From a couple who married (and planned a wedding) while in medical school:

Dear Incoming MS-1 Class,

Congratulations! Medical school is a pretty awesome (though admittedly difficult) life experience. I am writing to tell you that despite what you may think, it is possible to have a love life in medical school. Granted, my perspective is slanted by the fact that my now-husband is also in medical school, but I want to tell you how it is possible to make it work in addition to everything else you have going on during your first two years a medical student. First a little background: I met my husband on the first day of med school. As it turns out, he was placed in my Introduction to Clinical Medicine (or ICM) small group....so don’t overlook the people right in front of you! We dated for most of our MS-1 year before becoming engaged mid-way through the MS-2 year. After a hectic springtime studying for Step 1 of the USMLE (the boards), we catapulted into MS-3 year. I spent most of my first few clerkship rotations knee-deep in wedding prep on top of everything else third year will bring. By fall of our MS-3 year, I was walking down the aisle. Now, we are talking about residencies and couples matching...time flies! Looking back at our relationship retrospectively, here is my list of tips for how to make it work:

1. **Realize from the beginning that it is VERY difficult for anyone who is not in medical school to understand what you will be going through.** This means that if you have a significant other who is outside the field, you will have to work and communicate extra hard about expectations for time spent together. I can’t tell you how many times my husband and I had a date planned only to decide come Friday night: “You know what, I am exhausted. Can we watch a movie instead?” or “Man, I am so behind and I really can’t spare an evening for a date...rain check?”

2. **If you don’t want the whole class to know intimate details about your love life, then keep them to yourself!** The first two years of medical school are especially tight knit. You spend lots of time with your classmates both in class and studying outside of the lecture hall. This was one of my favorite things about med school, because I love my classmates. Unfortunately, it also means that gossip will happen, and it will spread like wildfire.

3. **You must be flexible.** As mentioned in #1, you never know when a week is going to turn especially stressful. You and your significant other must be willing to change or cancel plans without feelings being hurt. This includes being willing to count lunch in the hospital cafeteria as a date...you’ll realize this is pretty good quality time once you are exhausted from working.

4. **Appreciate small gestures and moments.** There will be weekends when you have no time to spend at dinner or a movie. These are the times when you must really appreciate the 5 or 10 minute study break that you get to talk with your significant other on the phone, Skyping, or meet them for a snack.

5. **Everyone in med school needs a cheerleader.** Someone to make you smile and remember why you are going through this. Friends can help do this, but it’s crucial that your significant other be proud of what you are doing and remind you that you can do it.

I hope these tips help you as you are going through some big changes in the next few years. Just remember that med school is stressful, but it is also exhilarating, fun, and most importantly, a huge step toward a job that you will hopefully love for the rest of your life. Best Wishes!