Avoiding Burnout
Ashley and Phaedra’s Declassified Grad School Survival Guide

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Graduate Student Orientation - Fall 2019
Kent State University
Get to know a little about us! - Breaking the Ice

- Phaedra Norrell
  - Second-year Biomedical Sciences Neuroscience Student
  - Research focus on addiction neuroscience and neuroendocrinology of disease
  - Lover of cats, coffee, and sleep

- Ashley Davis
  - Fifth-year Biomedical Sciences Cellular and Molecular Biology PhD Candidate
  - Research focus on obesity and metabolism
  - Loves to read, binge watch Netflix, and play Pokemon
Welcome to Kent State!

- Today we'll talk about taking care of yourself in Graduate School
- Some topics we'll cover
  - Self-Care and Wellness
  - Stress and its causes
  - Mindfulness Practices
  - Useful Resources at the University (and in the surrounding area)
What is Self-Care in Practice?

- **Do you take care of yourself?**
  - Some examples
    - Do you have time every day that is dedicated to just you?
    - Do you have a hobby?
    - Do you have self-care routines of any kind?

- **In what ways do you take care of yourself?**
  - Do any of the above apply?
  - Is there anything else you do to take care of yourself?
    - Going to therapy
    - Exercise
    - Group Fitness Classes
    - Healthy Diet
    - Taking a Social Media Sabbatical
    - Getting enough sleep!!!
Defining Self Care

- Self care is...
  - Deliberately taking care of our mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health
  - Vital for our well-being
  - Things that recharge your batteries

- Make self-care a priority in your daily life!
Examples of Self-Care (In addition to those mentioned earlier)

- Healthy lifestyle choices
- Maintaining a work-life balance
- Setting boundaries (and setting them early)
- Exercising regularly
- Stress management
What Self-Care ISN’T

- **SELFISH**
  - Self-care is NEVER a selfish act.
  - Self-care does not equal laziness
  - Isolating yourself - just because you need time for you doesn’t make you selfish!
Wellness - What is it?

“... a state of complete physical, mental, and social well being, and not merely in the absence of disease or infirmity.”
- The World Health Organization (WHO)

“A conscious, self-directed and evolving process of achieving full potential.”
- The National Wellness Institute
Types of Wellness - Six Dimensions of Wellness Model

- Emotional Wellness
- Physical Wellness
- Spiritual Wellness
- Social Wellness
- Intellectual Wellness
- Occupational Wellness
Additional Aspects of Wellness

- **Financial Wellness**
  - Attend the Breakout Session on Grad School Finances at 12:20 or 3:05 for more information on managing your money while in graduate school!

- **Family Wellness**
  - Attend the Breakout Session Panel on Family Resources at 2:10 for more information from our graduate students with families!
What is Stress?

- Stress is our body’s physical, emotional, and behavioral responses to events that are identified as threatening or challenging.

- Stress is subjective
  - It’s different person to person

- Stress is contextual
  - Stress can be related to certain situations

- Distress vs. Eustress

  **Eustress**
  - Positive
  - Energises
  - Generally short-term
  - Can improve performance
  - Believed within coping mechanisms (i.e. something we can handle)

  **Distress**
  - Generally feels unpleasant
  - Often depletes energy
  - Short-term or long-term
  - Decreases overall performance
  - Perceived outside coping mechanisms (i.e. something we cannot handle)
  - Can lead to physical illness/mental fatigue/emotional depletion
Causes of Stress

- External vs. Internal Causes
  - External
    - Financial difficulty
    - Major life changes (getting married, losing a loved one)
    - Relationships (friends and family)
  - Internal
    - Negative internal dialogues
    - Unrealistic expectations
    - Perfectionism
    - Fear of Failure
      - It's okay to fail and to be imperfect. You can always try again.
Stress in Graduate School

- Deadlines
- Classes
- Homesickness
- Isolation
- Finances
- Work/Life Balance
- Feeling Overwhelmed
- Work, TA, GA, or other responsibilities
- Culture Shock
- Sense of Belonging
- Language Barriers
Exercise on Identifying Stressors - Internal Audit

- Take 3 minutes to reflect on one (or more) of the following questions:
  - What are the five most stressful things in your life?
    - Rate them on a scale of 1-5 (1 being the least stressful to 5 being the most stressful)
  - What are some things that make you anxious?
  - How do you take care of yourself when you are stressed out?
  - Can stress be positive? Why or why not?
Internal Audit - Phaedra’s Responses

- **Take 3 minutes to reflect on one (or more) of the following questions:**
  - What are the five most stressful things in your life?
    - Rate them on a scale of 1-5 (1 being the least stressful to 5 being the most stressful)
      - 1 - Classes
      - 2 - TA Responsibilities
      - 3 - Time Management
      - 4 - Lab Responsibilities
      - 5 - Managing my outside-of-work life (bills, relationship, etc)
  - What are some things that make you anxious?
    - Fear of making someone angry, the feeling of not being liked/accepted, fear of failure, fear of the unknown.
  - How do you take care of yourself when you are stressed out?
    - If it comes to it, I cry it out and let it happen. I always feel better afterwards even though I hate crying. If it hasn’t come to that point, I’ll take a day to do nothing when I get home and just have a chill evening.
  - Can stress be positive? Why or why not?
    - Sometimes, I find that deadlines keep me oriented while also imposing an amount of stress that is motivational, but test taking makes me too nervous for my own good.
Internal Audit - Ashley’s Responses

