

EARLY CAREER JOURNEY



STS Career Development TweetChat

Pitfalls—What Not to Do Early in Your Career

Hosted by
Dr. Joseph Phillips

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Each quarter, the STS Career Development Workforce hosts a X/TweetChat on topics important to early career cardiothoracic surgeons. It's an opportunity for workforce members to connect directly with early career surgeons and share insights in real time.

What follows is a recap of the August X/TweetChat on ***Pitfalls—What Not to Do Early in Your Career*** hosted by Dr. Joseph Phillips.

Opinions expressed in this chat are those of its contributors and don't necessarily reflect the views of The Society of Thoracic Surgeons.

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Joseph D. Phillips, MD FACS @jdphillipsMD · Aug 21



Welcome to the [#CTCareers](#) Chat, brought to you by the [@STS_CT Surgery](#) Workforce on Career Development! Tonight, we're discussing strategies to avoid early career pitfalls to start you off on the road to success.



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Joseph D. Phillips, MD FACS @jdphillipsMD · Aug 21



I'm your moderator Joe Phillips. I'm a general thoracic surgeon and Associate Professor at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in NH.

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T1: What advice/concerns do you have for avoiding major clinical issues in the first several years of your career?

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1,421 posts



Joseph D. Phillips, MD FACS @jdphillipsMD · Aug 21

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T1 When planning big cases early on, seek help from your senior partner(s)! Have them there during the case (or at least in the hospital so they can come help if needed). #CTCareers



Robert Van Haren, MD @rvanharen · Aug 21

...

T1 first thought is about being safe on the OR with conservative case selection and getting support from senior partners #ctcareers



Olugbenga Okusanya MD @okusanyamd · Aug 21

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Replying to @jdphillipsMD

T1 Talk to your partners all the time. Ask them to double scrub with you for at least 3 months. Present even the most routine cases. Ask for backup on call for 6 months. #ctcareers

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 Tom Varghese Jr. MD, MS, MBA, FACS, MAM  @TomVarghes · Aug 21 ...

Replying to @jdphillipsMD

T1: Many similarities to training

- Preparation
- Attention to details
- Follow through

However, I would add:

- it is a sign of strength, not weakness, to know your limitations and call for help when needed

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 Elliot Servais, MD, FACS  @ElliotServaisMD · Aug 21 ...

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Just cause you did the complex post-induction uniportal sleeve resection on your last day of fellowship doesn't mean you start with that first day of your new job!

Start with bread and butter. Get early wins. Build your attending confidence.

 Mara Antonoff, MD, FACS @maraantonoff · Aug 21 ...

T1: Much better to seek help avoiding problems than to seek help after you've created them. Prioritize patient safety over your ego, and get senior support on board for decision-making as well as technical challenges.

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T2: What are major non-clinical pitfalls to avoid early in your career?

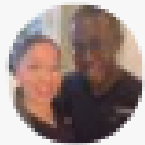
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Brian Mitzman, MD MS FACS @BrianMitzman · Aug 21



T2 [#CTCareers](#): Your first year is to learn how to be a successful clinical surgeon & for passing boards. It's great to have other interests & build that academic portfolio, but if you're an uncertified CT surgeon with poor outcomes, the next several years will be very difficult.



Olugbenga Okusanya MD @okusanyamd · Aug 21



Replying to [@jdphillipsMD](#)

T2 Over promising and under delivering. [#Ctcareers](#)

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Robert Van Haren, MD @rvanharen · Aug 21



T2 have to establish good relationships with clinical team members and also create network of collaborators for areas of interest (clinical, research, service, etc) [#ctcareers](#)



Mara Antonoff, MD, FACS @maraantonoff · Aug 21




T2: You only get one chance to make a first impression. Don't blow it. Make sure your actions reflect your true character. [#CtCareers](#)

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T3: If you find yourself in a tough spot (clinically or non-clinically) what strategies have you used to turn things around?

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 **Olugbenga Okusanya MD** @okusanyamd · Aug 21 ...

T3 Engage your mentors and seek wisdom. Pretty much nothing new under the sun. If you're going through it someone else has and likely has a roadmap to getting to upside and mitigating downside #ctcareers

