

## 10 STRATEGIES FOR STAYING HUMAN DURING RESIDENCY TRAINING

Allan Peterkin, MD

- 1. Aim to maintain an “internal locus of control”.**  
Seek to control what you can, rather than passively accepting everything that happens to you.
- 2. Draw a “self-esteem pie”.**  
Draw a circle and label slices as: work, love, play, spirit. How big is each slice in your current life? How balanced are your goals? Use the drawing as a reminder of where you are now and where you would like to be in terms of feeling whole.
- 3. Seek support.**  
Building and maintaining relationships is the most protective of all strategies in surviving residency. If you feel overwhelmed, your provincial residents’ association can put you in touch with confidential resources and professional counselling.
- 4. Don’t neglect the body.**  
Follow the advice you would give to your own patients about self care.
- 5. Know your rights.**  
Read your hospital contract/collective agreement to clarify work duties and benefits including study, illness and maternity leaves.
- 6. Read around your cases.**  
Reviewing a topic when it is immediately relevant to patient care is a good motivator but also contextualizes clinical principles in a way you will remember.
- 7. Keep a journal** to record your own thoughts, feelings, ethical dilemmas and “first” (i.e., first delivery, first death of a patient, first clinical mistake).
- 8. Be a generous and patient teacher** to junior residents and medical student. How we treat one another either perpetuates workplace abuse or humanizes us and the profession.
- 9. Don’t be afraid to say NO** if a demand doesn’t fit or is unreasonable.
- 10. Live in the moment** but consider your options. Many residents feel the only way “to get through” training is to live in the future and neglect their lives in the “here and now”. At the same time it is comforting to know that medical training confers many options most professionals do not have – you can teach, write, do research, consult, broadcast, re-specialize, travel, volunteer, advocate. Whenever you feel stuck, be creative in your goal planning/re-assessment.