On June 12th, my dad and I began our trek over the Pyrenees mountains, the first of a 30 day walk on the Camino de Santiago. This 500 mile pilgrimage stretches across the northern part of Spain, ending in Santiago de Compostela. Pilgrims have journeyed to Santiago since the 9th century, among them Saint Francis of Assisi, Charlemagne, and Pope John Paul II. We had big shoes to fill.

When we set out on the Camino, we were PREPARED. For months my dad researched (and reported to me regularly) average temperatures along the route. We made several visits to REI for backpacking equipment, and we squeezed hours of hiking and walking into our schedules to train for the 15- to 20-mile days awaiting us. Even so, once the time came to begin our pilgrimage, we doubted whether we had just the right combination of layers packed and whether we had taken enough time to prepare ourselves spiritually.

I recognize how we tried to prevent potential discomforts through our preparation. At a certain point, we had to let go of control and learn to lean on God when the unanticipated discomforts came along. I couldn’t have anticipated that two hours into Day 1, we would face 30+ mph winds and rain that would never end; my “water-proof” poncho wouldn’t live up to its bold claim, and I was left chilled to the bone. My initial calm acceptance turned into shivers, which turned into pleas to God to get us through this 16-mile uphill day. I have never experienced such intense weather, and to be climbing a mountain range with no shelter in sight, I was humbled and felt very small. But I was not alone; miles from any other buildings at the peak of the Pyrenees, we came across a small shack with a fireplace to warm up! There wasn’t a doubt in my mind that this was a gift from God, and His way of saying, “I’m with you in this storm.”

This theme of surrendering control and coming to terms with my humanness was consistent throughout the Camino, and actually deepened upon returning home. At mass the day after returning, the priest talked about how Jesus’ apostles were not, by any outward appearance, qualified to be apostles; some may not have been able to read or write, and none were well-read in Scripture. Yet Jesus called each of them by name; he handpicked them for a specific mission, based on the attributes they did have. I would argue Jesus chose them for their hearts.

(Continued Page 2)
I believe you also have been called – intentionally, for specific attributes, and most especially for your heart. But this Gospel passage in which Jesus called the 12 apostles as they were – not once they became Scripture scholars or earned some other qualification – leads me to believe that Jesus doesn’t expect 100% preparedness of us right now, or even years down the line. He calls us as we are. God did not call me to walk the Camino only after I was 100% physically prepared, mainly because that is impossible, but it also would have deprived me of the opportunity to lean on God for strength. In my weakness and fatigue I leaned on Him, and then stood in awe at the end of the 500 miles for what God enabled me to accomplish. So, in those moments when we feel acutely aware of our deficiencies or weaknesses, we may remind ourselves that we are intentionally works-in-progress who were not made to go this thing alone.

The Beautiful and Broken
by Treve Icenoggle

In a room of only shadows and silhouettes,
We the few gather lest we forget

A quiet man with a last choice,
Shyly stands finding a silent voice
“To all the words never said
And to all the thoughts of ‘Well maybe instead’”.

A pretty girl with a pure heart,
Comes to show all her damaged parts
“To all those who loved and for all it cost
And to all it gave, never to be lost”

An old man with a new hat,
Tries to hide a beaten flask
“To the could’s and should’s of if’s and then’s
And to the was and were’s of never again’s”

A small boy with heavy eyes,
In search of time, will ever try
“To all tomorrow’s becoming forgotten moments
And to present moments becoming forever postponements”

Then finally only I,
With all still buried inside
“To all locked doors forced open
Letting in the beautiful and broken”
Shrink Rap Stress 101: A Primer
Michael G. Kavan, Ph.D.
Associate Dean
for Student Affairs

Stress – it’s everywhere! In fact, recent surveys on stress by the American Psychological Association (APA) noted that Americans feel stressed about health care costs (66%), the future of the nation (63%), crime, terrorism, and the list goes on and on. You may say, “Interesting, Dr. Kavan, but what about me?” Well, very few recent studies have been conducted on stress in U.S. medical students. Various international studies have been completed in Germany, India, and the Middle East, but those results are always hard to extrapolate to U.S. students. With that said, what do we know about stress in U.S. medical students? Several things -

First, stress is a normal part of living and, yes, even a normal part of living as a medical student. Factors that enhance stress in U.S. medical students is workload, internal and external expectations for high performance, USMLE Step 1, role conflicts, and so forth. In addition to these, medical students are exposed to ethical conflicts, suffering and death, exposure to traumatic events in the clinical setting, mistreatment, debt, and “normal” life events such as illness, illness and/or death of family members, financial problems, relationship issues, family problems, and so forth.

Second, stress is not all bad, in fact, some level of stress is constructive and actually motivates us, makes us sharper mentally, and enhances overall performance. So, when you do feel stress, keep it in perspective.

