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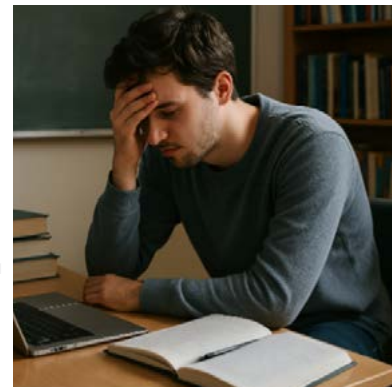
Thriving as a Graduate Student: A Guide to Mental Health and Well-being

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Thriving as a Graduate Student: A Guide to Mental Health and Well-being

Graduate students often face significant mental health challenges during their academic careers. [A 2018 study of over 2,000 graduate students published in Nature Biotechnology](#) revealed that they are more than six times as likely to experience depression and anxiety compared to the general population. On the respective scales utilized to test anxiety and depression, 41% percent of graduate students scored as having moderate to severe anxiety while 39% percent scored in the moderate to severe depression range. This compared with 6% percent of the general population previously with those same scales.



Common Mental Health Challenges in Graduate School

- **Stress and Anxiety:** Balancing deadlines, expectations, and research setbacks can be overwhelming.
- **Impostor Syndrome:** Many graduate students feel like they do not belong or are not "good enough," despite evidence of their capabilities.
- **Work-Life Imbalance:** Long hours and high expectations can make it difficult to maintain relationships, hobbies, and self-care.
- **Isolation and Loneliness:** Research can often be a solitary process, leading to feelings of disconnection.
- **Burnout:** A constant cycle of work without rest can lead to exhaustion and loss of motivation.

Strategies to Support Your Mental Health

Remember: You Are Not Alone

It is okay to ask for help. Prioritizing mental health is not a sign of weakness; it is a fundamental part of being a successful and well-rounded scholar. By taking care of yourself, you will be better equipped to navigate graduate school and thrive in your academic and professional journey.

Acknowledge Your Feelings

It is normal to feel stressed or overwhelmed at times. Recognizing and accepting your emotions is the first step toward managing them effectively.

Build a Support Network

- Connect with people who are facing similar challenges, and talking about shared experiences can help.
- Seek mentorship from faculty, advisors, or more senior students who can provide guidance and encouragement.
- Maintain relationships outside of the academic family and friends can offer perspective and support.
- Talk to your advisor about workload concerns or mental issues that you may experience - they may be more understanding than you expect.

Seeking Professional Help When Needed

- Many universities provide counseling and mental health services specifically for graduate students. [UCF Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) is a free and confidential counselling service. Do not hesitate to reach out if you need professional support.
- Attend wellness workshops and mental health awareness programs.

Establish Healthy Boundaries

- Learn to say no to additional unreasonable commitments if they jeopardize your well-being.
- Schedule time for rest and recreation; your brain needs downtime to function effectively.
- Avoid overworking yourself; taking breaks can enhance productivity and creativity.

Take Care of Physical Health

- Exercise regularly. [UCF Recreation and Wellness Center \(RWC\)](#) is a great place to stay active and incorporate physical activity into your routine. Be sure to check it out as soon as you can!
- Maintain a healthy diet and proper sleep schedule; both are critical for cognitive function and mood regulation.
- Reduce excessive caffeine and alcohol intake, as these can exacerbate anxiety and stress.

Reframe Setbacks as Learning Opportunities

- Research is full of uncertainties and failures; view them as steps toward progress.
- When facing criticism or rejection, remind yourself that growth comes from challenges.
- Celebrate small wins to acknowledge progress and maintain motivation.

References

Evans, Teresa M., et al. *Evidence for a Mental Health Crisis in Graduate Education*. *Nature Biotechnology*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2018, pp. 282–284. <https://www.nature.com/articles/nbt.4089>

UCF Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). <https://caps.sswb.ucf.edu/>

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