

Hannah Kay, MD
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

The vastness of 2,500 miles was not clear to me until it became the distance between myself and my family, during a surgical residency, during a pandemic. I longed for a simple weekend at home but couldn't stomach losing 12 of my precious weekend hours to flights. My yearning for family was numbed only by the workload of intern year and the friendships I made through our shared trauma.

At the start of my second year, I met Joy. Sometimes, names like "Joy" are ironic, or unfitting, or worth judging a person's parents for. That is not the case for this Joy. Joy is the Queen of our Cysto Suite. She knows every stent, sheath, and scope that exists, and not only where to find them in the hospital, but exactly whose *cell phone* to call if they go missing. She shows up too early, leaves too late, and generally works too hard. In a post-COVID world where staffing shortages are hurting everyone, Joy is the person lifting us up. I doubt she even knows this, but Joy became my local family when I missed my own. From her pep talks before and after tough cases, to the way she would make sure *my* favorite lead apron was available each morning, to the way she would send me restaurant recommendations after I told her I missed my mom's cooking, my entire view and attitude toward work changed when Joy became a daily part of it.

She has watched dozens of classes of second-year residents go through the rite of passage that is the benign urology rotation and she has nurtured each of us with her whole heart. She has seen tears fall in those rooms and has hugged us afterward. She has reminded us to call our parents and tell them we love them, a seemingly small task that we somehow always forget. She has bundled countless patients in warm blankets before and after surgery, and held their hands while they fall asleep. She has chosen to embody compassion despite our profession becoming increasingly cold and burnt-out.

My residency colleagues and the alumni who came before us would be hollow versions of ourselves had we not been blessed with Joy. My career is fresh, and I have been blessed with a network of incredible professionals in the field, but I know for certain that my clinical practice has been permanently enhanced by my relationship with Joy. She has showed me that relationships matter, be it those between teammates or those with our patients. Residency is scary, challenging, and isolating, and often it is these very relationships that we put on the backburner in order to survive. She may never realize the impact that her comments and small acts of kindness had on me, but because of her I am dedicating myself to being a source joy for my patients and colleagues who may have the privilege of knowing my Joy.