

# As Match Day approaches, 6 things to keep in mind

MAR 15, 2023

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The lead up to Match Day—and the day itself—can be full of emotion. To make the most of the time before medical students and other residency applicants find out where their career will take them, and have the best experience possible on the day itself, veterans of the residency-application process offered these tips.

## Expand your horizons

Match Day can be a career-defining day. Because of that, the days and weeks proceeding it can be mentally taxing. Getting out of the “med school bubble” in the days before you open your envelope can be a beneficial exercise, according to Chantal Young, PhD, director of medical student wellness at the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California.

“Just get out of your head. Get out of the very narrow mind that is only thinking about self,” Young said during a recent episode of “Meet Your Match” series of the “AMA Making the Rounds” podcast. “And if you can get out of the med school bubble and spend time with other people, other activities, other locations that are not in medicine.

Doing so “just helps us remember there's a whole world out there and it's OK to ask your colleagues to discuss or not discuss Match—whatever you need at the time. And organizing something for your classmates too, like a hike or an outing, can feel good because it can feel like a very competitive time.”

## Trust your judgment

On Monday of Match Week, you'll find out whether you matched, and most applicants do Match. Still, the process remains out of your hands as an applicant. But the steps you took to get this point were likely well planned. Remember that and let go, if possible.

“Try not to stress or obsess,” said Carl Earl Lambert Jr., MD, an AMA member and assistant professor of family medicine at Rush University Medical College. “You’ve worked really hard to get to this point and my hope is that you’ve had wise counsel up to this point. If that’s the case, I encourage you to enjoy the moment and trust the road you’ve taken to get to this point.”

## Do it your way

Many medical schools do large, public Match Day ceremonies at which applicants open an envelope containing their Match result in unison. If that isn’t for you, don’t force it, Young said. In her role working in student wellness, she has in some instances read the results to the student in a quiet setting.

“Sometimes, there’s a lot of pressure on that moment,” she said. “Schools will have joint events where students open letters and that can be kind of pressure. It has to be an idealized moment like: Oh wow, I’m so joyful. But we like to say there are many ways to do that. We could be available to sit with you as you open the letter in our office. We could be on Zoom with you so that the student’s at home with their loved ones, but we’re there. Or it could be a totally private, calm, quiet moment. It’s really your moment and your way.”

## Reframe your “first choice”

Even if you don’t match at one of the top residency programs on your rank-order list, you want to remain positive about the opportunity.

“When you get in somewhere, even if it’s not your first choice, you really want to treat it like your first choice,” said Deborah Spitz, MD, who directs residency training in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience at University of Chicago Medicine. “That’s where you’re going to be for the next few years, and they want you to be happy—and you want to be!”

## Celebrate the achievement

The Match is only part of the physician journey, but it still should be one that you celebrate, according to Liz Southworth, MD, an AMA member and third-year ob-gyn resident at Michigan Medicine.

“Celebrate the accomplishment of matching regardless of where you matched,” Dr. Southworth said. “This milestone takes you one step closer to what you’ve worked so hard to accomplish. Residency is

exhausting at times, but it truly is one of the most exciting educational experiences and an amazing opportunity to refine and grow yourself as a physician.”

## **Make contact**

Planning the next steps of your career and life require contact with key stakeholders on the other side of the equation.

“The next step after Matching is to focus on building a life at your program,” Dr. Spitz said. “Building relationships in the program with fellow residents and faculty.

“When people match in our program, we’re going to contact them, but we also love to hear from them. We’re going to start building relationships even in March, months before training starts.”