

Why do some trainees struggle?

A psychological perspective
on paediatric training

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Who am I?

Occupational and Counselling Psychologist

Worked in Medical Education for 20 years:

1998-2008 Consultant Education Adviser, KSS Deanery

2008-2014 Head of The Careers Unit, London Deanery

2014- Set up CPD – Career Planning for Doctors and
Dentists



'Fascinating and troubling. Read it and weep.'

SUSIE ORBACH

ALSO HUMAN

THE INNER LIVES OF DOCTORS

'Crucial and timely.'

ATUL GAWANDE, author of *Being Mortal*

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Hi, I am currently an ST1 in paediatrics but am questioning some of my career choices to date and am looking for some career support. Could you please advise me on how much you charge for your 1 to 1 career coaching
many thanks,

Hello! I am currently a paediatric registrar level doctor but have concerns that this career is not sustainable for me in terms of my mental and physical health long-term. I wonder if I could please make an appointment to discuss my career? Many thanks

I am a paediatric trainee in XXXX.

I've just gone part-time due to fatigue and to some extent anxiety. I have had multiple opportunities to review and reflect on my career in the past, and have had a total of two years out of training (I graduated in 2007). Previous experience of careers guidance, mentoring or health interventions have tended to focus exclusively on one side of the problem, i.e my mental health or the practicalities of progressing one's career in an appropriate direction, not the holistic story that joins up the threads.

I have dealt with the emotional aspect of my work through the numbing effect of starvation and reducing everything to numbers - now this coping mechanism is no longer an option, I am finding caring for dying children incredibly distressing. I am concerned the career I love may not be compatible with a happy and healthy life

Career Decision Making

“According to psychoanalytic theory, people shape their world both consciously and unconsciously. Childhood experiences (both positive and negative) and familial heritage have a major influence on vocational choices. People choose an occupation that enables them to replicate significant childhood experiences, satisfy needs that were unfulfilled in their childhood, and actualize dreams passed on to them by their familial heritage”

Malach-Pines A, and Yafe-Yanai, O. (2001)
J of Employment Counseling 38 (4), 170-84

Hello,
I'm not sure you'll be able to help, I'm actually in Australia, but I can't find someone to see here to discuss some career issues. Do you do skype sessions? Or alternatively- do you know of anyone in Australia? I'm a paediatric advanced trainee.
Thanks

Task

USING NO NAMES.....

1. Think of a trainee whom you have struggled to support.
2. Write a few bullet points about the key factors underpinning the difficulties this trainee experienced
3. In twos or threes – discuss the case with your colleagues.

CASE STUDIES

Again in twos and threes –

After reading the case study carefully, discuss any ‘missed opportunities’ or points where either Dora or Kelly could have been better supported.

Implications for Practice

1. Always take an educational/career history. This applies to **all** trainees.
2. Some trainees give a huge amount of thought to specialty choice and base their decisions on a robust appraisal of themselves, and of the demands of the specialty. Others don't.
3. A small sub-set of trainees may have chosen paediatrics out of a desire to address some of the psychological difficulties that they experienced as children.
4. The psychological impact of career transitions needs far greater attention – particularly if a trainee has been away from treating acutely unwell children for a considerable period of time.
5. Although trainees in all specialties can be effected by events going on in their private lives (relationship breakdown, bereavements, moving to a part of the country where they know nobody) – paediatric trainees can be particularly vulnerable if they experience problems with fertility, or health problems with their own children.
6. Mistakes – particularly if they have a bad outcome – can cause considerable and long-lasting distress.
7. Early intervention – with a lightness of touch – is always best. Career switches later on in training are far harder to effect.
8. Different paediatric sub-specialties or different specialties pose different psychological demands on the practitioner
9. If a trainee is thinking of changing specialty or leaving medicine, they may benefit from specialist careers help.

TASK

Still using no names, go back to the trainees whom you personally have struggled to support – and discuss whether, in the light of the issues discussed this morning, you might approach things slightly differently.



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