

REIMAGINING PRODUCTIVITY: MORE SELF-CARE = LESS STRESS

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NOTES FOR THIS PROGRAM

- Keep some Post-It notes, a sheet of paper, or a Google Doc/Word Doc handy
- We'll be pausing a few times during this program to do a check-in
- Part of the 'participation' in today's program is thinking about yourself as a human being, and your own needs, and trying to be honest about yourself in the ways you may be dealing with stressors + facing fatigue and burnout



WHAT IS PRODUCTIVITY?

- When we talk about workplace productivity, we are referring largely to **how much work is accomplished in a particular work environment, over a particular period of time.**
- In the academic environment, the grad student's productivity could look like completing your coursework, taking exams, working on a dissertation, working via a TA- or RA-ship, lab work, taking on extra work inside or outside the university, internships/externships, working on trying to get your writing/research published, taking care of families & other loved ones, managing relationships with professors, committee members, peers, your students....
- Often, the university culture asks us to do nine-month-long sprints, with only some sort breaks in-between. How can we remain productive for this long?



RETHINKING PRODUCTIVITY

Some questions to ask yourself about your own 'productivity':

- Do you believe to be productive you have to constantly burn yourself out?
- And keep pushing yourself past burnout*?
 - * a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity
- Have you been 'burning the candle at both ends' and fatiguing yourself? For how long?
- Are you making plans and schedules and goals for the work you do?
- Are you aware of what stress is and how it is affecting you?
- Are you taking time to self-reflect about stressors in your life?
- When you feel fatigued, are you making time to rest up and relax?
- What are you doing to prevent fatigue and burnout?



RETHINKING PRODUCTIVITY

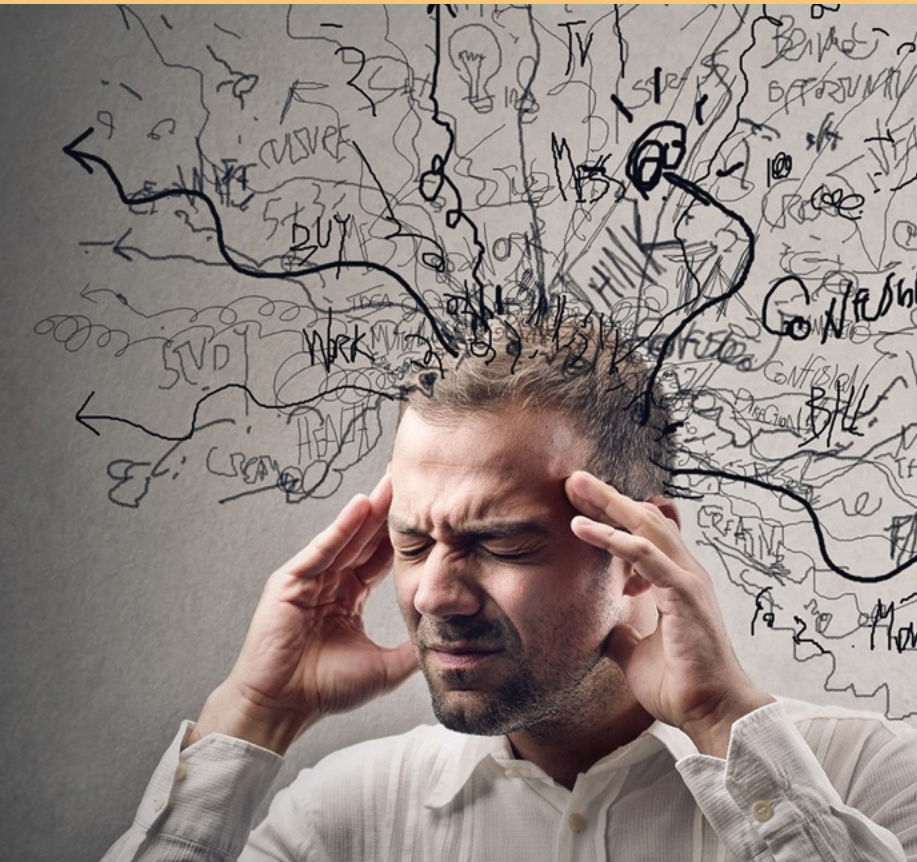
The purpose of this program is not to train us how to be better machines in a system that values endless labor, but remind ourselves that we are human beings with finite energy that can be fatigued and thus must rest to be able to do our best work.

