

dear residents

Seasonality in Residency

November 24, 2024

Dear Residents,

It's that time of year again—the Thanksgiving and Winter Holiday Season is upon us. For some of you, this might be the first time working on Thanksgiving, Christmas, or New Year's Day. Ours is a profession that never sleeps, delivering care 24/7, and while this commitment can feel daunting, it's also a reflection of our purpose.

When we first launched the *Well-Being Fuel Gauge*, we assumed that winter would bring the lowest scores for overall well-being. Surprisingly, we were wrong. Well-being tends to improve as we approach winter and stays stable until February, when it dips again. Perhaps the Holiday Season lifts our spirits even when we're on duty. Maybe it's the collective celebration, or perhaps it's the relationships we build with our "work family" that sustain us.

We **thrive** when we feel competent, connected, and equipped for growth. Reflecting on my own early residency days, I remember feeling lost in July and August, entirely reliant on guidance from others. By September and October, I began gaining confidence, and by November and December, I felt capable of managing most situations independently. Of course, I missed my family in Karachi, but a February vacation filled with home-cooked meals was a restorative anchor that powered me through the rest of the year.

Residency has a natural rhythm, a seasonality that shapes us: the energy and optimism of summer, the early exhaustion of fall, the renewal of winter, and the spring lull before the finish line appears. Some of you have shared how revisiting a rotation one year later has highlighted your growth—how you now approach challenges with a sense of mastery that seemed unimaginable just a year ago.

This **growth journey** often rewires our intrinsic rhythms. Residency isn't a 9-to-5 job; if anything, it's an inverted version—you sleep at 9 and rise at 5. For night owls like me, this can be challenging, while early birds might find it a perfect fit. [Dan Pink's](#) idea of "Third Birds" is also worth noting—those of us who fall somewhere in between. Our rhythms evolve, too. Children are early risers, teenagers become night owls, and many shift back to early bird patterns in their 20s. Personally, I now wake earlier than I once did, though my most productive hours remain later in the day.

Larks, Owls and 'Third Birds'

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As we move through this season, embrace the spirit of renewal and connection, both with your loved ones and your colleagues. Whether you're working or celebrating, know that you are part of a profession that not only makes a difference but also fosters incredible personal growth along the way.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Dino Kazi