

dear residents

Self-Reflection

December 18, 2022

Dear Residents,

The end of the year is fast approaching. We are gathering up any incomplete evaluations so we can tidy up ACGME milestone reports. Respiratory infections are on the rise again. We are anticipating a winter COVID surge – perchance a kinder one than we endured these last two winters. We are also expecting much colder weather by the end of the week. The good news is that after December 21, the days will begin to get longer.

The midpoint of the academic year is a natural point to reflect on your experience this year. We all value soft skills, such as empathy, compassion, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and communication. To this list of soft skills, we ought to add self-reflection. Take a moment to reflect on your time in this program – I expect that you will recall unforeseen surprises, stinging failures, and vexing frustrations, but that you will also recall times when you were enthralled, had that profound insight, made a meaningful connection with someone, or had moments of unbridled joy.



Photo by [Annie Spratt](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Making self-reflection a regular habit is trickier and requires some discipline to keep a journal on a regular basis. There are some useful tools to guide your reflections. One of these is the [Gibbs Reflective Cycle](#) with six stages of exploration:

- Description of the experience
- Feelings and thoughts about the experience
- Evaluation of the experience, both good and bad
- Analysis to make sense of the situation
- Conclusion about what you learned and what you could have done differently
- Action plan for how you would deal with similar situations in the future, or general changes you might find appropriate

We are our own worst critics but can also be our own best friends. Making the time for self-reflection can help guide us in this time of immense growth and evolution (which is typically served with a side of confusion). I know I've written before about the finitude of 156 weeks of residency training – measured this way, it can feel quite fleeting. As this year ends, for some of you only 26 weeks will remain. Make this time count. Prepare for this final leg by discovering what worked for you and what didn't. A reflective exercise will help elucidate how you can positively influence your remaining time in this program and prepare best for the next step in your career.

I have most Wednesday mornings set aside to meet with you. I invite all graduating residents to share their reflections with me.

Warm regards,

Dino Kazi