Effective vs. Ineffective Coping
We know that students who use disengagement, avoidance, wishful thinking, social withdrawal, self-criticism, and substances like alcohol and marijuana to cope with stress actually exacerbate their stress problems. Using these may result in not only additional stress, but also feelings of fear, uselessness, anger, and guilt, as well as psychological and/or physical morbidity.

In contrast, strategies that involve engagement, such as productive problem solving, positive re-interpretation of events, reliance on the support of others, and the appropriate expression of emotion can reduce stress and enhance self-efficacy so that you are more likely to deal properly with future stressful situations.

Specific Stress Management Strategies
So, what, specifically, can medical students do to better handle stress? First, remind yourself that stress is normal. Accept stress, but understand that you can do something about it. Second, do something about it! Meaning, avoid avoidance. You are all very competent people – so, focus on what you have control over and take on stress knowing that you can cope effectively. Finally, make sure to use stress management techniques such as reflection and self-awareness, deep breathing, mindfulness, and relaxation. Also, challenge unproductive or irrational thinking, socialize with others, and, of course, exercise regularly. And do what you can to support other students who may be struggling. Invite them out for some socializing and lend an ear and some time to help them out. And know that you can also seek out formal counseling by contacting our Center for Health and Counseling on the Omaha campus (402-280-2735) or the Anxiety Resource Center in Phoenix (602-604-9440). I wish you all the very best leave you with a Chinese proverb – “Tension is who you think you should be, relaxation is who you are.”
What was it about Project CURA that made it such a meaningful experience? It was because of my amazing companions. Before going to Uganda, I really only knew half my group. While in Uganda, I made special bonds with these future doctors and know I will keep in touch with them for the rest of my life. I call my tripmates “Brother Braden” or “Sister Lindsay,” both as a carefree joke, but also because they are now family to me. We could be swimming in Lake Bunyonyi with the crocodiles, listening to fetal heartbeats in clinic, or in the van quoting *Dodgeball*, and everyone would have a giant smile on their face.

Project CURA was also an experience that I will never forget because of my medical and tourist interactions. In one day, I saw my first live birth, first C-section, a breach birth where the baby had spina bifida, and an abdominal surgery where the surgeons removed four feet of necrotic intestines. I learned to accurately predict weeks of pregnancy by palpating the patient’s abdomen. I diagnosed my first case of pneumonia and performed vision screenings for hundreds of people. I white-water rafted the Nile River and summited a 14k volcano, doing over 7k feet of elevation. I ran 10k with some of my brothers and sisters by just sneaking into the back of the line and running, hoping no one would notice I did not have a bib. I sang Bon Jovi in an Irish Bar owned by a Canadian in Kampala. We played pickup basketball with Dr. Bruce in the center of Kabale. We also developed bonds with the workers at the hostel where we stayed for a month, whether it was watching the World Cup or learning their local language. Every morning when I woke up, I asked Rodgers how he slept, and he always responded with a cheeky grin, “I slept like a log Mr. Chris,” before galloping away like a stallion he was. We quoted the best lines of *Zoolander* to each other over and over again, showing off our blue steel looks. These are among the tremendous experiences I shared with my tripmates.

There were moments where we cried from our medical experiences. One patient had a fist-sized bed sore that went down to her sacrum, destroying her nerves and causing paralysis- she had not gotten out of bed in months. A lot of it was tough to watch, but we learned to listen and think about what we saw so we can act appropriately in the future. Thankfully, I was never alone in these experiences. Our group was always there for each other, a calming presence when things were not going our way, when we were upset with the healthcare system, or when we were homesick. We reflected on these experiences and opened up to one another.

I would highly recommend Project CURA. You will learn a lot medically, get to see some amazing views, meet new people, and truly enjoy your summer. Although I was hesitant at first, Project CURA was one of the best decisions of my life. I guarantee that I will always be in touch with my group because we shared some of the most fun, intense, and exhilarating moments of my life. I wouldn’t trade these experiences for the world because it made me closer with my peers, but also gave me motivation to be a better physician and human.
Gaining Perspective

Michele Millard -Ph.D., LMPH, CPC

It’s easy when you are in the middle of an intense experience to lose perspective. The only thing you see is right in front of you, and you may be missing the bigger picture. Here are some hints that, as a med student, you may have lost perspective:

• When you go out with non-medical students, you're abnormally quiet, because you don't know what to talk about besides med school.

• You know countless mnemonics for parts of the body, but couldn't tell anyone what the front-page headline today (although most days, it may be better not to know).

• You refer to the semesters you took organic chemistry as "The Good Old Days."

• You know that, in theory, you have a family and friends, but you can't place the last time you saw them.

