

# dear residents

Endings Matter

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**Dear Residents,**

Residency is a unique and fleeting chapter in your journey. While it may sometimes feel like an eternity, it is, in reality, a brief but formative period. For those of you who have just matched to a fellowship starting next July, these final six months may feel like a paradox—both too long and too short. How you choose to perceive and approach this time will shape your experience. Is it merely a steppingstone to the next phase of your career, or will it become a cherished, nostalgic chapter that has shaped you profoundly?

Consider the story of [James Dean](#), whose career, though tragically brief, left an indelible mark. He starred in only three films, two of which were released posthumously, earning him iconic status. Similarly, cultural legends like Jimi Hendrix, Kurt Cobain, and Amy Winehouse departed at their peaks, leaving behind legacies of unrealized potential. Your impending departure from residency represents a peak of its own. It's a moment when you are at your professional best, standing on the brink of the future.

[Kahneman's research](#) informs us that for any experience, we tend to remember the peak moments and the ending most vividly (peak-end rule). I didn't fully appreciate this until I completed my fellowship, having remained in the same program for both residency and fellowship. When my ending finally came, I distinctly remember the last clinic, the last consult, and the heartfelt goodbyes. These memories endure because endings matter, and they offer us a chance to close a chapter with intention.

So, as you approach the conclusion of your residency, think about peaking as close to the end as possible. These last six months are a valuable opportunity to refine your skills and remain deeply engaged. From an ACGME competency perspective, you are already "competent for independent practice," but there is more to achieve than competence alone. Competence is merely the foundation. [The Dreyfus model of skill acquisition](#) describes stages beyond competence: proficiency, expertise, and mastery. While competence reflects the ability to perform a task to an expected standard, proficiency adds ease, efficiency, and insight.

Be intentional with your remaining time in residency. Be present for the moments that unfold and make an effort to document your journey—whether through photos, conversations, or journaling. There is great value in capturing these experiences. A quote that resonates with me, from a book about a [Moroccan Berber village](#), captures this sentiment beautifully:

*Nostalgia happens in our present, and it is about our future. It is a call from our heart (or our liver, as villagers say) to attend to something we might lose, something our gut tells us we ought to cherish and preserve, and bring with us on our inexorable march into the unknown.*



<http://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/32379>

Cherish these final months, not as a countdown but as a culmination. Your future self will thank you for it.

Congratulations on a fabulous fellowship match,

Dino Kazi