

“MyStory” Series: A Medical School’s Approach to Building Community and Promoting Wellness Among Medical Trainees

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BACKGROUND

Burnout rates are high among physicians and can begin early in medical training during medical school and residency, impacting both provider health and patient outcomes. Among medical students, drivers of burnout can include exposure to patient death and suffering, academic workload, performance pressure, medical school structure, lack of balance, uncertainty of the future, and financial concerns. However, strong interpersonal relationships and social support may protect against burnout and promote wellness.

AIM

To demonstrate a peer-led and low-resource medical school initiative as a method for promoting community wellness by:

- 1) Creating a safe platform for normalizing hardships and help-seeking behavior
- 2) Deepening authentic interpersonal relationships through open dialogue
- 3) Celebrating vulnerability

DESCRIPTION

- Student-led program for attendings, fellows, residents, and medical students to share their personal stories of overcoming hardships with Mayo Clinic medical students.

Estimated number of presentations since 2015: 50
Average number of attendees per session: 15- 35
Average length of presentations: 20 – 60 minutes
Typical Format:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mainly in-person, on campus, over lunch hour with food served ▪ Virtual platform during COVID ▪ Any combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Verbal story sharing ○ Powerpoint presentation ○ Audio or video recording ○ Expression through art (poetry, musical instrument, etc.)
Ground rules discussed at each session:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No recording of any kind (video, pictures, etc.). ▪ No outside discussion of details from personal stories shared. ▪ Continued outside discussion of general, non-identifying themes/lessons learned encouraged.

OUTCOMES

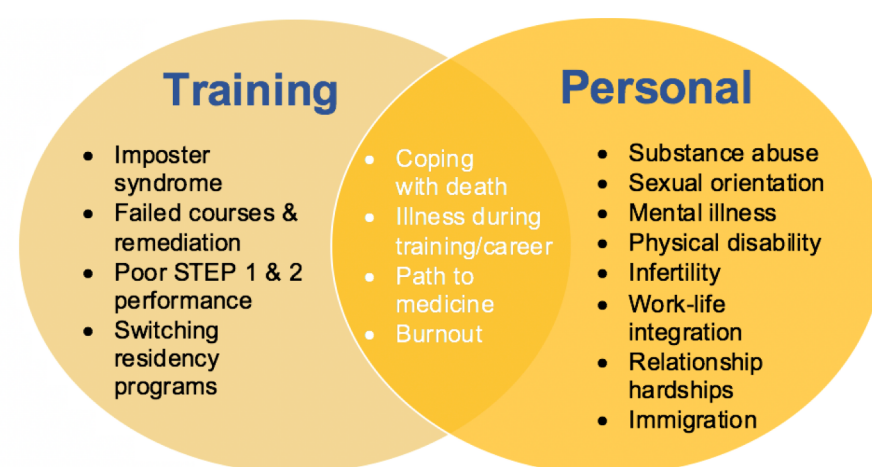


Figure 1: List of example session topics from MyStory series. Categorized as related to medical training, one’s personal life, or both.



Figure 2: Informal post-session feedback from attendees on the benefit of MyStory. Presented in summarized themes.

CONCLUSIONS

- The MyStory series may serve as an example of a easily reproducible way to positively impact the collective mental health and resiliency of medical communities.
- The series is highly regarded by both attendees and presenters alike, as a mutually beneficial experience.
- Future directions: increasing creativity in session formats, expanding session topics, including stories of joy, creating a social media presence, expanding surveys

Presenter Survey	
Theme	Quotes
▪ Give back	▪ “Give back (since I had benefitted from the sessions as a medical student), shed light on the frequency with which physicians change training programs.”
▪ Help others	▪ “I struggled through graduate school with both mental and physical health challenges that I hope can help other students.”
	▪ “To share my experience with anyone who may have had a similar difficult time—to offer that we are not alone.”
▪ Reduce stigma	▪ “I wanted to reduce the stigma around mental illness for both medical professionals and patients.”
▪ Raise awareness	▪ “Hoping that my story would help students either struggling with fertility (I spoke about infertility as a physician) or who had never thought of it as a risk before but might consider freezing eggs/embryos afterwards.”
▪ Empower	
▪ Release	▪ “Catharsis? It was personal trial which I had never told anyone before.”

Table 1: Themes and representative quotes on motivation for presenting at MyStory. Data obtained from surveying most recent presenters (n = 7).

