

My second year of residency was the hardest year of my life. The PGY2 year in my residency is set up to build independence and autonomy. In hindsight, it did do that for me, but while I was living through that year I was filled with loneliness, self doubt, shame and florid impostor syndrome. My journey back to loving my job and feeling more comfortable in my skin as a new physician came from finding a sense of kinship and connectedness with my patients, colleagues, and family. I thought about this concept of kinship so much that I based my PGY3 grand rounds talk about it and have recently rewritten it to be recorded on as a podcast. I found a way to love my job and be good at it though being intentional about manifesting kinship in all aspects of my life, well except one, at home with my partner.

Emergency medicine is my second career and I started residency when I was 34 having lived quite a full life already. I'd had a few long romantic relationships, some were short, and a few that were somewhere in between. I moved from Chicago to LA, newly single and ready to dive her first into my new job and life as a resident. I met my partner at the end of my first year of residency. When I met him, I was ready again to be in a relationship and we clicked immediately. He is not in medicine and didn't know the first thing about working 12 hour shifts, putting in central lines, pronouncing time of death. But, he was interested, incredibly supportive about my career goals and the difficulties I faced in residency particularly during my PGY2 year. He was my closest confidant and biggest fan during this time.

I found myself again in my job toward the end of my PGY2 and beginning of my PGY3 year. When I became more comfortable at work and I no longer relied on him for as much social support as I had before, our relationship shifted. I was much more comfortable at work than at home. I stayed longer after shifts to chat with my coworkers, follow up on patients and help out when I should have been on my way home. At work, I was a valued member of the team, I worked with my friends, I found ways to be a leader, and there was always something else interesting to see and learn. At home, I was tired, impatient, and disconnected. I didn't need as much support and I didn't know how to connect with him any more. At first, I didn't want to talk about this with anyone. My partner was beloved by many of my friends and family. We joked that he was the "nicest person in my family." I thought I would be disappointing my family and friends if I said we were having problems.

Being in a relationship is hard work when neither person is working 60-80 hours a week, seeing terrible traumas, making big mistakes. Along with my co-resident, Dr. Andrew Herzik, I am interested in adding to an ongoing conversations about wellness within our residency so that we can incorporate wellness in our partnerships at home and discuss this difficulty and deeply personal aspect of our lives in a safe space without stigma or shame. We intend to incorporate more significant other only events such as a significant other orientation along with intern orientation that can help facilitate connectedness for new resident families with their partners as well as with one another. As residents, we commiserate extensively about our jobs. We seek to create a forum so that other significant others can discuss the difficulties and joys of having a partner in residency and for our coresidents to discuss their relationships as well. Our intention is to not only create a safe space to talk about family relationships but also provide tools to foster healthy relationships outside of the hospital. My experience with my partner is unique to us but struggles in relationships while in residency are not and I learned that from finally talking about it to my coresidents. I hope that by talking about wellness at home as well as at work we can foster deeper and more meaningful connection between residents and their families during a challenging but also remarkable and rewarding time in our lives.