

Remember that you are not alone and you will succeed!

Dear Intern,

Congratulations on entering residency! Residency is by far a much better learning experience than being a student. Yes, you will have longer hours, more work, surgeries in the middle of the night when sleep is crucial, weeks that blur together, and days that you think you've been in the hospital for more than a day. The journey that you are about to embark on is tough, strenuous, sleep deprived, and exhausting; however, those are the best parts of residency. Every day that you finish in residency is another learning opportunity that you can add to your knowledge bank. The wealth of knowledge that you are going to get from all of these experiences through the long hours and days will make you one of the most highly sought-after physicians in the country.

Remember that while you are on this tough journey you are not alone. You will make friends, not only within your own specialty, but other specialties as well. They are key to getting you through this tough, yet amazing, adventure. Also, do not forget about yourself. You may have days where you just feel defeated and this is completely OK. Remember to take care of yourself, especially on those days, with a cup of coffee or a candy bar from the gift shop. It will make your day, trust me. Good luck on your journey and remember that you are not alone and you will succeed!

Take a deep breath, relax, not everything is an emergency. . .

Dear Incoming Resident,

Residency is going to be tough, especially your first year. You will definitely make it through, and you will learn a lot, and come out much better than when you came in. You will be tired, you will feel overworked, at times you will feel stupid, but by the end you will feel much more intelligent. Take a deep breath, relax, not everything is an emergency, and you can only be in one place at a time. It is going to be tough to draw the line between what is a manageable level of very busy versus overwhelmingly and excessively busy; but, in those times when you find yourself on the side of the line toward overwhelmed, do not be afraid to say something or to ask for help, you are not in this alone, you have a team. If you communicate well with your team, things will go much smoother. Don't allow yourself to get consumed by work, make sure you budget time for yourself, your family, your significant other, and your non-medicine friends.

#keepit100

Treat each moment and opportunity with your absolute best effort. Residency can be grueling and oftentimes it's tempting to take shortcuts here or there, especially if the task seems insignificant or no one is watching. Integrity, and the mark of a great physician, is doing what is right when no one is watching or no one else is willing to. Truth be told, you never know who is watching. It's a small world, and at some point we all need help from one another – might as well start paying it forward now. Give each patient encounter, peer interaction, lecture, or test 100% of your effort...100% of the time.
#messagetomyinternself #keepit100

The next few years are going to be a roller coaster.

Dear Intern-self,

Get Ready. The next few years are going to be a roller coaster. You will go through more emotions than you ever thought possible and will have some of the absolute best and hands down worst days of your life. There will be times (probably lots of times) when you are overwhelmed, stressed beyond belief and wondering why the heck you chose this career. You will be tired. You will cry. And sometimes you'll be pretty certain that a dark cloud is following you wherever you go. Luckily these days do not last forever.

Then there will be great days. Days where you feel you've made a difference, you actually know something, you have truly helped someone and you really are in the right place. You will also meet some of the best friends you will ever have. You will receive an overwhelming amount of feedback, both criticism and praise. Take it all with grace and with the belief that others are truly trying to help you become the best doctor you can. Both how you receive this feedback and how you use it, will shape the person and physician you become. Then before you know it, these few years of residency will be over and you will be much stronger, smarter, and more confident. You will grow tremendously. You will know that you can get through pretty much anything and come out being better for it. It will be worth it (repeat to self often).

Be sure to thank your family, friends and loved ones frequently – they will help more than you can imagine. Try to learn as much as you can, give your full effort even when you're exhausted and make time for some fun! (or you will go crazy). Become close with your class and support each other – you're in the exact same boat. You will make it! And it will all be worth it!

Identify your healthy coping mechanisms and escapes now and make sure you maintain those in your life from the beginning. . .don't lose the things that make you you.

Residency will simultaneously be the best and worst thing you've ever done. It will feel like it's dragging on in the moment, and then before you know it, it's all over and every day is filled with sad nostalgia. You'll experience every possible human emotion, sometimes within the course of an hour. Immerse yourself in it. Feel all of those emotions fully. Take advantage of every opportunity for learning that comes your way, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem. Work hard and strive every day to be better than you were the day before. Complete tasks efficiently so they're not hanging over your head. Through it all, remember that while one of your priorities is your own growth and education, you must always keep the best interest of your patients at heart. Advocate for them, support them, heal them. This will be exhausting. You will have moments where you cry or yell or can't think anymore and you're not even sure why. Identify your healthy coping mechanisms and escapes now and make sure you maintain those in your life from the beginning. Whether it's cooking or running or talking to your friends and family or snuggling with your cat, don't lose those things that bring you happiness and make you you. Never forget that you're not in this alone. Draw support from your classmates, your senior residents, and your attendings. Sometimes a mid-week happy hour venting session is all you need to make it to Friday. You are starting a wonderful adventure. Be amazing and have fun!