• People assume you know something when you tell them you're in med school, but you know that you haven't learned anything.

• You assess beverages for amount of caffeine before buying only those with more caffeine than coffee. Then you explain to the cashier how caffeine affects physiology.

Perspective is an elusive thing and hard to maintain because the demands in front of you are so great. It’s easy to get lost in the cycle of just getting beyond the next quiz or test and lose sight of the bigger picture. An opportunity to gain back some semblance of perspective in the midst of your craziness is having a conversation with a mentor. Mentors are valuable because they are a step ahead; peer mentors have recently been through what you are experiencing at the moment and faculty mentors have been around the block a few times, having the wisdom of professional experiences and life lessons.

A short conversation with one of these people can remind you of the bigger picture with moments like “Oh yeah, now I remember why I want to do this!” or “They have made it; I can make it.”

When I asked M3s and M4s what they “wished they would have known,” here are a few of the things they shared (for the entire list, check out Vital Signs on Blueline):

• To have had a better idea of how to study. Throughout medical school I learned how to study smart (which doesn’t mean study every waking moment) and how important it is that we manage our time throughout this journey.

• What to expect at the next level. A lot of times it seemed as though we were always in the dark until just before something happened. I found myself asking upperclassmen a lot of questions regarding the next step.

• To have known earlier how approachable and accessible most of the residents and faculty are. Most of them are glad to answer any question you might have, as well as willingly offer advice if needed.
• That until you see it, do it, and are immersed in a specialty area of medicine, you really cannot completely understand or appreciate it. I think people get too closed-minded on what they want to go into early, and that can be detrimental to choosing the specialty that truly fits you as person best.

• The work you put in equates with what you get out of it. If you just come to class or watch the lectures online, you're missing out on lessons in interpersonal and communicative skills, which are just as important in the field of medicine as are clinical skills and knowledge. Plus, you won't have the support system that you'll need for the next four years and beyond.

• Take breaks and make sure to incorporate fun and exciting activities into your life. Medical school is a marathon, not a sprint, which means that you must prioritize your emotional and physical needs over all else - despite the high load of academic stressors. Also, it is important to find a support system outside of the medical school - don't be afraid to call your family or friends from back home to clear your mind of the medical school hassles.

• Internalized and believed earlier, to "trust the system." As an M1/M2, it is impossibly hard to see that everything will work out and there is no need to panic, but I wish I had relaxed a bit and enjoyed those first two years of school more.

• After you get into medical school, there is so much more. Do not get into the mentality that "once you get it, you're set." With the help of faculty and peers, and a lot passionate hard work, we will learn to push ourselves and hopefully become good clinicians.

• To have reached out and listened to the advice of upperclassmen more during my first few years of medical school (it would have saved me a lot of re-inventing the wheel!).

• That everything will be ok. Each year has its own challenges and rewards, but people make it through and it is important to not lose sight of the main goal.

• Being vulnerable is not a fault but is actually a strength. Failure doesn't define you; how you handle failure is much more telling.

• There are many different strategies and resources available to succeed in medical school and not everything will work for everyone. I wish I would have stopped and looked harder at what was working compared to what wasn't for me personally and made these changes earlier.

A mentoring conversation could help you learn from your mentors---what do they now know that you need to know? Instead of saying “I wish I had known,” you could be saying “I’m so glad they told me. . . .” You might think that the mentoring requirement is onerous---just another obligation---but instead, try seeing it as an opportunity to meet a variety of people who may help you along the way. These are people that you may not have met, or a conversation you may not have had, if not for the mentoring requirement! Granted, the relationship might not click with one of the mentors, but you have choices---just take the mentoring moments for what they offer. Don’t forget the list of alumni mentors (around 500 of them) found in Blueline/Vital Signs that are willing to be contacted via phone or e-mail for questions about the profession, their educational experiences, their specialty, or region of the country. Have a conversation and gain some perspective!

Photo credits: resusreview.com, dentistslook.com
How to Increase Your Leptin Secretion 101
by Nara Tashjian

Whether you’re an M1 new to Omaha or an M4 who’s just looking to switch it up, I’ve jotted down my favorite must try locations in town. As Kavan always says, we can all use some more balance in our lives. So… EAT YOUR HEARTS OUT!

$=<$10/entre
$$=$10
$$$=$20
$$$$=$30+ (aka take yo’ parents)

COFFEE/CAFÉS
Archetype ($) : The best coffee shop in Omaha for beans of African origin.
*My opinion. Not fact.*
Rally Coffee ($) : Best coffee shop for beans of central American origin.
Culprit Café ($) : Great overall coffee, great pastries. The new location in Midtown is open longer and sells booze (yay).
Della Costa Café ($) : Hidden gem inside of the Della Costa restraint in Midtown.
Farine and Four ($$) : The best toasts in town. My fave: beet cured salmon toast (also, their chocolates are certifiably amazing).

