Dr. Aaron Michelfelder

What is your favorite easy healthy meal?

For the last 8 months, I went lacto-ovo-vegetarian and have discovered a wonderful array of vegetarian options. An easy favorite for me is grilled portabellas over black and red quinoa with greens from our garden. Takes about 20 minutes and you have great leftovers for another day!

What is your favorite workout?

My favorite is hiking on a mountainside through a pine forest, looking for animals and hawks. On a daily basis, bike rides on the prairie path or even 30 minutes on a Loyola Center for Fitness elliptical gets the job done!

Best Self-Care Tips while being a practicing physician?

Plan frequent getaways, such as to nature, or at least block in regular time for fun activities.

How do you remain healthy while practicing medicine?

Take care of yourself. Get at least 7 hours of sleep a night, exercise regularly, eat well, and connect with your friends and family often.

What advice do you have for first year students?

Live in the moment. Enjoy being a first year medical student. This is your one and only opportunity you will have to be a brand new medical student. Enjoy it, savor it, absorb it, live it!

Mental Health Corner

Maria Nakhasi
M.D Candidate 2020

Dear Stritch classmates,

Remember that analogy professors use to describe how our sympathetic nervous system responds to a threat? To help you gear up to run away from that bear, your heart beats faster and faster to increase blood flow to your vital organs, your pupils dilate, your mouth dries up almost instantly as your saliva stops being produced, your limbs shake as your veins are filled with adrenaline, and you start to sweat. A lot. The feeling that I might cry and collapse at any moment was my constant reality as I felt some variation of these sensations during almost every moment of every day of my first year of medical school. That whole “rest and restore” parasympathetic nervous system never seemed to get activated. And I told myself I was fine.

I had always been described as an anxious person by my friends, family, educators, and administrators, but that anxiety never reflected negatively on my academic performance, my outward warm, friendly personality, or my relentless drive to perform at the highest level in anything and everything I took on. Until it did. Throughout my first year at Stritch, I would spend hours poring over the material. An extra review session? I was there. Professors’ office hours? I was present, especially right before exams. That laundry list of supplementary material? You’d better believe I tried Every. Single. One. Same as many of my classmates. And my grades wouldn’t reflect that. I constantly felt defeated, often waiting until I got home to check my grades so I wouldn’t have to feel decimated among my peers. And that made me feel more alone than ever. If the song of my soul ceased to sing, could I survive the silence?

Thankfully, my sources of support noticed my gradual change, and encouraged me to seek help, which ultimately allowed me to become a better version of myself, one that is filled with so much peace, joy, excitement, and hope for the physician and person I am becoming. Here are some bits of advice I’d like to share with you.
Mental Health Corner
Maria Nakhasi
M.D. Candidate 2020
continued

Make a home. Before coming to Stritch, many of us came from a community of our own. We arrived from different schools, different cities, different professions, and had different definitions of family. Before this academic year began, my close friend and fellow Stritch classmate, Hollie Schaffer and I, decided to live together and make our apartment a safe, warm space. We cook meals together, study in the same room at desks opposite one another, have good friends over including Sarah Mooney, leave sticky notes on the bathroom mirror with encouraging words, and laugh together. Ultimately, we take care of each other. She’s family to me, and our place is always open to those in need of a safe space!

Tupperware isn’t dishes. If you can manage, have some meals at your place. On plates. With knives. And forks. Preferably made of some kind of metal. NOT PLASTIC.

Develop a constant source of comfort. I burn a warm scented candle and make iced coffee before I study. It helps me focus! Find your thing.

Don’t be afraid to seek professional help. Stritch has wonderful resources to combat mental health issues. I started with Perspectives, and then progressed on to Dr. Martinez’s office, where I was prescribed medication to manage my anxiety. Stritch students have access to free services. It was the best decision I could have ever made. Also, finding a mentor in medicine can help you navigate avenues of support too.

Treat yourself. You work hard. Love yourself. Wine & Chocolate is always effective. Also, a new pair of shoes every now and then never hurts!

Be unapologetically honest with yourself. This is the hardest part. If you are struggling, admit it to yourself. You work hard, but if something isn’t coming out the way it should, be honest with yourself about it, so you can proactively find a solution. Don’t bury your head in the sand and expect things to get better.

Exercise. This is my favorite one! I go to Pure Barre in Elmhurst, IL about six days a week and it makes me an unbelievably happy person. The philosophy behind the exercise is that you perform small, isometric movements, to gradually tone your body and burn away fat. Since these classes can be out of the range of the average student budget, there are wonderful, effective group classes at the Loyola fitness center as well, which allow you to fill your brain with the oxygen that it needs to spend all of those hours hitting the books. Going with a friend always helps, and makes you feel less alone!

Eliminate peer pressure. Don’t judge your performance based on how you perceive others to be doing. Using them as benchmarks will never lead to happiness, and only serves to drive a wedge between you and your future colleagues. Celebrate their successes and create a community of positivity.