● Take 3 minutes to reflect on one (or more) of the following questions:
  ○ What are the five most stressful things in your life?
    ■ Rate them on a scale of 1-5 (1 being the least stressful to 5 being the most stressful)
    ● 1. Analysing my data
    ● 2. Writing my dissertation
    ● 3. Finishing up experiments
    ● 4. TA responsibilities
    ● 5. Balancing work/life responsibilities (ie. Bills, housework, social, and family time)
  ○ What are some things that make you anxious?
    ■ Fear of not finishing on time, finding a job after graduate school, medical bills, moving to a new house when the time comes
  ○ How do you take care of yourself when you are stressed out?
    ■ I take a nap, vent to my family, friends, and fiancé, read, go for a walk/exercise at the gym, watch something on netflix
  ○ Can stress be positive? Why or why not?
    ■ Yes it can be, but only in moderation. It can help motivate you to get stuff done and stress means that you care about your responsibilities, too much of it though can cause burnout!
Let’s Talk About That

● If you feel comfortable discussing and sharing some of your answers, let’s do that!

● We are all in this together, and we aren’t here to judge, we are here to help!
What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where you are and what you are doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what is going on around us.
Practicing Mindfulness

Choose one (or more) of the following to spend the next 3 minutes doing:

- Draw something that makes you feel relaxed
- Use the time to list things that give you joy
- What are you grateful for today?
- Write down what motivates and inspires you!
Mindfulness Practice - Phaedra’s Responses

- Choose one (or more) of the following to spend the next 3 minutes doing:
  - Draw something that makes you feel relaxed
  - Use the time to list things that give you joy
    - My Cats
    - My boyfriend
    - Fridays
  - What are you grateful for today?
    - I’m grateful for the opportunity to do research and to build knowledge every day
  - Write down what motivates and inspires you!
    - Carrying on the legacy of my grandma by discovering new things about Alzheimer’s Disease, so one day a family won’t have to grieve in the way we did.
Mindfulness Practice - Ashley’s Responses

- Choose one (or more) of the following to spend the next 3 minutes doing:
  - Draw something that makes you feel relaxed
  - Use the time to list things that give you joy
    - My family and fiancé
    - Pets
    - Chocolate
  - What are you grateful for today?
    - The opportunity to teach and to do research
  - Write down what motivates and inspires you!
    - The ability to help people and to one day work in a cancer research lab or to work for the CDC!
Let’s Talk About That v2.0

- If you feel comfortable discussing and sharing some of your answers, let’s do that!

- We are all in this together, and we aren’t here to judge, we are here to help!
Organizing, Balancing, and Being Mindful

- Manage your Graduate School Responsibilities!
- Prioritize the important things (like your health!)  
- Incorporate mindfulness into your school routine
  - Taking a moment each day whether it be at home, in your office, or somewhere that you enjoy to just take in the moment, and live for now.
- What can you do to avoid being overwhelmed? How do you assess your limits?  
- The KEY to avoiding burnout is taking preventive action!!
Coping Mechanisms

- Share what practices or hobbies help you cope with stress personally. Why and how do they work for you?
  
  For Phaedra, humor is a valuable coping mechanism.
  
  For Ashley, exercise is essential for reducing stress.

- What are some other ideas to consider?
Self-Care Tips and Tricks

- **Learn to say “No.”**
  - You can be diplomatic: “I don’t have time right now”
- **Know when to say “No.”**
  - Feeling like there’s too much on your plate? Time to say it!
- **Be kind to yourself**
- **Exercise regularly**
- **Eat healthy**
- **Separate work and fun**
- **Ask for help**
- **Build a support system**
- **Plan your work**
- **Schedule “me” time**

Art Credit: TheLatestKate (Redbubble)
Useful Resources at Kent State

- **Kent State University DeWeese Health Center**
  - Women’s Clinic
  - Psychological Services
  - Health Care services
  - Immunizations

- **Kent State University Recreational Services**
  - Ice Arena
  - Group-X Classes (including Yoga)
  - Pool, exercise equipment, nutrition assessment, and more!
  - Massages
More Resources at Kent State!

- The Counseling Center (White Hall, Room 325)
- Student Accessibility Services (SAS)
- LGBTQ Student Center
- Women’s Center
- Sexual and Relationship Violence Support Services (SRVSS)
- Student Legal Services (Acorn Alley)
- Campus Police
Resources in Kent and the surrounding Area

- One Love Yoga (Downtown Kent and Silk Mill Locations)
  - Student Pricing
- Center Peace Yoga Kent
- Kent Psychological Associates
- Coleman Professional Services
  - Behavioral Health Services and Emergency Services
- Town Hall II - Portage County Residents
  - Rape Crisis Center
  - Addiction Counseling
  - Women’s Halfway House
  - Emergency Services
- Community Support Services - Summit County Residents
  - Medical and Psychiatric Care
  - Emergency Services
More Resources in Kent and the Surrounding Area

- Portage Path Behavioral Health - Akron
- AxessPointe Healthcare - multiple services and locations
- Planet Fitness - super cheap rates for exercise!
  - Kent
  - Stow
  - Cuyahoga Falls
- Stark County Crisis Intervention and Recovery Center - Stark County Residents
- Ravenna RAC Center- Offers discount on gym membership for those who work at Kent State University!
Emergency and Walk-In Health Care

- University Hospitals Medical Centers
  - Kent
  - Ravenna
  - Streetsboro
- Cleveland Clinic Hospitals and Clinics
  - Kent
  - Stow-Falls
  - Akron General Hospital
Thank You!

- Thanks for coming!
- If you have questions or comments - ask now or contact us!

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