

Wellness Workshop!! Work Habits, Boundaries, Mentorship

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Structure

Start with “what do you want to get out of it” [10-15 min]

Mini Session #1: Work Habits [25 min]

1. Reflection question: What are your current work habits?
2. Sharing & Facilitated Discussion/Tips
3. Next Steps: What do I plan to commit to?

Mini Session #2: Mentoring [25 min]

1. Reflection question: What are your current mentorship relations? How do you approach seeking mentors? Etc.
2. Sharing & Facilitated Discussion/Tips
3. Next Steps: What do I plan to commit to?

Mini Session #3: Boundaries [25 min]

1. Overview of what boundaries are
 - a. Boundaries in terms of protecting and communicating our limits on space, time, bandwidth.
 - b. We often think about our space boundaries, but time and bandwidth can be more difficult to think and communicate.
2. Roleplay an example. Whiteboard the within and without of the boundary.
 - a. What was A trying to protect? What was B asking? What did A and B do well to help A protect their boundary? What could be improved?

3. Facilitated discussion
4. Next Steps: What do I plan to commit to?

General Tips

Random tips from Elise - take with a grain of salt/do what works for you

Work Habits

- See Josh's [amazing guide!](#)
 - Elise has some resources here: <https://elisewoodard.org/tools>
- Focus on small, process-oriented goals.
- Don't be afraid to workshop *work-in-progress* with other grad students & faculty
- Embrace pluralism!
- Super important to just have a foot in the door each day.
 - Even write for 5 min most days - it helps!
- If you're in course work:
 - try to get papers done as soon as possible
 - Reviewing is, in my opinion, just as important if not more important than doing the readings. That means coming up with a few questions based on whatever you read (even if you didn't do all the reading).
- Plan next day the day before: have a 'big 3'
 - Make sure your plans are sensitive to your commitments the following day
- If you find yourself motivated by deadlines, try to find ways to create them and ways to hold yourself accountable to them (I have some suggestions)
 - Try to make fake deadlines with advisor(s), or use conference submissions as real deadlines
- Try not to get obsessed with finding an *optimal* routine -- just try to find something that works for you.

Workshop component:

- What are some daily goals you can feasibly commit to?
- What are things that get in the way of this goal?
- Which of your work habits do you endorse? Which do you think can be improved?

Mentorship

- Break things down: there are different areas where we need mentorship - find different people to play different roles. (Shift from person-based model to needs-based framework)¹

¹ From NCFDD Nov 4, 2019 [suggestion: sign up for this!! <https://www.facultydiversity.org>]

- Example of different types of roles: professional development, emotional support, sense of community, accountability, access to network, project specific feedback, role models, safe space
- Be proactive
 - Assume your mentor will not tell you directly anything you want/need to know
 - E.g. when to start submitting to journals, which journals to submit to, conferences to go to, conferences that are relevant, books/papers that are relevant
- Tips/challenge from NFCDD:
 - Pause every time you feel the urge to use the word "mentor" or "mentoring" and ask yourself: What do I need right now? What's holding me back? And what (specifically) would help me to be more productive and effective?
 - Go through the previous list of typical faculty needs (above) and specify what would be helpful to you in moving forward. Don't be afraid to name your need.
 - Ask yourself: How can I get _____ (insert current need not being met)? If you don't know, state the need to someone else, and ask them to help you brainstorm how to get your needs met.
 - Once you know what you need and have identified possibilities for getting it met, ask for help widely without shame, insecurity, or the belief that such a request means you are incompetent.
 - Release yourself from the limiting belief that all you need is to find a single guru-like figure who will care for you, protect you, and lovingly guide you through your academic career. Repeat after me -- There is no guru. Instead, see what opens up this week for you when you replace that limiting belief with the idea that you can get your needs met from a wide variety of people and then take action in that direction.
 - Be sure that you are taking advantage of whatever "mentoring" programs your department, college, and/or university offers, as well as any that may be offered by your professional organizations. They may not meet all of your needs, but they will increase the size of the network of people you can call on to assist you when you need it.
- If you don't feel sufficiently mentored, *don't take it personally!*
- Rackham: [*Mentoring and Advising*](#) [thanks to Josh for linking!]
 - E.g. 48 page guide on how to get the mentorship you want

Boundaries

Saying No:

- Keep a 'no' list: try to say 'no' to 5 things a week.²
- Get a 'no' committee: 2-3 close friends who can help you assess whether to take on new projects

Work-Life balance:

² Rena Seltzer

- Have a daily pomodoro goal (or one that is sensitive to daily commitments). Once you meet it, *take a genuine break*. E.g. read something for fun, etc.

Not letting other things encroach on your priorities (whether that's research or something else):

- Try to not let other people's stress become your stress
- Try to block things like email or other distracting things when necessary (Elise has app suggestions)
- Have firm non-negotiable commitments (e.g. prioritize 1 hour a day for writing; prioritize 1 hour a day for working out -- these don't have to be written in stone but can be flexible. Whatever works best for you)

Other tips

- Learn how to satisfice (& learn how to be OK w satisficing!)
- Be OK with things not getting done
- Be mindful about whether your boundary setting is encroaching on other people's ability to set boundaries [they are sometimes a zero sum game] -- set boundaries, but be flexible when necessary/appropriate

Notes from Workshop

Q1: What do you hope to get out of it?

