Work-Life Balance: Keys to Successfully Managing the Graduate School Life

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Graduate School Stressors

Academics—tests, papers, projects, research/teaching, participation
Relationships—romantic, family, friends, colleagues/peers, professors
Career/Vocational—job openings/market, best training, job search skills
Environmental Features—low/no money, competitive context, limited play

Problematic Coping Symptoms

*Anxiety/Stress
*Increased Alcohol/Drug Usage
*Procrastination
*Denial/Avoidance
*Low Motivation
*Vocational Uncertainty
*Low Focus, Concentration, or Attention
*Distractions (eat, sleep, spend, sex, travel)
*Thoughts of Quitting or Dropping Out
Work Life Balance: The SPICES Model

The SPICES Model provides a framework for examining your work life balance in graduate school. Based on an evaluation of your work life balance, results can lead to the importance of:

1. Skills associated with healthy coping with graduate school stressors
2. Wellness behaviors to be implemented both during graduate school and life outside of school
3. Key campus and community resources

Activity: Evaluating Wellness Expressions and Detractors

Social Wellness

- **Social Wellness** involves developing & maintaining healthy personal and professional relationships.

Examining Skills/Coping

- How do I manage being constantly evaluated (meetings with professors, grades, comparisons to peers)?
- How strong is my social support network? Do I use it?

Wellness Behaviors

- Plan for fun/social time. Make time for non-school friends
- Nurture professional relationships-shared projects/interests

Key Campus and Community Resources

- Student Organizations [http://www.uga.edu/stuorgs/](http://www.uga.edu/stuorgs/)
- Athens Organizations [http://www.connect2athens.com](http://www.connect2athens.com)
Physical Wellness

- **Physical Wellness** encourages regular exercise, proper nutrition and quality sleep.

**Examining Skills/Coping**
- Is good exercise, eating, and sleep a regular priority?
- Is caffeine, nicotine, & alcohol often my “go-to friend”?

**Wellness Behaviors**
- Schedule physical activity during study breaks/weekends
- In times of high academic strain, prioritize nutrition & rest

**Key Campus and Community Resources**
- Ramsey Center [http://www.recsports.uga.edu/](http://www.recsports.uga.edu/)
- Nutrition (Health Promotion) [www.uhs.uga.edu/nutrition](http://www.uhs.uga.edu/nutrition)

Intellectual Wellness

- **Intellectual Wellness** is creative and stimulating mental activities providing ongoing intellectual growth.

**Examining Skills/Coping**
- How am I improving and enhancing my capacity to learn to optimize my graduate school experience?
- How am I preparing for a career after graduate school?

**Wellness Behaviors**
- Work smarter-Work that is good vs. good enough?
- Building mentor relationships that support job search

**Key Campus and Community Resources**
- Career Center [http://www.career.uga.edu/aboutus.html](http://www.career.uga.edu/aboutus.html)
- Professional Organizations (locally and nationally)
Cultural Wellness

- Cultural Wellness is the process of engaging and learning through involvement with diversity.

Examining Skills/Coping
- How skilled am I at building healthy diverse relationships?
- How would I become cultural competent in my field?

Wellness Behaviors
- Increase diversity self awareness: Comfort vs. Discomfort
- Use class assignments to increase diversity knowledge
- Use breaks from school to travel and experience diversity

Key Campus and Community Resources
- UGA Intercultural Affairs [http://www.uga.edu/ica/](http://www.uga.edu/ica/)
- Athens/Atlanta Events [www.entertainment.georgia.com](http://www.entertainment.georgia.com)

Emotional Wellness

- Emotional Wellness is the ability to acknowledge, accept, and accurately express various feelings.

Examining Skills/Coping
- How skilled am I at expressing feelings that can facilitate relationships and connections?
- Can I successfully manage stress, anger, & sadness?

Wellness Behaviors
- Be aware of feelings to help quality decision-making.
- Utilize support networks for venting, support, and help.

Key Campus and Community Resources
- UGA Health Center-CAPS [http://www.uhs.uga.edu/CAPS](http://www.uhs.uga.edu/CAPS)
- Dr. Andy Case-Simonson [www.drandycasesimonson.com](http://www.drandycasesimonson.com)
Spiritual Wellness

- **Spiritual Wellness** is the willingness to seek meaning and purpose in human existence.

Examining Skills/Coping

- Am I aware of what brings me personal and professional meaning and purpose?
- Do my choices help me attain greater spiritual wellness?

Wellness Behaviors

- Prioritize “spiritual investment” time (yoga, worship, volunteer)
- Engage in spiritually directed goal setting/planning

Key Campus and Community Resources

- Local Religious/Spiritual Groups [www.libs.uga.edu/athens/religion](http://www.libs.uga.edu/athens/religion)
- Athens United Way [www.unitedwaynega.org/index.html](http://www.unitedwaynega.org/index.html)

Defining & Assessing Stress

The result of a perception of helplessness in facing serious life demands. Stress does not exist out in the world. It is our perception of events that elicits a stress reaction (Matheny and Riordan, 1992)

Check List of Stress Symptoms

Read each symptom carefully and indicate whether or not you believe the symptom to be characteristic of you at the present.

**Symptoms At Work/School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Difficulty concentrating</td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Feel constantly pressured &amp; behind</td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chronically complain</td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Uncertain how I am being evaluated</td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Loss of motivation</td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Confusion regarding my duties</td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Generally bored</td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>More absences/desire to stay home</td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Trouble with professors, peers, or students I supervise</td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Feeling that my school work/responsibilities is out of control</td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stress Symptom Checklist

**Symptoms in Relationships**

Subtotal_____/10

1. Thoughtlessness to others
2. Preoccupied/Unable to listen
3. Restless or Irritability
4. Emotionally withdrawn
5. Humorless
6. Limited joy from parties/vacations
7. Avoid by staring at the TV
8. Increased fights with loved ones
9. Sexual difficulties
10. Choosing alcohol over friends

**Symptoms in Physical Health**

Subtotal_____/10

1. Insomnia/more need for sleep
2. Unplanned changes in eating
3. Increased aches & pains
4. Abuse of alcohol or drugs
5. Topical sores, blisters, rashes
6. Recent allergic reactions
7. Chronic worry and anxiety
8. Chronic fatigue or apathy
9. Increased headaches, backaches, or ulcer flare-ups
10. Feeling of dizziness, queasiness, or tightness in my stomach

When More Help is Needed

**Warning Signs for Yourself and Friends**

Panic Attacks  Alcohol/Drug Abuse
Failing Grades  Depression
Hopelessness  Thoughts of Suicide

**Campus Resources**

The Graduate School  Counseling & Psychiatric Services
Trusted Peers, Friends, Family, Professors

**Community Resources**

Andy Case-Simonson, Ph.D. Licensed Psychologist. Accepting Pearce & Pearce Insurance in providing graduate-student centered individual and couples counseling in areas not limited to anxiety, depression, relationships, grief/loss and wellness.