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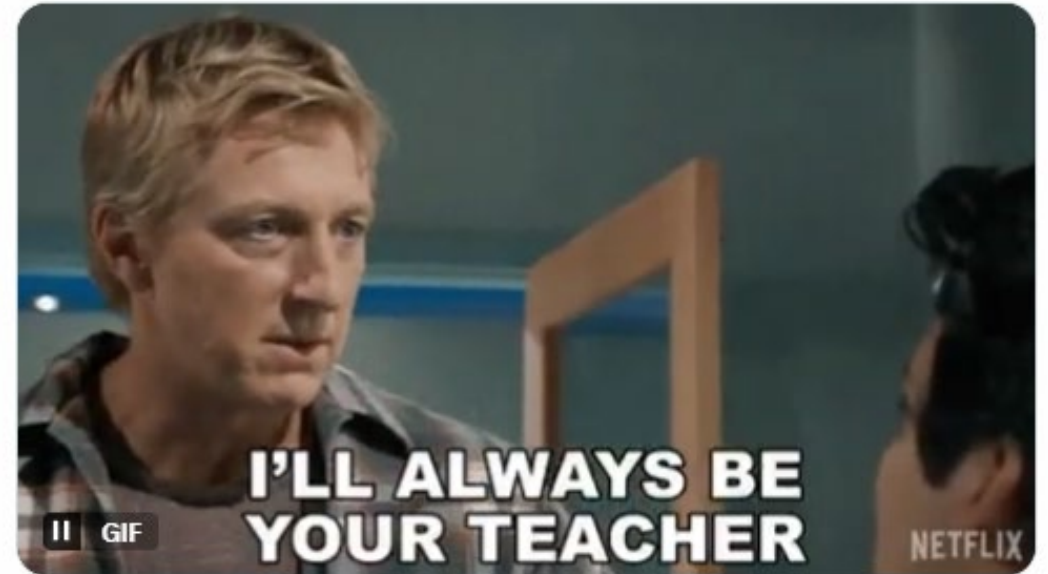
 **Joseph D. Phillips, MD FACS** @jdphillipsMD · Aug 21 ...



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 **Brian Mitzman, MD MS FACS** @BrianMitzman · Aug 21 ...

T3 #CTCareers: Your program director from training never really stops being your program director. Don't hesitate to reach out to trusted mentors and colleagues from all stages of your career.



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Robert Van Haren, MD @rvanharen · Aug 21



T3 important to remember that there will be many up and downs and in early career the swings can be extreme. Don't get too discouraged when there is an issue [#ctcareers](#)



Joseph D. Phillips, MD FACS @jdphillipsMD · Aug 21



T3: Seek advice from colleagues (either at your institution or outside) for a diverse array of perspectives. Don't fight the battle alone! [#CTCareers](#)



Elliot Servais, MD, FACS  @ElliotServaisMD · Aug 21



T3/Maintain outlets outside of work.
Don't let this work consume all of you or it will
Family, friends, hobbies, exercise
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T4 : What are/were you most concerned about when starting your attending career?

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Joseph D. Phillips, MD FACS @jdphillipsMD · Aug 21

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T4: I was most concerned with making the right decisions regarding patient care. Checking in with senior partners to make sure you are seeing the whole picture helped a lot. Also, involve your multi-disciplinary tumor board or teams to get other opinions. [#CTCareers](#)



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Robert Van Haren, MD @rvanharen · Aug 21



T4 Looking back, I would say managing the stress of new attending responsibility was the most difficult [#ctcareers](#)



Dana Ferrari-Light DO, MPH @dferrarilight · Aug 21



T4: Making sure that I am the 3 "A"s that make a great surgeon - Available, Affable, and Able. Will never forget lessons from [@NahushMokadam](#) [#CTCareers](#)



Elliot Servais, MD, FACS  @ElliotServaisMD · Aug 21



Replying to [@dferrarilight](#) and [@NahushMokadam](#)

Yes, just be careful with "available". Being too available can be a fast path to burnout. Remember - you join a group so that you trust you coverage and your partners can be available for you.

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Joseph D. Phillips, MD FACS @jdphillipsMD · Aug 21

Time for closing thoughts, fire away! #CTCareers



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Joseph D. Phillips, MD FACS @jdphillipsMD · Aug 21



The start of your career is just that; the beginning of a marathon. While you have come far, you have a long way to go. Choose your cases carefully, ask for help, and be humble. [#CTCareers](#)



Robert Van Haren, MD @rvanharen · Aug 21



Agree - great discussion!! Don't be afraid to ask for help, create strong relationships, and keep working to improve! [#ctcareers](#)



Mehmet Alagoz, MD @alagozmhmt · Aug 21



Thanks for amazing chat and advises 🙌🙌 [#CTcareers](#) [@STS_CTsurgery](#)
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Elliot Servais, MD, FACS  @ElliotServaisMD · Aug 21



Replying to @jdphillipsMD

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There are many demands on early career surgeons and many “asks”
Occasionally reflect on what’s important to you. Remember why you became a surgeon. If you remain true to your own goals and values, and ignore the noise, you can’t go wrong!
Enjoy the best job there is.



Elliot Servais, MD, FACS  @ElliotServaisMD · Aug 21



Replying to @ElliotServaisMD and @jdphillipsMD

Final final thought

“No I’m not interested in doing that”

“No I don’t have the time for that”

Practice those phrases

They are acceptable responses

Thanks Joe for a great hour

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Joseph D. Phillips, MD FACS @jdphillipsMD · Aug 21

Thank you all for contributing to this fantastic chat! Such great advice. Follow [@TheHub_STS](#) and [#CTCareers](#) to stay on top of the discussion! sts.org/career-develop...



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Want more insights from surgeon leaders and peers? Check out these career development blog articles authored by STS surgeon members:

- [The Importance of Setting Boundaries as a CT Surgeon](#)
- [Building a Practice in the Community](#)
- [The Cost of Changing Jobs](#)
- [How to Kick Start an Education Career Path](#)
- [Retirement Planning for the Early Career Surgeon](#)