

Defeating Self-sabotage:

**Procrastination
Perfectionism
Overcommitment**

Hugh Kearns



Who am I?

- **Flinders University, Adelaide**
- **Lecture and research**
- **Self-management**
- **The psychology of high performance**



FLINDERS
UNIVERSITY

Who We Are

Maria Gardiner

Hugh Kearns

Flinders University

iThinkWell



Introductions

- PhD Etiquette



JORGE CHAM ©THE STANFORD DAILY



Deschappelle's Coup

Mr Alexandre Deschappelles
Playing 'at odds'



World Championship Match, New York 1894



What Gets in the Way

- Patterns of behaviour
 - Overcommitting
 - Never saying No
 - Getting distracted
 - Procrastination
 - Perfectionism

- What gets in your way?



Overcommitment

- **Overloaded?**
 - **Balls and tube**
- **Overcommitment**
- **How many balls in your tube?**



Time management – saying no

- ▲ Learn how not to say YES
- ▲ Buy yourself time to think
- ▲ Give people alternatives
- ▲ Delegation



Saying NO

- Situation:
- Your supervisor/boss has asked you to consider taking on an additional project. This could be important for the department. She's expecting that you will say yes.
- Feelings:
- As you knock on her door about to say NO how do you feel.

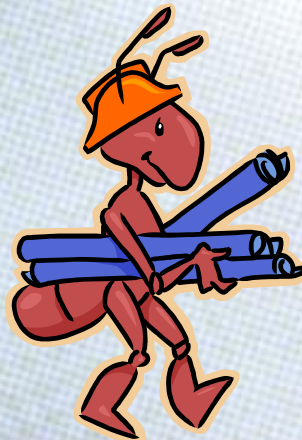
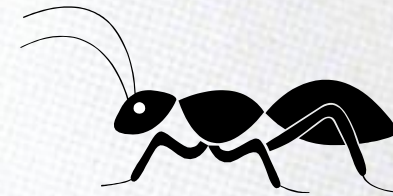


Saying NO

Situation:	Saying NO to your supervisor/boss
Feelings:	Nervous, guilty, anxious

ANTs

Automatic Negative Thoughts



Situation:	Saying NO to your supervisor/boss	
Feelings:	Nervous, guilty, anxious	
ANTS Automatic Negative Thoughts	AND SO	MATHs More Accurate Thoughts
She'll be very disappointed	She'll make me feel bad and guilty I'll feel terrible	She might be but I'm not being unreasonable
She'll be upset with me	She might take it out on me	She hasn't in the past. Unlikely.
I should be doing it	Maybe I'm not committed enough	I do good work.
She'll think I'm not committed	She might tell others It'll affect my career	I am committed. I just can't do this one thing.
I'll miss out on more chances	I'll be stuck in this job forever I'll never get a promotion I'll be falling behind Maybe I'm not up to it Maybe I'm not cut out for this type of work I knew it – I'm a failure!	Overall I've got a good track record. People forget and move on It's not a race She told me before I was doing well Ditto Not really!



Cognitive Behavioural Coaching

Situation:

Feelings:

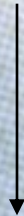
Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs)

More Accurate Thoughts (MAThs)

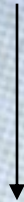


It's the THOUGHT that counts

Event

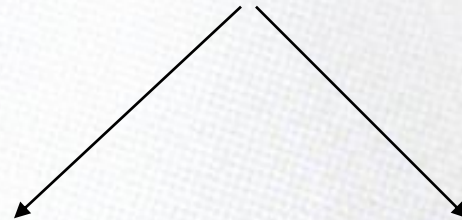


Beliefs



Feelings

Bank being sold



This could be good



Optimistic

This is bad

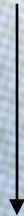


Worried

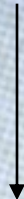
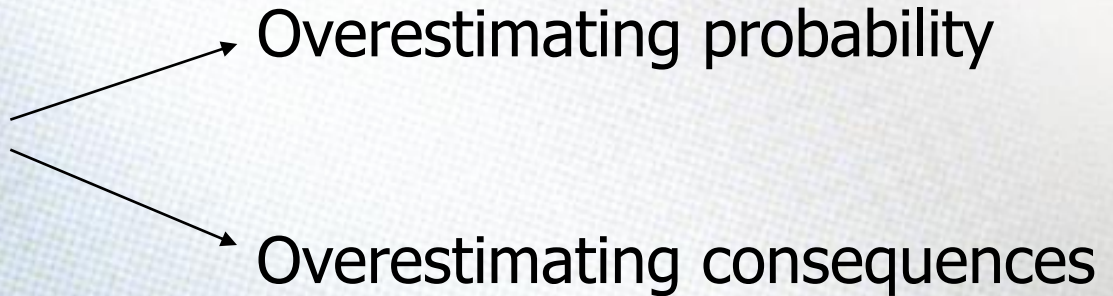