BOOZE:
Crescent moon ($) : Wow, no surprise this is on the list…
Night Owl ($) : A mix of all the beverages you could ever want. Alcoholic slushies, beer, and a darn snappy old fashion.
Mercury ($) : One of the most underrated cocktail bars in Omaha. Try the Granddaddy Low cocktail. I promise you won’t regret it. (ALSO they do personalized cocktail classes for cheap, just sayin’.)

Kros Stain Brewery ($$) : Yes it’s a drive, but they have an amazing selection of beers and a great DIPA (however, I would stay away from the sour- we can’t be good at everything).
Speakeasy under Blackstone social ($$$) : No clue what the name is, but they bring around a cart and make your cocktails in front of you.
Wicked Rabbit ($$$) : Omaha’s classic speakeasy.
Berry and Rye ($$$) : A sister bar to the Wicked Rabbit. More chill vibe. The Antoinette is probably their best drink.
Red Lion Lounge ($$$) : If you like gin, you’re about to go crazy for this place. If you don’t like gin, who are you? We’re old now.

BURGERS:
Darios ($$$) : Rated best burger in Omaha in last year’s Wellness Chronicle. Great quality and flavor. Can’t go wrong.
Block 16 ($$$) : Are we even surprised it’s on the list?
Stellas ($) : Cheap and delicious, best value burger around town.
Monarch Prime ($$$) : Best happy hour burger. Go between 4-6 and sit in the bar. Wagyu patty with the most amazing curly fries on this side of the Mississippi.

RESTAURANTS
Lalibela ($) : Best Ethiopian food. Get the sample platter if you’re new to Ethiopian food. It feeds two and is like $12. Date night?
Star Deli ($) : Best Cubano in town, but you have to get it on a baguette.
El Basha ($) : Best Mediterranean restaurant in Omaha. If you’re a baba ganoush fan, you’re about to love this place.
Nolis ($) : Hot take by Nara: Nolis>>>>>Dantes.
Salween ($): A Creighton classic. No need to say more.

Gertas ($): Go on a Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday and get their pan fried chicken. It’s incredible.


Amsterdam Falabel ($): You also can’t go wrong here. Everything is amazing.

Kitchen table ($$): Solid, good food.

La Buvette ($/$$$): Best wine bar in Omaha. ProTip: their butter is AMAZING.

Saddle Creek Breakfast club ($$): Still dying for their donuts with Nutella sauce. But really everything’s so amazing - even their avocado toast if you’re feeling basic (which I am most days tbh).

Stirnella (SS): I’ve never had a bad meal here. But if I had to recommend something it would be the burrata appetizer.

Via Farina (SS): Must try the brown butter ravioli. It’s not a big serving, but wow the brown butter = heaven.

Umami ($$$): This guy trained under the top apprentice of Jiro from the Netflix documentary “Jiro Dreams of Sushi.” If you don’t know what I’m talking about, get on Netflix now and watch it. You’re missing out.

Ika Ramen and Izakaya ($$): I don’t know what I like more - the ramen or the bar downstairs.

Yoshimoto (SS): Solid sushi. I’m excited to compare it to Butterfish that’s opening in Blackstone.

Baela Rose (SSSS): A restaurant that mirrors the best of Omaha. If the pierogis are on the menu, you have to get them. No questions asked.

Au Courant (SSSS): THE BEST RESTAURANT IN OMAHA. No joke. Everything is good; would recommend getting the amuse and aperitif and split a protein/pasta- way more bang for your buck. Trust me your taste buds will thank you. Ok, I’ll stop gushing now.

V. Merts (SSSS): One of the best restaurants in Omaha. Expensive, but worth every penny. Their cocktails are also amazing.

VEGAN

Amateur Coffee ($): Their oat milk is amazing. A must try.

Modern Love ($$$): I don’t care if you’re a vegan, vegetarian or an omnivore, but this place is darn delicious and you need to go.

Faux Dogs Omaha ($): Vegan hot dogs full of flavor.

ICE CREAM AND SWEET TREATS:

Coneflower ($): BEST ICE CREAM IN OMAHA. *This is a fact. Not opinion.*

Mixins ($): Best rolled ice cream place in town. Just make sure you have a lot of time because there’s always a long line.

eCreamery ($): If you go on Tuesdays, Creighton students get 1 scoop free.

Wisk + Measure ($): Great cakes and bars. If you’re ever out in the area it’s a must try. Great Saturday study spot.

Donut Stop ($): Closing October 31st SO YOU MUST GO. Best fried donuts in Omaha and cheap as can be aka some sorta heaven. Only open 10pm-10am.

Photo credits: yelp.com