

SHAME IN MEDICINE: THE LOST FOREST

EPISODE GUIDE



EPISODE 3.
GOLDEN TICKET

the
NOCTURNISTS



How to Use This Guide

Though shame is everywhere in medicine, the topic is taboo, which can make it difficult to discuss. To help, we've prepared discussion guides for each episode of our podcast documentary series, *Shame in Medicine: The Lost Forest*, to facilitate conversations between friends, colleagues, and leaders.

This discussion guide is for **Episode 3. Golden Ticket**

You'll find:

- Episode summary
- Notes from behind the scenes
- Discussion questions
- A medical trainee's reflection on the episode
- Additional resources

Lastly, talking about shame can be challenging, emotionally and interpersonally. Please feel free to use our **facilitator toolkit** for leading and organizing conversations around shame. You can find additional resources at thenocturnists-shame.org/engage.



Illustration by Beppe Conti



Episode 3. "Golden Ticket Summary

We all arrive at the gateway to medicine carrying baggage from our past. We've had different hopes, hurts, and childhood arcs. How do these early life experiences guide us toward our careers? And once we "arrive," how do they impact the way we experience shame in the workplace?

Behind the Scenes

The train station metaphor really helped bring this episode together. We knew we wanted to discuss the way our pre-medical lives impact the way we experience shame in our profession, since Will's research shows that shame narratives are often set up very early in life – as early as childhood. During an organic team discussion, Will came up with this train station metaphor and we ran with it. It also offered a great opportunity for sound design and worldbuilding.

Discussion Questions

1. Which stories in this episode did you connect with, and why? How did you respond when you were in similar situations?
2. Imagine the baggage you've brought with you on this trip to medicine. Discuss, draw, or write about what you see.
3. What does the gateway to medicine look like to you? Consider other metaphors, besides a train station, that speak to your experience.
4. How has your healthcare career changed the contents of your suitcase? What are things you've let go of or added? What do you still carry?
5. What are the pros and cons of sharing your life story with others?



A Trainee Reflects on Episode 3. "Golden Ticket"

"The image of boarding a train, with years of baggage and countless questions about the journey ahead, is a beautiful and apt metaphor for embarking on medical training. I remember hearing my dean during the first days of medical school talk about how we would be taking on a dominant doctor identity over the coming years. I certainly hoped my identity wouldn't be all doctor, as I liked the other facets of myself, thank you very much. Over the coming years, I reckoned with—and continue to do so—all the experiences that made me choose medicine and also make me particularly vulnerable to the pain and suffering we witness. These certainly shape the doctor I am, and it often looks very different from other doctors I see.

The diversity of stories in this episode characterized some of the baggage folks bring to their career in medicine. The first voice mentions how 'markers of class became markers of pathology' and how she wanted to assimilate to 'reduce friction' between herself and her peers. I often think of the minefield our Black and Brown colleagues have to endure, given that the history of medicine has not only excluded them for so long but also considered them to be pathological. The experience of being in a classroom and learning that 'being Black' is associated with a myriad of diseases, when, in truth, race is being used as a proxy for the systemic racism creating conditions that promote illness. The shame that can emerge when that nuance and context is lost is profound.

The other narratives hit on countless important themes as well—the pressure to constantly succeed and strive, the silence that comes with family secrets, and the need to find the language to talk about those experiences. I was struck by the degree of trauma that each of these individuals carry, and I wondered about the trauma we've all packed away in our luggage. Would airing it out be helpful or too overwhelming?

The longer I've been on this train, the more my own luggage contents and weight have shifted. When I'm more tired, the weight is unbearable and I find myself trying to sit on my suitcase of feelings, to keep it all in. When I'm more relaxed, I can open it back up and reorganize the contents, occasionally unzipping corners to show close friends that I, too, packed way too much stuff for this trip.

I believe using this metaphor with learners and diving into the ways life shapes us could bring much needed healing and transformation to medical education."



Resources

Read:

- Bynum WE 4th, Varpio L, Lagoo J, Teunissen PW. 'I'm unworthy of being in this space': The origins of shame in medical students. *Medical Education*. 2021.
- Dolezal L. Gibson M. *Beyond a trauma-informed approach and towards shame-sensitive practice*. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* 9, 214 (2022).
- hooks b. *Moving Beyond Shame in Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. 2003.
- Mantoo S. *Vulnerability and Shame in Medicine*. *FemInEM*. 2019.

Watch:

- Ngozi Adichie C. *The danger of a single story*. TEDGlobal 2009.

