

dear residents

Let it RAIN

July 23, 2023

Dear Residents,

By now, everyone has had a chance to fully experience the start of resident life. There were some delays for a few of you (visas, training permits, other circumstances), but everyone is in the saddle now, so to speak. Some of you have been on challenging rotations like critical care and cardiology, while others have been on electives and itching to get into the thick of things. By the Fall it will all even out. That was my experience in 1988 when I began residency training – by September, I had been around the block once, knew my way around and felt a semblance of control. My first month as a supervising resident also had its moments of feeling lost, but I felt more settled by September/October that year.

Tackling anything new involves a combination of excitement, trepidation, hopefulness, and anxiety. For me, the anxiety component was the tough one. I had nausea each morning. [I am not morning person, BTW]. And I often felt my pulse quickening – worried about being late, being unprepared and hopelessly disorganized. I know some things now, that I wish I knew then. One of these is the power of mindfulness. Tara Brach, a clinical psychologist developed the [RAIN method](#). The acronym stands for 4 steps:

- Recognize what is happening.
- Allow the experience to be there, just as it is.
- Investigate with interest and care.
- Nurture with self-compassion.

Just recognizing what you are feeling, giving it a name, pausing to let the moment of whatever you are experiencing just sit and then summoning your curiosity to understand it and finally wrapping it with a dose of self-compassion is the technique in brief. I think this is what Samuel Shem implied when he formulated one of the [House of God Laws](#): “Law 3 - At a cardiac arrest, the first procedure is to take your own pulse.” 34 years later [Samuel Shem added an additional 4 laws](#) to the original 13

Law 14 : Connection comes first. This applies not only in medicine, but in any of your significant relationships. If you are connected, you can talk about anything, and deal with anything; if you're not connected, you can't talk about anything, or deal with anything. Isolation is deadly, connection heals.

Law 15 : Learn empathy. Put yourself in the other person's shoes, feelingly. When you find someone who shows empathy, follow, watch, and learn.

Law 16 : Speak up. If you see a wrong in the medical system, speak out and up. It is not only important to call attention the wrongs in the system, it is essential for your survival as a human being.

Law 17 : Learn your trade, in the world. Your patient is never only the patient, but the family, friends, community, history, the climate, where the water comes from and where the garbage goes. Your patient is the world.



Mindfulness

Being aware of the physical, emotional, or mental pain of the moment.



Self-kindness

Treating ourselves with kindness, considering our own needs.



Common Humanity

Recognizing that these experiences are a normal part of being human.

If **self-compassion** is a new concept for you, head over to [Kristen Neff's website](#). She explains the 3 elements of self-compassion:

- **Self-kindness vs self-judgement** – acknowledging that being imperfect and failing is inevitable.
- **Common humanity vs isolation** – you are certainly not alone – suffering is a shared human experience.
- **Mindfulness vs. Over-identification** – keeping the balance between suppressing (silent suffering) and amplifying (swept by negativity).

I can see your evaluations coming in and everyone seems to have had a great start. Thank you for completing the voluntary well-being fuel gauge and adding your advice to me – I will collate and send these out next week.

Sometimes, self-care is not enough, and you may need additional assistance in navigating your wellbeing. The GME website has several [wellbeing resources](#) which include a confidential resident wellness and counselling center.

This is a compassionate residency training program – we listen, we act, we care.

With you all the way,

Dino Kazi