DEFINING STRESS



- Stress is a normal human reaction that happens to everyone.
- It is neither inherently “good” nor “bad.”
- The human body is designed to experience stress and react to it.
- When you experience changes or challenges (stressors), your body produces physical and mental responses.
- Stress responses help your body adjust to new situations.
- Stress responses can help us sense danger and motivate us.
- Stress responses can also wear us down without periods of rest or relaxation.

CHRONIC STRESS



- Many people, over the course of their lives, have experienced acute stress, a dramatic physiological and psychological reaction to a specific event.
- Chronic stress, however, is a consistent sense of feeling pressured and overwhelmed over a long period of time.
- Causes of chronic stress could include poverty, a dysfunctional marriage or family, or a deeply dissatisfying job, or workaholism in general.
- Chronic stress slowly drains a person's psychological resources and damages their brains and bodies.

STRESS AND THE HUMAN BODY

Stress can lead to physical, mental, behavioral, & emotional symptoms:

Aches and pains.

Chest pain or a feeling like your heart is racing.

Exhaustion or trouble sleeping.

Headaches, dizziness or shaking.

High blood pressure.

Muscle tension or jaw clenching.

Stomach or digestive problems.

Sexual dysfunctions.

Weakened immune system.

Anxiety or irritability.

Sadness and/or depression.

Panic attacks.

LET'S TAKE A COUPLE MINUTES TO DO A PERSONAL INVENTORY OF OUR OWN SYMPTOMS...

Symptoms of stress: does anything sound familiar?

COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS	EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Memory problems<input type="checkbox"/> Inability to concentrate<input type="checkbox"/> Poor judgment<input type="checkbox"/> Seeing only the negative<input type="checkbox"/> Anxious or racing thoughts<input type="checkbox"/> Constant worrying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Moodiness<input type="checkbox"/> Irritability or short temper<input type="checkbox"/> Agitation, inability to relax<input type="checkbox"/> Feeling overwhelmed<input type="checkbox"/> Sense of loneliness and isolation<input type="checkbox"/> Depression or general unhappiness
PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS	BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Aches and pains<input type="checkbox"/> Diarrhea or constipation<input type="checkbox"/> Nausea, dizziness<input type="checkbox"/> Chest pain, rapid heartbeat<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of sex drive<input type="checkbox"/> Frequent colds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Eating more or less<input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping too much or too little<input type="checkbox"/> Isolating yourself from others<input type="checkbox"/> Procrastinating/neglecting responsibilities<input type="checkbox"/> Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax<input type="checkbox"/> Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

HOW DO WE RESPOND TO STRESS?

Stress Responses

- FIGHT:** agitated or angry response
- FLIGHT:** depressed, withdrawn, or disengaged response
- FREEZE:** can't do anything because you are simultaneously agitated and disengaged

Fawn: immediately acting to try to please to avoid any conflict.

THE UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT IS UNIQUE WITH ITS STRESSORS



ACADEMIC STRESSORS

- Internal stressors like perfectionism, pessimism, imposter syndrome, & workaholism
- Expectations to volunteer / take on service roles for little or no compensation
- Low-paying stipends and the other financial pressures of being a grad student
- The 'publish or perish' culture and having to deal with rejection with your writing/research
- Pressures of the job market + changing/shifting fields and tenure lines
- Power structures in the university that place grad students in a 'middle management' position
 - We're often balancing the idiosyncrasies of our own students + the faculty we report to
 - There are times when the tenure system allows bad actors to get away with bad behavior
- Being a minority in the academy/your field & dealing with prejudice
 - First-gen college student status; dealing with classism, sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and beyond; undocumented/immigration/international student status...

LET'S TAKE A COUPLE OF MINUTES TO EVALUATE OUR OWN ACADEMIC STRESSORS

- Internal stressors like perfectionism, pessimism, imposter syndrome, & workaholism
- Expectations to volunteer / take on service roles for little or no compensation
- Low-paying stipends and the other financial pressures of being a grad student
- The 'publish or perish' culture and having to deal with rejection with your writing/research
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SO... WHAT CAN WE DO TO COPE?



