

6 STEPS TO KISSING STRESS GOOD-BYE (EVEN IN GRAD SCHOOL)



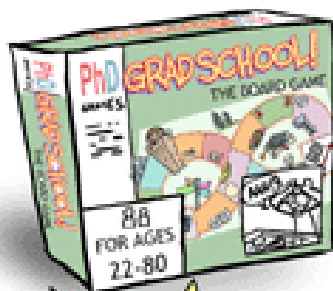
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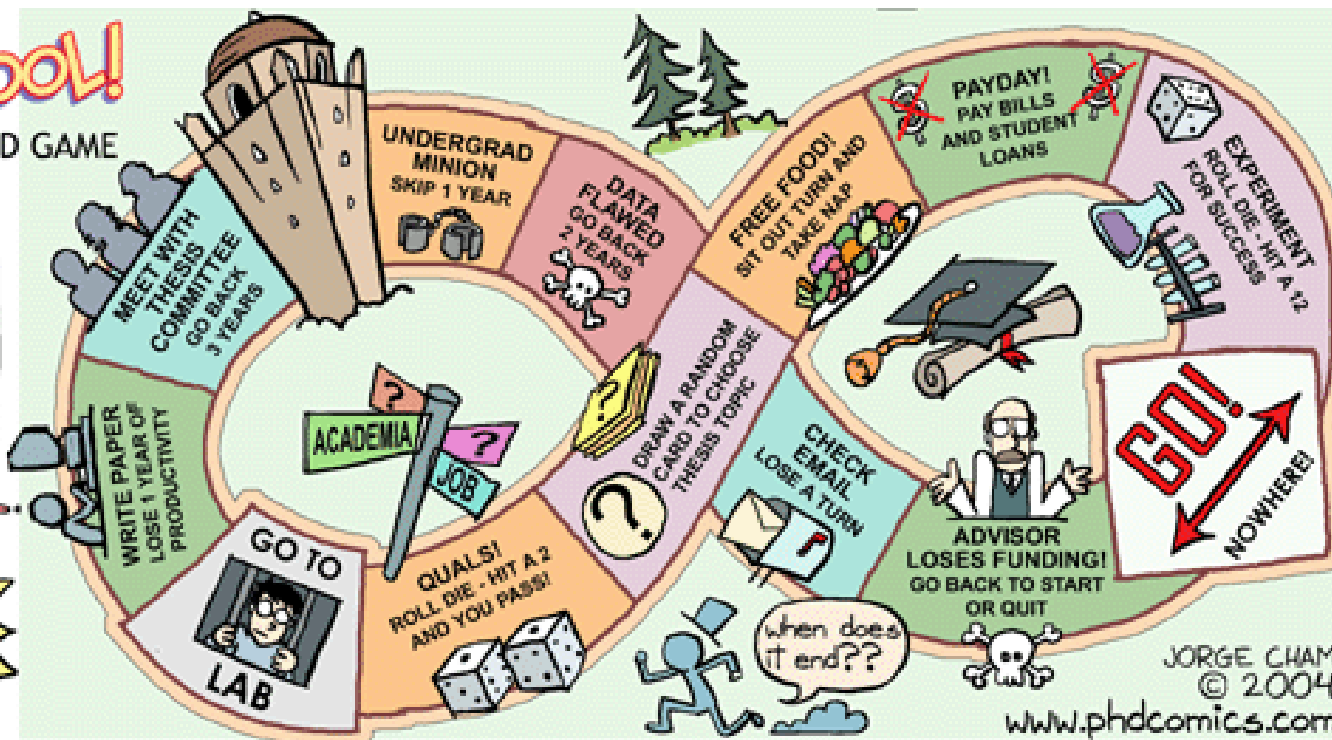
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GRAD SCHOOL!

THE BOARD GAME



FUN FOR ALL AGES!



WHAT IS STRESS?

Perception that
DEMANDS > RESOURCES

And how you respond with thoughts,
feelings, and actions.

TRUE OR FALSE?

Graduate students have
HIGHER STRESS/DISTRESS
than the general population.



TRUE

(surprise!)

AND stress is the most commonly
reported barrier to academic
performance
(American College Health Association)

AREAS OF STRESS

- **ACADEMICS**
- **SOCIAL/FAMILY**
- **FINANCIAL**
- Life (you can't pause it!)
- Identity/'otherness'
- Imposter syndrome
- Balance
- Expectations + culture of the program
- Relationships with faculty
- Self-esteem/self-worth
- Perfectionism
- Lack of experience

WHY YOU???





