

Angèle van de Ven  
Lodewijk Schmit Jongbloed



Preview

# HEAL

the doctor

LIVING AND WORKING WITH **ZEST**

HEAL the doctor - living and working with zest

Angèle van de Ven

Lodewijk Schmit Jongbloed

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## READY FOR DEPARTURE

Every journey begins with a first step. Once you took that first step towards your career as a medical doctor. Nowadays careers are more dynamic than ever, yours is probably no exception. Continuous change is reality, unrelenting personal and professional adaptation the norm. These changes can significantly affect your work satisfaction: what works for you today can be irrelevant ten years from now. Your personal circumstances and preferences change. Just like your job, profession, and colleagues. So, get started and keep wondering about the way you practice and pursue your work goals.

Motivated and engaged doctors are essential to accomplish quality care. These doctors are less prone to medical error, get more work done, are sick less often, and retire at later age. Their patients have lower no-show rates, provide more satisfying patient evaluations, and report greater trust in their doctors. They demonstrate better medication compliance and adhere more often to healthy life style recommendations. On the other hand, doctors who are unsatisfied with their jobs will more often suffer burn-out symptoms, have lower self-esteem, and are more prone to stress, depression, addiction, or physical problems.<sup>1,2</sup>

Reflection is the key to a healthy career in medicine. So, step back regularly, think about what you are doing and what you would like to accomplish. This fuels focus, improvement, change, and renewal.

You can start reflecting by posing yourself and your colleagues a variety of questions. You will find these throughout this book. Questions that touch themes you could encounter in the various career stages. Don't expect a rigid table of contents, reading guide, or cut and dry solutions. Allow yourself to be surprised by the unexpected and unknown. Just like in your career, the challenge is to find the path that suits you best. Luckily, more than one road leads to Rome.

With “HEAL the doctor”, we dare you to take an in-depth look into your unique work life, from different perspectives. We want to touch you, stir you up, and get you moving. Most importantly, we encourage you to take the time for personal and professional growth. That enables you to work with joy and fulfillment and by doing so make a significant contribution to yourself, your family, patients, colleagues, and society.

We love to challenge you to be a lifelong learning doctor.

Angèle van de Ven  
Lodewijk Schmit Jongbloed

## WHY

- did you decide to go to medical school?
- did you choose your current profession?
- did you persevere, even during hard times?
- are you still doctoring today: what inspires you?

## KEEP YOUR DREAMS ALIVE!

You can dream in every stage of your career: about yesterday, today, and tomorrow. This is how you (re)discover your (past) aspirations.

Imagine that ...

### Flashbacks

- You just finished high school. What college degree will you pursue?
- You just started as a qualified physician. Where will you settle? Describe your ideal medical practice or work environment.

### Daydreams

- Your salary doubles. How will you spend it?
- Your salary halves? What will you save on?
- You can fully control your daily schedule. What does your ideal workday look like?

### Dreams about the future

- A year from now, your work and life will be exactly the same as today. How does that make you feel?
- You start a new hobby. What would it be?

## COLORFUL CAREER PATHS

The typical doctor and typical medical career do not exist, nor does the “doctor’s life”. Where some spend years as locum doctor before starting their own practice, others will start residency training immediately after medical school. Perhaps you decided to give your partner’s career priority or started abroad in a developing country. Random events, encounters, and choices determine the direction and color of your career path.

All these different career patterns create a fascinating patchwork community of doctors: general practitioners, clinical specialists, public health physicians, and medical researchers. All work together and learn from each other throughout their careers: young and experienced doctors, generalists, and super specialists. They build on the work of their predecessors and hone their craft step by step. Together and on their own they mix and match personal drive, core values, professional pride, doubts, annoyances, and fun and by doing so, give meaning to their work and life.

Territorial thinking? No need for it. In some ways, every doctor is equal to others, yet no two doctors are alike. What counts is to become the best medical doctor YOU can be. Let yourself be guided by those colleagues who inspire you and make them your role models.

Or, be a pioneer yourself and take an innovative direction, be enterprising, invent a new way of doing things, and inspire others along the way.

You can be an example in every phase of life or career stage. For younger and older colleagues. Sometimes by staying the course. Sometimes by trying something new. Sometimes by knowing when to stop. What should be your benchmark? Simply, *the Why*.

## IT STARTS WITH WHY ...

Simon Sinek refers to the reasons for existence of organizations and services. His core message: be clear about 'why you do what you do'. What was your original motivation to become a doctor? On page 5 you will find several Why questions to ask yourself at every career stage.

