

# Master Adaptive Learner

## What is a Master Adaptive Learner and why is this important to competency-based medical education?

The Master Adaptive Learner (MAL) model describes the process of developing the skills for lifelong, self-regulated, self-directed learning. This process has four continuous, integrative phases (Planning, Learning, Assessing, Adjusting) that are impacted by learner characteristics (Curiosity, Motivation, Growth Mindset, Resilience) and supported by coaching. A resident who is a MAL values intentional learning as a core part of their professional identity and actively seeks and incorporates feedback to enhance their learning.

### How the Master Adaptive Learner model relates to competency-based medical education (CBME)<sup>i</sup>

- 1) **Supports the development of life-long, self-directed and self-regulated learning<sup>ii</sup>**
  - a. When faced with a new situation, the MAL can adapt by creating new approaches.
  - b. In CBME, the resident engages in the four phases to close the gaps between what they know and do not know and what they can and cannot do.
- 2) **Provides a framework for reflection and deliberate practice<sup>iii</sup>**
  - a. While the MAL engages in the four phases, they use the four learner characteristics to help them successfully navigate each phase.
  - b. Curiosity helps the resident reflect on feedback and assessments. Motivation, especially internal, fuels the drive to work on learning goals. A growth mindset helps the resident continue to believe that they can achieve their goals. Resilience helps the resident persevere and bounce back when encountering difficulty in achieving their goals.
- 3) **Emphasizes the need for coaching<sup>iv</sup>**
  - a. Coaching is an integral factor in helping the MAL improve in their ability to self-assess and act on feedback. A coach provides both accountability and a safe environment for setting goals.
  - b. With regular meetings, a coach helps the resident create an individualized learning plan. Together, they look at feedback and progress on current goals. Through questioning, a coach helps the resident understand what they need to improve and to create a path to reach the desired goal(s).

<sup>i</sup> Cutrer WB, Miller B, Pusic MV, Mejicano G, Mangrulkar RS, Gruppen LD, Hawkins RE, Skochelak SE, Moore DE Jr. Fostering the Development of Master Adaptive Learners: A Conceptual Model to Guide Skill Acquisition in Medical Education. Acad Med. 2017 Jan;92(1):70-75.

<sup>ii</sup> Edje L and Price DW. Training Future Family Physicians to Become Master Adaptive Learners. Fam Med. 2021;53(7):559-566.

<sup>iii</sup> Cutrer WB, Atkinson HG, Freidman E et al. Exploring the Characteristics and context that allow Master Adaptive Learners to thrive. Med Teach. 2018;40(8):791-796

<sup>iv</sup> Reynolds AK. Academic coaching for learners in medical education: Twelve tips for the learning specialist. Med Teach. 2020;42(6):616-612