

## Ownership



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The discussion moved quickly around the room. I sat with my notes open, the margins of my notebook crowded with annotations, and my response already rehearsed in my head and formed. I knew what I wanted to say. Still, I hesitated. Not because I didn't understand the material, but because I was aware of how easily a misstep could be remembered.

I lowered my hand.

I had prepared carefully. I understood the content. Yet I found myself weighing the cost of being wrong more heavily than the value of contributing. The conversation didn't slow because of my hesitation. It continued, confident and fluid, just without me. Sitting there, I recognized how quickly that pause could become a habit, and how easy it is to remove yourself without meaning to.

So, I spoke up.

My voice was steady, even though I didn't feel certain. No one interrupted me. No one corrected me. My comment was acknowledged and folded into the discussion, and the conversation moved on. What struck me wasn't that I was heard, but how long I had been waiting for permission to speak. At that moment, I realized that confidence wasn't something I could afford to wait for. If I wanted to be present, I had to choose to be.

That choice felt familiar. From an early age, I was taught that education was the foundation of independence. As the child of immigrants, I grew up understanding that my future was something I was responsible for building. Opportunity wasn't abstract or guaranteed. It required intention as well as the willingness to step forward before certainty arrived.

In medical school, that lesson has taken on sharper meaning. Ownership has stopped being an idea and become a practice. It has meant raising my hand before I feel fully ready, and asking to be involved when I worry I might still be learning the rules. It meant accepting responsibility even when I'm aware of my own tendency to second-guess myself. Each time, I have to decide whether silence feels safer than growth.

I've learned that when I wait to feel ready, opportunities pass by. When I step forward, even imperfectly, I am trusted with more. I've learned that confidence follows action, not the other way around. Ownership, for me, is not about being the loudest voice in the room, but about refusing to disappear from it.

As I move forward in medicine, ownership is the principle I return to when hesitation feels tempting. I carry it with me when I advocate for myself and when I work alongside others, and eventually to others that come after me who are learning to trust their voices.