It's the THOUGHT that counts

Event



Beliefs



Feelings



The Secret Life of the Researcher



Distractions

- **Why is housework so much fun?**
- **Displacement activities**
 - Tutoring, marking
 - Grants, tangential projects
 - Endnote, formatting
 - Emails, Facebook, Solitaire
- **What is your distraction of choice?**



Distractions

- **Where you work**
 - Open plan offices
 - On the kitchen table
- **Close the door**
- **Do not disturb**
- **Earphones**



Emails

- **Number one excuse for not doing work**
- **They interrupt and break concentration**
- **Multi-tasking vs Single-tasking**
- **Email can make you dopey!**
- **Don't check first thing in the morning**
- **Log out**
- **Specific times**



secret



Be realistic:
It's not a Nobel Prize



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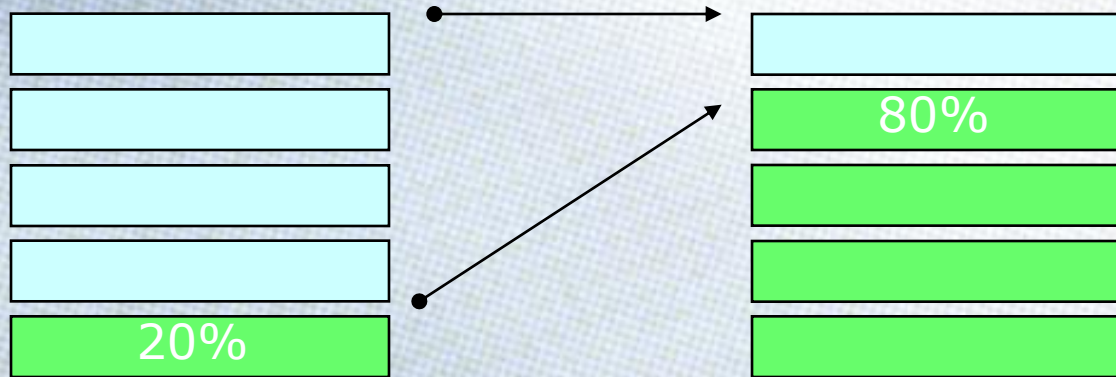
Perfectionism

- **It's not a cure for cancer**
- **Adding to the body of knowledge**
- **Academic culture**
- **You are learning how to do research**
- **My best-selling thesis**



The 80/20 Principle

- **Perfectionism**
- **The Pareto Principle – 80/20 rule**



Perfectionism

- Situation:
- You've been working on a difficult part of your paper/thesis for a couple of weeks. You've got a draft but it's not finished. It's due next Friday.
- Your supervisor comes along and says she'll take whatever you've done now as she has some time before her meeting with the Dean of Research.
- Feelings:
- As she puts her hand on the papers how do you feel



Situation:	Handing over unfinished report	
Feelings:	Anxious, worried	
ANTs Automatic Negative Thoughts	AND SO	MATHs More Accurate Thoughts
It's full of mistakes. It's rubbish	It's going to look like I'm stupid.	It's a draft.
What is she going to think of it? What is her boss going to think of it?	She'll think its stupid. No good. Sloppy.	I've explained that it's not finished.
What is she going to think of me? What is her boss going to think of me?	She'll think I'm stupid. No good. Sloppy. So will her boss.	In the past I've done good work. They know that.
It's not fair. They shouldn't do this to me.		These things happen.
This is terrible. It's a disaster.	Everyone will find out how stupid I am I'll never get my PhD I'll be kicked out of uni My family will be so disappointed I'll never get a decent job I knew it – I'm a failure!	My supervisor said I was going OK They probably would have told me by now Unlikely. They might be disappointed but they would get over it Lots of rich people don't have PhDs Not really!



Frauds

- **Imposter syndrome**
- **The belief that you are one mistake away from being exposed as a complete fraud**



Being Realistic Tips

- **Get evidence**
- **Try it out**
- **Look at what's real**
- **Just because you feel bad DOES NOT mean that it is bad!**

*“The Best is the enemy
of the Good”*



Procrastination

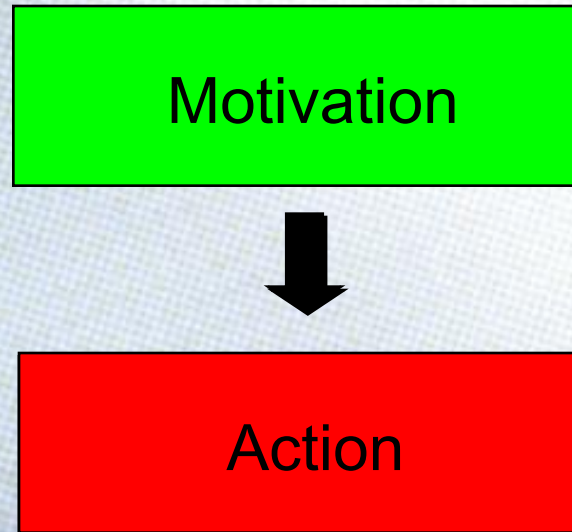
- ▲ **The black cloud**
- ▲ **Avoidance strategies**
 - Email and surfing the net
- ▲ **Waiting for the motivation fairy**

