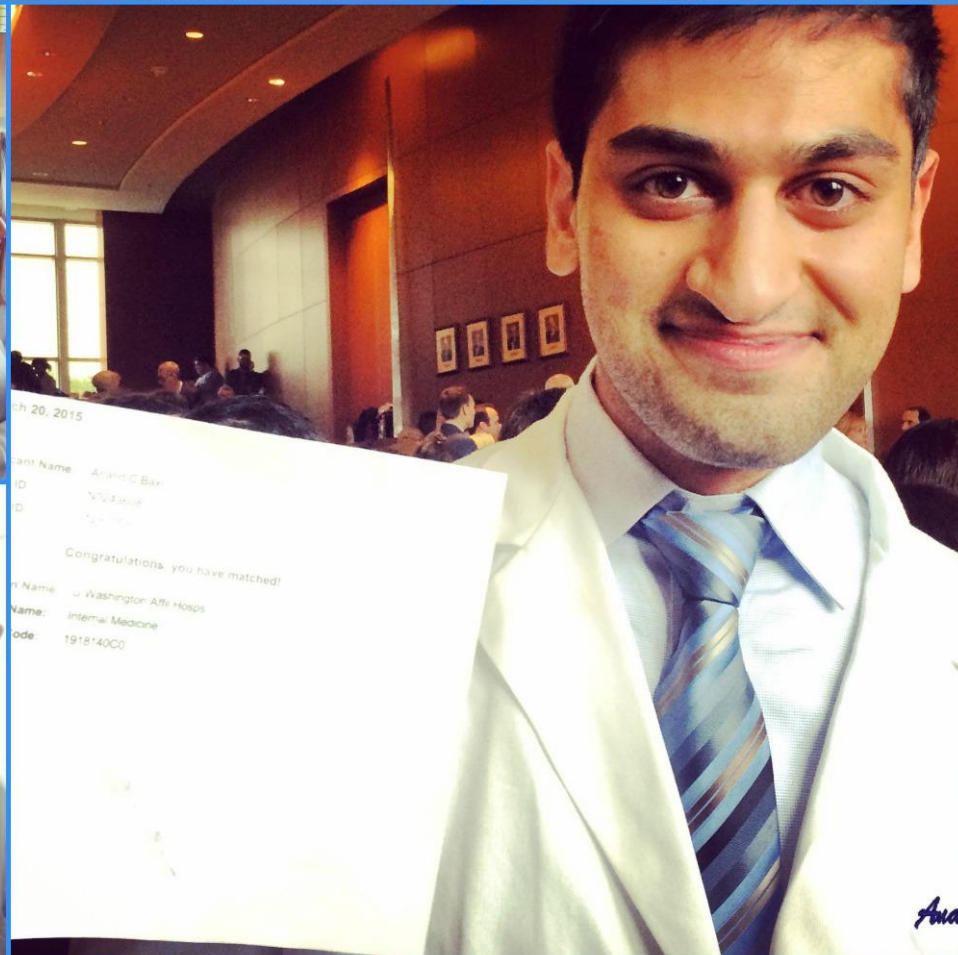
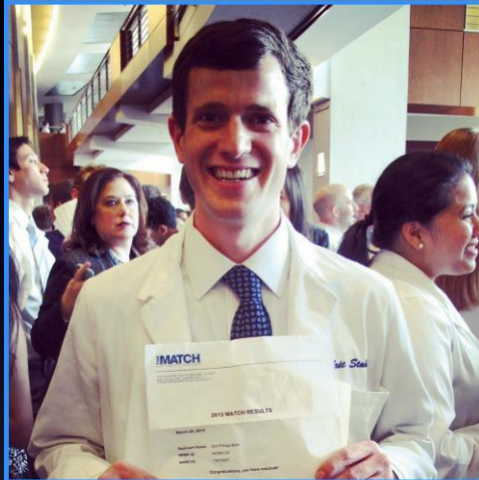
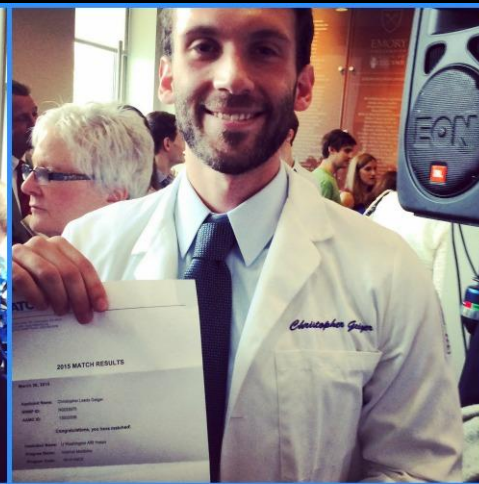


PERSONAL STATEMENT BOOT CAMP

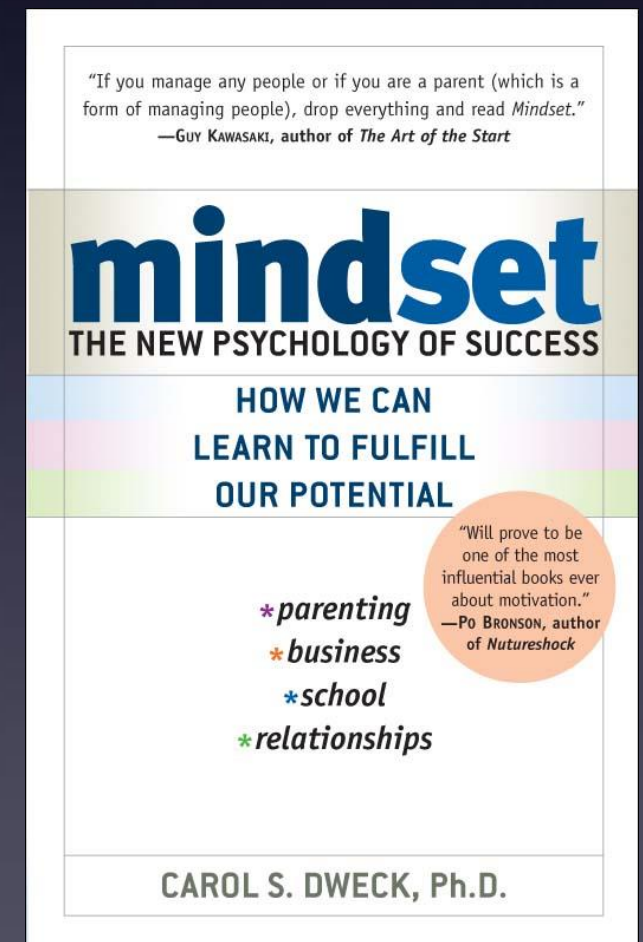
Kimberly D. Manning, MD, FACP, FAAP
Associate Professor of Medicine
Program Director, Transitional Year
Director, Distinction in Teaching and Leadership Program
J. Willis Hurst Internal Medicine Residency
Emory University School of Medicine





*“Becoming is better
than **being.**”*

~ Carol Dweck



The conundrum.



There are many amazing medical students.



Turns out that many are smart,
have been to far away places,
and have done really cool things.



You each have your unique strengths.

It's easy to get lost in
the crowd.



