



A Medical Student's Experience

I am determined to turn this slow burning anger outward this time, rather than turning it inwards, the way I always would have done, expressing something I had no name for on my skin's surface.

Today I feel a florid anger, spreading through me. It began as feeling a little disjointed, a little out of sorts, slightly under-the-surface-but-I-can't-quite-touch-it emotion, in response to a brief, but enlightening, interaction this morning. A short meeting, supposedly there to support me, as a student, on my course.

A few of the questions asked are still ringing in my ears, the shadow of this example of every day blaming of another human being for their experience, for what was done TO them, lingering.

I was asked how my paediatrics placement had gone. In fact, it had gone very well, apart from being physically unwell. I actually love paediatrics, I get on with children generally, and have no fear of play or blowing bubbles in full sight of all my colleagues to try and keep a child calm so we don't lose their airway from them beginning to cry. I mentioned, just in passing really, that I am not particularly shocked by anything I see, and that perhaps that is a little sad.

What I was pertaining to here, was my own past experiences, which have left me, not unfeeling, but actually, completely unsurprised by the extent of atrocities certain members of this human race can commit. Abuse, violence, rape, none a stranger to me. In my life so far, I have both experienced and encountered many others who have experienced, genuine terrors and what can only be described as hellsonearth. None of these can be judged as better or worse than another, but I would not say I am shocked. Deeply concerned, angered, in fact downright furious, saddened, and in fact sometimes lost for words, by the hell one human being can inflict upon another, but no I am not shocked, not even surprised. You name it, I have probably heard of, met someone who experienced, seen (or experienced myself) an individual who has had to endure, survive, recover from, whatever the hell you want to call it, something in the same vein. That's not to say I am all knowing, omnipresent, wordly – I have just seen a lot, heard a lot, in my 26 years. I wish I could say I'd imagined the experience of me and so many others I know, but that isn't the case.

I wish I had naivety, I wish I had some of the kind of spellbound shock that seems to drive people to search out 'real life' stories in cheap magazines, with some kind of awe and wonder that these things DO happen. I wish I was far removed from that world that burns, and sucks on your soul, and where every other person you speak to knows pain. But no, I am not walking around eyeshut, and I haven't always had the greatest of times, so it does not astound me to come across child abuse, neglect, ritual abuse, rape, domestic violence, more rape. It wouldn't even get me to raise an eyebrow.

Further to my comment, it was suggested that this was a bad thing, as a going-to-be-a-doctor, medical student. That I was unable to see that these things are wrong because I am not



shocked by them, that this lack of shock means I am desensitised to such situations. And there we have it. In those lines, the words that slipped from her mouth so easily – the raw truth.

Rather than point the finger at the atrocity of what happened to lead me to NOT be shocked by the cruelty of other humans, or how horrific my experience is, let's attribute ideas, words, imaginings to me. Let's put words in my mouth, let's see me as a victim who has been ruined by her experience, rather than a bright, passionate, young woman with a drive and determination you might not find so readily elsewhere. I am not flawed, or incapable, because of what was done TO me. I got through it, I worked my fucking ass off actually to be able to come back to this career I love so much, and showed just how much I can shine, in spite of everything that I have seen, heard, experienced.

So, forgive me, person in the role of doctor, who is supposed to be supporting students, if I am not shocked by the things I've encountered in the worlds of obstetrics, gynaecology, paediatrics. However, that does not mean that I do not feel, that I lack sensitivity, empathy, compassion, or that I need to be as quick as you to judge others and their experiences. I am not fumbling around for words in the dark to try and get my meaning across, because I don't need to. These are my experiences, I lived them. I have heard experiences from the mouths of others, seen them in eyes (and not all those eyes are hollow, as you expect, they are sparkling, shining, living). I am not damaged. I am very much alive, very much here. And I have so much to give, if you could just get past the expectation that all who have experienced rape, abuse, violence, are damaged, and somehow fractured in some way.

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