

Maintaining a healthy work/life balance

Sometimes we talk about our professional lives and our personal lives as if they can be separated. The truth is you have one life to live. The balance between work and life is a reflection of the balance within yourself. For postgraduate researchers it is important to get a good balance between all aspects of your life. There is nothing wrong with working lots/being dedicated, if that is truly what works for you!

Doing research is like any job and you need to take time out to retain your focus and energy. Spending time away from your research may seem contradictory when the pressure is on, but it is sometimes the most positive thing you can do. Whilst the following tips may seem obvious, when you are in the thick of your work, you may forget how important these activities are to its success:

- plan in some form of regular physical exercise, eat healthy and get sufficient sleep
- put things in perspective when considering how much of your life you are spending undertaking your PhD; the temptation to work excessively long hours may not work for you overall
- plan in a holiday, even if you feel you don't have the time – it will make all the difference
- get involved in student societies or social activities
- meet regularly with family or friends unconnected with your research
- if working from home, go through your diary with your partner, family or friends, and plan in the times you can spend with them, and the times you need to be working alone
- revisit and reassess goals and priorities regularly
- learn to say “no” to unrealistic demands on your time
- challenge the “super hero” myths (in order to reclaim a balanced lifestyle), you don't have to be able to do everything
- try leaving some gaps in daily schedules, enjoying a daily technology-free break to sit quietly and reflect, making time for a hobby that requires a slower pace (e.g., reading, painting, gardening, or yoga), eating dinner at the table
- spend a few days at a GRADschool from which most participants return with increased enthusiasm for their research: “Excellent, the best fun for ages and makes you feel totally de-stressed and rested!” visit www.grad.ac.uk/GRADschools for further details
- for more tips visit www.grad.ac.uk/stayinghealthy

It's your life, so make it work for you!

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