### **Google**

"Start with the Why – How great leaders inspire action"  
Simon Sinek



**EVERY DOCTOR**

IS IN SOME

RESPECTS LIKE

... **ALL** OTHER  
**DOCTORS**

... **SOME** OTHER  
**DOCTORS**

... **NO** OTHER  
**DOCTOR**

## YOUR **CAREER** IN **FOCUS**

At what point in your career do you find yourself currently? Are you getting a kick by riding the bullet train or do you enjoy taking the slow commuter train? Do you sometimes feel you are in the wrong car - the one soon to be disconnected? Or do you prefer - for whatever reason - to wait for the next train? No matter where you are in your career: overseeing your choices will help you along.

Each career stage addressed in this book starts with a route chosen by a physician in that particular stage. Get yourself some scratch paper and colorful markers and draw your own career path by looking back as well as forward.

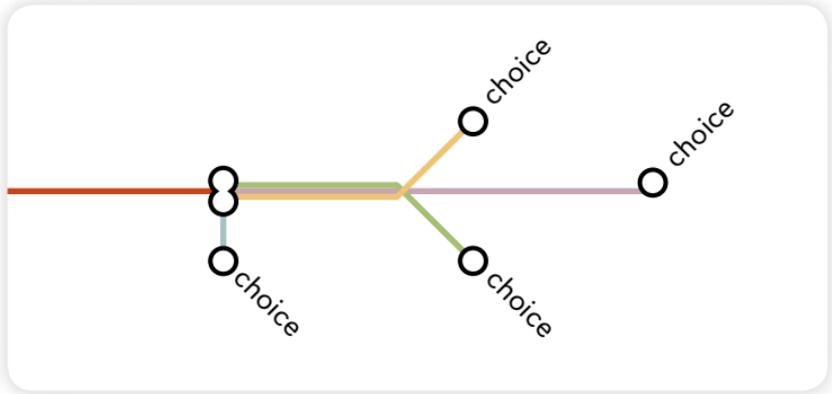
### **Looking back**

Draw the path that illustrates the important choices you have made in life and work so far. Also indicate directions you didn't take at certain moments.

Reconsider your path and ask yourself:

- Why did or didn't I make certain choices?
- What internal and external reasons played a role?
- What directions did I consider in the past, but didn't I pursue? Why not?
- In what stage did I thoroughly enjoy my work? For what reasons?
- In what stage did I have a hard time at work? For what reasons? How did I manage to get through?

draw your own career path



### Looking forward

Add routes to your drawing that you still consider and ask yourself:

- What short and long-term choices do I want to make?
- Why haven't I jumped into action yet?
- What could help me to act?
- What first (small) step can I make today?
- With whom can I share my intention? At what moment will I allow this person to check my progress?

*Your current position does not determine where you can go; at best, it marks your departure point.*

# A **GLANCE** AT YOUR **CAREER**



Where are you coming from?

Where are you now?

What makes

this moment

this consult

this patient

this meeting

this workday

this day off

worthwhile?

For me.



Where are you going?

## PERSON AND PROFESSION

Especially for doctors, lifelong personal and professional development go hand in hand. From “pretending to be a doctor” to “behave like a doctor” to “be a doctor”<sup>4</sup>. The person you are influences your profession and vice versa.

As a doctor, your work is mostly reactive. You are trained to see symptoms, diagnose and treat. However, when it comes to your personal and professional growth it works better to take a preventive approach: don't wait until you develop symptoms yourself. So, have a break regularly, step back, and allow yourself space for a new way of thinking or looking. Reflection keeps you mentally sharp, fresh and healthy: even a few minutes a day can mean a world of difference. Or allow yourself a sabbatical. Some departments encourage each colleague to take a few months off regular duty every five years.

To explore ways to change your work routine and add more zest, take a glance at the past and future of your career. Or focus on your functioning right now: what makes it (still) worth while for you on a daily basis? By doing so, you will discover whether you want to continue to work as you do, putting in these hours, with these colleagues, and this team.

Perhaps you think “I really don’t have time for this!” No doubt it will be hard to find the time. However, it will prevent you from doing what you’ve always done, which holds the risk of suffocation in the long run. The good news: you’re the one who makes the choices.