USMLE SCORES

TRANSCRIPTS

HOBBIES

DEANS' LETTERS

GRADES

LORs

CHAIR LETTERS

BAR GRAPHS

EMAILS

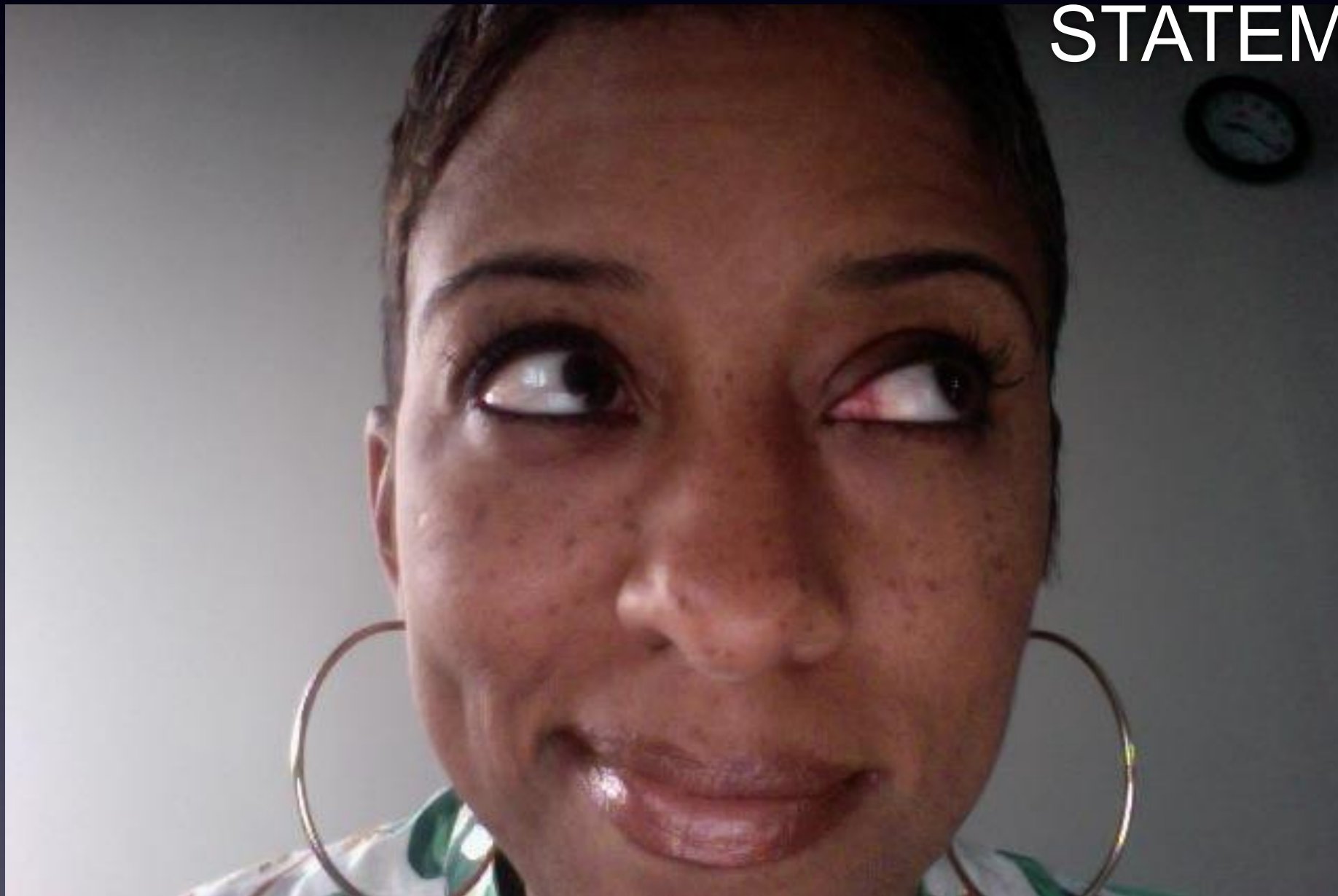
CURRICULUM

VITAEs

EXTRACURRICULARS

INFORMATION OVERLOAD

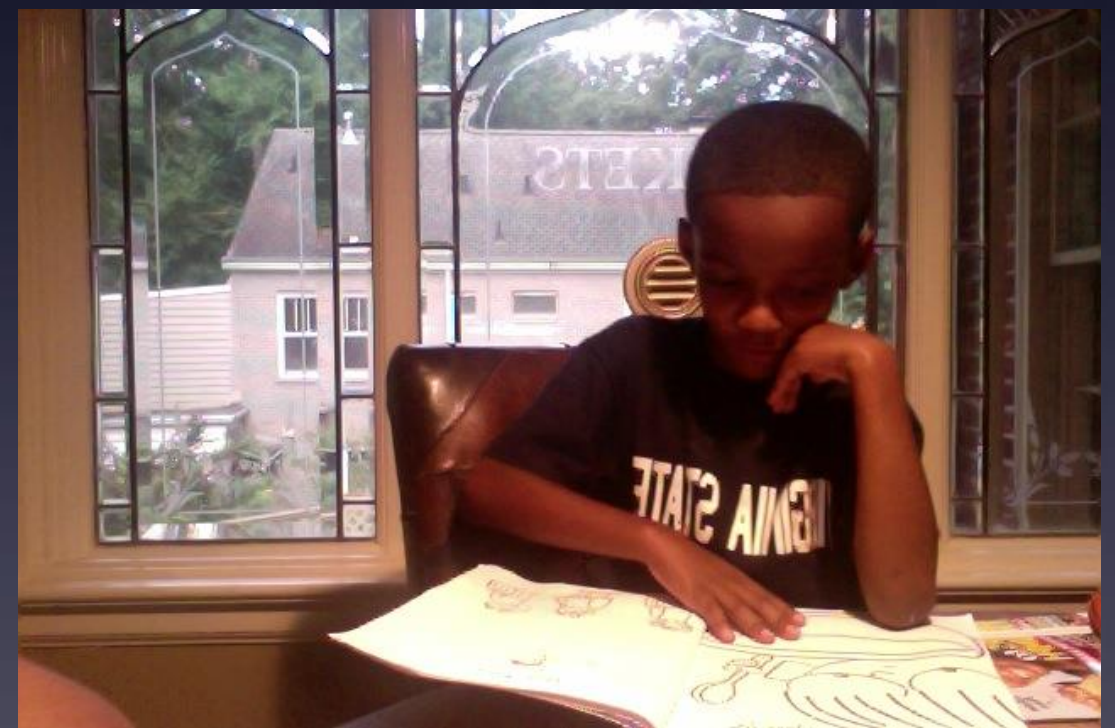
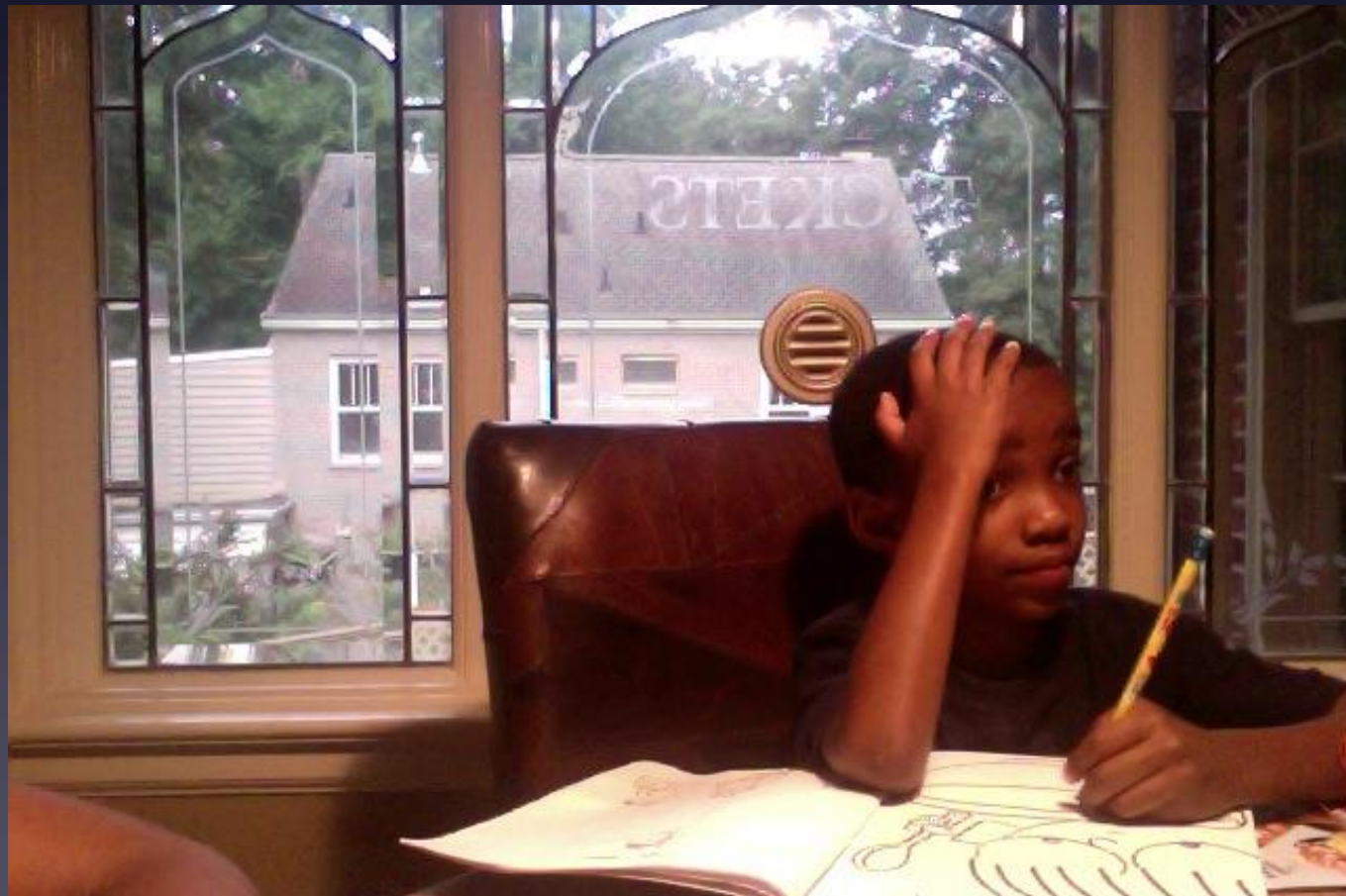
**“AT LEAST I HAVE THE
PERSONAL
STATEMENT!”**







They blend together after a while.



