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## **ESSENTIAL STEPS TO STAYING FIT AND MOTIVATED WHILE STUDYING IN MEDICAL SCHOOL**

Nowadays in medical institutes and schools, the issue of staying motivated and fit is extremely important. As future doctors, medical assistants and nurses are going to work with people's health it is obvious that they need to know everything about physical fitness, psychology and health in general. Therefore, there is a question how to find time among all the subjects and crucial amount of information that we gain in the medical school.

Below we have prepared a few offers how to stay motivated and fit in medical school:

### **1. Find your people.**

A support system is absolutely what will get you through medical school, so it is important to have a good one. Everyone's network looks different, but it is very important.

It may be a mix of family, friends from home, college and grad school, friends/study group at school, the members of some Students Medical Association, and mentors from various stages of education. These may be the people you talk to when you are having the best and worst days, and they're the ones who have gotten you through the year.

### **2. Motivation is everything.**

Fortunate enough to begin med school with a good picture of what motivates you based on background and many of the activities you participate in during undergrad and graduate school.

The fact that some of the populations that you are going to work with never given a fighting chance due to disparities in health care and education is what keeps you awake at night. It is what will push you out of bed in the morning and what determines the activities you are involved.

Motivation can come from many different sources and is very person-specific. Find what motivates you and hang on to it because some days will be difficult, and you will definitely need the reminder of why you came to medical school in the first place.

### **3. There is no shame in asking for help.**

It is not only OK — it is crucial. However, so many med students went through school always understanding everything and never really having to ask for help, but there are times in medical school when you just do not know what to do. At these times, it is so important to ask for help, whether from classmates, faculty or others.

This will be especially important later on the wards because patients can really suffer if you do not know what you are doing and you don't ask for help. It may take some humility at first, but you may be surprised that people are often more than happy to teach you and are often glad that you asked ... not to mention that others often have the same issue but are afraid to ask.

#### **4. It's OK to try new things.**

“Humans are creatures of habit?” It's kind of true, but it turns out that we miss a lot if we stay inside our comfort zones all of the time.

New things — like running a half-marathon, dancing in front of an audience and trying new hobbies, among many other things. Shaking things up keeps life interesting, and it has definitely led to some fun experiences.

#### **5. You are a person.**

This may mean that sometimes you need a day off, so take a day off or push through until you can. There are also times that you will have an emotional encounter with a patient or something bad will happen in your life outside of medical school. At these times, it is so important to take care of yourself.

#### **6. The sacrifice will be worth it.**

In a few short years, people will trust us with their lives; that's an incredible responsibility. Thus, there are sacrifices that we must make. The hardest one has been not being able to see family and friends as much as you would like. However, they, as well as you, know that this is temporary but necessary, and it will definitely be worth it on the other side.

#### **7. Sometimes it's hard work**

Studying medicine comes with a certain expectation to work harder on average than most other students. There are generally more contact hours than other subjects with practical lessons and lectures taking up a great deal of time. Of course it is not just the contact hours when you are working: lecture notes need to be read over, essays have to be written, practicals should be prepared for and keeping on top of it all can be a challenge. This is especially the case as your work load will vary from week to week, sometimes being set a great deal of work and sometimes having a whole week with very little to do. There's also a reasonable amount of pressure on to pass exams. In most subjects other than medicine what you are really studying and aiming for is the best grade possible. Obviously this is true to an extent in medicine, but there is an additional challenge, which is the very high pass marks for the “Step” exams, the ones you have to pass in order to become a doctor. By being passed in these you are essentially being certified as competent enough in a subject area to continue towards a professional medical career. Passing these exams can often require cramming a great deal of knowledge in a small space of time and this can be stressful, but the reward after exams is a long summer to enjoy. Medicine can be challenging.

#### **8. It's not all hard work!**

Don't panic, medicine can be challenging but you'll still have plenty of time to enjoy being an undergraduate, an experience that many people say is the best time of their life. All that you need to do in order to manage these other activities is be efficient with the time you spend working; don't spend a whole afternoon watching YouTube videos if you know you have a gym that evening. University is about a lot more than simply gaining a degree, you will learn a lot about yourself and other people and hopefully build yourself into someone who is capable of being a good doctor.

Sports and societies also provide an opportunity to take a leadership and organisational role, which once again will become very important in a clinical context, whether it is organising ward staff or running a practice as a GP. Medicine is a career

in which it is vital to emerge from university as a functional person who is capable of interacting well with others.

### **9. Studying medicine brings you up to date with the latest medical research**

For those of you who are really interested in the biological sciences, studying medicine is a great opportunity to be brought very close to the frontier of current scientific knowledge, beyond what you will find in textbooks. Your lecturers are all actively involved in their field of interest and as such it is part of their job to stay up to date with all the latest advances and studies that are going on in that area.

### **10. Medicine is a long course**

Studying medicine is very much a marathon, not a sprint. It is a 5 or 6 year course, where in your final few years holidays become a lot shorter and you are studying almost all year round (instead of having three months off a year). The reason the course is so long is because of the volume of material that needs to be learned; both the basic scientific principles and the clinical skills needed to apply them must be taught. While this may seem like a fairly monumental task the truth is that while at university time seems to pass incredibly rapidly, probably because the average student is so busy they don't have time to notice each term flying past. While this is nice as it feels as if you're making rapid progress through your studies it also means it's very easy to get behind on work and not catch up until the holidays come around.

Among all these offers we have prepared a few how to stay fit and healthy during the long process of studying:

- **Meal prep for the week.** Devote a few hours on Sunday to plan and prepare food that can be frozen and reheated. It's just like creating a study plan for school and makes choosing the right foods a lot more manageable.
- **Do a food swap.** No one likes eating the same meal every day for a week. Find other people who also will do a meal prep for the week and swap lunches. That way you get variety without having to eat out or cook too often.
- **Reward yourself.** Don't allow yourself to quit all your vices cold turkey. Just smaller portions.
- **Separate eating from studying.** Seriously. Take 20 minutes to just eat. You'll eat less. If you're studying while eating, you'll eat more and likely eat more sweet or starchy foods.
- **Have an accountability partner.** Someone who is also doing this with you. Whether you go to the gym together or cook together, daily check-ins help keep you on track.
- **Make your workouts fun.** Call it a "fun out," not a workout. Is it a spin class, or a new trail you want to run?
- **Make working out a time to escape studying.** No one I know does well when studying is always on their mind. Getting away from the material for an hour is refreshing for when you return.
- **Celebrate your workouts.** Little successes are key. Most people who work only towards big goals will fail them.

### **Conclusion**

Studying at university is a real contrast to being a student at school and one of the real challenges is organising your work and activities. You can no longer rely on your parents to keep a calendar of everything that's going on and instead you must sort things for yourself. Add to this the fact that a significant proportion of time at university will be spent feeling tired, due to excessive studying or partying, and there is a recipe for potential disaster. Tutorials may clash with rehearsals, practicals may coincide with sports matches. The most important thing is to have some kind of system, whether it is a paper diary you keep with you or a calendar on your phone. Make sure you're not the one who is always nearly missing things or running round at the last minute trying to work out where you're supposed to be.

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