



# Tips for Preceptors on Working with an Unmotivated Medical Student

Strategies and Insights for Effective  
Intervention in Medical Education

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# Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will:

- Identify common signs of lack of motivation in medical students and understand potential underlying causes.
- Apply effective strategies to motivate medical students.
- Develop skills in creating a supportive learning environment.
- Utilize reflective practices and case studies to enhance understanding of engaging unmotivated students.

# Understanding a Lack of Motivation in Medical Students

- Signs
  - Lack of engagement
  - Poor performance
  - Absenteeism
  - Lack of initiative



# Understanding a Lack of Motivation in Medical Students

- Potential Reasons
  - Personal issues
  - Burnout and stress
  - Academic difficulties
  - Lack of interest in the field or current rotation



# The Impact of Unmotivated Students

- Effects on Learning Environment
  - Decreased Engagement
  - Strain on Resources
  - Negative Influence on Peer Dynamics
  - Negative Impact on Teaching Morale



# The Impact of Unmotivated Students

- Effects on Patient Care
  - Reduced Quality of Care
  - Increased Risk of Errors
  - Impaired Professional Development
  - Negative Impact on Team Dynamics

# Strategies for Identifying Lack of Motivation

- Observational Techniques
  - Behavioral Observations
  - Performance Trends
  - Peer and Staff Feedback
  - Nonverbal Cues





# Strategies for Identifying Lack of Motivation

- Direct Communication
  - Open Dialogue
  - Specific Inquiries
  - Feedback Sessions
  - Goal Setting Discussions
  - Expressing Support and Availability



# Techniques to Motivate Medical Students

- **Setting Clear Expectations**
  - Clarify Goals and Objectives
  - Establish Performance Standards
  - Outline Responsibilities
  - Regular Check-ins



# Techniques to Motivate Medical Students

- Personalizing Learning
  - Identify Student Interests
  - Adapt Teaching Methods
  - Opportunities for Choice
  - Connect Learning to Career Goals





# Techniques to Motivate Medical Students

- Providing Constructive Feedback
  - Timely and Specific Feedback
  - Focus on Growth
  - Encourage Self-reflection
  - Create a Safe Environment for Feedback



# Alex, the Unmotivated Medical Student

- Alex is a third-year medical student who has been displaying signs of lack of motivation during his internal medicine rotation. He has been arriving late, showing minimal engagement in patient rounds, and demonstrating a lack of initiative in learning opportunities. His preceptor, Dr. Smith, noticed these signs early in the rotation and decided to intervene to help Alex find his motivation.



# Alex, the Unmotivated Medical Student

- Initial Assessment
  - Dr. Smith started by scheduling a private meeting with Alex to discuss his performance and wellbeing. During the conversation, Alex revealed feeling overwhelmed by the volume of information and the pressure of clinical responsibilities. He also expressed uncertainty about their choice of specialization, contributing to his lack of motivation.

# Interventions

- 1. Setting Clear Expectations:** Dr. Smith outlined specific, achievable goals for Alex to meet by the end of the rotation, including mastering patient history taking and improving diagnostic reasoning skills. These goals were designed to be challenging yet attainable, providing a clear path for Alex's efforts.
- 2. Personalizing the Learning Experience:** Recognizing Alex's interest in sports medicine, Dr. Smith arranged for Alex to spend a day with the orthopedics team, which reignited Alex's enthusiasm for learning and showed him how his current rotation could be relevant to his future career.

# Interventions

3. **Providing Constructive Feedback:** Dr. Smith made a point to provide regular, constructive feedback to Alex, highlighting areas of improvement and acknowledging his progress. This approach helped Alex build confidence and see the value of his efforts.
4. **Encouraging Reflection:** Dr. Smith encouraged Alex to engage in reflective journaling about his daily experiences, challenges, and what he learned. This practice helped Alex to process his experiences more deeply and to recognize his own growth over time.
5. **Creating a Supportive Environment:** Dr. Smith fostered an open and supportive learning environment, encouraging questions and promoting peer support among the medical students. This atmosphere helped Alex feel more comfortable seeking help and engaging with his peers.