Work habits

(a) Things that seem to work for people

- Make to do list before you go to sleep (needs to seem like it comes from hand of god, i.e. night before)
 - Hard to make a good to do list -- need to have things that you can get dopamine hit of crossing it off
 - Goals that work best are temporally oriented goals -- e.g. start writing for 5 min, open document
 - Goal of 3 hours a work a day
- Planning week on Friday
- App suggestion: Hour Stack is a helpful app in estimating how long something will take you
- Reading habits:
 - Anxiety prevents one from reading
 - Recent strategy: just have to open up book
 - Tell self you won't take exhaustive notes
 - When just researching, easier to read
- General anxiety about working (including email, esp those that you let sit for a few days [or weeks] and feel guilty for not responding to earlier)
 - Suggestion: Just open it up! If it's particularly stressful, give yourself a full day to do so!
- Meditation can really help - even just a few minutes [See Headspace for students!! Only \$10/yr]
- Process-oriented goals
- Keep track of when you take breaks/get distracted
- Block distracting things
- 2 book suggestions:
 - *Deep Work* by Cal Newport
 - *Atomic Habits* by James Clear
 - Start small
- Other tips:
 - Get good sleep!
 - Vitamin D deficiencies!
 - SAD light
- **Incompletes:**
 - Have small goals: e.g. read 1-2 articles aday, write an hour - start with rough idea of thesis & let it be refined
 - Open things up!
 - No shame in taking a new class - 'Y' on transcript forever ok!

- MIT - Most Important Task

Things to commit to:

- Have more physical divide between work & life
- Systematically chip away at one literature you feel should have under belt but don't
- Send out a message to grad students about incomplete study group/support group
- Paragraph of writing / day
- Smaller goals
- Read 1 paper from an incomplete & open up the document
- If there's something anxiety-inducing, make the task your One Task for This Day. (And you'll get stuff done by structured procrastinating anyway!) woo!
- Track my habits more accurately so that I can reflect and adjust on them better.

Mentorship relationship

Current:

- Dissertation advisor super great mentor
 - Candid discussion about mentorship and what you need
 - Being explicit about what sort of mentorship/feedback you're looking for
 - Ex: saying you want to build idea up (rather than just have it knocked down)!
 - Harder to know how to ask people in more informal way
- Meet with ombudspersons - get list of meetings to set up with people
- Email advisors, anticipating a busy week & would fall a bit behind - be explicit/up front - indicate people before the problem not after
- Figure out what you want & dif kinds of advice it would be helpful to you to have
 - May need dif people to play dif roles
 - Ex: some people may not be good for feedback but will be v good with time
- Not afraid to cold email people - be humble and deferential but don't be afraid to follow up/email

How to get over nervousness:

- Keep in mind that their lives are often messy & they're often just not thinking of you
- Analogy: think about your relationship to undergrads - happy to do things for them/help them out (e.g. by writing letters) but not actively trying to mentor them or anything

More tips [see above for more detail]:

- Try a *needs-based model* rather than a persons-based model. This involves breaking things down into different types of needs first, and working from there with different people.
 - Example: needs will be different for emotional support v professional development v accountability for work habits.

- People on a committee can be different in terms of feedback, affirmations, etc. So they can play different roles -- instead of trying to change these qualities about them.
- Don't be afraid to reach out to people and ask for feedback on papers
 - It's their job to set their boundaries and decide whether they can take things on! Not yours!
- Try to look for mentorship early to set patterns, etc.
- Don't assume that your mentors will tell you about relevant conferences, etc. You have to ask them that. Don't expect them to do it on their own.

Boundaries

- What is boundary-setting?
 - Pertains to service-work & work distributions
 - We're often used to physical space boundaries
 - Time & bandwidth harder to see/set
- What are things one can try to protect:
 - Time - specifically time already allotted for other things
 - Relationships
 - Deep thought -
- How to protect:
 - Specific about how much time you have - immediately gave temporal boundary
 - Set boundary about time could use later in day
 - Be specific about your boundaries and your expectations, e.g. detailed times
 - It's a mutual
 - Be mindful about asking people for their time - help people protect boundaries
 - If someone starts talking to you / invades personal space, try to say: "I really want to talk about this, but I don't have much time right now. Can we touch base at [...]"
 - Can then check in and ask "Is that OK that I set that boundary," etc.
 - Applies in lots of domain

What we can commit to:

- Adopt scheme for email - only be on email at certain times of day - batch email...
- Be more explicit about boundaries - communicate them
 - Sometimes waiting until feel overwhelmed
- Reinforce other's boundaries when appropriate
- Try to initiate more conversations with friends & colleagues about boundaries & expectations
 - Which can help minimize the extent that we burn out lol.
 - Communicating in advance and also checking in along the way
- Tip for email: [SaneBox](#)

- Don't have phone out etc when with people
 - Tell people you're a dedicated aspiring single-tasker
- It can be difficult to set sufficiently hard, definite boundaries. Being more proactive about *what do I want my life for the next n weeks to look like?* Rather than *what can I manage to do?*
- Soft caps on pomodoros, decided by the hand of God.
 - Take breaks after it
- One thing one likes (pro tanto) about oneself is lack of boundaries
 - These activities are valuable!
 - When one feels like boundaries are crossed not bc it's too much of a burden on time but rather bc the spirit is not super collegial/respectful/collaborative
 - Using implicature and conversational strategies to imply boundaries can help too.
 - Be explicit about limits/communicate relevant facts about self - e.g. not someone remaining work can be relegated to