Strategies for Success

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Strategy 1 – develop a circle of advisors (Stewart & Valian, 2018)

- your aims
  - figure out how to do your best work
  - enjoy yourself – as much as possible – in the process
- instead of a single mentor, rely on a range of people from each of whom you ask a modest amount; put yourself in the driver's seat
  - in the ideal case the thesis or post-doc supervisor will be actively helpful in many aspects of your career
- choose people who will provide constructive comments and encouragement, who will bring out your best
  - avoid or neutralize people who make you feel bad
- get professional advice from professional colleagues
- get psychosocial advice and support from people who aren't evaluating you

Strategy 2 – develop an incremental, skills-based approach: everything can be learned

- two basic ways of perceiving psychological traits (Dweck, 2006)
  - trait as fixed entity that can't be changed or trait as malleable and responsive to learning
  - Dweck finds that people persist through setbacks more when they have a growth mindset than when they have a fixed view, though there is some concern about the size of the effect (Sisk, Burgoyne, Sun, Butler, & Macnamara, 2018).
  - effort is not a sign of weakness or lack of ability but a sign of understanding that skills require effort and practice
- success in academia is a skill that one can acquire (see, e.g., Alon, 2009a, 2009b, 2010)
- learn what a professional product is: analyze successful models and copy them; try them out; get feedback
  - grant proposals
  - CV – be sure it's perfect
  - job talks of different lengths
- practice, practice, practice
- rewrite, rewrite, rewrite
- consult your circle of advisors
- use the internet – strategically; start with the references in 4 below
Whatever issue you've had, someone else has also had; see what suggestions people have and try some out.

- Don't focus on how smart or talented you are or are not, but on learning and enjoying learning.
  - Failure is inevitable and common; persevere (Haushofer, undated).

**Strategy 3 – organize workshops**

- Think about what you need to know.
- Ask someone you respect to talk on that topic.
- Topic 1 could be: what you need to know.
- Almost everything can be learned from workshops.

**Strategy 4 – learn what types of needs are common (not exhaustive)**

- Setting goals and tracking progress.
- Information about how higher education works.
- Constructive criticism of written work.
- Information about prizes, awards, fellowships, and other benefits you might be eligible for.
- Information about career trajectories.
- Suggestions for and information about further training.
- Tips on speaking in public.
- Strategies for attending conferences.
- Training in building and working with a team.
- Sympathetic critiques of self-presentational style.
- Help with time-management and procrastination problems.
- Recommendation of specific courses of action for various problems.
- Challenges to do better.
- Reassurance that you can be successful when you doubt yourself.
- Information about how different people integrate work and personal lives.
- Help with personal problems (family, friends, money, love, substance abuse).
- Advocacy.

**Strategy 5 – develop a flexible psychological plan for writing (paper, dissertation, grant proposal, other work)**

- There's no single right method or right way to write a paper or dissertation.
  - Figure out what works for you, even if it's embarrassing.
  - If the "wrong" method gets results, it's the right method.
- There's no single right personality to have.
  - Maybe work comes easily to you, maybe it doesn't; either way, you can be productive.
  - Maybe you're extremely self-confident, maybe you're plagued by self-doubt; either way, you can be productive.
• methods to consider – one or more, depending on whether you are happy with your progress or not
  o writing group or dissertation group
  o regular meetings – or not – with supervisor
  o workshops
  o work ally (Valian, 1985)
• decide on parameters
  o work every day?
  o work at particular time of day?
  o work for set time or set amount of work completed?
• VVV’s dissertation method (Valian, 1977): 15 minutes/day
  o worked every day to ensure continuity
  o decided on time rather than amount of pages because I knew I could last out a fixed period of time
  o decided on 15 min initially
  o did nothing but work during the 15 min
  o accelerated gradually, in 15-min chunks
• like the doing, like the doer
  o writing is hard work, but rewarding; articulate what is rewarding about working
• enjoy the rest of your life
• revise your plan as necessary

**Strategy 6 – think experimentally**

• treat your situation as one where you need to figure out the right combination of efforts
  o you are simultaneously the experimenter and the participant
  o as the participant, you, like every participant, are never wrong
  o as the experimenter, you, like every experimenter, will analyze the experiment if something doesn't work and modify the procedure until it does

**Strategy 7 – develop skills** (learn what experienced people say about how to become successful; it's a lot – take it one step at a time)

• communicate better in writing and presentations
  o analyze what you appreciate in other people's papers and talks
  o look on line for suggestions
  o try out different approaches to see what works for you
  o get constructive and challenging feedback
• develop emotional resilience to failure; try not to take failure personally; persevere
• learn how to balance the time you spend in different activities
• be strategic about how you present yourself to different people
  o women may be less willing to bluff than men; this doesn't mean anyone should bluff, just that they should be aware
  o acknowledging difficulty can lead to perceptions that person is struggling – thus, be careful who you talk to
• learn how the system works via a circle of advisors, not just one person
  o publishing (e.g., revise-and-resubmit is standard)
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- grants (e.g., talk to program officer)
- teaching (e.g., be efficient and effective)
- requirements for promotion and tenure (e.g., ask)
- how much service is required (e.g., observe)

- choose research topics to balance manageable projects with riskier projects
- create a website
  - many different platforms available; make sure that whichever one you use will allow people to reach your site easily
  - include research statement, teaching statement, mentoring experiences, publications, posters, special skills, links; upload a video clip of a presentation or class
  - depending on your level of experience, you may have little to enter in some categories; wait until you have a respectable amount of information; the different categories can serve as a reminder of what picture of yourself you wish to present to the world
- consider what social, professional, and academic sites you want to have a presence in
  - make sure that your personal information is private
  - think carefully about every message you send out into the world; it is easy to say something you regret

References