GENERAL STRESS MANAGEMENT

Yale Medicine's stress management recommendations include:

- Setting realistic goals
- Learning time management techniques
- Exercising
- Eating healthy foods
- Getting more sleep
- Making time for leisure activities
- Building stress reduction skills
- Learning and practicing mindfulness (learning to control attention)

SETTING S.M.A.R.T. GOALS

S



SPECIFIC

Be clear and specific so your goals are easier to achieve. This also helps you know how and where to get started!

M



MEASURABLE

Measurable goals can be tracked, allowing you to see your progress. They also tell you when a goal is complete.

A



ACTIONABLE

Are you able to take action to achieve the goal? Actionable goals ensure the steps to get there are within your control.

R



REALISTIC

Avoid overwhelm and unnecessary stress and frustration by making the goal realistic.

T



TIMEBOUND

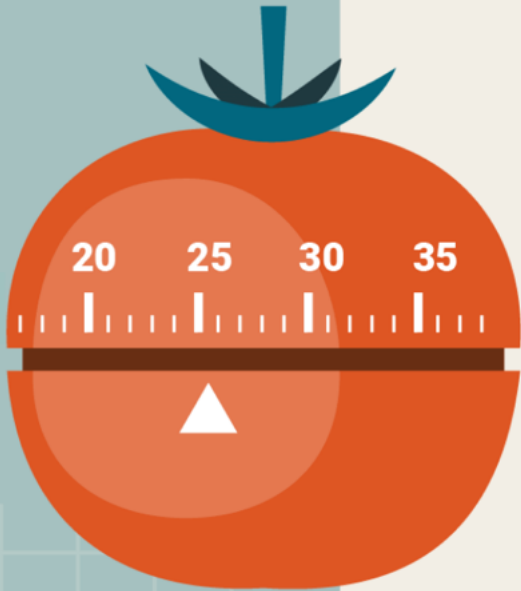
A date helps us stay focused and motivated, inspiring us and providing something to work towards.

TIME MANAGEMENT

QUICK TIPS FOR TIME MANAGEMENT





TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES



Pomodoro Technique

This technique has you **utilize a timer to break down your work into intervals**. Each interval is known as a *Pomodoro*.

WORKS WELL FOR:

-  Creative thinkers
-  Those feeling burnt out

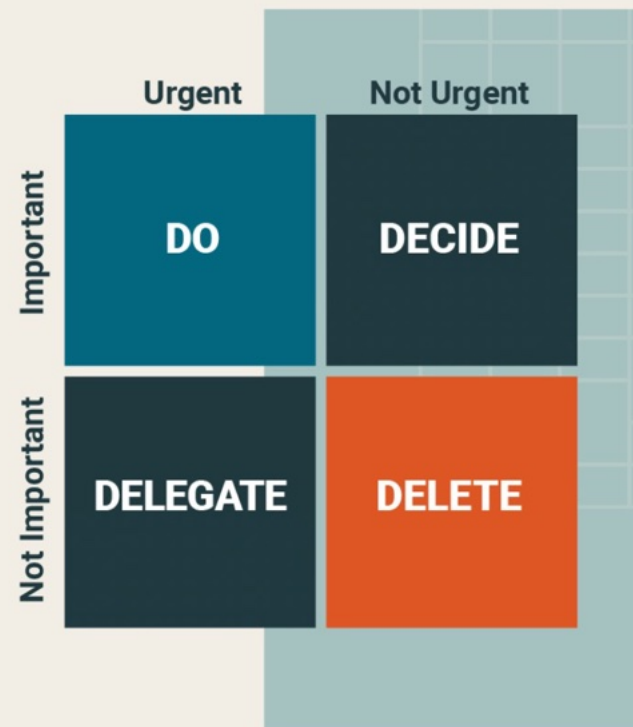
TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Eisenhower Matrix

This method has you **organize your tasks into 4 quadrants** sorting them by important vs. unimportant & urgent vs. not urgent.

WORKS WELL FOR:

- ⚖️ People with tough decisions
- ⚡ Critical thinkers





TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES



Parkinson's Law

This law is based on the idea that **the amount of time you give yourself to complete a task**, is the amount of time it will take you to complete that task.