## STEP BACK BEFORE MOVING AHEAD

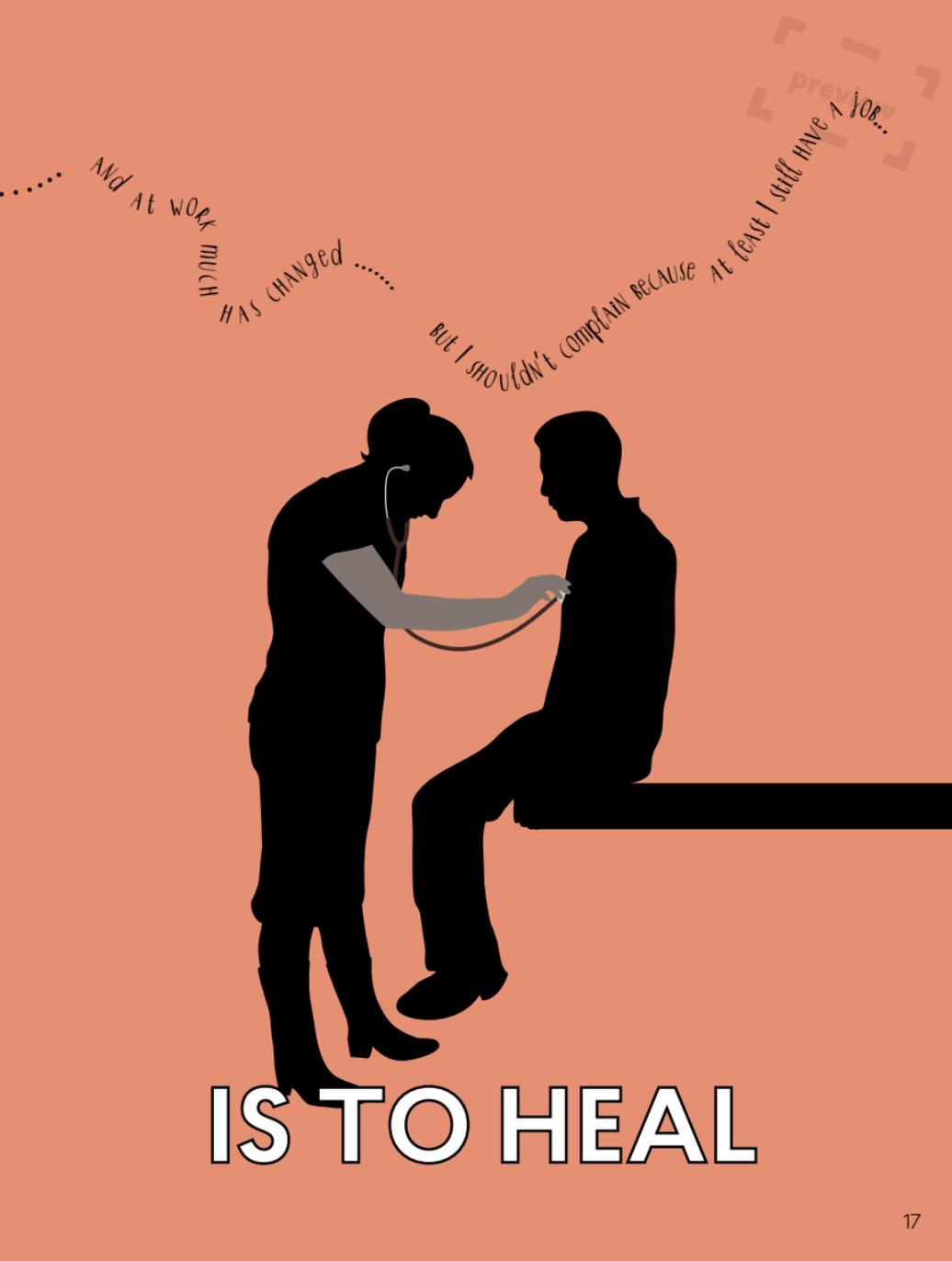
You have many opportunities to develop your unique professional attitude:

- Self-reflection
- Ask feedback from your direct co-workers, friends, or family
- (Team) coaching
- Peer-to-peer learning or clinical supervision
- Evaluate your ambitions and opportunities regularly with an (external) coach

You can also create space for reflection by walking, running, gardening, yoga, reading, going to a movie, or visiting a museum. Try to find a way that suits you. These moments of self-reflection, as well as interactions with other people and role models, will help you gain inspiration and new insights. In the end, you’re the only one who knows what’s needed to live your meaningful work life.

*I'm WORRIED ABOUT my SON, I CAN'T CONNECT WITH HIM ....*

**TO LISTEN**



prev job...

.....  
AND AT WORK MUCH  
HAS CHANGED .....

BUT I SHOULDN'T COMPLAIN BECAUSE AT LEAST I STILL HAVE A JOB...