Who is the real person?



YOU don't want to get
overlooked.



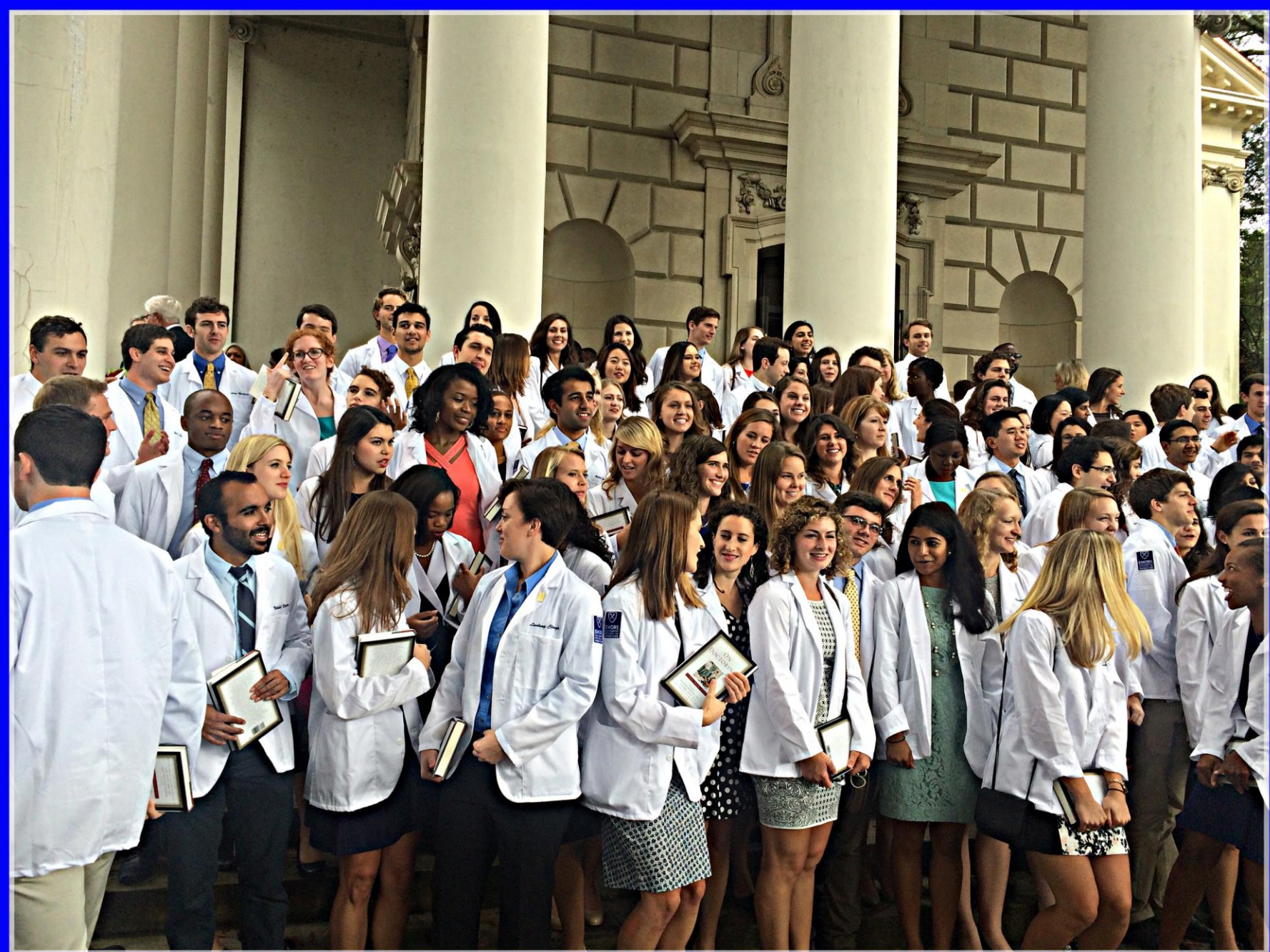
PROGRAMS don't want
to miss a good thing,
either.



That's the conundrum.



In Defense of the Personal Statement



Getting personal

- What program directors hate
- What a lot of people do
- What not to do
- Where to start
- Things to consider
- Building your PS

Objectives

- To identify elements of an effective personal statement
- To assemble personal attributes and experiences for consideration in a personal statement
- To construct a meaningful personal statement that gives programs a window into who they are as potential residents



NOT PERSONAL AT ALL

TOO LONG

BORING/COOKIE CUTTER

TOO MUCH TIME TALKING ABOUT FIELD

NONCOMMITTAL

**THINGS PROGRAM DIRECTORS HATE TO
SEE IN PERSONAL STATEMENTS**

What a lot of people do

- Talk about a patient or a hero (but not themselves)
- Rehash their CV
- Try to convince us of why the field WE already chose is wonderful
- Try to tell too many stories
- Talk about things that don't excite them
- Forget to "bring it home"

What not to do

- Don't plagiarize.
- Don't go over a page.
- Don't forget WHO you're writing for.
- Don't forget WHICH qualities to highlight.
- Don't write about what you DON'T want to talk about
- Don't be inconsistent.

<http://futuredocsblog.com/2010/07/22/personal-statement-do%E2%80%99s-and-don%E2%80%99ts/>

Valued qualities

- Well-roundedness
- Pleasant
- Leadership skills
- Competency
- Team players
- Drive/focus

In other words. . .

Nice.



Hardworking.

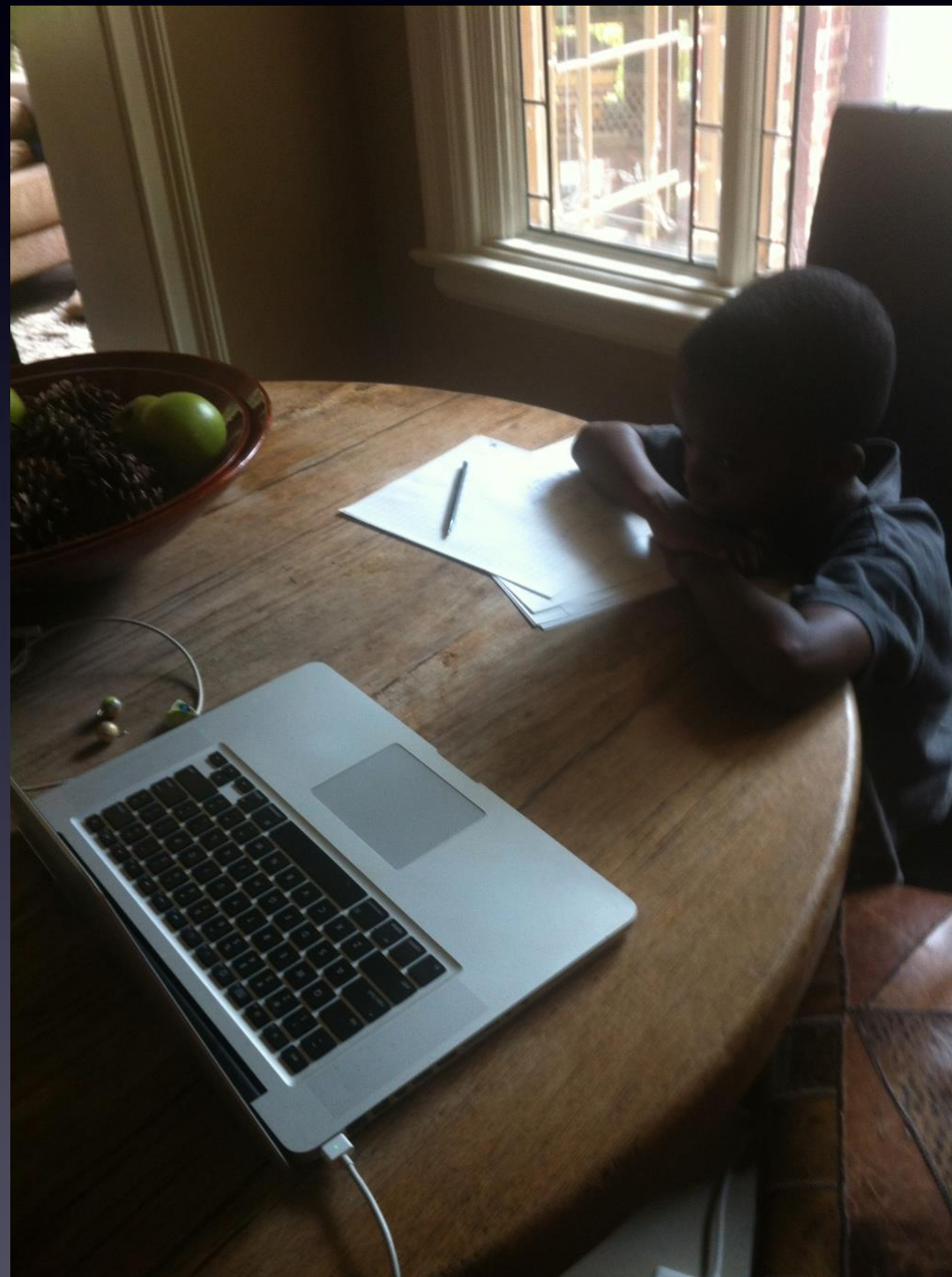


Smart.