# Alex, the Unmotivated Medical Student

- Outcomes
  - By the end of the rotation, Alex showed significant improvement in both performance and engagement. He was arriving on time, actively participating in patient rounds, and even taking the initiative to lead discussions on cases related to sports medicine. Alex expressed gratitude to Dr. Smith for the personalized support and reported feeling more confident in his abilities and more motivated to pursue his medical career. The experience also helped Alex to understand the importance of resilience and adaptability in his professional development.

# Alex, the Unmotivated Medical Student

- Conclusion
  - This case study illustrates the effectiveness of tailored strategies in addressing student motivation. By taking the time to understand Alex's unique challenges and interests, Dr. Smith was able to apply targeted interventions that not only improved Alex's performance during the rotation but also contributed to a more positive and engaged learning experience.



# Jordan, the Disengaged Medical Student

- Jordan is a fourth-year medical student currently on a pediatrics rotation. Despite being an excellent student academically, Jordan has shown a noticeable lack of interest and engagement during this rotation. Jordan's preceptor, Dr. Lee, observed that Jordan often seemed disinterested during rounds and patient interactions, and rarely volunteered for additional learning opportunities related to pediatrics.

# Jordan, the Disengaged Medical Student

- Initial Assessment
  - Concerned about Jordan's sudden drop in engagement, Dr. Lee arranged a meeting to discuss her observations and understand Jordan's perspective. Jordan admitted to feeling disconnected from the rotation, explaining that she had always envisioned a career in surgery and struggled to see the relevance of pediatrics to her future career path.

# Strategies Applied

- 1. Exploring Underlying Interests:** Dr. Lee engaged Jordan in a conversation about her career aspirations, specifically discussing how skills learned in pediatrics could be invaluable in any medical field, including surgery, such as patient communication and empathy.
- 2. Setting Personalized Goals:** Together, Dr. Lee and Jordan set goals for the rotation that aligned with Jordan's interests, such as focusing on surgical conditions in pediatric patients and participating in pediatric surgical procedures when possible.

# Strategies Applied

3. **Incorporating Surgical Case Studies into Pediatrics:** Dr. Lee integrated surgical elements into Jordan's pediatrics rotation by using case studies that focus on common pediatric conditions requiring surgical intervention (appendicitis, congenital heart defects, hernias).
4. **Providing Diverse Learning Opportunities:** To further cultivate Jordan's engagement, Dr. Lee ensured Jordan was involved in a variety of cases, including those that required surgical intervention, and encouraged participation in interdisciplinary team meetings that included surgical discussions.
5. **Encouraging Reflection and Feedback:** Dr. Lee encouraged Jordan to reflect on her daily experiences and to discuss these reflections during their regular feedback sessions. This helped Jordan articulate the value of her pediatrics rotation in developing a holistic approach to patient care, even in a surgical career.

# Jordan, the Disengaged Medical Student

- Outcomes
  - Jordan's engagement and motivation significantly improved throughout the rotation. By focusing on aspects of pediatrics that were relevant to her interest in surgery, Jordan became more active and involved in patient care and team discussions. The case studies were particularly transformative, providing Jordan with a new perspective on the importance of comprehensive care for surgical patients, regardless of age.
  - At the end of the rotation, Jordan expressed appreciation for the tailored approach Dr. Lee took to align the rotation with her interests. Jordan recognized the value of a broad medical education and felt better prepared to approach her future specialty with a more holistic and patient-centered mindset.



# Jordan, the Disengaged Medical Student

- Conclusion
  - This case study demonstrates the importance of flexibility and creativity in engaging students who may initially seem unmotivated due to a perceived lack of relevance in their current rotation. By identifying and leveraging a student's interests, educators can significantly enhance the learning experience, fostering engagement and motivation even in areas outside of the student's primary interest.