IS TO HEAL

Head – I think



Heart – I desire

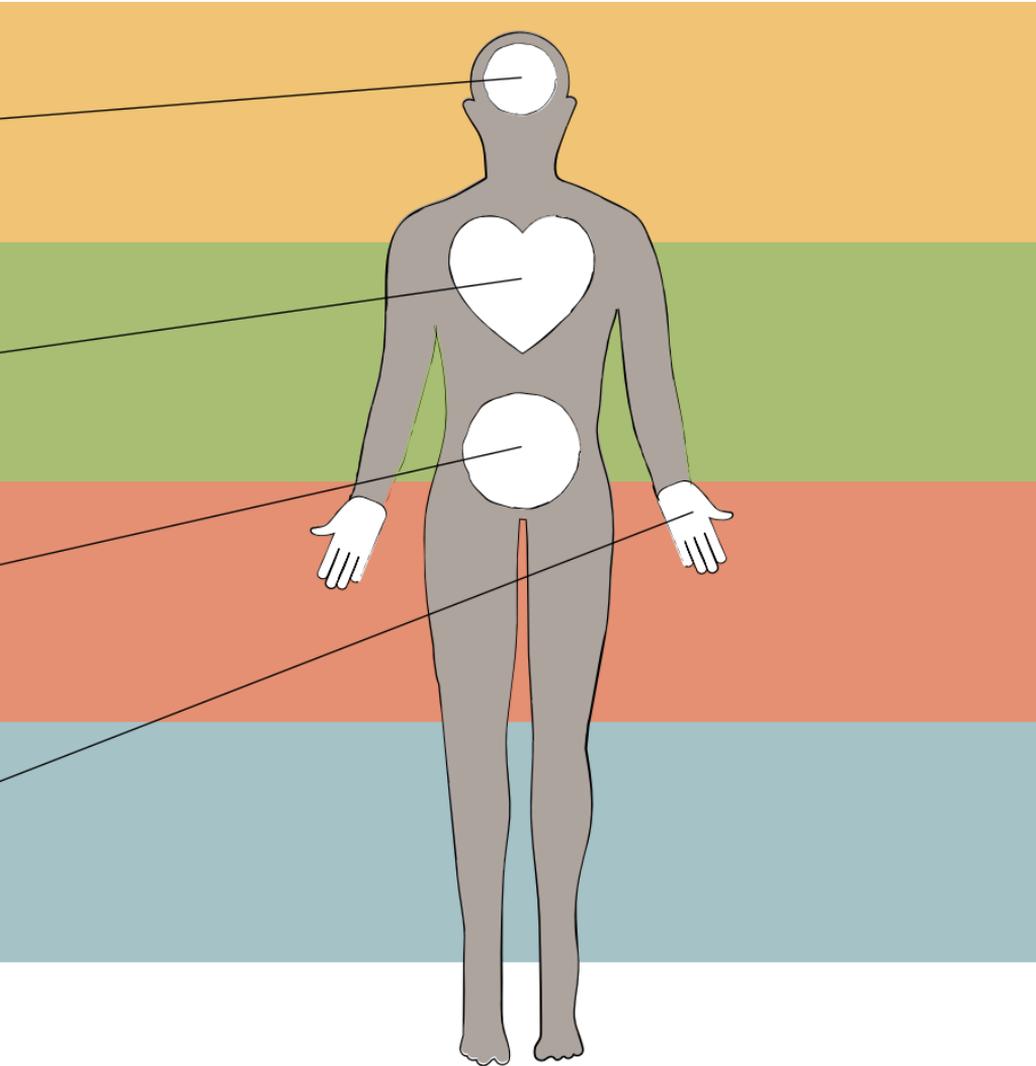


Belly – I feel



Hands – I do





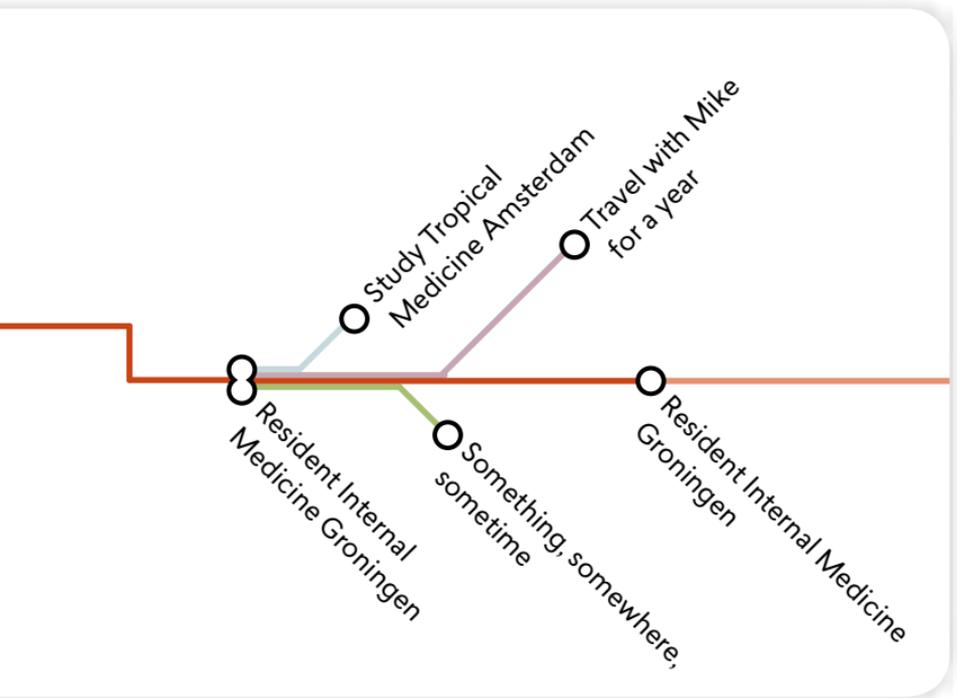
# MEDICAL DOCTOR IN RESIDENCY TRAINING



## Career Path Choices Vincent

Vincent is over the moon. After two years as an intern in neurology he is now a resident Internal Medicine. It feels as if the world has opened up for him: a real medical doctor in the eyes of his patients. Such a rewarding challenge to treat patients more and more autonomously. Of course, each day has its moments, especially when his attending physician - yet again - finds that one blind spot. It triggers him to perform even better. For sure: no better profession

