Finding a balance

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By Laura Zima

I looked out at all the UNO students — questioning me and three other medical students at a pre-health organization meeting at UNO — and I so vividly remembered being in their shoes. I wish I could tell them that the worries they were feeling completely go away once you are in medical school, but unfortunately that doesn’t happen for everyone. Sometimes it can seem like whenever one goal is met there is always that next step, and it comes with a new set of questions and uncertainties.

These undergraduates were asking questions like, “How do you de-stress in medical school?” Each of the UNMC students I was with had some thoughtful and helpful advice on these and other topics, but they weren’t all the same. This led me to wonder, how many other opinions and voices can you listen to before it starts to be harmful rather than helpful?

I realized that I felt like I had lost the balance of listening to the advice of trusted sources and truly thinking about what is best for me. I began to think about some of the questions I had in my life right now. Should I do research this summer? Should I apply to be on the admissions committee? I have asked many people for advice on these and other topics, and I have heard many unique and sometimes conflicting responses.

Knowing when to ask for help is a very important skill, but I know all too well that sometimes it has left me feeling even more confused and lost. Obviously, different people will give different answers based on their experiences, so why am I so quick to always ask others for advice or trust another opinion more than my own?

Of course, especially when navigating the rigors of graduate school, advice can be invaluable, during those times finding a few trusted sources of information, like an advisor, can help the confusion. Sometimes though, I do think there are times when it is best to shut out all of the outside voices and really think about what is best for you.

One of my favorite quotes, by Brittany Renée, is, “I would much rather have regrets about not doing what people said, than regretting not doing what my heart led me to and wondering what life had been like if I’d just been myself.” As hard as it might be, the next time I am faced with a question — professional, personal, or otherwise — instead of asking for friends’ advice or turning to the Internet first, I am going to try to look inward and regain that balance by putting my opinion back on the scale.

For guided outside advice, please contact the UNMC Counseling and Student Development Center at 402-559-7276 during regular office hours, or the 24/7 Boys Town National Hotline, 800-448-3000, for immediate crisis assistance. Contact info also is available via the UNMC mobile app.

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