

Building Grit and Resilience



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Today marks the conclusion of formal medical education for our Medicine Class of 2024. But it will also begin a new page where new stories shall be written, a new journey towards lifelong learning and meaningful living, and a new adventure bound to test strength and limits.

Life in medicine is a roller-coaster ride. You learn to go with the flow and speed. You master the art of rolling with the punches. Our young Thomasian doctors here today are not exempt from these strong feelings of “helplessness and hopelessness” that they have courageously successfully surmounted to make this day possible. And for this and the many sacrifices offered and battles won, let us give these modern-day survivors a well-deserved round of applause.

Let me zero in on my commencement message on “Building Grit and Resilience.” Building a character is important for the world to respect you. Building capacity is vital for the world to trust you, but building grit and internalizing resilience may both be life changing and lifesaving.

Building grit and resilience are crucial for the success and stability of medical learners. These essential skills must be developed, embedded within and acclimatized like a second skin.

In the highly demanding world of medicine, how can we help you, our young Thomasian doctors, build grit and resilience as you move from the formative years of medical schooling to the real challenges of a fast-paced existence?

GRIT is the passion to be and perseverance to become the vision you want to be. RESILIENCE is the ability to recover quickly from difficulties and adapt smoothly in the face of adversity... Yes, grit and resilience go together. While grit is the foundation, resilience is its execution. Your medical journey

has been decorated by many moments where you knowingly or unknowingly displayed both of these.

You faced challenges people of your age never encountered. The sleepless nights, the never-ending reading and the endless examinations and assessments. You weathered the storm and made it here, in the country’s most challenging and difficult medical school.

The rigorous academic workload, the emotional strains and the heartbreaking pressures, all made you stronger than you can ever imagine.

But how can you strengthen grit and fortify resilience as you move from one phase to the next in this unfolding story of a promising future?

Let me share some insights that can help you strengthen your grit.

First, set a goal. Define a mark. Establish a finish line. This will keep you focused and determined to go past it, settling only with nothing but victory.

Second, persevere. Trying is not enough. You may still get hurt by the setbacks. Trying to be the best may still fall short. You may still despair with uncertainties you did not clear. BUT trying to be better than your best may bring you closer to the target and make the experience worth repeating and revealing.

Third, find your passion. Look deep into yourselves. Find it and never let it go. Do what you can to understand and live it to the fullest. By doing so, you make yourself better in your craft and transform yourself into an almost impermeable and invincible soul.

But how about resilience? How do you unlock it and seize it?

First, accept adaptability. The malleable mind, the flexible body and the willing soul will preponderate beyond challenges and surmount obstacles that life may put in the way.

Second, practice self-care. As the song says, the “greatest love of all is inside of us, and it teaches us to love ourselves” not above God, not above others, but for ourselves and in accordance with how we can be better at what we do and what we can offer. Third, nurture support systems. We are an embodiment of every single person we meet, a representation of every experience we can remember. At this point, look around; every person here made us possible, too. In fact, it is on their shoulders we stand the tallest... Let us give a round of applause to your parents, families, professors, classmates, support staff and campus personnel who made every single day a step to reach this momentous day.

I sincerely thank our dedicated administrative officials — Fr. Aparicio, Asst. Dean Mimi and our most hardworking Faculty Secretary Pe — and to our esteemed faculty council, academic officials, Department Chairs and Chief Program Officers and the entire academic and non-academic staff. Your unwavering commitment and sacrifices, at the expense of your medical practice, family and personal time, have been truly remarkable. You have exceeded your roles and job descriptions to ensure our learners receive the best medical education possible. We also express our deepest appreciation to the university and our generous benefactors, the AFI, philanthropists, industry partners and alumni organizations. They support not only the scholarships, but all our lofty endeavors. Your belief and trust in our vision and steadfast support have been invaluable in helping us achieve our goals.

My dear graduates, as we let you out in the world, never forget what we wanted you to be.

Develop a mindset of growth and possibility. Choose to accept every challenge as a veiled opportunity to discover something new and bring out something you never thought you had.

Reflect as you practice. Always go back to your core. Connect with your conscience. Ask your heart. Listen to your mind. Check your body. Nurture your soul. These compasses will keep you on track and will never fail you.

Never cease to learn. Desire to learn. Be an advocate of lifelong learning. Stay in tune. Stay

updated. Ours is a swiftly changing world. We need to swim in it every day of our lives for tomorrow is never promised.... A successful life is never guaranteed.... A bed of roses may not always be what life will offer... So, deal with uncertainty head-on.

Prepare yourselves to rise above situations and handle your faculties with confidence and competence... Only bow to God and not to life's pressures. Make decisions when required. Solve problems when needed. Shoot troubles when asked to, but put life's pressures where they should be and refuse to be consumed and cowed.

And more importantly, as Thomasian physicians, beam with empathy and shine with compassion; be beacons of enlightenment, bearers of hope, faith and love. Be role models of kindness, generosity and selflessness to inspire others. Be productive and proactive citizens of our society who look at life's legacy as one that is better lived than left.

Today is a celebration of a milestone that will truly change your life.

Your grit and resilience paid off. Build on them. Stand proud because of them. Make a difference using them.

As you step into bigger shoes as Thomasian medical doctors, remember that the journey ahead will be filled with trials and triumphs. Embrace each day as a chance to demonstrate, if not embolden, your grit and resilience.

Let your passion for medicine guide you and your commitment to the medical profession sustain you in the years ahead.

Go forth, our dear graduates, and build a future where competence, commitment and compassion will transform the lives of others for the better. As your alma mater opens its doors for you to discover the world, please remember to come back to the home where your promising future was born – the “great” UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery – home of the biggest, the brightest and the best.

Congratulations, and may God bless you, the UST Medicine Class of 2024, with His unending love and grace!