

BREATHE

Tamra Travers, Class of 2016

The air surrounding me is clouded and thick with the stench of negativity.

Overstressed, behind, rushing. The clock speeds faster, faster, and I am grasping for air.

The breath I try to catch is stale and thick with slimy grouch. It does not satisfy.

Suffocating, I drag myself across the hall while the screams of tummy aches and ugly coughs bombard my ears. I turn to see a flood of tears, exhaustion, and fear swirling towards me. My emotions have begun their attack. I reach for the handle of the door and dart inside.

When I look up, three faces are staring at me. Three beautifully round and dark faces.

The mother stares with relief. The wait is finally over.

A child glares with fear and clutches her mother tightly in a fit of panic. Needles and pokes shake her imagination. Her thick hair hangs down low on her back in a silky black stream, but a few clumps stick to her tears on her fever flushed cheeks. She moans and clings tight to the comfort and safety housed within her mama.

A third face watches intently with curiosity. He follows my every motion with a smile of wonder, and wonder pours into the air from that smile. I gratefully breathe it in, and the sweet air fills the depths and even the tiniest crevices of my lungs. My face relaxes and the corners of my mouth turn slightly upward. The curious little brother smiles back, shining his tiny teeth at me. I wrinkle my nose and cross my eyes, then unwind my face to see his face mimicking my own contortion. Laughter leaves his mouth and fills the room with its beautiful, soft sound.

I can breathe again.

Tamra Travers is a third year medical student. She records personal reflections on her medical education adventure on her blog White Coat Wonder: Reflections on Health, People, and My Journey from Girl to Physician. The blog is available at www.whitecoatwonder.tumblr.com

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