working under supervision



than this one! Occasionally, Vincent is getting ahead of himself. He's a perfectionist, which is time consuming. His office hours regularly run late, and he finds himself skipping lunchtime educational activities. It is difficult for him to say "no" to assignments that go beyond his direct responsibility. He finds it hard to delegate tasks to nursing staff or paramedics. As a result, his work pressure is very high, and he often feels exhausted. Recuperating at home is not easy:

until Vincent and Mike find a home, they commute back and forth between their respective student houses. Too bad he must bail out often on the mountain bike trips with his fraternity.

### **Characteristics**

- a more defined career path
- the need to be exceptional in different areas
- instant gratification: applying newly learned skills to practice right away
- increasing responsibilities
- perfectionism

### **Needs**

- personal development
- emotional support
- to become a medical doctor and to remain my (human) self

### **Know that ...**

- on average, 10 percent of residents drop out of the program.<sup>5</sup>
- due to limited availability one out of four medical doctors will not be able to attend their preferred specialty. This equates to 700 doctors annually.<sup>2,5</sup>
- almost 1/5 of residents experience symptoms of burn-out.<sup>14</sup>

## Reflection

Ask yourself:

- Who am I as a human being and as a doctor?
- Who do I want to be as a human being and as a doctor?
- In what areas am I doing well?
- What are my pitfalls?
- How do I handle responsibility and work pressure during residency?
- Where and how would I like to settle (geographical, rural or city, academic or general hospital, solo or in a team)?

Ask a resident:

- How do you handle:
  - perfectionism?
  - giving clear instructions to colleagues?
  - demanding patients or family members?
- When do you say “no”?
- How do you set boundaries without being rude?
- What do you focus on?
- How do you maintain a balance between empathy and keeping your distance?
- How do you schedule your day effectively?

## Continue to learn together

Discuss the above questions within a group of residents. As a supervisor you can start a work meeting with one of these questions. Listen to each other without interrupting and make an effort to understand different points of view.

# WITHOUT PEAKS



# AND VALLEYS

preview

NO LIFE

Does your personality  
color your work?

Or your work your  
personality?



# MO·TI·VA·TION

## 1 reason, driving force

## 2 desire to perform a task

What motivates you in your work? The joy to meet other people? Carrying out something together with colleagues? Developing expertise within your field? Or perhaps the money as a reward and the possibility this offers to attain personal life goals?

According to behavioral economist Dan Ariely most of us continue to thrive in our work if we can keep growing and -at the same time- experience our contribution as meaningful. Money doesn't appear to be the major motivator. The most important drivers for medical professionals are autonomy, mastery, and purpose.<sup>18</sup> If your job includes these, great chance you will experience fulfillment and can go the extra mile if needed. Ariely offers tips to keep up enthusiasm at work:

- Focus on visible results.
- Implement major changes step-by-step.
- Go ahead and challenge yourself with new and difficult projects. The larger the effort it takes, the more proud you will be in the end.
- Notice the meaning of your work for others.

## CHECK OUT

### TedTalk

What makes us feel good about our work – Dan Ariely



## HARVEST

How do you know if you had a good day at work? Reap your personal dose of zest by cherishing beautiful moments or new insights.

To do so, ask yourself two questions at the end of the day:

- What did I learn today?
- What can I do tomorrow to take another step forward?

Such as: <sup>19</sup>

“I asked the right questions”

- *What questions?*

“I discovered something new about the human body.”

- *What exactly?*

“My medical knowledge has expanded.”

- *Tell me more...*

“I felt genuinely concerned with several patients I met today.”

