

The Power of a Team

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Dr. Racek dedicates this composition to her Obstetrics and Gynecology Residency Class, the Class of 2017.

Stepping out into my happy place while simultaneously breathing in fresh, crisp air and feeling the sun on my skin after a long day of school. This was my freedom and my release. This was my chance to push my body to the limits again and again and feel that sweet adrenaline rush. This was my home with my handpicked family. A family that stuck together in rain or shine and victory or defeat. Bonds stronger than blood. This was the moment I had been waiting for all day.

Soccer first made me realize how much could be accomplished with a group effort. My high school coach's tradition was that no one could step onto the field by themselves. We all took our first steps unified and this meant holding hands and forming a team chain. As teenage girls, we sometimes found this corny, but always obliged because we knew this game was more than a win or a loss. He wanted us to be reminded we were all important and all had roles to fulfill. I always took comfort in knowing that none of us were alone and were all in it together.

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College soccer introduced me to more amazing people. Having an already made family during my first time moving away from home was helpful for the transition to adulthood. Again, I was reminded of the joys and triumphs of strength in numbers. This group of women were each other's biggest supporters. We could lean on each other for problems outside the field. When I left for a semester abroad, I was able to play on a team in South Africa and realized sports can transcend language barriers and racial divides. I was able to connect with people a continent away. These women became friends for life.

As I transitioned into medicine, I was struck by the similarities between this new world and my first love. These were also comrades who inspired and dreamed together. Even though we barely knew each other, our friendships grew deep almost immediately. We understood the unique nuances of our new life. A new life that is difficult to explain to people that are not part of it. Amidst the fatigue of block exams, there was laughter and late night delirium. There were patients that changed us even if we did not immediately realize the impact during our encounters. We became a new version of our old selves. We began a long journey that was made better by the fact that we had each other. And then just as quickly as it started, it was time to split up across the country and say goodbye. It was bittersweet. We were thankful the four years had flown by quickly, but also saddened to leave the people that were part of our transformation. Perhaps, one of the most important times of our life.

And then it became even closer to the dream. Finally, I was able to live and breathe obstetrics and gynecology full-time. It was time to start the foundation of my future career. And it was there I met even more incredible people. It was there the five of us in my class became my new team. And I wondered how I had not known them my whole life. For they felt familiar and I needed them like I had never needed anyone else.

Through all these events, I continue to be amazed by the sheer magnitude of the impact a group of people can have on being instruments of change. We bring new life into the world on a daily basis. We help people achieve the possibility of being able to get pregnant. We talk about sensitive topics and bring answers to questions people have sometimes been afraid to ask for decades. We sometimes even cure cancer. Our voices matter. And when we come together, we are advocates for something much larger than ourselves. It is an honor and a privilege to be let into so many women's lives. From the small day-to-day triumphs to the larger scale wins, we are powerful because we choose to work together both with our colleagues and with our patients. Teamwork is part of everything we do and our victories are made that much sweeter because we have so many people that share in the joy.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." ~Margaret Mead