



More Than a Doctor

Text by Dr Sneha Sharma

Illustration by Dr Kevin Loy

In Singapore's highly competitive medical space, there is often little room to make mistakes or be anything other than your "perfect" self. This is especially true in the intimidating world of residency where residents are judged not just on medical knowledge but also on how they dress, how they speak and their overall collegiality. A seemingly small misstep – such as speaking to a senior doctor in the wrong tone or blurting out an incorrect answer to what is deemed a "simple" question – can put one's reputation at risk both during specialist training and beyond. This constant pressure to be "perfect" is where resident and junior doctor burnout begins.

Like many doctors, I recently experienced professional disappointment myself. What stayed with me was

not the outcome but the way my mind responded to it. The vicious cycle of self-analysis, replaying conversations and wondering what could have been done differently often weighs one down even more than the initial incident. Despite investing several thousand hours in residency and beyond, the thought that "you are still not good enough" continues to replay in one's mind.

The phrase "not good enough" is something many residents and junior doctors feel on a weekly basis. Medicine is a field where perfectionism is valued above all else – leaving little room for doctors to acknowledge their own insecurities.

It is important therefore to reclaim ourselves and to realise that medicine is but one small part of our life. Perhaps the trick is not to be "good enough" for

this vast field of medicine but to be a kind and reflective human being who is "good enough" to yourself and to whoever walks through your door on any given day.

I will end this piece with a simple question – who are we outside of being doctors? ♦

Dr Sneha is a family physician at Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic. She graduated from Duke-NUS Medical School in 2020 and completed her family medicine residency and Master of Medicine (Family Medicine) in 2025. Outside of medicine, she enjoys performing Bollywood dance and writing short stories.