Attendee Focus Groups	
Theme	Quotes
▪ Combats isolation	▪ “It makes you feel not isolated.”
▪ Creates a safe space for expression	▪ “Everyone else is actually stressed out too. They think they’re not doing enough all the time. And it’s like- yeah, we all think that we’re the only ones feeling it but we’re not.”
▪ Fosters perspective, advice, guidance, and peer-to-peer support	▪ “I’ve been approached by people who are struggling, and I’ve approached people with my struggles and I think that’s a special thing about this place.”
Presenter Survey	
Theme	Quotes
▪ New mentorship relationship	▪ “Medical students who attended the session have reached out to me to mentor them, which is an honor.”
▪ New dialogue	▪ “It was great to start a discussion about a topic that I had never heard discussed when I was a student.”
▪ Connection	▪ “Positive experience connecting with my medical school.”
	▪ “Other students struggling with mental health came up to me after which was great.”
▪ Education	▪ “A lot of people told me they learned something about eating disorders which was amazing.”
▪ Peer support	▪ “Support and understanding from peers.”
▪ Self-processing	▪ “Telling my difficult story helped me process the situation. I also felt I had a better understanding with those who attended.”
▪ Peer understanding	

Table 2: Themes and representative quotes on the benefits of attending or presenting at MyStory. Data obtained from IRB approved focus groups with pre-clinical medical student attendees (n = 18) and anonymous surveying of recent presenters (n = 7).

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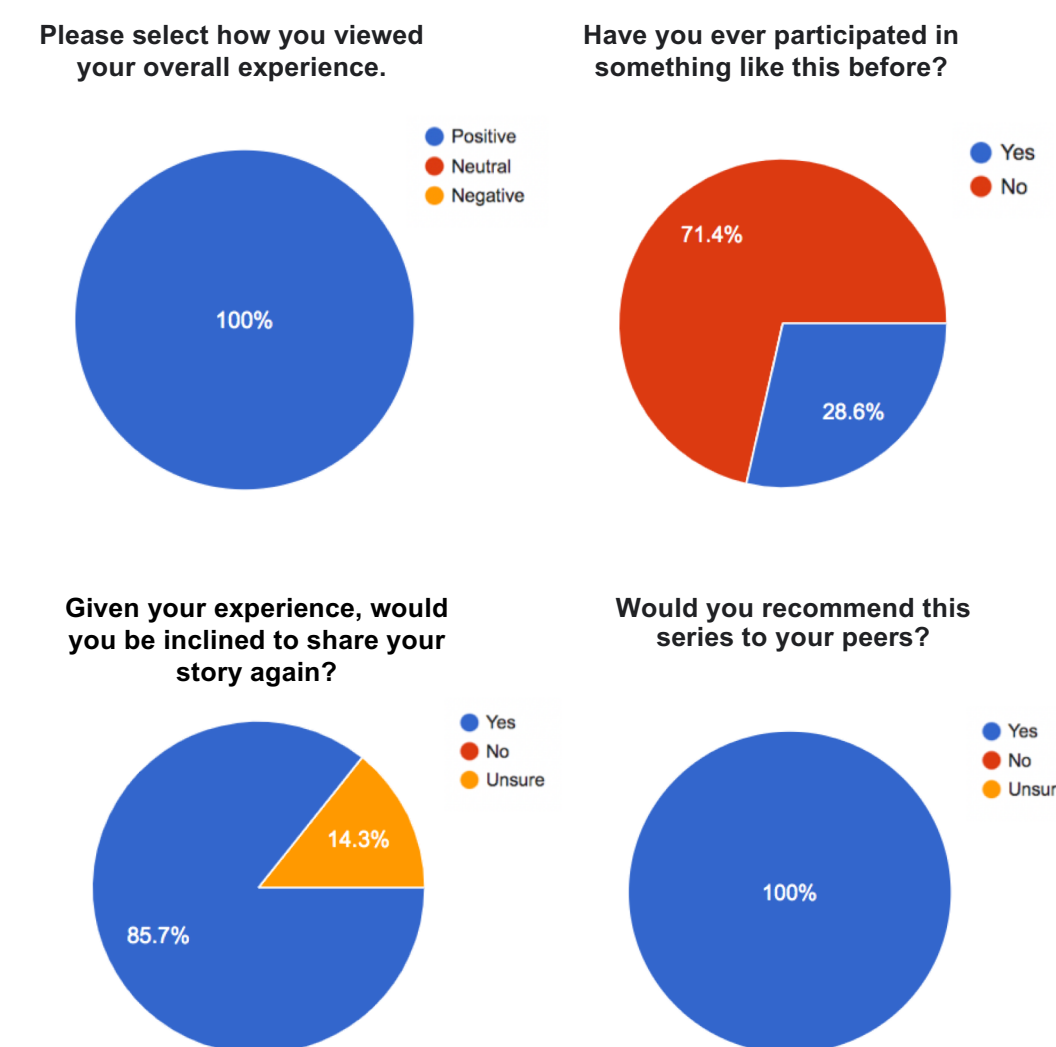


Figure 3: Presenter survey results. Anonymous surveying of recent presenters (n = 7).

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