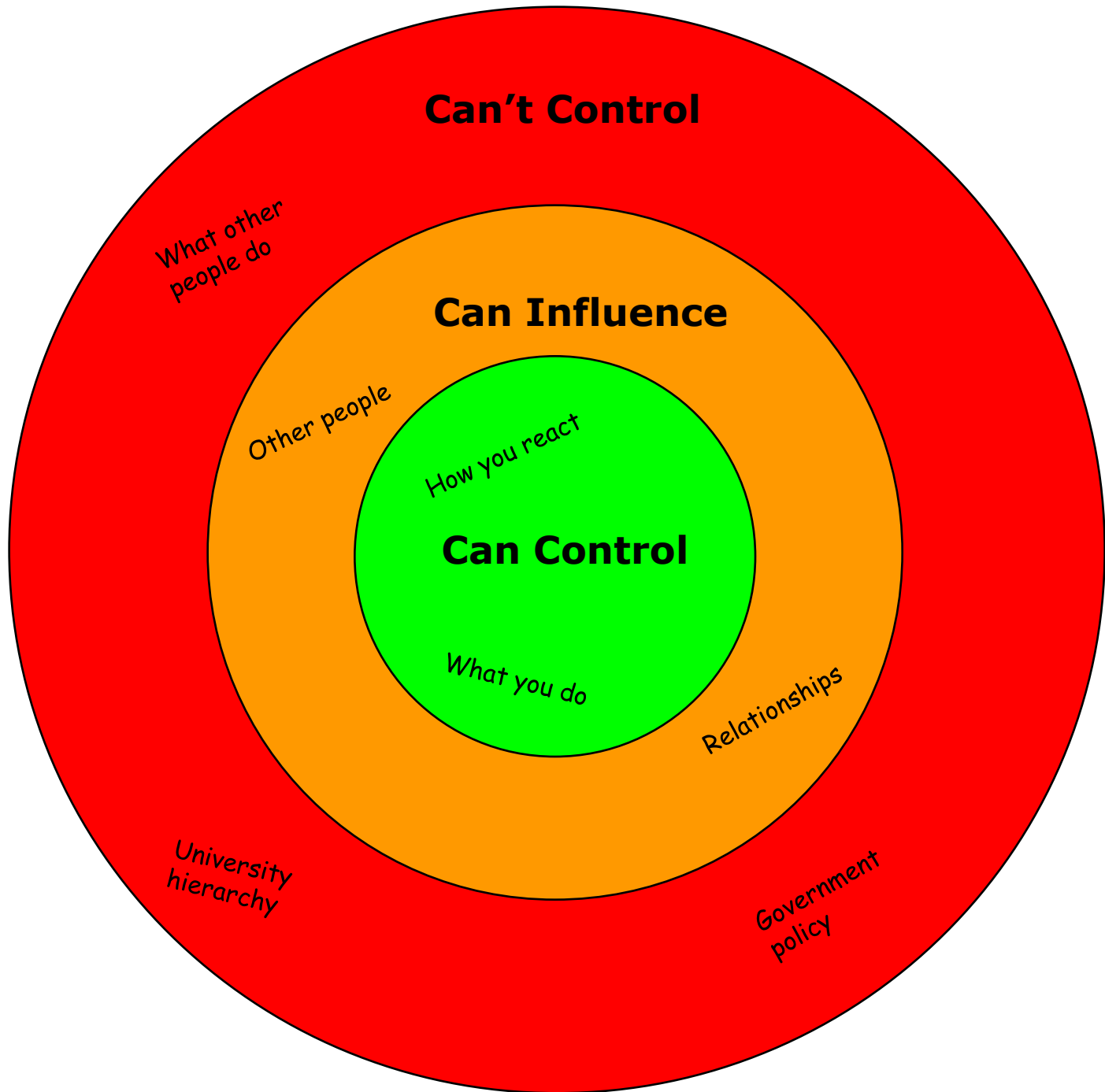


Motivation

Motivation

How motivation happens





What are your Controllables?

- **What can you do (or not do!) that could help you manage your time and research?**
- **Small and achievable steps**
- **For example:**
 - not check emails first thing
 - identify the next thing
 - break big jobs into smaller jobs
 - submit that draft

