Motivation, Procrastination, & Time Management

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Motivation & Procrastination
Why did you come to grad school?

What did you hope to achieve?
What is “keeping “ you at grad school?
What do you find challenging in terms of maintaining your motivation?
Common Challenges in Grad School

- Lack of structure in day, tasks
- Lack of accountability
- Competing demands
- Abstract nature of tasks
- Unclear expectations
Equal and Opposites Forces

Motivation = related to action, movement
Procrastination = delay or avoid action
The truth about Motivation

**Myth:** “I’ll do it when I feel like it”

**Fact:** Activity *precedes* interest

**Myth:** If I just wait, the time will be right and I’ll be more productive

**Fact:** Developing work routines builds motivation and productivity
The truth about Procrastination

**Myth:** This is “me”, it’s my style.

**Reality:** Procrastination is just a habit.

**Myth:** I do my best work under pressure

**Reality:** Procrastination may have served you in the past, but now the volume & associated stress is counter-productive.
Manufacturing Motivation

- engagement
- accountability
- goals
- rewards
- strategies for action
What are your future plans?

What will get you there?
How does your grad work connect?

Today

Week

Month

Year

5 Years

10 Years

Tomorrow or Yesterday
What gets you side-tracked?
GOAL SETTING

S - Specific
M - Measurable
A - Attainable
R - Relevant
T - Time-bound
Task Based Goals

SMART goal:
For the next 7 days, I will complete 2 pages of writing per day. I will devote 2 hours to writing in the morning, and 2 hours in the afternoon.

Poorly structured goal:
I think I’ll write today.
Micro-goals

www.mytomatoes.com

5 minutes

5 pages

5 paragraphs

Eliminate Anxiety and Enhance Focus

The Pomodoro Technique
Trouble Getting Started?

Try the “5 More Rule”

- Set a modest, achievable goal
- e.g. 5 more pages, 5 more minutes, 5 more dishes, 5 more sentences
- Do it —you can, it’s modest!
- STOP—recognize your achievement
- Make a decision: 5 More? End of work? …
Trouble Staying Focussed?

☑ Turn off the technology
☑ Plan “check me” time

☑ Do hardest work first
☑ Use 50 min. on/10 min. off pattern x 3hrs max. OR complete your deep thinking
☑ Switch up tasks
Focus continued

✓ Start each session with a quick review
✓ Different work spaces for different tasks

✓ Build in *thinking time* (while you run?)

✓ Set limits on your work day--refresh
Get Stuff Out of Your Head

Distraction Pad
Reward using your “distractors”
Types of Rewards

Extrinsic Rewards
- Recognition by others
  e.g. Gold Medal, pay, MVP, praise

Intrinsic Rewards
- Personal thoughts or feelings. Often based on values.
  e.g. satisfaction, pride, relief, curiosity, delight, new understanding
The Motivation Cycle

- review
- goals
- strategies for action
- accountability
- rewards
Accountability

Tell yourself

Tell a peer

Tell your advisor

*Go public!! Tap into extrinsic rewards.*
Let your supervisor know what you need to be productive

- frequency of contact
- amount of structure
- resources
- professional feedback
- personal encouragement
Action Plan

- 3 things I will start within 24 hours
- 2 things I will learn more about
- 1 thing I will STOP now
Time Management
Personal habits

Do you set goals of

- completing a task?
- working for a period of time?

Is your system working for you?
Tools for Time Management

- Term Calendar + Task Analysis
- Weekly Schedule
- Daily To Do
Big Picture planning

Task Analysis

- Break large assignments into tasks
- Work backward: Estimate time needed per task
- Add time for the unexpected
- Enter date on Term Calendar
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step/Task</th>
<th>Work dates</th>
<th>Estimated Time</th>
<th>Actual Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Search</strong> for all available methods/paradigms</td>
<td>May 20-26</td>
<td>10 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Examine</strong> each method and relate to my research questions.</td>
<td>May 30-June 4</td>
<td>20 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Consider</strong> methods I might use</td>
<td>June 7-11</td>
<td>5 hours</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Task Analysis Tools

- Assignment Calculator see [www.queensu.ca/qlc](http://www.queensu.ca/qlc)
- Thesis Manager see [www.queensu.ca/qlc/thesis.html](http://www.queensu.ca/qlc/thesis.html)
- Time and task **Gantt chart**: [www.ganttproject.biz](http://www.ganttproject.biz)
How can I fit everything in?

Weekly Schedules
1- fixed commitments (classes, job, family)
2- health activities
3- estimate # hours needed per course –OR work in 3 hour blocks for research/thinking
4- flexible commitments
5- ensure daily down time

Remake it, until it works!
E-calendars or schedules

- Google Calendar
- iCal
- Outlook
Partition the day

- 3 hrs in morning, 3 hrs in afternoon, 2 hrs? in evening

- Assign tasks to blocks, e.g. reading, data collection, writing, thinking, T.A.’ing

- Use intervening time for eating, exercise, socializing, Facebook, nap
## Goals for the Week:

- Complete draft of fellowship application
- Prepare lecture for Thursday
- Go to dentist

*Buy gift for mom’s birthday*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thurs</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>Sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning</td>
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<td>Afternoon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Goals for Each Day:
Include Free Time & Think Time
Prioritizing the TO DO List

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOksW_NabEk
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Urgent</th>
<th>Not Urgent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Crisis control</td>
<td>Meaningful, productive tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deadlines</td>
<td>family &amp; friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not</td>
<td></td>
<td>hobbies &amp; activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 D Decision System

- Delete It
- Defer it
- Delegate it
- Do it
## Monitoring Time & Accomplishments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start Time</th>
<th>End Time</th>
<th>Time Used</th>
<th>Description of Activity</th>
<th>How well I used my time</th>
<th>Analysis: Why did I rate the task in this way</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>10:30</td>
<td>1 h 30 min</td>
<td>Graded PSY100 exams</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Exams due on Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45</td>
<td>11:30</td>
<td>45 min</td>
<td>Scheduled research participants</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Could have delegated to RA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>1:00</td>
<td>1 h</td>
<td>Lunch with Sarah</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chance to catch up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dealing with Distractions and other Time Bandits

- Check me, check me! Ring, ring!
- Friends, family
- Students wanting help
- Supervisor asking for a response
- Sunny day
- Dirty house
- No laundry
- Travel time
Action Plan

- 3 things I will start within 24 hours
- 2 things I will learn more about
- 1 thing I will STOP now
“Managing Your Time at Graduate School”

http://sass.queensu.ca/learningstrategies/topic-time-management/
Learning Strategies Advising

Professional Consults
Student Success unit, 1st floor Stauffer Library

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