

# The Pursuit of A Healthy Work- Life Balance in Academia

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# Pre-assessment: Group Discussion

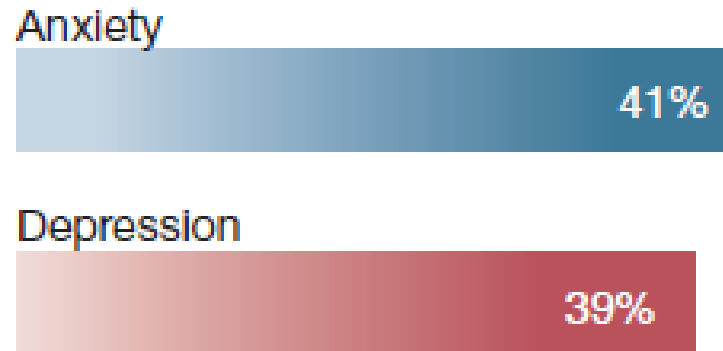
Question 1: What does work-life balance mean to you?

Question 2: How often do you feel stressed?

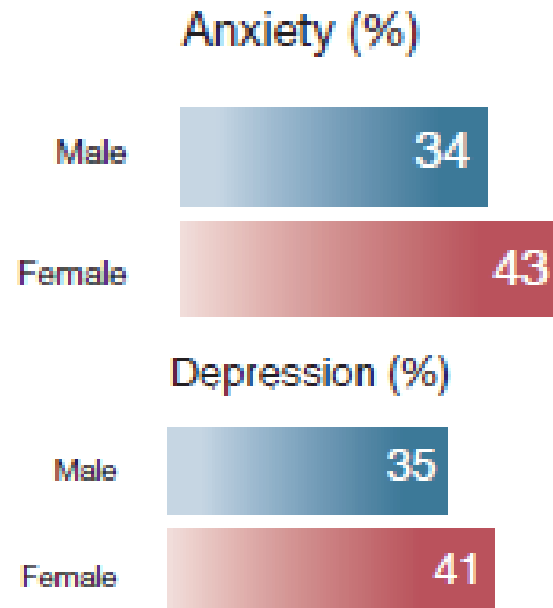
Question 3: What sort of resources are available to you through the CSU Health Network?

**“There is a mental health crisis in graduate education, and research institutions need to take action to address it.”<sup>1</sup>**

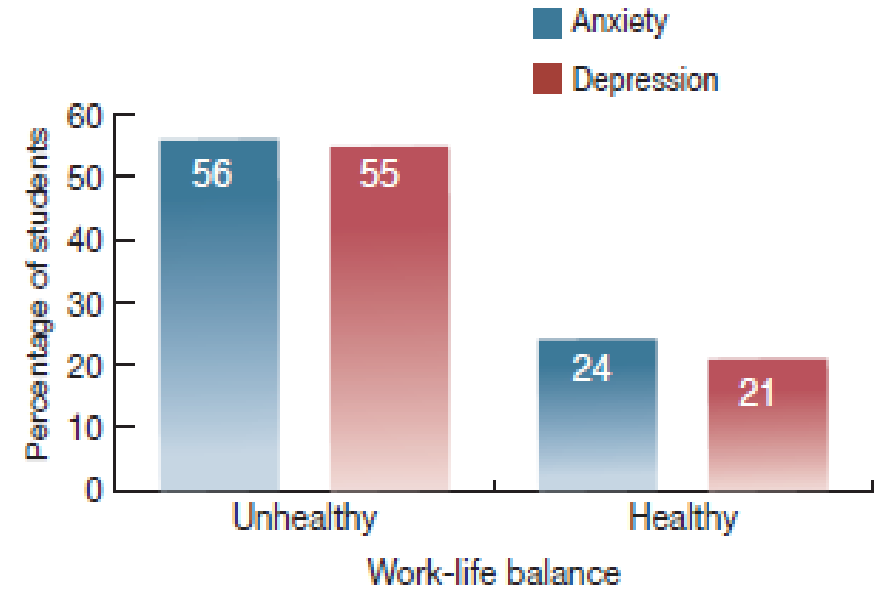
# A recent survey of ~2,300 graduate students