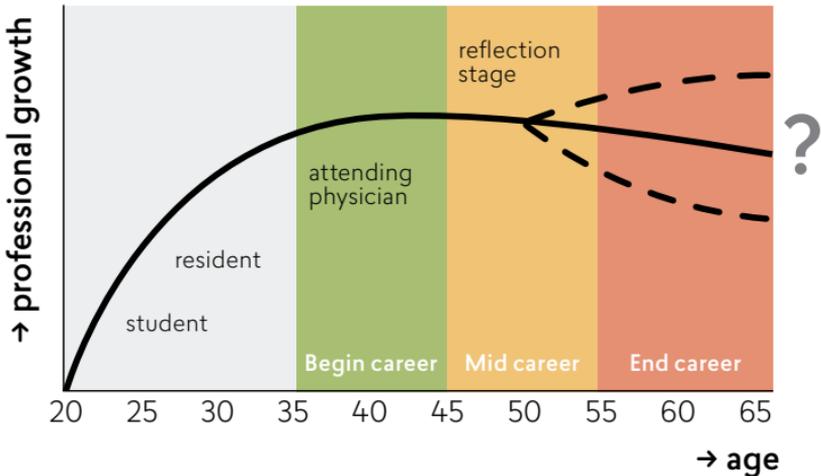
- *Someone in particular?*

And how about the doctor who daily jots down a few striking, hilarious, or moving moments in his notebook. In his free time, he is a writer. Eventually, he wants to collect enough anecdotes for a novel. His drive? “Every patient is a story. Now and then I have the privilege to read a snippet.”

# PROGRESS AND ROUTINE

During medical school, residency training, and the first stage of your career as an independent professional, your knowledge and skills increase significantly. At the same time, you make great strides on a personal level.

This is not as obvious in the second half of your medical career. Of course, by then you have developed a personal routine. Knowing what kind of care is necessary for your patients creates stability, security and comfort. However, it can also lead to a lack of challenge. You've been there, have done that: no more (un)pleasant surprises. Without challenge, work satisfaction diminishes for many doctors.<sup>21</sup>



## KEEP LOOKING AHEAD

Take some time to discover how to keep working with zest and satisfaction throughout your career. If you welcome daily routine, there is not a cloud in the sky. If you dread it, there is work to be done.

Try this:

### **Get out of your comfort zone**

Lack of challenge can lead to boredom and dissatisfaction. It is important to stay involved in nowadays developments and activities. Deliberately create new opportunities or be the driver of change. What are you still curious about?

