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**Q. What first sparked your interest in medicine?  
What drew you to your specialty?**

**A.** Growing up in Baile Govora, Romania, I was deeply influenced by my parents, both of whom were physicians. My father, a radiologist, and my mother, an internal medicine doctor, provided me with early exposure to the hospital environment and the daily life of medical doctors. These experiences ignited my passion for medicine from a young age, and I decided early on that I wanted to follow in their footsteps and become a surgeon. My interest in cardiothoracic surgery developed from a profound admiration for the heart and lungs, organs that are vital to life. I was drawn to the significant impact that cardiothoracic surgery provides and the opportunity to make life-saving interventions to the most critically ill patients. The blend of technical expertise, continuous learning, and the chance to perform intricate and impactful procedures cemented my commitment to this specialty.

**Q. What about your work inspires you today?**

**A.** The complexity and precision required in cardiovascular surgery keep me engaged and continuously learning, while the resilience and gratitude of my patients motivate me to strive for excellence in every procedure. The blend of technical skill, innovative advancements, and the chance to save lives is what fuels my passion for this work.

**Q. How would you describe the defining characteristics that have led you to your success?**

**A.** The defining characteristics that have led to my success as a cardiothoracic surgeon are a strong work ethic and resilience. The demanding nature of this specialty requires unwavering dedication and the ability to persevere through challenging and complex situations. My commitment to continuous learning, precision in my work, and the ability to remain calm under pressure have also been crucial.

**Q. What is the best advice you've ever received?**

**A.** Growing up, my father advised me that if I couldn't be a king, I should become a doctor. Since becoming a king wasn't an option, I chose to become a heart surgeon. My father served as both my role model and mentor, imparting invaluable wisdom that has profoundly shaped my approach to patient care and my professional journey. His guidance emphasized the significance of service, compassion, and the transformative impact of making a meaningful difference in the lives of others. These enduring values serve as the cornerstone of my commitment to excellence in medicine and continue to guide me as I strive to provide compassionate and impactful care to my patients.