# Checklist for Preceptors: Engaging Unmotivated Medical Students

## Checklist for Preceptors: Engaging Unmotivated Medical Students

### Understanding the Student

- ☐ Observe the student's behavior for signs of disengagement.
- ☐ Schedule a private meeting to discuss their feelings and challenges.
- ☐ Encourage the student to share personal goals and interests.
- ☐ Identify any external factors that may be affecting motivation.

### Setting Clear Expectations

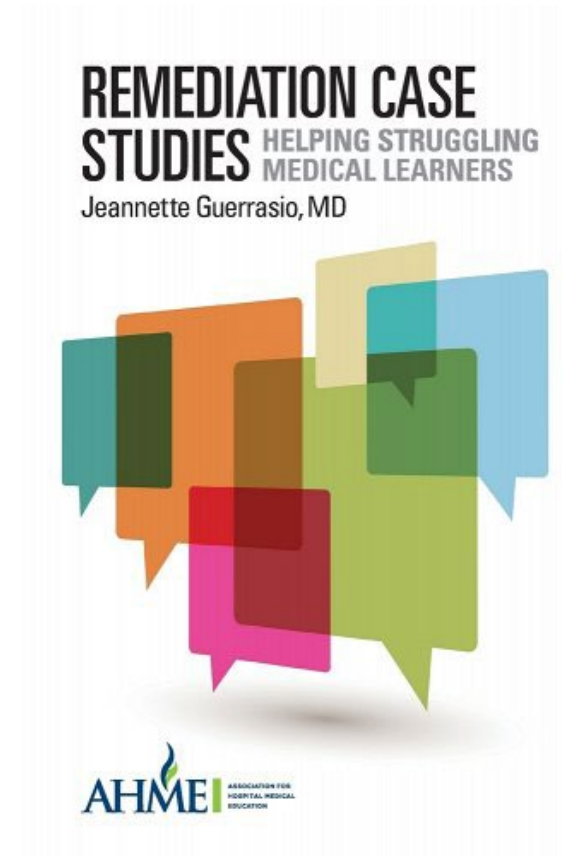
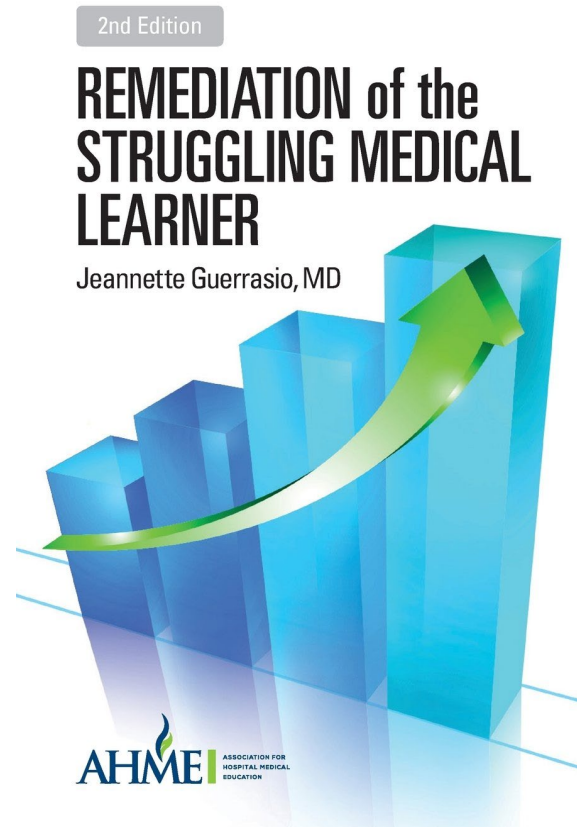
- ☐ Clarify the goals and objectives of the rotation.
- ☐ Define standards of performance and responsibilities.
- ☐ Establish regular check-ins to discuss progress.
- ☐ Adjust expectations based on the student's feedback and progress.

### Personalizing Learning

- ☐ Incorporate the student's interests into learning activities.
- ☐ Use a variety of teaching methods to cater to the student's learning style.
- ☐ Offer choices in assignments or projects to foster autonomy.



# Tools and Resources for Preceptors



# Q&A Session

- Open Floor for Questions and Sharing Experiences





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