trusted colleague over a cup of coffee. Sometimes you capture that well, and then at other times you sound more like a clinic preceptor.

Regarding your summative thoughts, I think you can go further than just "remaining calm" or "not getting angry." The more interesting question is when you notice anger arising, what do you do with it? Do you stuff it because it is unprofessional? Do you decide it is justifiable because the other person is a "jerk"? Do you try to learn something from it? Is it telling you action needs to be taken? If so, what might be the goals of that action? How might you go about taking that action in a way that is courteous

and professional, yet also meets your goal? When you calm yourself by taking a breath (a valuable strategy that could be highlighted in the essay), to what end? How do you proceed after the breath and how does it help? Are there other strategies you use, such as perspective taking or seeking common ground? Perhaps this kind of discussion is similar to the one you had with resident A, and these points can be folded into your concluding thoughts in a narrative rather than a purely didactic way.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR II: This essay attempts to address the thorny issue of how to teach professionalism to residents; and how to manage one's own anger and frustration. Unfortunately, despite the sincere efforts of the author, the essay has not cohered. Most seriously, the overall conceptualization of what this essay is about, what are its main points, while no doubt clear to the author, remains murky to the reader. The writing is pedestrian and repetitive. The time sequence is confusing. I've tried to give the author some guidance through heavy editing, but the essay still requires a great deal of work.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II: Thank you for your efforts at revision, including changing the title, eliminating much of the medical terminology, reducing the medical details of the flashback, and highlighting the techniques you use to manage your own emotions in provocative situations. You also made clearer the key turning points in the narrative, such as the way resident R provided only a cursory explanation of her condition to your patient. There are still several issues that need to be addressed to ensure that the essay conveys a clear message and has a smooth flow.

The way I understand this essay is this: 1) Resident Dr A behaves badly toward a patient's daughter. You are annoyed with Dr A's lack of professionalism and wonder how to intervene. 2) There follows a long "flashback" involving another resident, Dr. R, who along with his fellow residents, was rude and unprofessional to you; and subsequently was callous and dismissive to your patient Ms. P. 3) Dr. A observed and was distressed by both of your interactions with Dr. R. In discussing these incidents with her, you stressed the importance of taking a centering breath and knowing how to take the other person's perspective. Lesson learned, so you thought. 4) Flash forward - you have just witnessed an unprofessional interaction involving Dr. A, the beneficiary of your earlier tutelage. You are disappointed and even a bit angry, and wondering how to respond. But while you are pondering, Dr. A recognizes her mistake (implicitly) and herself verbalizes what she could have done differently, recounting the lessons she learned from the earlier encounters involving Dr. R. 5) As she talks, you realize that you are guilty of the same "lapse" toward Dr. A that she exhibited toward her patient - i.e., you felt angry and frustrated with her. 6) However, by applying the lessons you already know (and taught Dr. A), you were able not to act on your emotions, but rather empathically interact with her and appreciate the stresses that she was experiencing. 7) Conclusion? Professionalism isn't a matter of one-shot learning, but a process that both teachers and learners must engage in.

Is this the essence of your essay? The fact that I have to ask highlights the problem. It is still hard to fully grasp the connection between the incident with Dr. A and the patient's daughter; and the (presumably) earlier incident with Dr. R, observed by Dr. A. It is further a bit confusing because the incident with Dr. R primarily involves a resident behaving in an unprofessional manner toward an attending (and later, toward a patient, although this latter event somehow seems less egregious); while the incident with Dr. A involves a resident behaving unprofessionally only toward a patient. Is the point that Dr. A seemed to learn the lessons of breath and perspective when she observed bad behavior in someone else; had trouble applying them when they were relevant to herself; but retrospectively realized how she could

have improved her behavior toward the patient's daughter? Is another point that, with Dr. R, you managed to contain your frustration and act in a professional manner; with Dr. A, you hovered on the brink of snapping at her; but in the nick of time were "saved" from an unprofessional act by her spontaneous insight? The essay needs to be a lot clearer on the overall points it's trying to make about both Dr A and the narrator.

The title still seems a bit bland to me. Maybe you could eliminate the term "professionalism" from the title (it sounds more like an article than an essay) and go with something a little more involving: "Take a Breath, Take the Other's Point of View." Or something.