(In that order.)

Where to start?



Remember:
*“Becoming is better than
being.”*



What are you PROUD of?

Think about 3 qualities and 3 facts
about yourself
that you consider
your strengths.



You may have to ask
a trusted friend.

What must people know about you?



Examples.



Mina.



“I am detail-oriented.”

“I have good ideas.

“I stick with things I try.”

Must knows.

- I was born to immigrants
- I am multilingual
- I care about underserved people and underrepresented minorities
- Service is important to me

- “I am detail-oriented.”
- Why are you that way?
- What is an example of something you’ve done that illustrates this quality?
- Who influenced you in developing this quality?
- Try talking about it.





“My mom has a lot to do with why I’m this way.”

Note:

1. Don't overdo it.
2. This should underscore something about you.
3. It is tempting to write all about another person.
4. This a chance to talk about you. Use it.

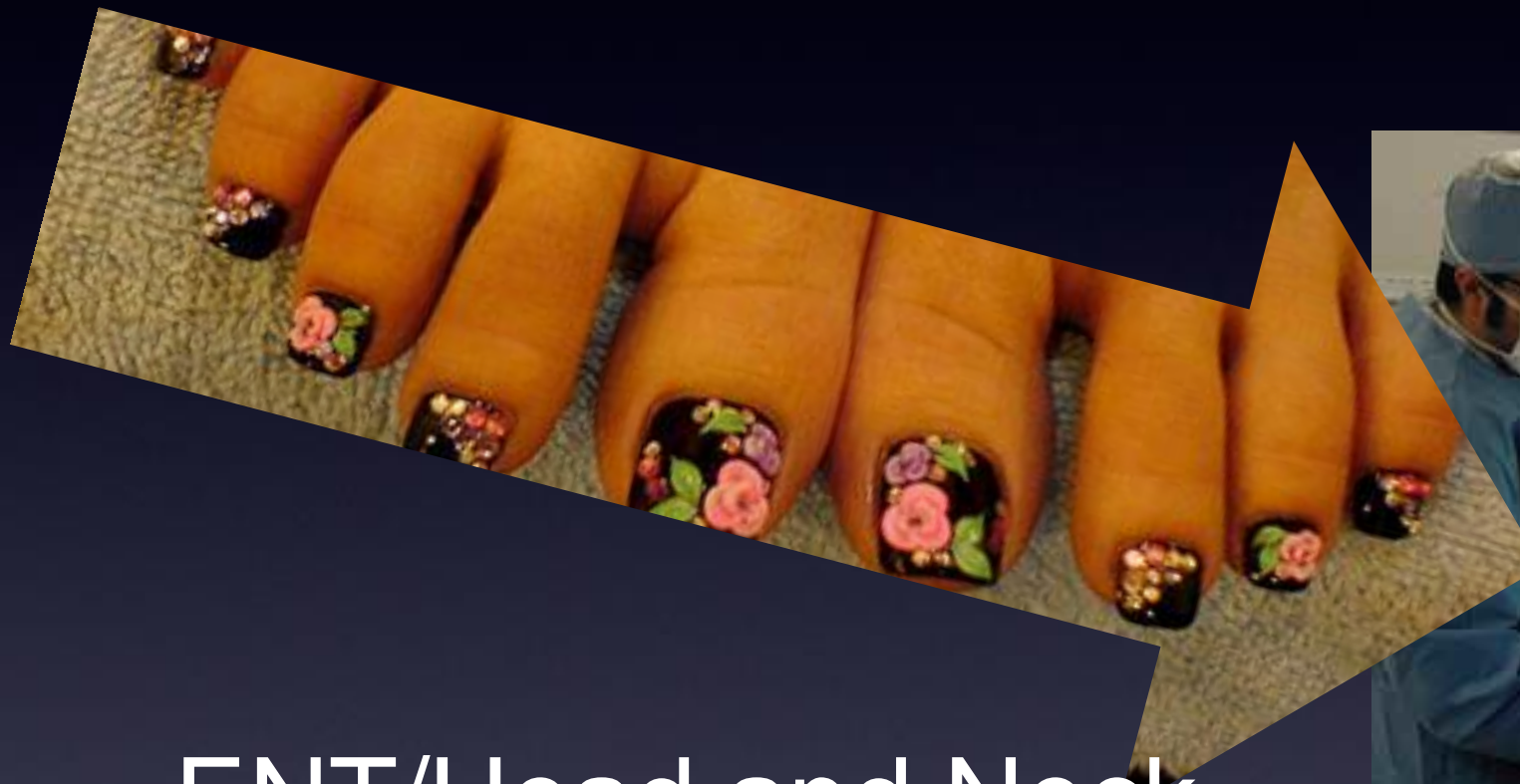


Pick a specific example:



“She taught me to paint
tiny flowers on toes.”

Can you draw a parallel?



ENT/Head and Neck
Surgery: Dexterity in small
spaces
Attention to detail
Patience

Jeremy.



“I am easygoing and not easily flustered.”

“I am open to all kinds of people.”

“I am okay with change and some uncertainty.”

Jeremy.

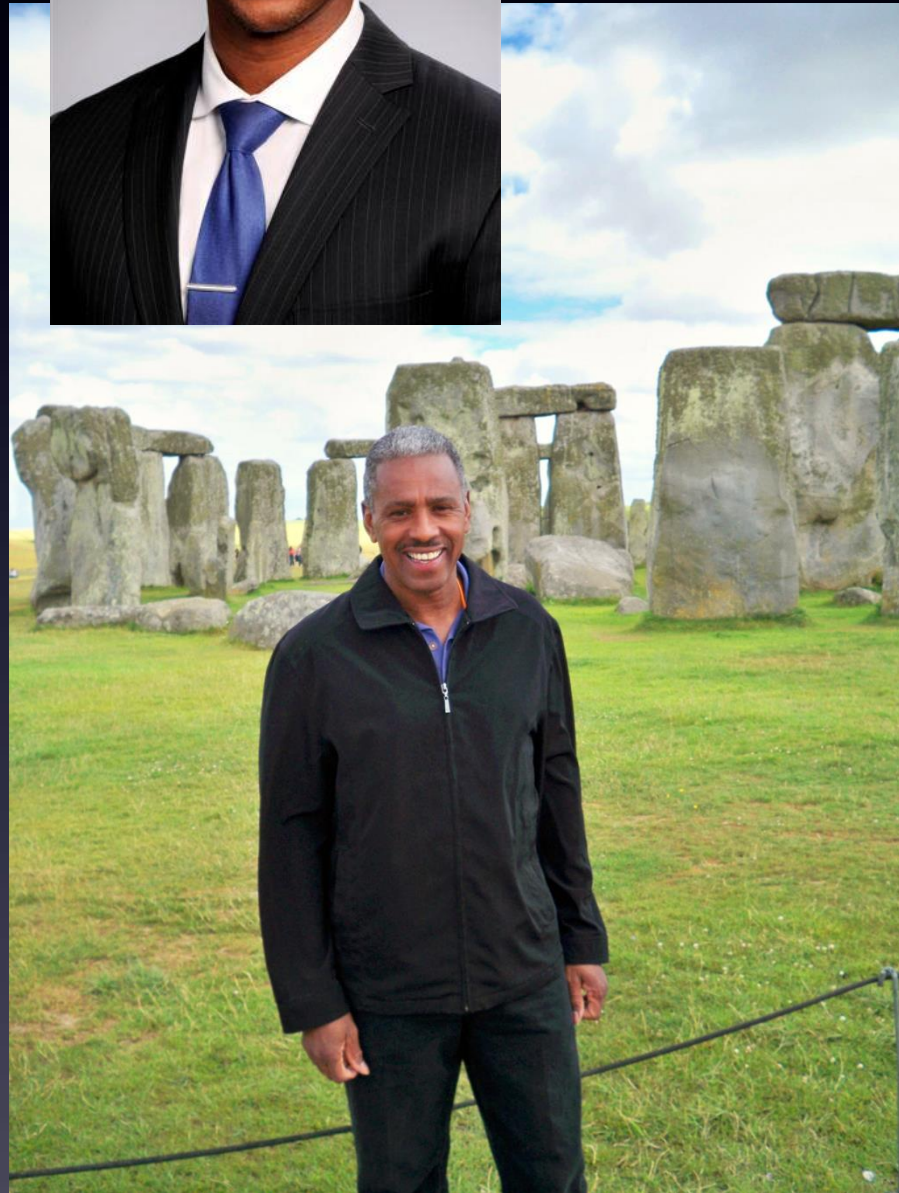


The son of an Air
Force Colonel.