WORKS WELL FOR:

-  Procrastinators
-  People that work well under pressure


TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Time Blocking Method

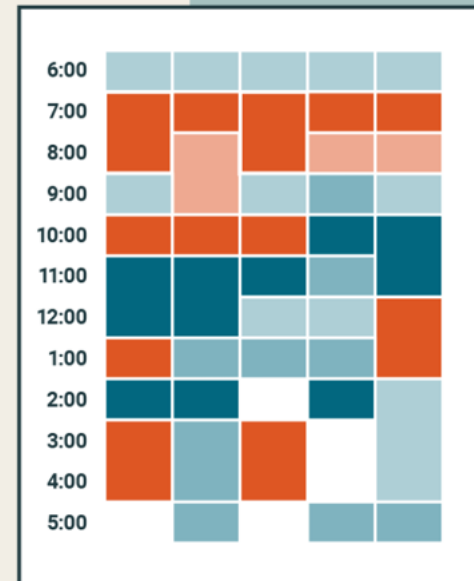
To use this method, **assign each time block in your day to a task.**

These tasks can be anything from eating breakfast to studying for a test.

WORKS WELL FOR:

 Working students/parents

 Analytical thinkers





TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Eat That Frog Technique

This technique encourages you to **start your day by first doing the things that you may not want to do**, but will benefit you in the long run.

WORKS WELL FOR:

-  Abstract thinkers
-  People with long-term goals



EXERCISING & STRESS MANAGEMENT

- **Exercise pumps up your endorphins.**

- Physical activity may help bump up the production of your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins.

- **It reduces negative effects of stress.**

- Exercise can provide stress relief for your body while imitating effects of stress, such as the flight or fight response, and helping your body and its systems practice working together through those effects.
- This can also lead to positive effects in your body—including your cardiovascular, digestive and immune systems—by helping protect your body from harmful effects of stress.

- **It improves your mood.**

- Regular exercise can increase self-confidence, improve your mood, help you relax, and lower symptoms of mild depression and anxiety.
- Exercise can also improve your sleep, which is often disrupted by stress...