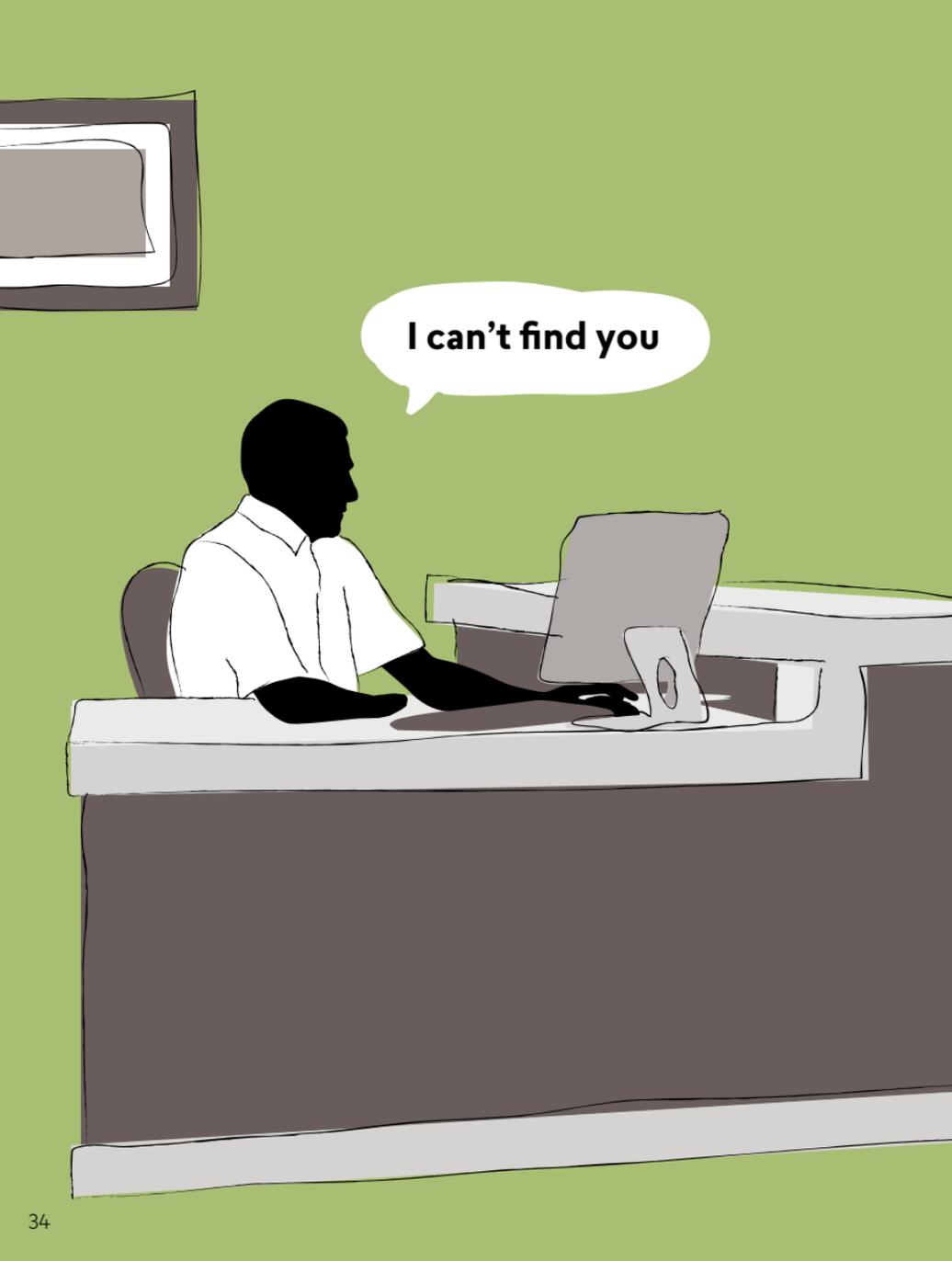
### **Allow yourself to be surprised**

Do you always take the same route to and from work? If you ride your bicycle, take a different road, and purposely wander around. Are you in your car? Turn off your navigation system and take an exit you haven't taken before. Or take a two-lane road instead of the highway. Have you listened to the same music for years? Ask others about their favorite music. Or inquire about a book or movie that made a big impression on them. Find out if this will be the same for you.

**WHEN  
LAST DO  
FOR THE**



**DID YOU  
SOMETHING  
FIRST TIME?**

A stylized illustration of a person with a black silhouette sitting at a desk, working on a laptop. The person is wearing a white short-sleeved shirt. A speech bubble above the person contains the text "I can't find you". The background is a solid light green color. In the top left corner, there is a framed picture on the wall. The desk is a simple grey structure with a white top surface. The laptop is open and facing the person. The person's hands are on the keyboard. The overall style is minimalist and graphic.

**I can't find you**

**I'm right here**



# Dare care!

*“I have nothing but respect for almost every doctor I have come across. Most just want to cut through the bullshit and treat their patients right.”* A message on Twitter that I retweet wholeheartedly.

Because those are the doctors I often meet. People who want to do an excellent job and put in their heart and soul day after day. Professionals who continue to improve themselves, question their functioning, and hone their skills with training, peer-to-peer feedback, supervision and coaching - involving the whole team if necessary. Professionals who are pushing boundaries.

I once read a wonderful story about neonatal care. It now seems inconceivable, but until the eighties touching (crying) incubator babies was not allowed. It was striking that while in the incubator their weight barely increased, despite the technically perfect circumstances. Significant weight increase only occurred after their time in the incubator. One day it was discovered in an American hospital that some babies did grow normally while still in the incubator. It turned out that one specific nurse was taking care of them most nights. She reluctantly admitted: she had ignored the rules and gently caressed the backs of crying babies to soothe them. Although she felt guilty, she had continued doing so because it really calmed them down.

A beautiful example of a professional who is trying to balance between her own inner values and external rules. A professional who courageously trusts and cares. For me this proves the strength that lies within lifelong learning and progressing together. This calls for caregivers who simultaneously deploy their contemporary knowledge as well as their intuition. Who adhere to the state of the art guidelines and protocols, while keeping an eye open to the specific situation at hand. Who connect to the needs of this unique patient. Professionals whose judgement leaves room for making the deliberate choice to deviate from the standard. Who encourage themselves as well as their colleagues to innovate by exploring new possibilities, together with their patients.

Utopia? I don't think so. However it will require a safe, supporting, and learning culture in which brave doctors can keep developing themselves. It will not prosper in an environment in which medical professionals – fearing reprimands or bad reviews on the social media and internet – only dare to follow strict rules and procedures.

I long for a future with doctors who continue to dare. Who stand for their professionalism and navigate using both their factual knowledge and gut feeling. These doctors I will gladly entrust with my fears, doubts, and health. Let's support them through introspection rather than inspection!

Angèle van de Ven

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



### **Angèle van de Ven** (1969)

Personal leadership trainer,  
executive coach, facilitator

Guides medical practitioners in their  
personal and professional career development.

### ***Her inspiration***

Stems from the stories told by medical doctors about their way to continue working a lifetime with satisfaction and enjoyment. Stories that are well-worth sharing with other doctors but are often not told because the care for their patients always comes first.

### ***She sees***

that the profession of a medical doctor is a way of life, with its inherent night calls and societal responsibilities. Today, there are many varieties of this ‘doctor’s life’; the opportunities to arrange work and life as you desire. With “HEAL the doctor”, Angèle brings her practical knowledge and experience to the medical world in powerful words and images to help you dream up your own path through (working) life.

