

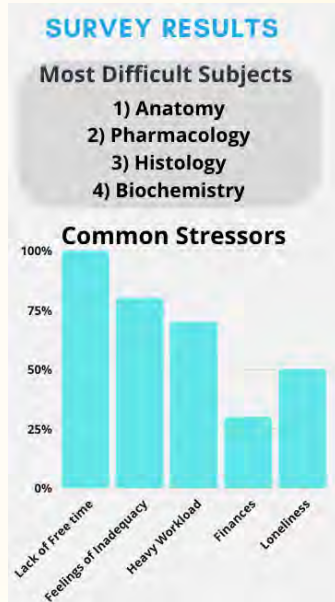
# Grow With Us: Developing Mental Endurance (Medical Education)

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**Background:** 25-50% of medical students experience imposter syndrome, which is further marked by burnout and associated with cynicism, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization.<sup>1</sup> Early intervention and self-reflection to improve growth mindset and grit have been shown to be good indicators of success in medical school.<sup>2</sup>

**Purpose:** To introduce students to self-reflection and growth mindset, identifying common stressors that help build community among students.

**Design:** Thirty first-year medical students participated in a structured small group reflection, listing common stressors they were experiencing during their transition into medical school. Both academic subjects and personal struggles were addressed and compiled. (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Common stressors experienced by students and subjects listed by difficulty

Students were then asked to contemplate and share some methods they used to mitigate these academic stressors and feelings of Imposter Syndrome. Finally, students brainstormed ways they could seek help from others. (Figure 2)



**Figure 2:** Shared coping methods of students and external aids

**Results:** Self-reflection showed that all students reported feeling a lack of free time, and large proportions also reported feelings of inadequacy, heavy workload, and loneliness. To mitigate stressors, students often reported taking regular breaks (70%), exercise (50%), and using planned study schedules (80%). Building community and emotional networks were also commonly attributed to helping students cope. By undergoing self-reflection exercises, students were introduced to the idea of growth mindset, while also developing connection, empathy, and self-awareness in the context of medical education.

**Limitations:** Small sample size is likely not representative of nationwide first-year medical students. Longitudinal follow-up is also necessary to observe if early self-reflection elicited long-term benefit, especially considering any confounding variables that occur after reflection exercises.



1. Villwock, J.A., et al., *Impostor syndrome and burnout among American medical students: a pilot study*. International journal of medical education, 2016. 7: p. 364.

2. Jumat, M.R., et al., *Grit protects medical students from burnout: A longitudinal study*. BMC medical education, 2020. 20(1): p. 1-9.