Overall prevalence of anxiety and depression



Disparity between female and male students



Perceived work-life balance

# Undergrads are at risk too

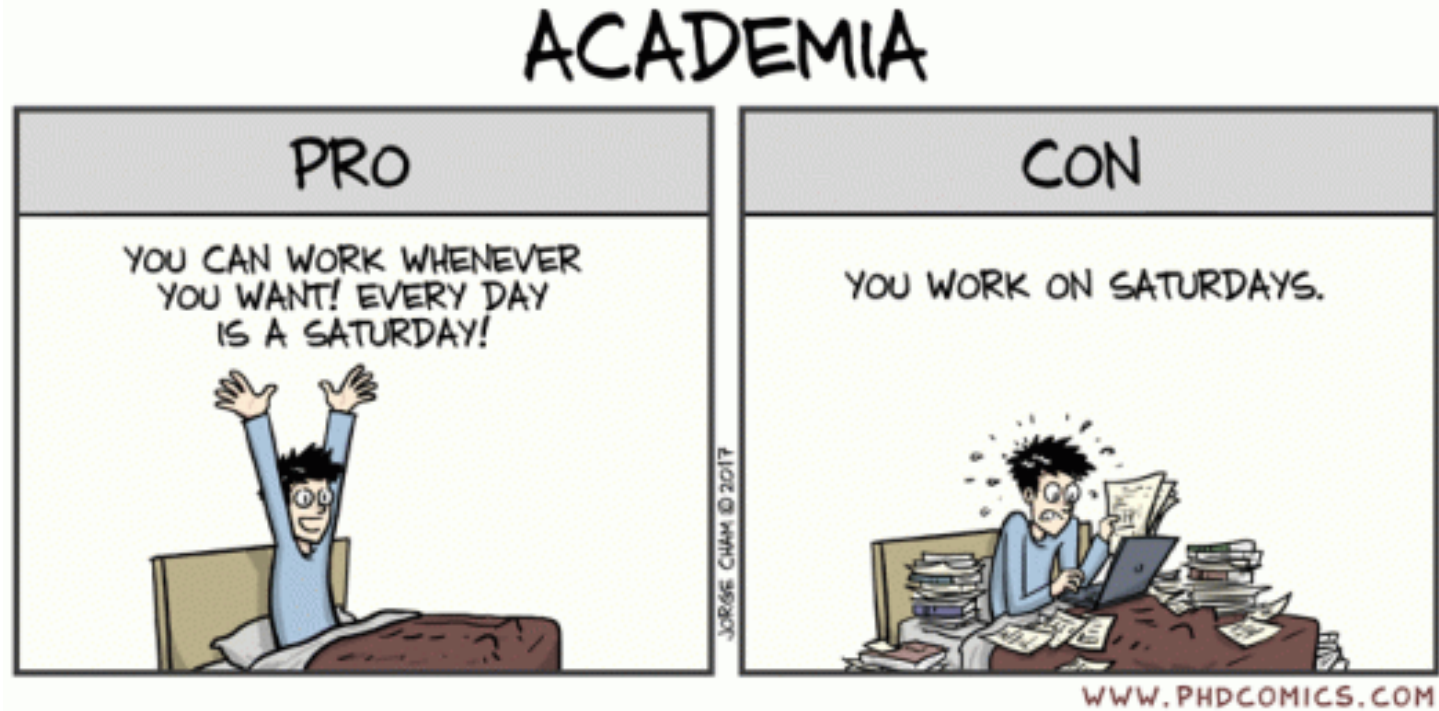
- A majority of undergraduates feel mentally and emotionally exhausted at least once during the academic year.<sup>6</sup>
- Female undergraduate students are more at risk of developing anxiety or depression.<sup>6</sup>
- Poor sleep habits are linked to increased risk of developing mental health issues over time.<sup>7</sup>

# Why is mental health important?

- 1) Graduate students' work represents a significant portion of the overall academic output of institutions. <sup>2</sup>
- 2) With a PhD drop out rate of 30-50%<sup>4</sup>, there is a serious risk of losing trained academics due to mental health issues.
- 3) Mentor- mentee relationships often fail due to lack of communication<sup>11</sup> which also affects overall work satisfaction.