MEAL PREP SUNDAY

<https://www.reddit.com/r/MealPrepSunday/>

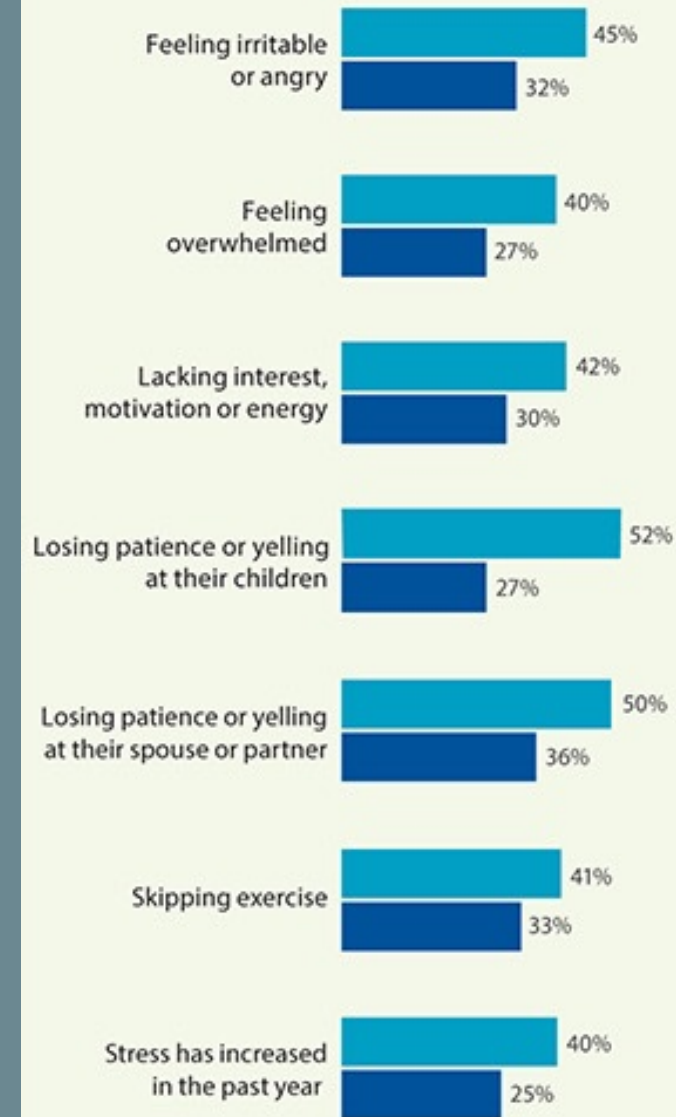


SLEEP & STRESS MANAGEMENT

- Survey findings show that stress may be getting in the way of quality sleep. American adults report sleeping an average of 6.7 hours a night — less than the minimum recommendation of seven to nine hours.
- In addition, 42 percent of adults report that their sleep quality is fair or poor and 43 percent report that stress has caused them to lie awake at night in the past month.
- When they do not get enough sleep, 21 percent of adults report feeling more stressed.
- Adults with higher reported stress levels (eight, nine or 10 on a 10-point scale) fare even worse — 45 percent feel even more stressed if they do not get enough sleep.
- Research has shown that most Americans would be happier, healthier and safer if they were to sleep an extra 60 to 90 minutes per night.

Consequences of Not Getting Enough Sleep

■ Adults who get fewer than 8 hours of sleep a night
■ Adults who get at least 8 hours of sleep a night



LEISURE AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

- “When people engage in leisure activity, they have lower stress levels, better mood, a lower heart rate and more psychological engagement — that means less boredom, which can help avoid unhealthy behaviors,” Professor Matthew Zawadzki (a health psychologist with the University of California, Merced) said.
- “But it’s important to immerse themselves in the activity and protect their leisure time from external stressors.”
- Zawadzki shows that **rumination**—or the stress within a person’s mind, as opposed to external stressors—can damage one’s health even more than support from friends can help it.
- Rumination can put a person in a bad mood, which then leads them to worry even more about the things going wrong in his or her life.
- Leisure activity that is mentally engaging breaks that cycle, allowing the person to recharge before tackling the sources of their stress.



STRESS REDUCTION SKILLS

- **Guided Imagery**
 - It's a relaxation technique that involves visualizing positive, peaceful settings like a beautiful beach or a peaceful meadow.
- **Meditation & Yoga**
 - Meditation is a practice that involves focusing or clearing your mind using a combination of mental and physical techniques.
 - Yoga is an ancient practice that involves physical poses, concentration, and deep breathing.
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**
 - It teaches you how to relax your muscles through a two-step process. First, you systematically tense particular muscle groups in your body, such as your neck and shoulders. Next, you release the tension and notice how your muscles feel when you relax them.
- **Deep Breathing**
 - Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, without forcing it. Try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Breathe in gently and regularly. Some people find it helpful to count steadily from 1 to 5. You may not be able to reach 5 at first. Then let it flow out gently, counting from 1 to 5 again, if you find this helpful. Keep doing this for at least 5 minutes.
- **Positive Self-Talk**
 - As you notice yourself saying something negative in your mind, you can stop your thought mid-stream by saying to yourself "Stop." Saying this aloud will be more powerful.

BEYOND THE GENERAL, LET'S THINK
ABOUT ACADEMIA SPECIFICALLY...



CREATE A SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR YOUR WORK

- Learn to advocate for yourself and be pro-active about your own education in order to prevent isolation and sequestering
- Try to find faculty who can mentor you and peers who support you
- Find people who can guide you through the publication & academic job market process
- Surround yourselves with those who can advise you through rejection...
- ... and those who want to genuinely celebrate your successes
- For minoritized students: find affinity group resources on campus (and allies) to help you deal with microaggressions and bias in academia

CREATE A WRITING PRACTICE FOR YOURSELF

- Create a productive and distraction free work environment for yourself
- Create a writing practice that is daily—or at least often
- Try to turn down the dial on self-criticism/perfectionism while you're writing
- Try to tune out social media/internet distractions if that's a problem for you
- Remember that writing has stages & steps—you shouldn't do everything in one sitting
- Set S.M.A.R.T. goals for your research, writing projects, and dissertation

TIME MANAGEMENT IN ACADEMIA

- Try to create time management goals that are specific to your academic tasks
- Create a plan for every semester—including your time off/breaks in-between
- Manage your own perfectionism to keep up with your semester plan
- Create a time block schedule that prioritizes leisure & self-care next to academic goals
- Make sure you're being aware of how much time you're dedicating to teaching/mentoring your own students, researching/working on your own writing and scholarship, and doing service for the university. Prioritize!

