

dear residents

On Authenticity and Professional Growth

March 8, 2026

Dear Residents,

I recently attended the Kenneth Shine Academy Conference in Austin, where a video was shown of a medical student reflecting on her commitment to being **authentic**. The video was presented as an example of **professional identity formation in action**. At UT Dell, students are given structured opportunities to narrate their development throughout medical school and to articulate who they are becoming as physicians. Watching this reflection prompted me to think again about authenticity and about how easily the word can both inspire and mislead us.

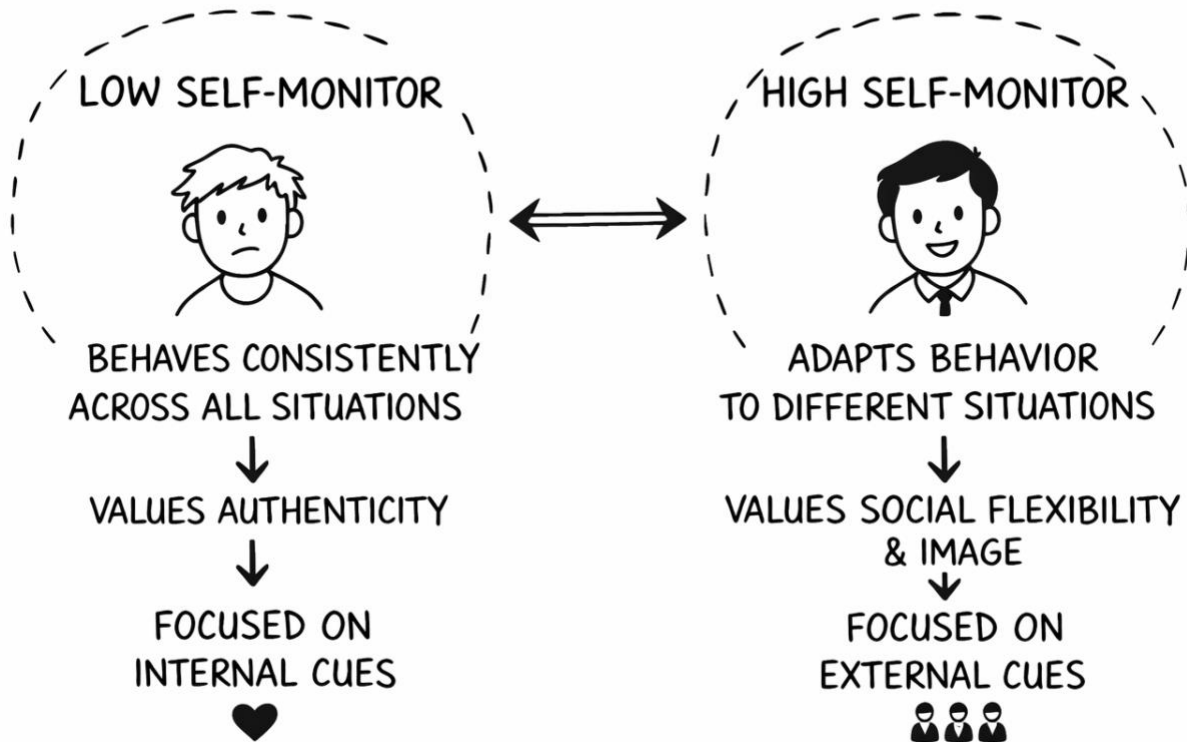
In clinical training, authenticity does not mean holding tightly to one's perspective without modification. It does not mean equating disagreement with disrespect, or plan changes with personal invalidation. Professional identity formation is not the preservation of a fixed self; it is the integration of personal values with the evolving expectations of our role. Authentic professionalism requires the ability to express clinical reasoning with clarity and confidence while remaining open to refinement, challenge, and shared decision-making. In a team-based environment, growth often occurs precisely at the point where our ideas are tested.

Residency is a period of adaptive development. It asks you to balance confidence with humility, autonomy with collaboration, and conviction with flexibility. The most effective physicians are not those who never adjust their thinking, but those who can recalibrate thoughtfully without losing integrity. That recalibration is not a loss of authenticity; it is evidence of maturation.

As you continue your training, I encourage you to reflect not only on what you believe clinically, but on how you engage when those beliefs are challenged. Our program's culture depends on thoughtful dialogue, mutual respect, and shared ownership of patient care. Authenticity, at its best, strengthens those values rather than undermines them.

I invite you to read Herminia Ibarra's article, [The Authenticity Paradox](#) and to review Mark Snyder's theory about [self-monitoring](#).

Mark Snyder's Low and High Self-Monitors



Authenticity in medicine does not mean behaving the same way in every room. It means carrying the same values into every room. It means respect for suffering, commitment to evidence, intellectual humility and ultimately, fairness, whether the patient is uninsured, difficult, demanding, or frightened. It also means approaching your colleagues with the same principle of honoring yourself while allowing your values to meet real-world complexity.

If you can learn to live inside ambiguity without retreating into rigidity, and adapt to context without abandoning your standards, you will be on your way to becoming a better physician.

Best regards,

Dino