The timing of the two incidents (with Dr. A and Dr. P) is confusing. Chronologically, it seems as though the encounter with Dr. P came first, but was observed by Dr. A. Later, you witness Dr. A's clumsy encounter with the patient's daughter, which causes you to reflect on the incident with Dr. P. Is this correct? Please clarify the relationship between these two events.

There still seems several observations and information that don't seem particularly relevant to the essay. They are indicated on the attached file.

Although I appreciate your highlighting the concept of "taking a deep breath," as requested, in this version it came across as a bit too much of a good thing. I suggested a few places the breaths could be cut.

I attempted some editing to bring the points of your essay into sharper focus. For example, I tried casting the incident with Dr. A in the present tense to indicate that this is the immediate issue being addressed, while the incident with Dr. R remains in the past. I realize that this version of your narrative may not be exactly what you wanted to convey. Please look at these suggestions to stimulate your own thinking, but do not feel you have to adopt them wholesale. Instead, I think that if you clarify the narrative arc the essay will fall into place in a more accessible and understandable manner.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR III: This essay addresses the thorny issue of professionalism and how it can be taught. The author has been remarkably non-defensive in what has been a long process. He has worked very hard to revise the manuscript according to editorial feedback; and in fact the latest version includes many comments showing his sincere and thoughtful efforts. The problem is that his writing style is pedestrian and it is hard to make the narrative come to life. I've made extensive edits (summarized below) and hope these will help the author toward a final iteration.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR III: Thank you for your patience with what has been a long process. I know we are united in wanting this essay to be the best possible piece it can be. I appreciated your thoughtful responses to major suggested revisions - both when you agreed and when you did not. Your arguments were persuasive.

The essay is much improved, and I agree that the chronology is clearer. Much extraneous and distracting information has been removed, and that helps as well. Nevertheless, while you are moving closer, the essay has not yet arrived. I've made further additions to try to refine the flow and style of the writing (please see attached). In addition, I'm recommending two larger changes (which are provisionally incorporated in the essay for your consideration:

1) Because you've changed the chronology, there are no flashbacks and it now proceeds in a straightforward manner. This being the case, it is confusing that some of the essay was written in present tense (which actually now chronologically happened earlier) and some written in past tense. I recommend the entire essay stick with past tense.

2) The essay bogs down at times because there is so much reported dialogue: I said this to her, then he said this to me, I told him this, then he said that. I think it will enliven the essay to make at least some of this direct dialogue, which I have attempted to do. Please consider whether you like this approach.

I recommend that you make all changes that seem desirable. **IN ADDITION TO THE TRACK-CHANGE VERSION, PLEASE ATTACH A CLEAN VERSION SO THAT WE CAN READ WHAT HOPEFULLY WILL BE A PENULTIMATE DRAFT FOR CONTINUITY AND COHERENCE.**

Thank you again for all the hard work you've invested in this piece. It is almost there!

COMMENTS TO EDITOR IV: This is a rather involuted essay that nevertheless makes a good point about how to teach residents about professionalism - and how to practice it oneself! The essay has gone through two major revisions and one more minor revision. As a result is quite a bit clearer and more focused than the original version. I think it has reached its potential. In my attachment, I recommend some small cuts of material I found redundant or unnecessary (this version of the essay was 1137 words, which I've reduced to 1099), as well as a few verb tense changes made for clarity of the time sequence, which has been difficult to present in a linear manner. If the author agrees to these minor changes, I will recommend acceptance.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR IV: Thank you for your patience in continuing to refine this essay. Its readability and clarity of focus are much strengthened in this latest submission. It now tells an engaging and illuminating story about how to teach residents about professionalism - and how to practice it oneself with residents! I've suggested a few minor cuts in order to bring the essay closer to the recommended 1000 word limit. I've also made a couple of other very small edits. Please see if you agree with these.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR V: I recommend that we accept this fourth revision. The author has been very agreeable to all recommended changes and has labored mightily over making this a coherent essay. Please note p. 1, line 25 should read "certainly no respect for..."

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR V: Thank you for all the hard work you put into this essay. It makes many interesting and valuable points about how to teach professionalism to residents - and how to incorporate professionalism into resident teaching.