

**REFLECTIONS  
FROM ER****Contrite or Not?**

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Lying there, in their lifeless forms, eyes piercing into nothingness. Faces of death. Life bustling around them but not with in. The team fighting for their life, at times disappointed, other times relieved, that misery is no more. The treating doctor thinking what else could have been done and what was not? For someone outside of this “code blue” scenario, it is difficult to grasp the reality of this moment.

Experiences like these are etched into our minds. These memories hidden in our deep conscious, resurface, suddenly one day while we are doing our job. The medical facts are overlapping with another patient that we are looking after. Or maybe the name, or a colleague mentioned something. You start to relive that moment again. Piece by piece, event by event. A weight on your consciousness, an uninvited guest. The long sighs in lonely corridors is an effort to put that thought aside. And then you become busy again. Not knowing when this will repeat itself.

The vastness of this field makes you feel inadequate at times, like a grain of sand at the shore of a sea. You cannot know all the things all the time. The long hours put into study and then clinical experience, start showing off after a while. But what about the seemingly trivial yet dire mistakes you made reaching that point? And the tragic cost of human lives, name after name, face after face piles up. Often times you are at crossroads, quizzing yourself yet again what to do next? And at times failing, yet again. And the circle goes on. One moment to another.

The question arises is quite logical. How much of the bad outcome was preventable? Could this have been played out some other way. The answers don't come easy, and they come with a cost. At times hidden and other times manifest. You deal with the manifest, but the hidden answers are not known to anyone besides you. They are the most painful ones. You don't want to be your own judge passing sentences of agony and despair. You start feeling inadequate as a care provider for your patients.

This vicious circle can take you down, but, that is why you choose your field of emergency medicine. You find help in people around you. They guide you in understanding and channelizing this experience. You refuse to become the second victim. As you know that your journey is lifelong and can not be spent with that chaos and internal rift. Gradually, you come out of it, you feel adequate regardless of your imperfections. For most of us, EM physicians, it is not about being complete, but it is about being comfortable, compassionate and provide all the help that your patient need at time of crisis.

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