UNSCHEDULE

- Instead of scheduling large blocks of work time, which tend to be easily put off, the un-schedule prioritizes leisure, hobbies, meals, free time, and self-care.
- After that, schedule events such as classes, labs, or work.
- Concentrate only on starting. Do not aim for 8 hours of studying or reading a whole book. Simply see yourself at your desk at a particular time. Think small! (e.g., half-hour of study, getting the books needed for a paper, or starting on an outline for a paper.)
- Plan a reward for each period worked, such as calling a friend, leisure reading, studying a more enjoyable subject, or watching TV. Anticipate problems by setting an alarm to remind you to return to studying.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wed.	Thurs.	Friday	Sat.	Sunday
7:00	Dress/ Eat	Dress/ Eat	Dress/ Eat	Dress/ Eat	Dress/ Eat		
8:00	History		History		History		
9:00	Studied	Eng.		Eng.	Chem. Lab	Dress/ Eat	Dress/ Eat
10:00		Chem.	Studied	Chem.	Chem. Lab	Chores	
11:00	French		French		French		
12:00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:00	Math		Math	Studied	Math	Work	Work
2:00	Studied		Studied			Work	Work
3:00	Swim	Swim	Swim	Swim	Swim	Work	Work
4:00	Studied	Studied	Studied	Studied		Work	Work
5:00	Free/ Fun	Free/ Fun	Free/ Fun	Free/ Fun	Free/ Fun	Work	Work
6:00	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner
7:00	Studied	Studied	Studied	Studied	Free/ Fun	Free/ Fun	Chores
8:00	Studied		Studied		Free/ Fun	Free/ Fun	
9:00	Studied	Studied	Studied	Studied	Free/ Fun	Free/ Fun	
10:00	Free/ Fun	Free/ Fun	Free/ Fun	Free/ Fun	Free/ Fun	Free/ Fun	Free/ Fun
11:00	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep	Free/ Fun	Free/ Fun	Sleep
Total Hours Studied	6 hrs.	3 hrs.	6 hrs.	4 hrs.			

RE-THINKING SELF-CARE



SELF-CARE CAN LOOK LIKE...

- Taking a warm bath
- Drinking a hot cup of chamomile tea
 - In a study using rats, chamomile extract helped sleep-disturbed rodents fall asleep. Many researchers believe that chamomile tea may function like a benzodiazepine.
- Making time to read for pleasure
- Ordering delivery food from an app
- Using a coloring book for adults
- Doing a crossword puzzle
- Spending time with a pet or loved one
- Going on a walk in nature
- Doing yoga or meditating
- Writing in a journal or diary
- Taking a nap
- Drinking a glass of water

...BUT IT CAN ALSO LOOK LIKE

- Having a conversation with yourself about what stressors are affecting your life
- Being aware of your own fatigue levels and not pushing yourself too far
- Trying to create routines & practice mindfulness in the first place to reduce burnout
- Preventing yourself from ‘doomscrolling’* / limiting your social media + technology usage
 - * the act of spending an excessive amount of screen time devoted to the absorption of negative news
- Learning to say “no” to people in your professional life who ask too much of you
- Practicing healthy boundaries with family, friends, peers, students, & mentors
- Working toward removing toxic people from your life who are actively harming you
- Seeking out therapy or a trusted person to talk to about how stress is affecting you

MAKING A SELF-CARE PLAN (LET'S TAKE A FEW MINUTES...)

- Use your S.M.A.R.T. goals to create a plan that prioritizes physical, social, emotional, spiritual, and occupational self-care.
- **Physical:** light exercise, running, gym, yoga, stretching, meal planning, healthy eating, sleep
- **Social:** FaceTime, phone calls, texting, group chats, meeting with friends in-person
- **Emotional:** practicing mindfulness, setting boundaries, journaling, therapy, talking things out with your support systems
- **Religious/spiritual:** making time for religious or spiritual practices, services, and activities
- **Occupational:** set boundaries with technologies/email/coworkers/faculty, don't eat lunch at your computer while you're working, respect other people's time as well as your own, take breaks, use your academic support systems

THANK YOU!

(LET'S DO ONE BREATHING EXERCISE FOR THE ROAD BEFORE WE GO!)

- **Inhale slowly through your nose and count to 4 in your head**, filling your lungs with more air with each number.
- Hold that air for a count of 7.
- Slowly exhale through your mouth for a count of 8, focusing on getting all the air out of your lungs.



SOURCES / WORKS CITED

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