

Coping with uncertainties for medical students

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Sir,

The article in the Medical Journal of Malaysia, clearly highlights the effects of anxiety on medical students.¹ The COVID-19 has disrupted the physical, mental, and social well-being of the medical students causing stress, anxiety, depression, fear, loneliness, and uncertainty about their futures.

We propose here some helpful tips for the much-challenged medical students of this time of uncertainties. The strategies are grouped into the three cyclical phases of self-regulated learning, viz forethought, performance, and self-reflection.^{2,3} However, not all may benefit from these guidelines as everyone is unique and has different coping strategies.

Forethought

Plan

Plan the day ahead taking due consideration of the online classes timetable, self-study, nonetheless giving due importance for self-care and social time.

Routine

Having an orderly routine frames the day better granting a sense of control. Get up every working day at the same time. Step into the day with the “serenity prayer” and blessings from parents. Follow your morning routine, a walk in the open (if possible), dress-up, have a good breakfast.

Performance

Effective Study environment

Wherever you study make the surroundings conducive. Keep the phone/distractions out of reach. Inspirational quotes, good lighting, comfortable seating may help.

Make notes

Making notes saves time and energy for the second reading. This is the best time to make mnemonics. Visuals and auditory methods help in retaining better.

Exercise, eat healthy and good sleep hygiene

Exercise is to body what reading is to mind. Dedicate 20-30 minutes for exercise, it can be as simple as walking/jumping. Healthy mind in a healthy body. Healthy food is associated with general wellbeing.

Practice good sleep hygiene as it acts as an energising fuel for the next day.

Mindfulness

Enjoy every moment. Live in the moment. There may be a list of tasks waiting to be ticked but be mindful of the task at present. For instance, while eating relish and taste every bite.

Free time

All work and no play, makes Jack a dull boy. Keep some time free to have fun, laugh out loud, watch a movie. So, you have something to look forward to.

Social time

Spend time socializing with friends and family and invest in healthy relationships. Share your feelings and emotions.

Self-reflection

Keep a diary

Pen down your golden moments of the day. It is good to write at least one-two things you were grateful for that day, the topics you covered etc. Note your mistakes and blunders to avoid in future.

Gratitude and Help

Start and finish the day with gratitude. Thank God for the new opportunity and show gratitude towards teachers, advisors, parents, and siblings.

Offer help to ones in need. At the same time, do not be reluctant to ask for help when needed.

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