You will hone your moral compass and the patient will always be true north.

You're so excited! Excited and anxious and worried. But mostly excited. Unfortunately that excitement will be replaced with fear, anxiety, overwhelming guilt and feelings of worthlessness. But these moments will pass and excitement will develop into a sense of duty and purpose. You will gain confidence as you develop plans of care and surgical skill. You will feel compelled to defend your choices not because you are cocky or bull-headed but rather you are assertive and advocating for your patient. You will hone your moral compass and the patient will always be true north. You will find peace and solace in this.

You will make mistakes. Some small and unimportant, some grave and everlasting. You will carry these with you and you will never forget these patients. You will never quite feel that you are prepared and fully ready to stop training and then you'll realize that this training never ends, there is always more to learn and ways to grow.

Your ambition will swell and it will suffer. You might not feel worthy of great things. You may feel compelled to push onwards and upwards to appease an outside motivator. But you will find your true self and feel content and happy in your decisions. You will be successful.

Your patients will thank you. They will be grateful for your kindness, honesty and service. You will feel as though days and weeks go by without some offer of gratitude but then a patient or family member will say something kind and encouraging and your energy will soar. You know this isn't the reason to keep pushing but you can't help but swell with emotion when your work is seen and understood.

Your family and friends will suffer. They will suffer in your absence and sometimes in your presence when the stress from work overflows and fills the spaces at home. You will repeatedly be grateful for their continued encouragement, support and love. You will find ways to make them important.

Lastly, at the end, you will feel drained and exhausted; ready to run out the door at the end of each day. As the days count down to the final weeks you will look at your co-residents and be overwhelmed with sadness. The thought of leaving them will creep into your head every day. You will find any excuse to spend more minutes and hours with them. You know you will stay in touch, but not like it is now. No one will ever know you the way your co-residents do. You will thank them for their support and love and understanding. You will shed tears when you hug goodbye one last time.

You will question your place, your knowledge, your path.

Enjoy

Residency will be one of the best experiences of your life.

It's a long arduous road, but it ends fast.

Work hard. Ask questions. Learn from the experience of others. Learn from patients. Treat each patient like you would like your family member to be treated. Read. MAs, Nurses, Clerks, Janitorial Staff are your friend, treat them with respect. Take time to relax. Keep time for your friends. You will question your place, your knowledge, your path. Keep the end goal, being a great, smart, loyal, humble physician in mind.

You can do this!

Ten Commandments of Residency:

1. Be kind and courteous to everyone with a smile. It will make your day and the day of those around you better. Also, please and thank you go a long way.
2. Never leave home without your hospital ID, phone, and wallet - all else can be found or borrowed once you get here (including clothes and deodorant).
3. You will encounter patients that make you sad, mad, jaundiced, uncomfortable, happy, and some will break your heart. It's ok! Have someone you talk to about them and will let you vent, cry, scream, laugh, whatever. Don't hold it back for too long.
4. Assume everything is covered in...unpleasantness. Wash your hands, change out of your scrubs, leave your white coat at work, and wear all the gowns and gloves, masks, etc. Trust me, once you have matured and think back you will want to burn all of your possessions and start from scratch.
5. Every day you must get three of the following four items: sleep (6-8hrs), food (3 meals, 2 of which are sitting down), exercise (not counting walking to and from your car and the hospital end to end), and personal time (whatever recharges you).
6. If you don't know ASK! You are here to be trained. There is nothing wrong with not knowing something. Asking is better than doing it wrong and those you are asking were in your same position at some point.
7. After being on nights you will have a PTSD like response to rings, dings, and chimes and you will occasionally wake up in the middle of the night swearing you heard the pager go off. Do not worry. This is normal and will go away eventually - or so I am told.
8. When you go home, relish in the fact that you can go home and can eat, drink, walk, and function like you can. After a long day, it can help put things in perspective.
9. On rounds, when you realize that you are jealous of your patients because all they have to do is sit in a bed and watch TV while someone brings them food, it means that you have not obeyed some or all of commandments 1-8 and I reference you to commandment 10.
10. Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Anyone can do anything for ... (insert a time frame ... residency, a year, two weeks, an eight hour shift, till lunch, the next 10 min, etc). By the time you get there, I promise things won't look so bad.