Time Management in Graduate School

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Before we get started....

What one thing could you do (that you are not doing now) that, if you did on a regular basis, would make a very positive difference in your personal life?
Before we get started....

What about in your work/school life?
Time Management

• One definition: the practice of using the time that you have available in a useful and effective way, especially in your work.

• Another: the process of planning and exercising conscious control of time spent on specific activities, especially to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity.

• Time management as self management.
Self management

Putting first things first
### Eisenhower Matrix

**Quadrant of Necessity**
- Impending deadlines (that are important and have long-term consequence to your life)
- Crisis/Emergencies
- Certain emails that may change your life (job/deadline)

**Quadrant of Quality and Personal Leadership**
- Building long-term solutions/systems
- Cultivating relationships
- Building career
- Personal/Skill development
- Improving health/wellness

**Quadrant of Deception**
- Interruptions/Distractions
- Most emails
- Some meetings
- Spending a lot of time on inconsequential tasks
- Dealing with some requests

**Quadrant of Waste**
- Most internet surfing
- Most social media
- Watching/reading news (to some extent)
- Excessive gaming/streaming
Exercise

What do some activities look like for each quadrant in grad school?
URGENT

1

Attending workshop on time management

2

3

4

Reading papers

Perfecting your teaching ppt 2 hrs before class

Developing a rubric for assignment for class you TA

Responding to email from NIH regarding a mistake you made on a grant proposal

Perfecting a meme for your SM post

Attending workshop on time management

mistake you made on a grant proposal
Exercise

What one thing could you do (that you are not doing now) that, if you did on a regular basis, would make a very positive difference in your personal life?

Did this fall in Quadrant II?
Putting it into practice

Keeping the goal and your life in perspective

• Why are you going to graduate school?
  • Support yourself and family?
  • Intellectual stimulation?
  • Have an impact/make a difference?
• Make time for cultivating these activities now.
How do I actually do the stuff in Quadrant II?

• There’s only so much time: needs to come from Quadrants 3 and 4!

• **Saying yes** to one thing means saying **no** to something else

• Be intentional with your time: align it with your priorities

• What will you be giving up/doing less?
Your turn

Now write down 3 things that are your priorities moving forward

And one that you will be eliminating/doing less
How do I do everything that I decided I want to do?
This is John:
• Second year PhD student
• Has a paper due in one of his classes
• Needs to prepare a presentation for another class
• Needs to read paper for journal club
• He’s the treasurer for his student club
• Will be TA’ing his first class in a couple of months
• His roommate is moving out
• His funding is running out after next semester
• Needs to plan his significant other’s birthday party
• His parents are visiting next week
• He still needs to find a dissertation project
• Is out of milk
How do I do everything that I decided I want to do?

“Failing to plan is planning to fail”

“Your mind is for having ideas, not holding them” -- David Allen
Identify tasks, then break them down

Task: Need to prepare for Ta’ing
Outcome: Syllabus, topics and lectures done
Next Action: Write Syllabus
Putting it into practice

Your turn

1. Write down the task/project/situation that is weighing the heaviest on your mind
2. What is the desired outcome?
3. What’s the next step?
What did you just do?

- Identified task
- Clarified goals
- Identified what to do

Getting Things Done, By David Allen
Do, delegate, defer, or drop?

Let’s look at some examples....
Identify potential members for dissertation committee

Learn how to use Photoshop

Invitation to go to scrapbooking party

Email grad coordinator about my class registration

Come up with dissertation topic

Email detailing new policy about travel
Practical Advice

1. Accept that everything can be improved
   i. Stop shooting for “perfect”
2. Begin and end each week by re-evaluating your inbox and workflow/projects
3. Weekly plans allow you to have a big picture view of what you want to accomplish + give you actionable items
4. At the very least, create a physical or electronic “inbox” to clear your mind of “stuff”
Practical Advice, part II

1. *Writing* and *Reading* should be your non-negotiable work activities
2. Start your days with QII activities
3. Recognize your high/low energy times and plan your tasks accordingly
4. Don’t waste time (yours and others’): come prepared and make meetings/class time count
5. Don’t give up if your system doesn’t “stick” at first, you might have to try a few different ones
6. Revisit your quadrants as needed
Some recommended reading

- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen R. Covey
- Getting Things Done by David Allen
- Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results by James Clear
- Four Thousand Weeks by Oliver Burkeman
Other resources
Questions?