AFTER ALL, YOU'RE:

DRIVEN

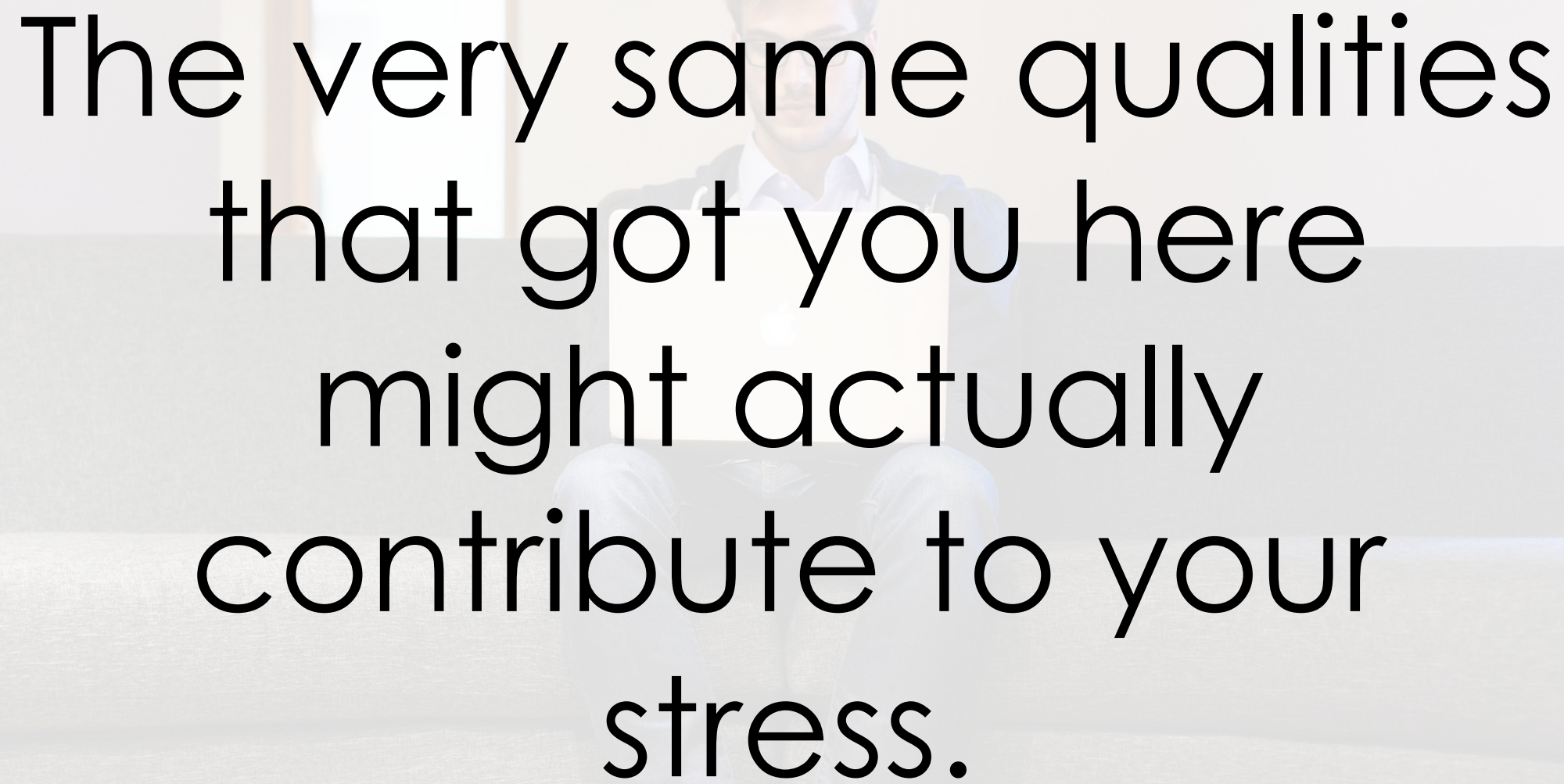
AMBITIOUS

INTELLIGENT

MOTIVATED

(YOU'RE KIND OF A BIG DEAL)

anything else?

A man with glasses and a beard, wearing a dark suit jacket, a light blue shirt, and dark trousers, is sitting on a white sofa. He is looking down at a laptop computer on his lap. The background shows a living room with a window and a wooden floor. The text is overlaid on the image in a large, black, sans-serif font.