Read about Angèle’s work: [www.angelevandeven.nl](http://www.angelevandeven.nl)



**Lodewijk Schmit Jongbloed** (1956)

MD, MBA, (team) coach, catalyst  
Received a PhD in Medicine for  
“Physician job satisfaction in the  
Netherlands” at the University Medical  
Center Groningen (UMCG).

***His wonderment***

Is it true that the current generation of medical doctors are less satisfied with the job than the previous? And if so, what can they do themselves to prevent or change this?

***He sees***

that the doctor’s environment is changing fast: more assignments, less freedom to act. This makes reflection on work and personal functioning necessary. Few doctors have learned this during their study. It will also take up scarce time and energy and it takes courage to look at oneself in the mirror. Yet it is necessary.

With “HEAL the doctor” Lodewijk offers a hand to ask questions that can help them to be, to become, and to stay motivated as a doctor and a human being.

Read about Lodewijk’s work: [www.schmitjongbloedadvis.nl](http://www.schmitjongbloedadvis.nl)

## REVIEWS

*“Being a doctor can be a thrilling profession, a way of life. 24/7, part of who you are. Although you are not constantly working, it can be hard to switch off being a doctor. You learn to look beyond the patient in front of you, to see the world in a different way. You learn about your personal depths and heights. This book puts a smile on your face as you reflect on being a doctor. It offers another perspective on yourself and your life’s work. You’ll find new answers to the ongoing question ‘How can I balance being a doctor and being me.’”*

**Marith Volp**, MD (Family Medicine) and former member of Parliament of the Dutch Labour Party, The Netherlands

*“A beautiful and powerful book - it touched me profoundly. People who work with people, like medical doctors, need to understand themselves. This book is a wonderful tool to achieve this. Inspiring and motivating with vivid examples, colorful illustrations and quotes. Not at all heavy, but with a wink - without lacking the necessary depth. The authors offer the reader important questions - questions that we often forget to ask ourselves and the people closest to us don't dare to ask. Let's rethink! The medical doctor is also just a human being - and expectations about his / her common humanity are ever-increasing.”*

**Gerda Zeeman**, MD PhD (OB/GYN) and personal coach for doctors, The Netherlands

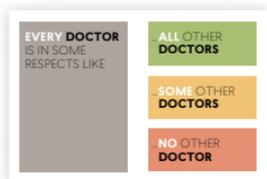
# REVIEWS

*“I’m rarely without words ... but now I am! What a beautiful, extraordinary and yet ‘everyday’ book. It handles the ‘daily’ matters needed to become, be and stay a MD. These matters are usually attended too little. Consequently, it’s essential to ask and pay attention to them. After all, tomorrow’s doctors are at the same time also ordinary people of today ... and tomorrow. “*

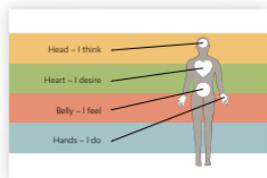
**Jelle Prins**, dean of MCL Academy, Medical Centre Leeuwarden\*.

\* Medical Centre Leeuwarden, a major top-clinical center in The Netherlands, presents all residents a personal copy of HEAL the doctor at the start of their career.

# SOURCES



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This illustration is based on a tweet from @wimdaniels, april 2014.

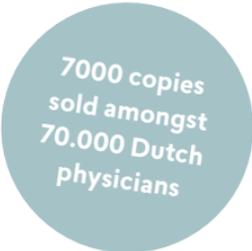
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# TERMINOLOGY WITHIN MEDICAL EDUCATION

<b>Educational stage</b>	<b>in the Netherlands</b>	<b>in the USA</b>	<b>in the UK</b>
<i>Phase following undergraduate training</i>	Postgraduate medical education  Specialty training	Graduate Medical Education  Residency training	Postgraduate Medical Education  Specialty training  Special registrar training
<i>Trainee within specialty training</i>	Resident  Specialist trainee	Resident	Specialist registrar  Registrar
<i>Registered medical specialist</i>	Medical specialist	Attending  Attending physician	Hospital consultant

This book is based on the health care system in the Netherlands and experiences of Dutch physicians. Bestseller since its first publication in 2015.



*7000 copies  
sold amongst  
70.000 Dutch  
physicians*



“HEAL the doctor” is a compact book packed with ideas for physicians who strive to explore and deepen their self-awareness in work life. It poses mind tickling questions about your professional and personal development. Offering recognizable descriptions of different career stages and life phases. It will touch and challenge you, stir you up, and make you think. Using humor in words and pictures, this book is a colorful quest into more personal areas that you might be less aware of. Reflection is key, presented in a vivid way.

Don't expect a rigid table of contents in this book. Angèle van de Ven and Lodewijk Schmit Jongbloed challenge you to find your unique path towards being the best doctor you can possibly be.

“HEAL the doctor” offers physicians of all ages and specialties an unorthodox road within. To (re)discover, maintain, or strengthen their purpose and zest in work life.

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