

ReMed helps when working as a doctor becomes an unbearable strain

Doctor, 30, crisis

It's the most common story that the ReMed support network repeatedly hears in a similar vein. This example is typical of the kind of competent, sensitive and hugely committed assistant doctors with high ideals who are so frustrated by their day-to-day work that they question their abilities and their choice of profession. The author urgently advises doctors to support young colleagues in order not to lose them during their postgraduate training.

"I turn to ReMed when I believe I am on the point of breaking down completely or being devoured by a monster. My heart races, sweat makes my t-shirt stick to me, and I feel dizzy. The warm voice of the ReMed counsellor on the telephone calms me down, so that I can explain my situation to him. I'm 32 years old, coming to the end of my training as an intern, started the last position two months ago – and can't go on. It's all a form of torture, the tension, anxieties, stress, accusations about my overtime, none of it makes sense any more. I admire others that take it in their stride. But I appear to be unfitted for this profession and I'm disappointed.

It was always my childhood dream to become a doctor, helping people and saving lives, especially those of children without anyone to care for them. I am now a doctor, but due to the stress of my job I find no time to really get to know my patients and really listen to them. Sometimes it seems as if at least a thousand people want something of me, and want it immediately. But I am by nature slow, cautious and not a multi-tasker.

Exhausted, disillusioned, anxious

Currently my nerves are often so bad that I become impatient, unfriendly and extremely aloof. I notice that I sometimes rebuff my patients. What on earth has become of my childhood dream? One of my chief physicians told me I held too high ideals and was too meticulous in my work. I need to learn when to stand back and not to question and double-check everything, and instead make decisions with confidence. Yet since one of my patients died from a lung embolism which even the senior physician failed to diagnose, I struggle every day to overcome my anxiety that I will miss something vital. Every morning when I enter the clinic I am plagued by self-doubt and the gruelling conviction that everyone knows I am unfit to be a doctor. Not that the boss would ever have said so. I don't understand why he has such great confidence in my abilities and even recommended a transfer to his private department. It's perhaps unfair to say this, but it seems to me that, in doing so, he is demonstrating his own incompetence.

Loneliness, sadness, fear of having missed the boat

The ReMed counsellor asks about my social contacts. For a long time I say nothing, and instead notice how hot my head starts to feel and tears stream down my cheeks. It's a sobering question. The last time I met anyone socially was two months ago, with my sister. I still have a friend in another city with whom I occasionally talk on the phone. Since I have been working as an assistant doctor, I no longer play music seriously. I used to sing in a band but my irregular working hours meant I had too little time to rehearse properly. And to be honest I have never been satisfied with my singing abilities. I set myself very high standards, not only at work but also in all other areas of my life.



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I am complicated, and that places a strain on my relationships with men. I yearn for a loving relationship and am deeply unhappy. I am ashamed that I have been single for four years, and as every year passes I become more afraid of having missed my opportunity to have children. That's definitely not the way to find the right partner! I feel powerless in my ability to change this area of my life: punished, unlovable and not attractive enough for the type of man who would interest me. My last relationship was with a colleague whom I admire very much on a professional basis. We were together for three years, but he ended the relationship because we had such different expectations of life. He has now become a father and is married to a nurse who has stopped working to look after their two children.

A new self-perception and realignment

Even if every day I entertain the thought of hanging up my stethoscope and doing something completely different, I know deep down that it would eventually make me no happier. I ask the ReMed counsellor how I can once more find my lost strength. We come to the conclusion that, as far as others are concerned, the work I do is good, but for me it is never good enough. I am under real time pressure, but it seems that I myself am responsible for most of the pressure I feel under and which often degenerates into panic. Somehow my internal system is simply unable to cope and shuts down. My unhappy personal situation also continually blocks, weakens and stresses me.

I don't know how I can change my life to make it rewarding again. At least the two talks with the ReMed counsellor have helped me to admit my longing for a relationship and for children, and look upon it as an important and valuable part of myself. We discuss various possible supportive measures for me, including tutoring, coaching or psychotherapy. I still haven't decided and am very ambivalent as to whether I want to seek further help. Thanks to the contact with ReMed I have gained some peace of mind and guidance. It is also good to know that I can contact the ReMed counsellor again without delay and without feeling ashamed whenever I want to address my problems with the aid of professional support. He will help me to find a suitable expert."

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