# Cultural Issue

- Scientists are passionate about their work, which is often held to “absolute and subjective” standards.<sup>8</sup>
- The internet allows for instantaneous transfer of information while also making it more difficult for academics to unplug.<sup>9</sup>
- Flexibility Stigma- those who violate the “ideal-worker” norm by seeking personal accommodation <sup>10</sup>



# Some possible solutions:

## Individual

### **Mentor**

Build a honest relationship with your mentees so that they feel comfortable talking with you about sensitive topics.

### **Mentee**

Pursue options to improve your work-life-balance and recognize that it is ok to admit it to yourself and others if you're struggling.

## Institutional

Spread awareness of mental health issues in academia and normalizing conversations regarding mental health between mentors and mentees.



# Objectives

## **Tools and Strategies**

Time Management

Expressive (Compassionate) Writing

Mindfulness

Communication and Support

## **Self Reflection & Discussion**

Starting the Conversation

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# How do you spend your time?



# Time Study

12 Hour Time Study Worksheet

Hours	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
7-8 a.m.							
8-9 a.m.							
9-10 a.m.							
10-11 a.m.							
11-12 p.m.							
12-1 p.m.							
1-2 p.m.							
2-3 p.m.							
3-4 p.m.							
4-5 p.m.							
5-6 p.m.							
6-7 p.m.							
7-8 p.m.							

# Fill in schedules with short term goals

- I'll work for 3 hours a day and 4 hours one day on the weekend
- I'll set up periodic meetings with my adviser (e.g. I'll finally write that email, or ask that question)
- I'll finish the introduction to chapter 1
- I'll read 10 articles
- I'll clean out my study and get my files in order so I can start working at home
- I'll write out a potential time line for graduation

-Ellen Cooney (CSU Health Network)

# Journaling

## Journaling About Stressful Events: Effects of Cognitive Processing and Emotional Expression

Philip M. Ullrich, M.A. and Susan K. Lutgendorf, Ph.D.  
University of Iowa

The benefits of expressive writing on sleep difficulty and appearance concerns for college women

Danielle Arigo & Joshua M. Smyth

Constructive and Unconstructive Repetitive Thought

Edward R. Watkins  
University of Exeter

Writing Can Heal: Effects of Self-Compassion Writing Among Hong Kong Chinese College Students

Celia C. Y. Wong and Winnie W. S. Mak  
Chinese University of Hong Kong

# Mindfulness

“Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us.”- [mindful.org](http://mindful.org)

# CSU Health Center

## **Ellen Cooney**

Ellen.Cooney@colostate.edu

“Thesis/Dissertation Support Group” in the fall 5-6 PM. Email or call to set up a consultation.