Moved a lot growing
up in a military
family.

Had to learn to be
malleable.

Jeremy.



Father is a strong influence.

Is proud of his father's military service and his mother's sacrifice.

Learned to be brave during uncertain times and when father was deployed.

Jeremy chose a career in Emergency Medicine.



EMERGENCY MEDICINE

- *Unpredictable*
 - *High stakes*
- *Must be malleable*
- *Requires courage*
- *Thick skin necessary*

Jeremy had great parallels for Emergency Medicine.

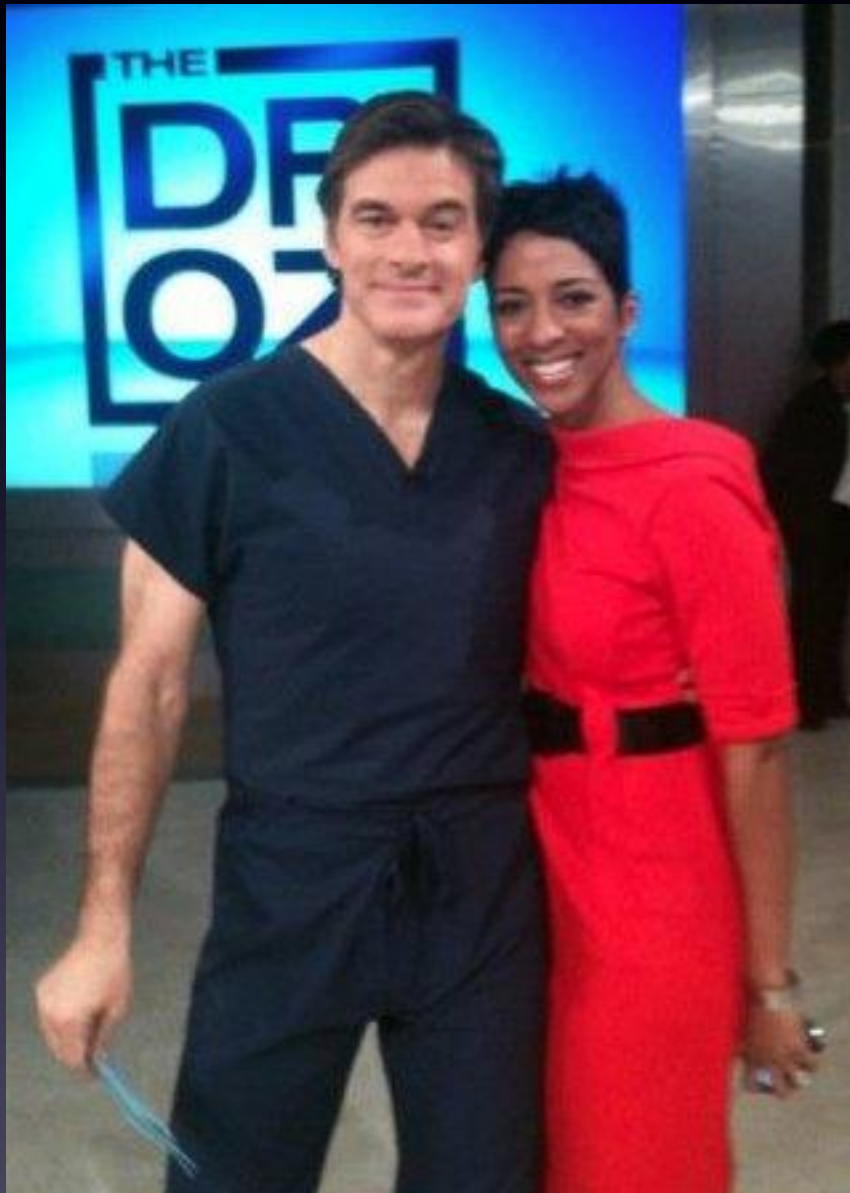


“I’ve realized a career in emergency medicine closely follows the narrative of my life thus far. It’s a storyline I hope not to change.”

What to include.

- Just because you've done it, doesn't mean you want to talk about it.
- What makes you LIGHT UP?
- What would you feel HAPPY to discuss for twenty minutes?
- Don't share everything.
- You'll have to leave things in your CV.

Just because you've done it,
doesn't mean it's what you want
to talk about.*



*I've done media. But actually, this isn't my first choice of accomplishments to discuss.



Breakout #1



Do this.

- Get a sheet of paper or use your notes on your phone/tablet
- Write down **THREE QUALITIES ABOUT YOU** that you consider **STRENGTHS**
- Don't overthink it
- This isn't a time for humility

Next. . . .





Breakout #2

Now. Turn to a classmate who knows you.

- Answer these questions about each other:
- “What would you say are some of my positive qualities or strengths?”
- “What are some examples of those qualities from what you’ve seen?”
- Consider the ones YOU listed and how they compare.

Regroup

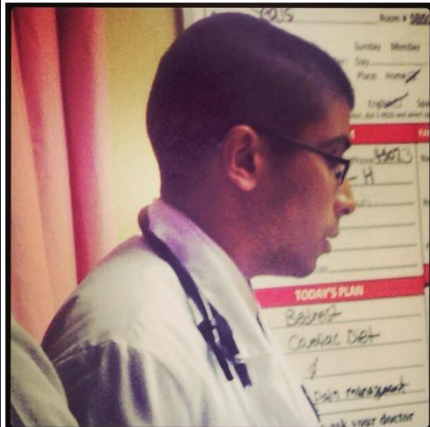
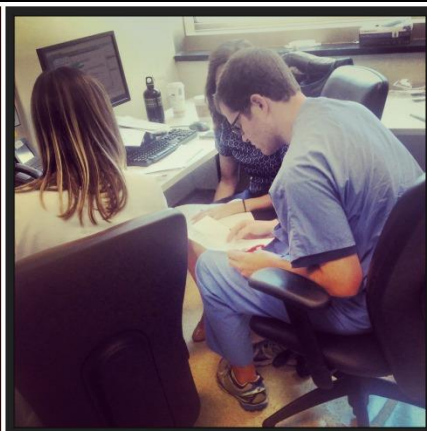
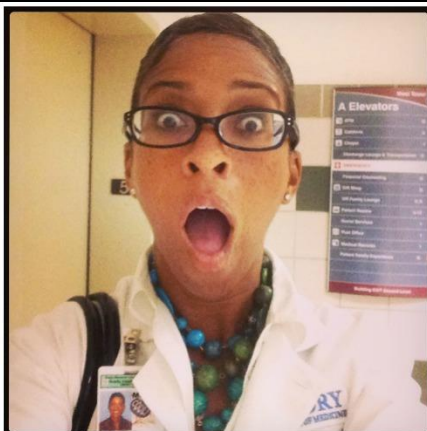


Next. . .

■



- LIST THREE THINGS THAT YOU ARE PROUD OF THAT YOU'VE DONE
- INCLUDE AT LEAST ONE PERSONAL AND ONE PROFESSIONAL



Very personal things.



- Meet Zoe.
- Zoe has chosen to pursue a career in Obstetrics and Gynecology.
- Zoe describes herself as a “queer person of color.”
- She struggled with including this in her personal statement.
- But she struggled more with excluding it.

Another conundrum.

- How do we share important parts of who we are without overshadowing our other great attributes?
- How do we touch upon important things without allowing them to usurp interview discussions?

First: Why share this?



- “I’m seeking a program that is open to diversity and that celebrates differences.”
- “My unique perspective draws me to health disparities research.”
- “I want to be comfortable in my learning environment and not a novelty. Ever.”

There's more to Zoe.



- MPH
- Health disparities research
- Curriculum coordinator for Pipeline Program
- Georgia Maternal and Infant Health Research Group
- She's got some good dance moves, too.

Introducing “the drop.”

- “The drop”
- Sliding a fact about yourself in through a story.
- Works well for personal things, accomplishments, and unique attributes.

Zoe used “the drop.”



- She opened with a reflection on patient she saw at Grady.
- *“However, as a member of the LGBTQ community myself, it was especially important to me that she felt she was receiving care in a safe environment.”*
- From there she moved to her research in sexual and reproductive health disparities.

Meet Zev.



- As a “bent arrow” had different background
- Wants to do pediatrics.
- Has three children.
- Previously worked in Biotech field
- Wanted to discuss these things as strength

Zev also used “the drop.”