De-stigmatize mental illness. Our patients are going to suffer from a variety of mental illnesses. If you had a broken bone, would you expect someone to “handle it?” So, why then if someone suffers from an overproduction or a deficiency of certain neurotransmitters, should they be expected to “handle it” without being treated? They shouldn’t be. As I began to take medication daily to manage my anxiety, the results I saw were tremendous. Who I am didn’t change. The biggest difference I saw was that I became the one who had control over my emotions and interaction and that I was less at the mercy of the physical manifestations of them, not the other way around. When I felt happy, I truly felt happy, not worried or sad in the back of my mind. Medication provides me with the ability to experience a profound sense of peace. As future physicians, we have the power to create change and make informed decisions regarding the treatment of mental health issues, without being influenced by the stigma. So let’s do it.

Be compassionate. Be nice to people, even if you are having a bad day. You have no concept of what they are experiencing or what could be affecting them. Spread positivity as much as you can, and be grateful. After all, we are lucky enough to be doing this for the rest of our lives.

The song of my soul is no longer solely about my academic performance, it is so much deeper, richer and happier, and so, it will never cease.

Feel free to contact me with any questions or if you’d like to chat!

With all my love,
Maria
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mnakha3@gmail.com
815-274-9563

SWAG Fairy Schedule

September 15, 2017
October 9, 2017
October 19, 2017
** The Swag Fairy will come around between 2pm-4pm.

Know Your Resources

Perspectives for Students
Room: 180
Number: 1-800-456-6327

Academic Center for Excellence and Accessibility (ACE)
Room: 255
Phone: 708-216-8166
Josh Hopps, PhD: jhopps@luc.edu

Vera Schalansky, J.D.–
Vscha_lanksy@luc.edu

Campus Ministry (LUMC)
Room: 270
Phone: 708-216-3245

Loyola Center for Fitness
(LCF)
Room: LCF
Phone: 708-327-2348

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Room: 498A
Phone: 708-216-2481

Care and Concern Referral
Link: https://stritch.wufoo.com/forms/z10h2vgr1yu4m2e/
Caprese Zoodles

Ingredients
4 large zucchini
2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
2 c. cherry tomatoes, halved
1 c. mozzarella balls, quartered if large
1/4 c. fresh basil leaves
2 tbsp. balsamic vinegar

Instructions
Using a spiralizer, create zoodles out of zucchini.
Add zoodles to a large bowl, toss with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Let marinate 15 minutes.
Add tomatoes, mozzarella and basil to zoodles and toss until combined.
Drizzle with balsamic and serve.

Sydni Meunier
M.D. Candidate 2021

1) How do you balance school and maintaining a healthy lifestyle?
Goal setting is a huge component to maintaining balance in my life. I set realistic goals in my relationships, fitness, service, as well as academic in order to encourage me to prioritize time to pursue these aspects. Goals provide a more objective way to keep myself in check. By pursuing multiple goals at a time, it helps me to stay balanced and away from a tunnel-visioned perspective neglecting some areas that are important to me.

2. What is your favorite workout?
Running! Hands down. But I also enjoy HIIT type training and basically anything high intensity or that can become something competitive.

3. Best Self-Care Tips for your peers?
Find what you like to do, and do that, and plan for it/make time for it each day or at the least a few times a week. Also, do things in community with others; surrounding yourself with support whether it be in a study group, or a gym buddy, etc. Doing things with others will not only foster those relationships, but also make sometimes dull tasks much more fun and fulfilling.

4. How do you stay encouraged while being in medical school?
I stay encouraged by looking at the big picture and thinking about my ultimate goal, but also taking time to appreciate every step of the journey, too. Happy times are obvious, but during difficult challenges I do my best to maintain perspective and believe that a lesson and growth are to come of the situation. Some days can be mundane or challenging, but by taking time for yourself, treating yourself right, and spending time with those you care about exposes all that there is to be thankful for along this journey and that motivates me to continue forward.

5. How do you maintain a healthy sleep schedule?
Personally I know sleep is super important for me and is not something that I can afford to shortchange. My body responds best to a consistent routine, so I do my best to go to bed and wake up at roughly the same time each day. I have also learned to listen to my body and give it what it needs in order to avoid a crash and burn in the future whether this be a nap, or a day off from the gym. I also have found that keeping a consistent workout schedule helps me to sleep better too!

“APPY” HOUR
Focus: SLEEP

Sleep Better
Put your phone under your pillow and the app will take note of deeply you fell in and out of sleep throughout the night. Set an alarm and the app will wake you when it is best for you, when your body is in the lowest level of sleep. You can also see how things like exercise, caffeine, alcohol and stress change the way you sleep.

SleepBot
SleepBot is a sleep tracker that uses your device's accelerometer and can even be set to record sounds. The app's smart alarm lets you set a range of time to be woken up, with the app deciding to trigger the alarm based on your sleep activity. SleepBot also includes an array of sleep tracking metrics (such as a sleep debt log) and a detailed knowledge base to help you learn about smart sleeping habits.

Relax Melodies
For a lot of people, falling asleep is harder than staying asleep. Relax Melodies works as a soundboard for sleep sounds. Choose between a few pages of different sounds from wind, to waves and even bird sounds. Combine as many as you want or just listen to one throughout the night. If the soothing sounds still can’t put you into a REM state, try one of the guided meditation tracks. When you get the app you’ll only receive one of these free, but you can buy more as you go.