

My parents, who never had the opportunity to pursue much of an education, always seemed a little nervous when they saw me gathering strange household items for my science experiments. While my classmates spent their summers at camp or playing little league, I spent mine watching *Mr. Wizard's World*. My favorite episode—although one I naturally couldn't emulate—involved the Wizard explaining the nature of fireworks. I was fascinated how the combination of strange chemicals and salts reacted to form this magical explosion. That was my first true introduction to science. Just as in our own lives, sometimes it's the unlikeliest of combinations that result in the most beautiful and promising outcomes.

Science is an exemplary portrayal of that growth and discovery. It's riddled with entropy and possibility. The "what-ifs" are limitless, like the infinite vastness of space in physics or the intricacies of anatomy or the combinations of matter in chemistry. I often spent my free time reading ahead in chapters that weren't covered in class, and pursuing mechanical engineering, a combination of those aforementioned disciplines, was a great fit to satisfy my curiosity, as was working in construction, which promised a hands on approach to world building.

Still, while I hoped to achieve great academic success, my main purpose was to become the best version of myself, to create the best recipe from life's unlimited ingredients. One of the core courses of our engineering program was in communication. During one of the debates, I spent numerous hours preparing counter arguments, and when the stage was set for my appearance, I failed to properly articulate the scientific thoughts swirling in my mind. Ashamed of my performance, I joined the public speaking club and fell in love with the genuine interaction outside the laboratory. My curiosity that had been once reserved for science and construction developed into a desire to understand people and the world we inhabit. I took a more active role at my construction company and spoke with customers about possibilities, customizing my words and suggestions to their unique perspectives and desires. And alas, with that added ingredient came an entirely new prospect—medicine.

Medicine became that magical explosion. It doesn't just encompass anatomy or the chemistry of certain drugs interacting with those biological systems. Medicine is also about community. It's about family. When I adopted that mentality, I grew further out of my box of random ingredients and sprouted into something more cohesive. I spent time volunteering at the Hospital Elder Life Program, where, for Alzheimer's patients, many days began and ended with a new journey. The experience felt both grounded and surreal simultaneously. Tending to patients who suffer from an incurable disease made it clear that sometimes the universe creates a problem for which we have no answer. And it is during those times that we relish the small successes, like playing Frank Sinatra for an Alzheimer's patient after a sad day.

All physicians seek to make their patients comfortable, but that trust must be earned. Volunteering as a call line responder, I found that callers sought a human connection more so than medical attention. A frequent caller was a recluse elderly woman who grew distraught over her weight and estrangement from her family. Every few weeks for the next six months, we spoke as I tried to taper her fears and build her confidence. One day, she finally left her house and went to the grocery store. Even that small victory meant so much to both of us considering the circumstances.

Without science, medicine cannot exist. But without the humanities, a physician cannot thrive. My journey has taken me in a number directions. From being born in India to two blue-collar workers, to pursuing engineering, working construction, and struggling to find my inner firework, I've discovered that there are no defined ingredients involved in the recipe that is medicine. Some physicians use humor to put patients at ease. Others are more sensitive, or more analytical, or more optimistic. Regardless of one's skill set, the most important thing, aside from the required library of knowledge, is finding a way to form that connection. It's being able to tap into a patient's mind and heart and let them know that we understand them, that we're willing to take this journey with them, and we're determined to do everything necessary to help them in their (medical) struggle. The results may not always be in our favor, but so long as we're tapping into our bag of ingredients and doing the very best we can, then we'll have made a small difference—in one way or another.