

# How to Negotiate - Future Surgeon

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## HOW-TO NEGOTIATE YOUR WORTH

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As a fourth-year medical student slated to begin residency in a few months, I cannot say that I have ever had to negotiate my salary as a practicing physician (yet!). However, there are ways that current and aspiring female surgeons must negotiate their clinical, academic and personal worth, at various stages in one's training and beyond, both in terms of salary in addition to being considered for leadership positions, promotions and competitive funding.

Self-worth can encompass many facets: our clinical expertise in the operating room, our excellent rapport with patients, our academic productivity, our leadership and extracurricular engagements (such as being a part of AWS!) and our personal strengths as individuals that make us great doctors, co-workers, researchers and friends.

Unfortunately, women are [Less Likely to Engage in Self-promotion](#) for reasons including fear of appearing arrogant, lack of belief in the significance our abilities/achievements, or the thought that our achievements are already known to our audience or that they speak for themselves (a dangerous assumption!)

Here are some concrete ways to advocate for ourselves in the workplace without selling ourselves short, and how to convince others of our worth when we feel that we are not being given appropriate pay/credit/respect (in other words, *negotiate!*):

1. **Know how much you are worth.** On an attending level, this could take the form of knowing monetarily how much your male counterparts in your practice are making. Citing numbers provides a concrete starting point for the discussion, AND, when coupled with evidence that your male counterparts are making this amount, it poses an important question: *Why am I, at the same level of training and clinical/academic productivity, not making the same amount?*
2. **Know your strengths.** We all have resumes, but there are times when we must verbally advertise our strengths in order to get recognized. This is hard to do when we, despite having wonderful resumes, cannot easily describe our strengths. We must **Own and Know our Unique Strengths**, in order to effectively advocate our worth for clinical, academic and leadership settings.
3. **Be seen, be heard, be proud.** In order for our worth to be known and appropriately recognized (through salary, promotion or elected positions), we must be sure to be **Seen and Heard**: in meetings, in the operating room, in research settings. This involves knowing our strength and worth (see above) as well as being verbal and engaged in our work settings. Check out books like [Feminist Fight Club](#) or [Lean-In](#) for wonderful tips on being effectively vocal and visible in the workplace.

4. **Sponsor other women.** This final (and my favorite) tip is one that we are all capable of practicing, no matter what our level: *promote and sponsor one another*. Whether in a meeting, the classroom or in the operating room, we are all capable of helping other women realize and own their worth. Sponsorship is the concept that more senior faculty/leaders help promote, encourage and showcase the talents of rising junior women in the workplace. It can be [Critical for Women's Success in the Workplace](#) and we should all engage in it: what goes around comes around!

Self-promotion and negotiating one's worth is an art. We must be cognizant of common pitfalls during this process and [How to Avoid Them](#). Ultimately, we can do even more than describe or negotiate our worth: we can ***own our worth***.

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