SURVIVING GRADUATE SCHOOL
Real Life Tips & Suggestions

Ana M. Salazar, MS, LPC
Please use my pronouns: She/Her/Hers
University Counseling Center
Clinical Case Manager
Discussion & Identification

Let’s identify, discuss, and nail down what it is that is stressful and troublesome as a graduate student.

If you can’t name it, you can’t tame it.

How Grad School Works

Then we’ll figure out what you may be missing or needing to succeed in your academic career, professional growth, and identify the resources and tips you need.

You don’t know what you don’t know.

Prioritizing Yes & No

Finally, we’ll have a real discussion about how to choose what to prioritize and saying the phrase “No.” like a professional.

You can do anything, but you can’t do everything.
ABOUT ME

Personal & Professional Roles
Licensed Professional Counselor (Texas)
Second Year Doctoral Student
First Generation College Student
Mother ● Partner ● Advocate ● Friend ● Sister
Colleague ● Peer ● Coworker

Stop Comparing & Start Identifying Your Stressors
If you can’t name it, you can’t tame it.

**Most common stressors**

- Time demands: family, work, study, research, self-care, daily needs
- Changing (or compounding) roles and responsibilities
- Feelings of inadequacy, fearing failure, heightened stress, other physical & emotional changes
- Needing more support than expected

Stop Comparing & Start Identifying Your Stressors
01 Debunking Traditional Time Management & Self-Care Strategies

- Time Management might be more about prioritizing than scheduling
- There is no wrong way to self-care
- Do what works within your budgets of time and money

02 Time to Have Those Difficult Discussions

- Talk to yourself
- Where CAN it give?
- Then talk to your partner, family, friends, peers
- Ask for help: Professional help, personal help, paid help

03 Start Identifying

- Walk through the problem/challenge
- What is it? Is it actually a problem?
- Counselor Cheat Sheet
Discussion & Identification: Counselor Cheat Sheet

WHAT IS STRESSFUL/IMPACTFUL

IS THIS A CHALLENGE VERSUS A PROBLEM

WHAT ARE MY EMOTIONS/REACTIONS TO THIS

HOW CAN I REALISTICALLY ADDRESS IT
Discussion & Identification: Counselor Cheat Sheet

WHAT IS STRESSFUL/IMPACTFUL

Not enough time to read all the **assigned**, much less recommended readings.

IS THIS A CHALLENGE VERSUS A PROBLEM

In advanced quantitative research design → A problem
Advanced counseling strategies → Challenge, but not a problem

WHAT ARE MY EMOTIONS/REACTIONS TO THIS

**Quant:** HOW WILL I EVER COMPLETE MY DISSERTATION IF I CAN’T GRASP QUANT

**Strategies:** Frustrated

HOW CAN I REALISTICALLY ADDRESS IT → Probably need extra input here

**Quant:** Do all the required reading, ask for recommendations for what can I skim versus read in the recommended.

**Strategies:** Read the unknown areas, skim all other required, skip recommended.
• No one is here to make you fail. Challenging is the point, failing you intentionally is not
• When someone offers to help, take them up on it
• Identify where the growth areas may be coming from:
  • Examples: Studying, writing, researching
• You really should talk to people about it, even if that’s hard
  • Professionals, peers, your program
What I Wish Someone Had Told Me

You already pay for resources & assistance

- Software, Librarian, GROW, SEAS

Read up and reach out

- Someone is into your work

Peers can make a difference

- Checks & balances

Office hours really do mean “Drop-In”

- Introduce yourself, it’s not weird
- Yes, you can really drop-in and ask questions or ask for help

Ask for a mentor

- Trust me, someone wants to work with you

Don’t be afraid to be a standout

- They don’t know what they don’t know
Recommendations & Tips for Becoming a Strong Professional

- Show up on time, turn in work on time, be a strong candidate
- **Pro Tip:** ASK if you don’t know how they want you to perform
- Stay connected with reality and trends in global professionalism
- Reprioritize when needed
- Advocate for yourself

THIS WILL BE HELPFUL IN YOUR ACADEMIC CAREER AND BEYOND
Tools...all the Tools of the Trade

• Look to your peers and those further along
• Take advantage of the provided resources & opportunities
• Look up the departments who might help you at least once a year
• Professional or presentation resources, ask around!
• Somewhere, someone, has needed that exact thing. Pass it on if its new!
Prioritizing Yes & No

You can do anything, but you can’t do everything.

What SPECIFICALLY are your personal, professional, and academic goals?

Personal Goals
Professional Goals
Academic Goals

● Specific ● Measurable ● Attainable ● Realistic ● Timely

Where do they overlap and can you multipurpose them?
Before saying “Yes” or “No”: Critically evaluate a decision

• Just because you can do anything, doesn’t mean you can do everything.
• How does this align with my goals?
• What are the time and other commitment requirements?
• Does it *literally* fit in your schedule?
**Saying No Professionally**

- "No." This a complete sentence, however, sometimes unrealistic to say.
  - Always be firm, but polite, don’t reply with a tentative.
  - Don’t ramble and don’t be overly personal.

- **When needed, be brief with your reply’s information**
  - Unfortunately, I have another presentation conflict for that timeline.
  - My other projects’ time commitments will interfere in me doing this task well.

- **Ask how else you could invest:**
  - I would appreciate another opportunity to collaborate if you have a project next semester or one with a different time-frame.
  - That sounds exciting, however, that does not fit in my skill set. Would you be willing to partner on...
If you can’t name it, you can’t tame it.

You don’t know what you don’t know.

You can do anything, but you can’t do everything.
Thank You & Good Luck!

You got this!

University Counseling Center Staff Fall 2020

counseling.tamucc.edu

361-825-2703

Instagram @tamucc_counseling