- Discussed his differences through a story of coaching little league baseball.
- Included family life and background this way
- Talked about how his life experiences would help him as a Pediatrician.

Pivotal experiences

- Can be a personal or a patient story
- What does this experience say about you?
- How does it underscore your strengths?
- How did it change you? Shape you?
- How does this relate to your chosen field?
- Would it make for good conversation?

Personal and patient stories.

- Does this illustrate your best qualities?
- Why should a PD want to hear about this?
- Is it “cookie cutter?”
- Get to the point.
- Too much about another person makes it less personal.

Kevin: Peer Comments



“He has a
servant’s heart.”

“He cares a lot about
serving the underserved.”

“People really
matter to him.”

Kevin: Qualities in Action



Organized
“Healthcare for the
Homeless” week

President,
HealthSTAT

★ Worked at an AIDS
hospice for the
homeless

- # Valued qualities
- Well-roundedness (volunteerism, activism)
 - Pleasant
 - Leadership skills (President of HealthSTAT)
 - Competency (Junior AOA, academic record)
 - Team players (worked at AIDS Hospice)
 - Drive/focus

Kevin chose a pivotal experience.



- Met Jimmy at an AIDS hospice for homeless patients in Washington D.C.
- Served as a “compassionate companion”
- Was with Jimmy when he took his last breath.

What Kevin learned.



“Why did talking about Jimmy matter?”

“What did it teach you?”

“How does it underscore who you are?”

Remember: This is
NOT Jimmy's P.S.



Life experiences.

- Things you've done.
- Places you've been.
- Hobbies and talents.
- Major accomplishments.
- BUT there should be a POINT or PARALLEL (and there usually is.)

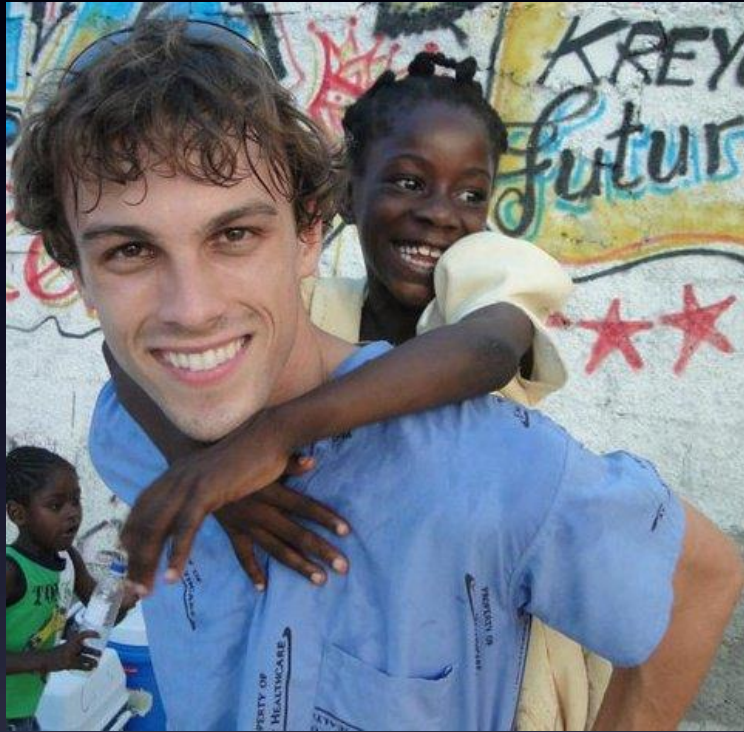
Sad stuff.



The rules on sad stuff.

- Be ready to talk about it if you write about it.
- Then be ready to talk about it again.
- Is it too important to leave out?
- Is it too fresh or emotionally charged?
- Will sharing this tell more of who you are?

Dan has chosen to
pursue a career in
Pediatrics.



Cool stuff.

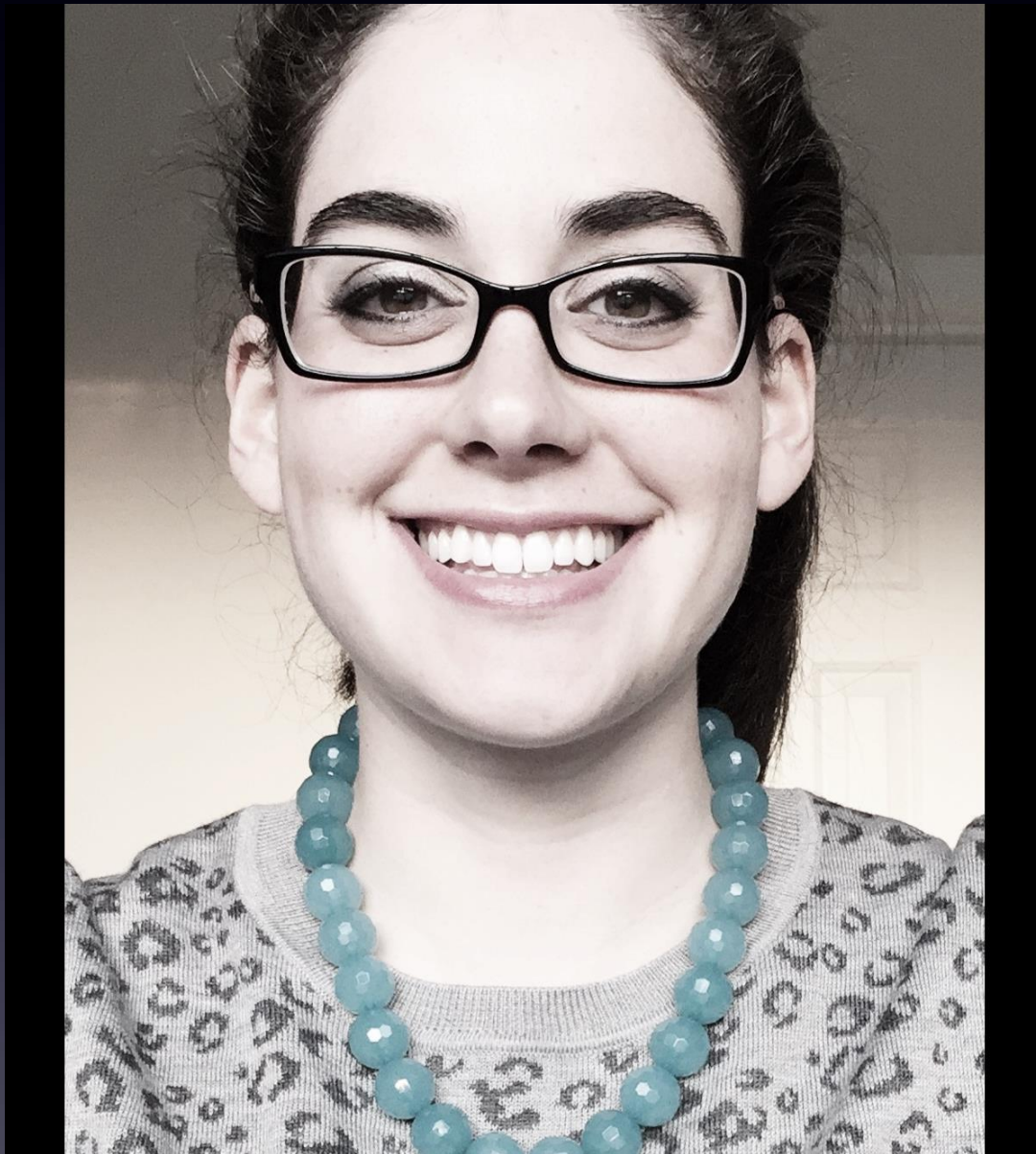


Dan.