## **Janelle Patrias**

janelle.patrias@colostate.edu

Manager of Mental Health Initiatives

CSU Health Network

Colorado State University



# Start the Conversation

## Perceived Stigma and Mental Health Care Seeking

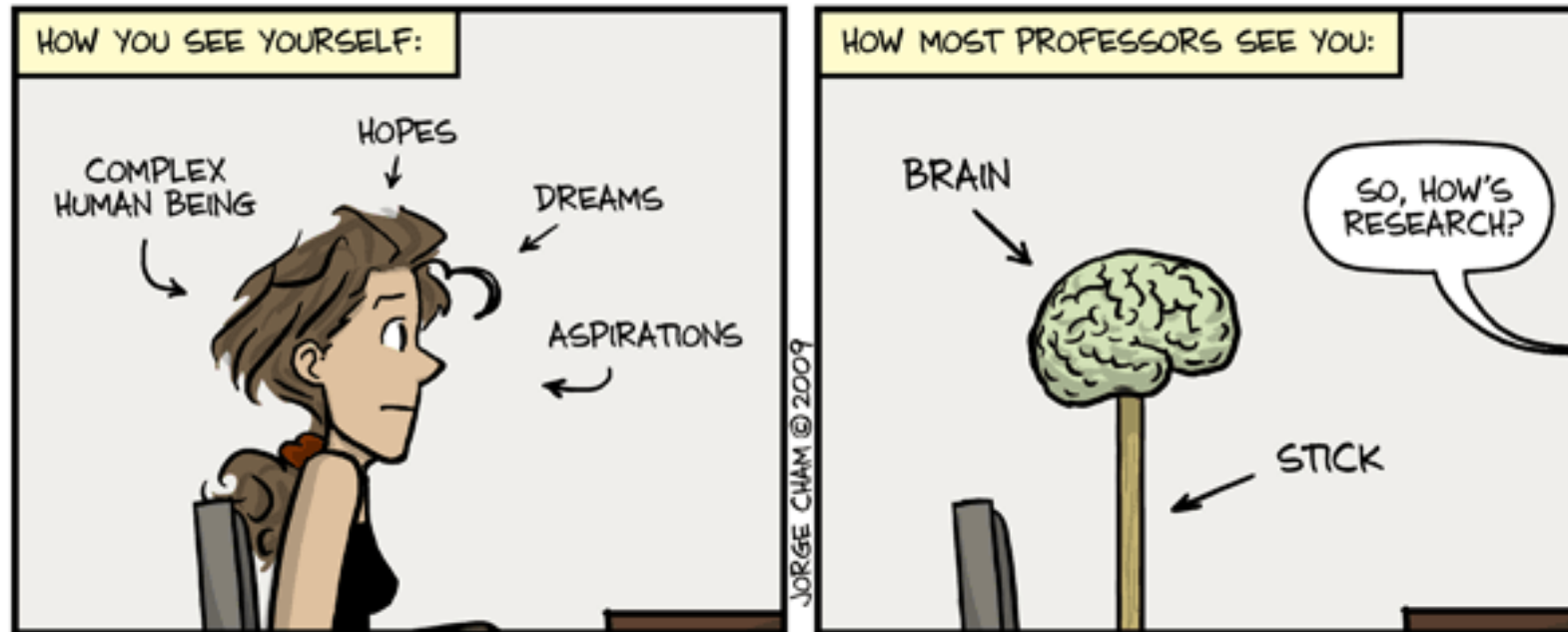
Ezra Golberstein, B.A.  
Daniel Eisenberg, Ph.D.  
Sarah E. Gollust, B.A.

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### How Stigma Interferes With Mental Health Care

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Patrick Corrigan  
University of Chicago



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# Objectives

## Tools and Strategies

Time Management

Expressive (Compassionate) Writing

Mindfulness

Communication and Support

## **Self-Reflection & Discussion**

Starting the Conversation

# Discussion: “Starting the Conversation”

## Pick 2

- **How do you feel about your research?**
- Who do you talk to when you are stressed?
- **What do you do for fun?**
- Where do you see your future you?
- **How do you feel about your work-life balance?**

