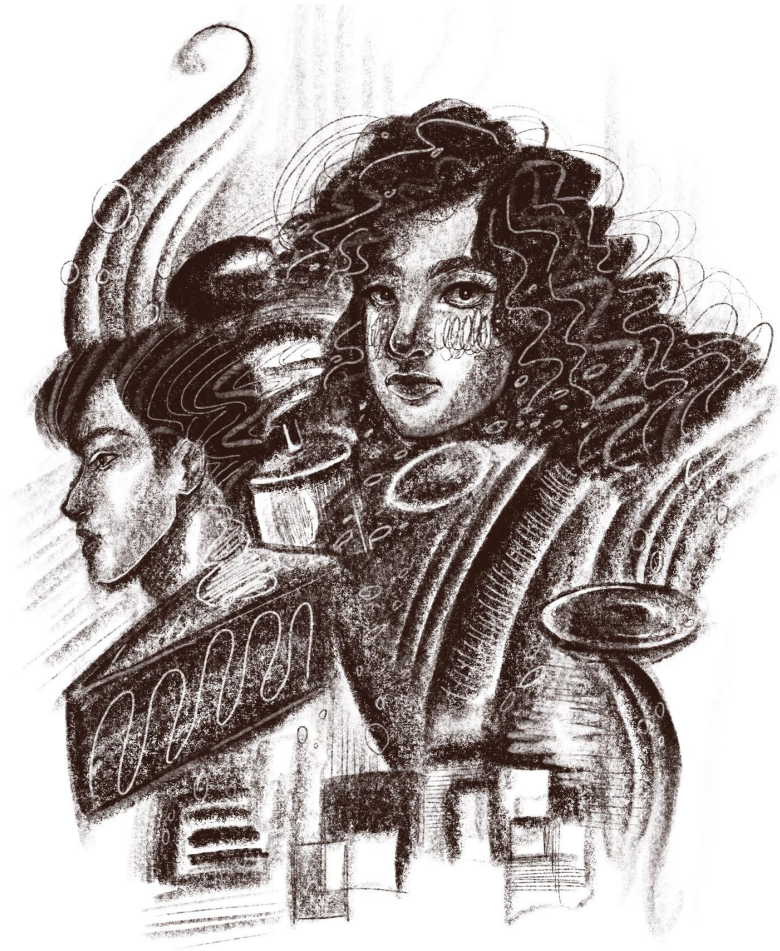


As an escape from the sometimes repetitive routine that I have adopted as a medical student, I try to make time for creative pursuits. Creative pursuits are especially important to me as I have been drawing for the majority of my life; I try to maintain this hobby that brings me so much joy and keeps me grounded. Furthermore, I find that it challenges me to use a different aspect of my brain power: whereas lecture focuses largely on memorization and analysis, I find that making art develops my creative thinking and problem-solving skills. Specifically, I do my best to carve out time to construct loose, organic, and most importantly, noncommittal sketches each day. Wherever my brain takes me, I try to incorporate the ever-shifting thoughts in my brain. This not only reduces the stress of making something perfect but helps me process my thoughts from the day- ultimately de-stressing me.

My casual sketching routine consists of two “tasks”. In my first task, I look around my environment for something to draw. I give myself roughly 1-3 minutes to decide on a subject that I would like to capture. This short decision period functions to reduce the anxiety of trying to find something especially visually stimulating/profound. For instance, I will draw my eraser, comb, Bates’ textbook, or even the water bottle that sits on my desk. For the next 20 minutes, I try to understand the shape of the item, its positionality to its environment, and how to capture its functionality or place it holds in my life. Depending on the mood, I focus on capturing the minute details or keeping the object very representational. Finding meaning and beauty in mundane, everyday objects helps me personally ground myself in what is important- especially when I feel overwhelmed with the responsibilities that come with being a medical student.

For the second exercise, I allow myself to explore my own thoughts. I give myself 5-10 minutes to sit with my thoughts in a well (but not harshly) lit, quiet, inherently serene room that is mostly free of distractions. After this I let myself draw the first thing I think of, and then tailor the image or lines according to where my mind wanders. Creating “one-line” drawings often helps me with promoting a flow state. After this, I either keep organically sketching, and adding to the chaotic but real image, or I try and add a bit more definition to the shapes that are generated. This exercise really challenges me to confront my thoughts and worries of the day, and I find that releasing them onto paper creates something so uniquely beautiful and personal.



A recent sketch example of the “flow state” exercise.