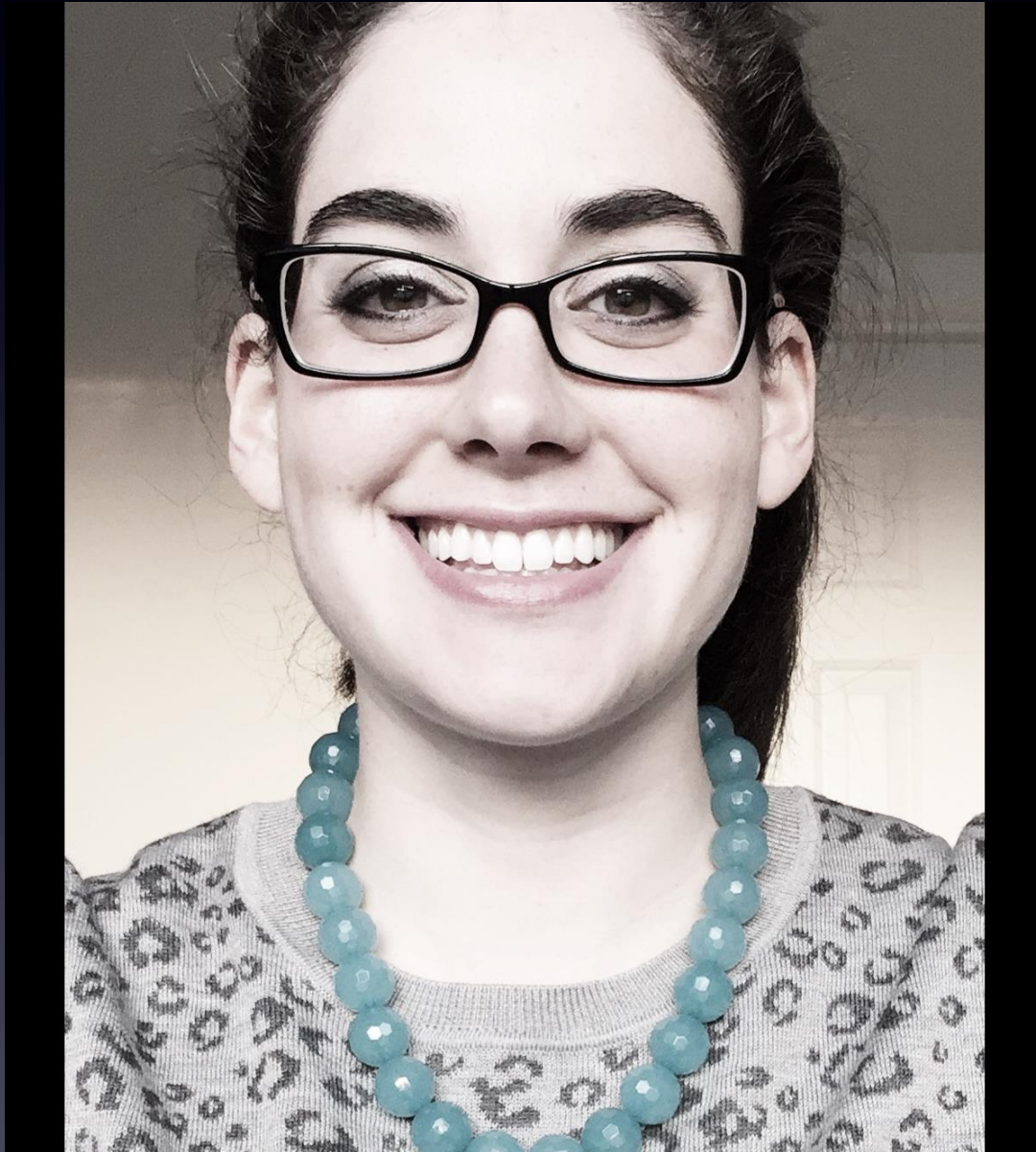
He is also a
fencer.
Some things
are just too
cool to not
mention.

Meet Jennifer.



- Loves precision
- Likes a challenge
- Meticulous
- Chose to pursue a career in Orthopedics

Jennifer.



- Listed the challenging things she has tried
- Taught herself to play the sousaphone
- Baked the hardest cake recipe she could find
- Is an athlete.
- Kept running after ACL repair



Other things to consider.

- The first thing you say can make or break you.
- The last thing you say should bring it home.
- Be careful when you're undecided.
- Is it boring for YOU to read?
- If it's boring no one will read it. (At least not all of it.)

Recipe

- Paragraph One
 - Grab us. A story, an experience, something that tells who you are and makes us want to hear more
- Paragraph Two
 - What they must know and what you're proud of
- Paragraph Three
 - Specific strengths to the specialty and leadership
- Closing paragraph
 - What you are looking for and what they can expect.

P.S. Rules for the road.



Rule #1

“Easy on the adverbs, exclamation points and especially *hooptedoodle*.”

~ Elmore Leonard

*“If it sounds like writing,
REWRITE it .”*



Rule #2

The “I’s” do NOT have it.

*Please. Go easy on the
I’s, me’s and especially my’s.
SHOW don’t TELL
(or you’ll risk sounding self-important.)*

Rule #3

NO word recycling.

If you “plummeted” in the first paragraph, then you need to just “fall” in the next one.

Rule #4

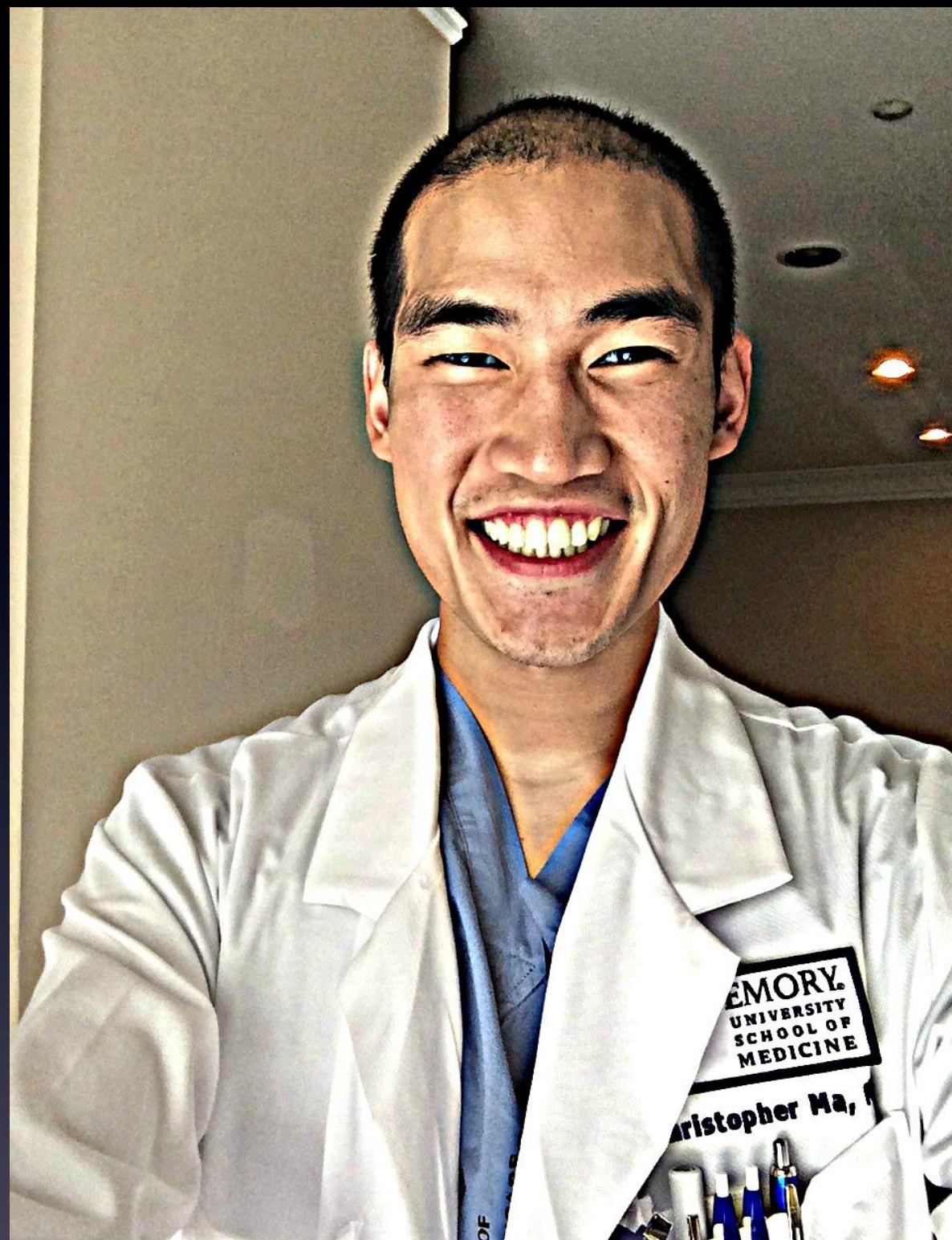
If someone who ISN'T YOU can put their name
at the top of your personal statement -
and IT WORKS - then it isn't personal enough.

(Try it and you'll see my point.)

Rule #5

YOU need to show up
in the the first four sentences.

(In other words, a full paragraph about
ANOTHER PERSON to open your P.S.
is not a good use of your one page limit.)



Cool stuff.



Rule #6



Some things are just
really cool
and will be memorable.



But simple things can make
great examples, too.

Rule #7

Don't keep it to yourself.

Show your personal statement to a trusted mentor.

Ask for their honest critiques.

Show someone in your chosen specialty, too.

Ask people who are willing to make time to give you feedback.

Don't fall in love with your first draft.

Follow up and share your final product.

Rule #8



Know who will be reading your P.S.