# **Exercise: I need some advice**

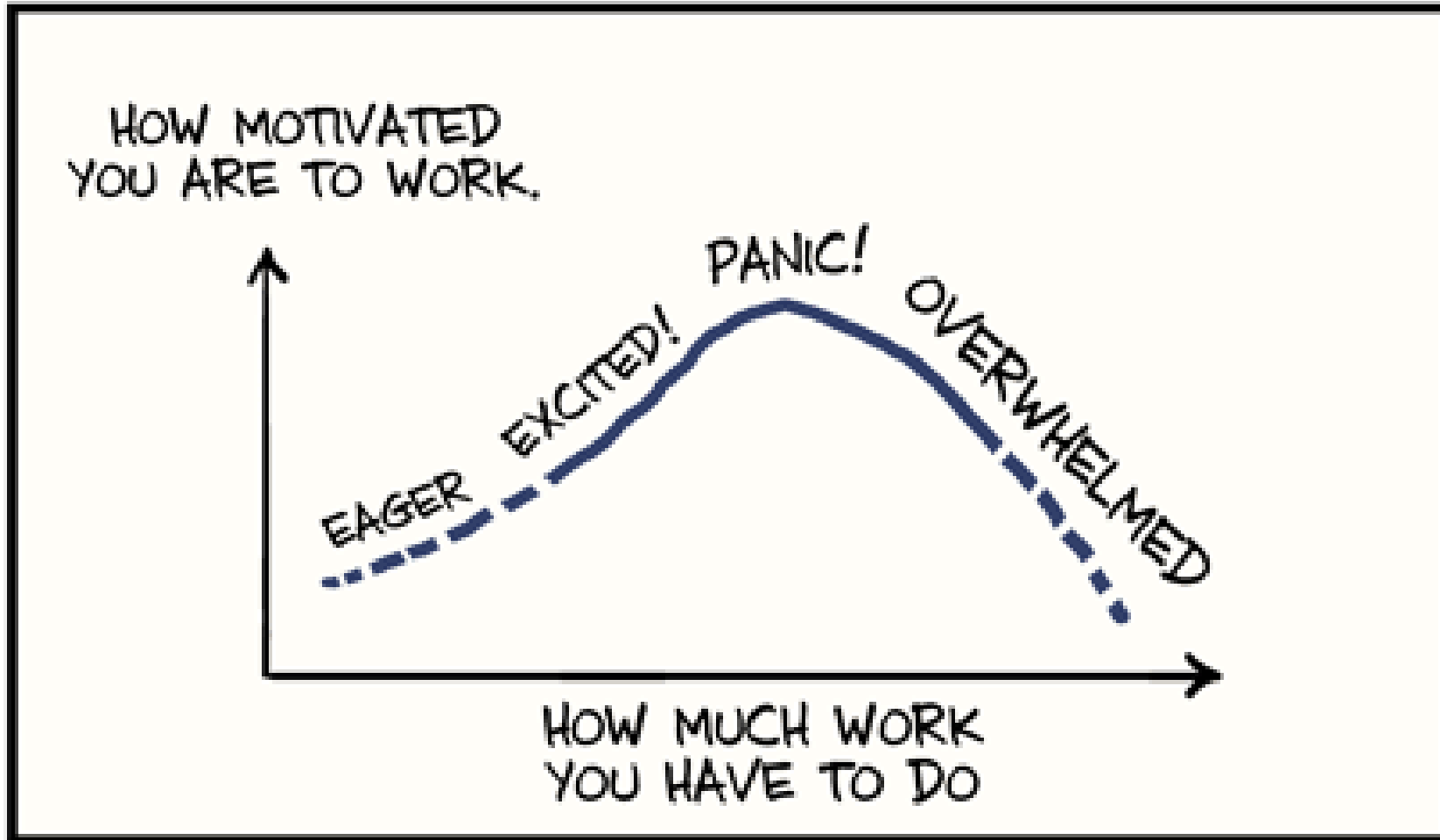
## **Break up into mentor-mentee pairs**

Mentee: You're struggling with time management, and need advice from your mentor. Ask "when was the last time you felt stressed? What did you do to overcome that stress?"

**“There is a mental health crisis in graduate education, and research institutions need to take action to address it.”<sup>1</sup>**

**What are some of the tools  
discussed in today's module that  
you will try to adopt?**

# Remember: You're not alone



# References

- <sup>1</sup> <http://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2018/03/graduate-students-need-more-mental-health-support-new-study-highlights>
- <sup>2</sup> Levecque K., et al. 2017. Work organization and mental health problems in PhD students. *Research Policy* 46, 868–879
- <sup>3</sup> Evans T., et al. 2018. Evidence for a mental health crisis in graduate education. *Nature America*. 36, 282–284.
- <sup>4</sup> Stubb J., et al. 2011. Balancing between inspiration and exhaustion: PhD students' experienced sociological well-being. *Studies on Continuing Education*. 33, 33–50.
- <sup>5</sup> <https://www.mindful.org/what-is-mindfulness/>
- <sup>6</sup> The American College Health Association. (2008). American College Health Association National College Health Assessment Spring 2008 Reference Group Executive Summary. *Journal of American College Health* , 1-16.
- <sup>7</sup> Milojevich HM. & Lukowski M.. 2016. Sleep and Mental Health in Undergraduate Students with Generally Healthy Sleep Habits. *PlosOne*. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0156372>
- <sup>8</sup> Fox MF., Fonseca, C., & Bao, J. 2011. Work and family conflict in academic sciences. Patterns and predictors among women and men in research universities. *Social Studies of Science* 41, 715-735.
- <sup>9</sup> Heijstra & Rafnsdottir. 2010. The internet and academics' workload and work-family balance. *Internet and higher Education* 13, 158-163.
- <sup>10</sup> Williams J. C. (2000). *Unbending gender: Why family and work conflict and what to do about it*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- <sup>11</sup> Straus S.E., et al. 2013. Characteristics of successful and failed mentoring relationships: a quality study across two academic health centers. *Academic Medicine* 88, 82-89.