

RECONNECTION AND GRATITUDE

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On August 27-29, about 30 medical students and five mentors joined together in the mountains to practice healing. I'd like to begin by thanking AMHA for sponsoring our Circle of Healers medical student retreat, which was also cosponsored by AMSA's Humanistic Medicine action committee. I'd also like to thank AHMA's very own Dan Benor and Larry Palevsky for serving as two of our absolutely beloved mentors for the retreat.



The retreat centered around reconnection. By that, I mean a few different things. We reconnected with the beautiful green earth upon which we enjoyed yoga practice, hikes in the woods, and a bonfire. We reconnected with our hearts, the true guide for being helpful, open, and loving people. We took time to recognize and pay homage to our hearts and practiced allowing our loving energy to serve as our personal balancing force. We used the power of this reconnection as a means to reinvigorate ourselves, and to remind ourselves of who we are and of the light we have to share with the world. As healers, we must take this time to honor ourselves.

Most importantly, we reconvened our community, our sangha, our tribe. New people came to know about the possibilities of being surrounded by loving people who share our common vision for what wellness and healing can be. These medical student retreats and AHMA conferences have become a second home for so many. I am strengthened by the knowledge that we will come together again and again.

At the retreat, our mentors led workshops on topics that asked the students to share feelings, experiences, and wisdom.

Larry Palevsky led us in a discussion about the cycles and balance of life in which success and failure are not endpoints but rather elements of life to be embraced and understood. He asked us to maintain focus on our breath as a constant reminder of those cycles of life and as a place to which we can always come home. I know that this perspective will be extremely important in weathering the difficult challenges of being a healer and a human being.

Dan Benor introduced a technique to help us to reprogram our own personal hard drives. He writes,

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“There are self-healing techniques that not only relieve stresses but also transform your attitude towards stress - from one of annoyance to one of gratitude that you are being offered further opportunities to clear the bucket of junk that you carry with you, and to reprogram your hard drive.” His technique is called WHEE, which stands for Wholistic Hybrid of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT). Practice of this technique empowered us to touch our thoughts, feelings and emotions with an understanding, compassionate, and mature perspective in order to direct them toward health and peace. After practicing this technique together, we felt that certain difficult emotions or fears in our lives were significantly more manageable.

Martina Steiger offered us practices in using our intuition, a source of great knowledge and energy to understand those we hope to heal and to heal ourselves. She also allowed us to gain a sense of our own energy and described the great responsibility we have to understand and protect it.

SUNY Stony Brook University Family Medicine physicians and professors Raja Jaber and Jeffrey Trilling focused our attention on mindfulness practice and the present moment through the teachings of Thich Naht Hanh. They encouraged us to tend to our own gardens. In our garden are planted seeds of happiness, anger, fear, love, etc. We must cultivate mindfulness in order better tend to those seeds. Mindfulness allows us to acknowledge our seeds with love and kindness, a true path to freedom.

Now I know that it sounds like this was a lot for one weekend, but I believe that it stands as a testament to what we can achieve when we gather our tribe together. AHMA and HuMED have already changed my life significantly in nine short months. Our gatherings are a centerpiece of the medical education for a growing community of medical students. So, I'm writing in tremendous gratitude to this organization's strength and mentorship and for its support of our dreams and wellbeing.