P.S. I love you

- Think about those three qualities you're proud of.
- Think about those qualities mentioned by your peer.
- Think of experiences or influences that illustrate or brought out these qualities.
- Figure out how they relate to your chosen field/parallel with your career interest.

Take home points.

- Keep it personal.
- Keep it less than one page.
- Keep it consistent.
- Keep it interesting.
- Keep it fluid.
- Keep it real.

Must read.

- McNamee T. In defense of the personal statement. *Ann Intern Med.* 6 November 2012;157(9):675
- Margalit T. The story between the pinstripes: Interviewing for Internal Medicine Residencies. *Ann Intern Med.* 2007;147(7):518.
- <http://www.gradydoctor.com/2012/06/linchpin-of-personal-statement.html>

Final rule:

And lastly, DON'T make empty statements like this—the perfect example of “*hooptedoodle*”:

"Research is the linchpin of a thriving academic medical center."

~ Kimberly Draper, M4

(I still have no idea what this sentence even means and I wrote it.)

Remember:

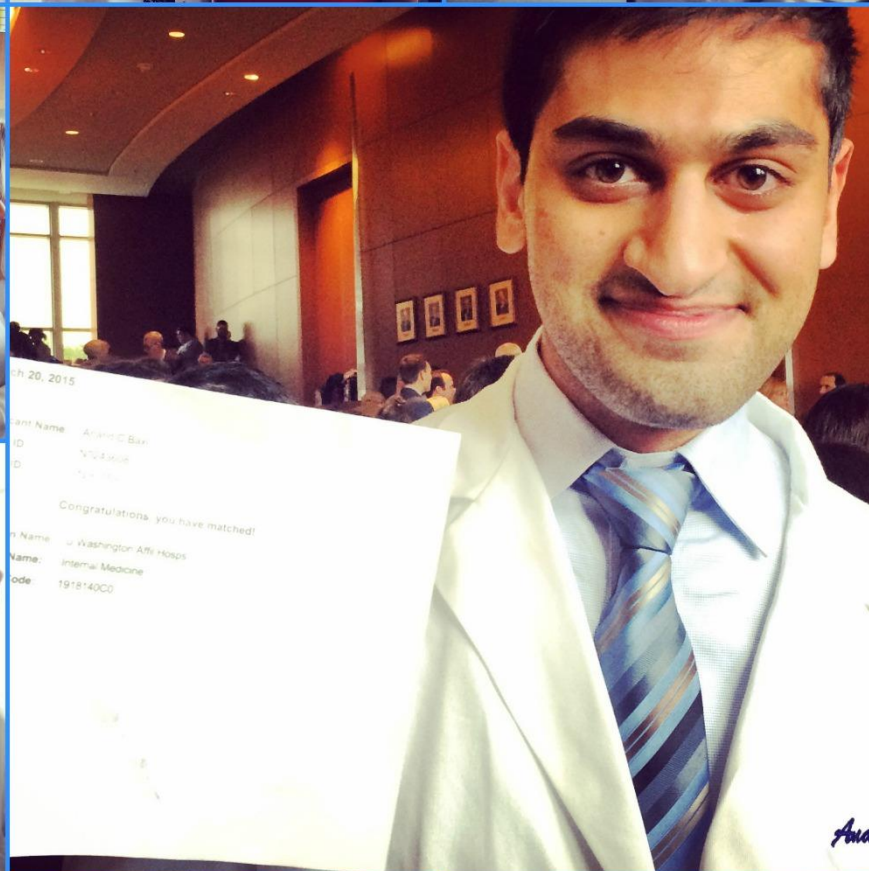
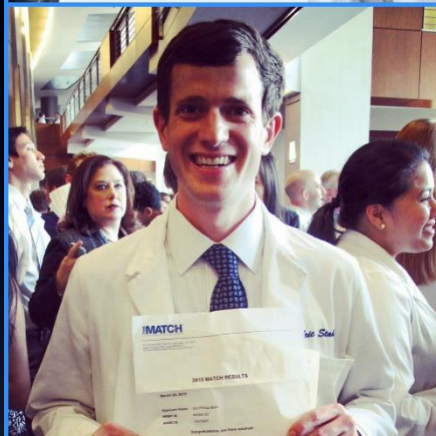
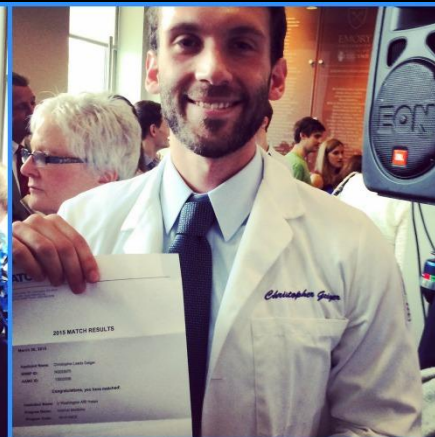
"Becoming is better than being."

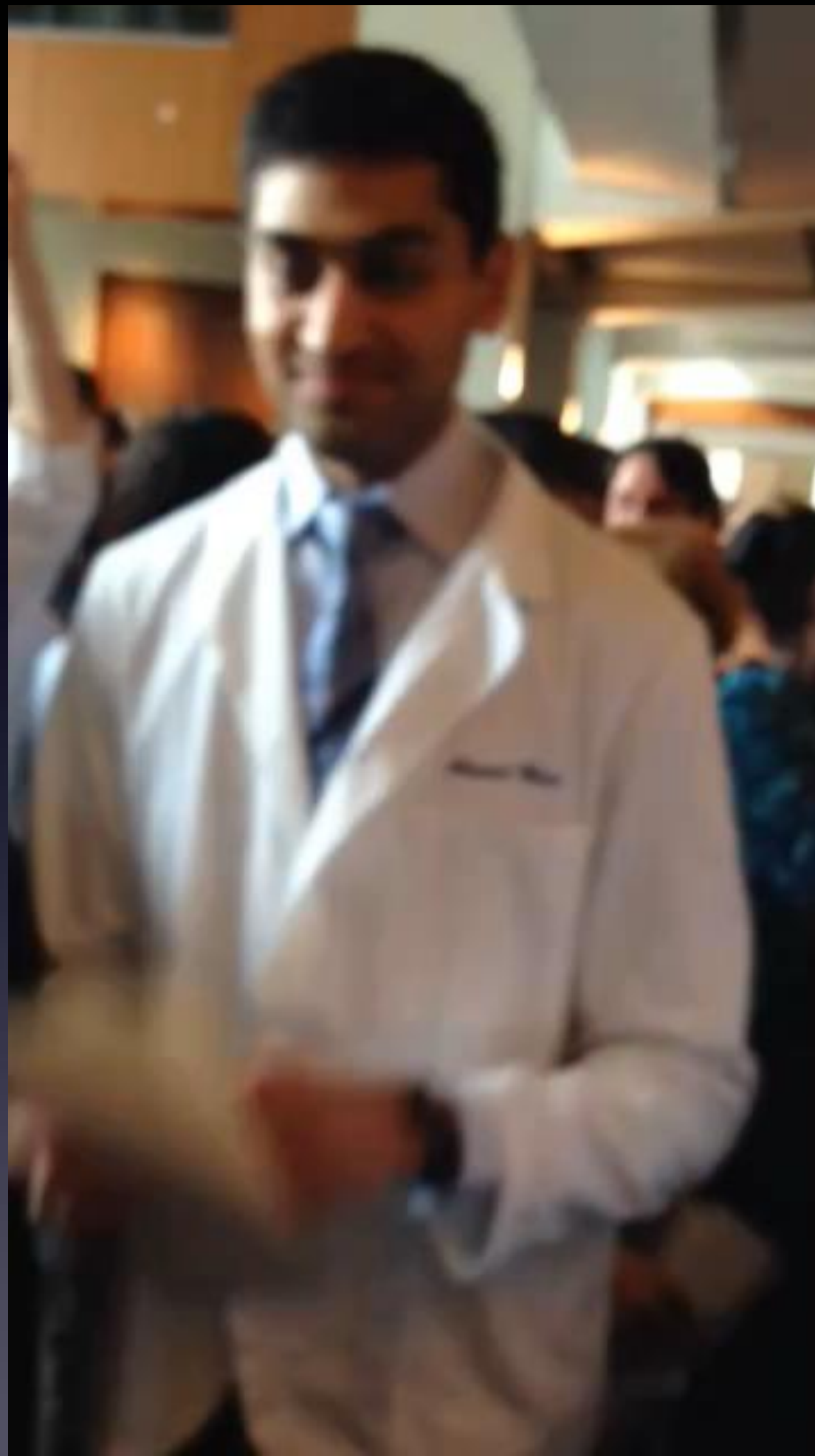


Or as the Grady
elders would say. . . .



*“You see the glory. But you don’t know the
story.”*





You got next.

