**How to… avoid loneliness and ‘burnout’**

Working as a Doctor often means keeping unsociable hours. Most rotas involve weekend shifts, late shifts, night shifts… Even your normal day shift can often overrun if patients become unwell or unexpected results return. This can lead to difficulty in maintaining a social life outside of work and many new Doctors can feel isolated and lonely.

The first thing to say is that it is not uncommon to feel this way. While that doesn’t sound encouraging, perhaps look from another perspective; **you are NOT ALONE in being lonely**! You can guarantee that if you were to talk to your fellow F1s many will be dealing with similar issues. Having someone to talk to and open up with can be very important in coping.

Another thing to consider is that if your entire work and social life is dominated by medical talk, it can feel difficult to escape or unwind. While it is good to discuss difficult times at work in order to reflect and deal with anything that arises, being able to disconnect is also extremely important. Those in medic households may consider having a ‘**work chat ban**’ – times dedicated entirely to talking and thinking about anything but medicine. Keeping up with non-medic friends is another way to manage this, most friends will be forgiving of an unpredictable schedule and will be happy to see you no matter how last-minute your plans end up being!

Holding on to your **interests and hobbies** is another vital part of surviving life as a Doctor. Having something outside of work is another way to disconnect, and gives you something to look forward to in your free time. Being part of a club or sports team, doing activities you love or even just being able to keep up with TV can help offset the feelings of ‘burnout’ – that build up of stress, over-work, no free time are feelings that most Doctors will be able to relate to.

In order to avoid this, making the most of **your free time** (ignore all portents of doom, you WILL have free time!) is the best way forward. Sleep, health, hygiene are all important to help you cope and reflect throughout F1. Even getting out of the house for fresh air can be the thing you need to make your free time truly your own and take ownership back on your life. Your time away from work is vital and focussing on yourself is important to avoid ‘burnout’ – do things you enjoy either by yourself or with others. Remember this is **your time**!

You have a long time as a Doctor and you need to look after YOURSELF first and foremost in order to give your patients the care they deserve.

I hope at least one of the suggestions above is useful for starting F1, but if I can leave with one last bit of advice it is to **TALK**. If you feel lonely, **TALK** to someone. If you feel like you are stressed, struggling to cope or have no escape from work, then **TALK** to someone. Who that someone is will vary from person to person, whether they are a friend or family member or a professional it is important that you are able to **TALK** about how you are feeling. If you are not happy, the most dangerous company is yourself and the worst place to be is inside your own head. Keep on reflecting and be open to discussing how you feel. As I said earlier, you’ll likely find you are not alone.

As a final note, surround yourself by workmates, friends, family who make you feel positive. They will be the people who make your life wonderful. Be that person for someone else and F1 life will not only be tolerable, but enjoyable. Good luck everyone!