The very same qualities
that got you here
might actually
contribute to your
stress.

Stress is higher now than it will be in your professional career,

but many students believe that if they can't handle it now, they'll never cut it.



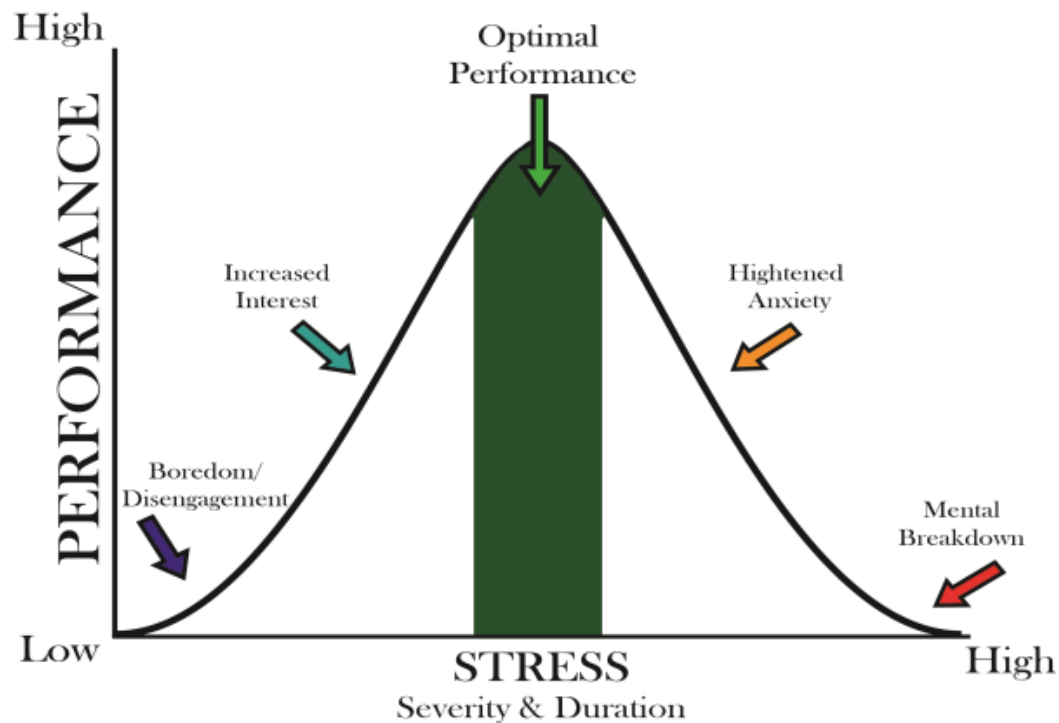
The background of the slide features a close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of a desk. In the foreground, a clear, faceted pen tip is visible, pointing towards the bottom center. Behind it, several sheets of white paper are crumpled and scattered, some showing faint blue handwriting. The overall lighting is soft and natural, creating a sense of a workspace or a place of study.

Students (and programs)
often view self-care and
quality life as a
“waste of time.”

“but I work **best** under pressure.”



YERKES-DODDSON LAW



Yes...and no.
Your performance peaks with moderate stress, but you have to stay in the green zone.

**MANAGING STRESS IS A
CRITICAL COMPONENT OF
SUCCESS.**

STEP 1: KNOW WHEN ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.



KNOW WHEN TO CALM DOWN + SLOW DOWN the 7 S's

Sun: Sleeping at night, waking in the morning, getting some sunlight.

Sleep: Getting consistent, high quality sleep.

Social: Positive and meaningful social relationships.

Starving: Are you eating nourishing foods?

Slipping: The feeling that you're falling behind, making mistakes.

Sitting: Moving your body, resting your body.

Substances: Are you abusing/relying on medication to relax, concentrate, stay alert?



STEP 2: TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOURSELF.



SLEEP...

Q: How much are you supposed to get? (A: 7-9 hours)

And how much do you get?

What gets in the way of sleep?

SLEEP DEPRIVATION EFFECTS

Your brain works a LOT harder but still can't keep up.

With just one night of lost sleep, say goodbye to flexible thinking and using new information.

Memory? What memory?

...sorry, could you repeat that? I wasn't paying attention.

You become a creature of habit (and impulse).
Especially with eating habits.

You might as well be drunk – **REALLY** drunk.
Except you don't even know it.

FEED YOUR BRAIN + BODY

Mood

Hangry is a real thing.

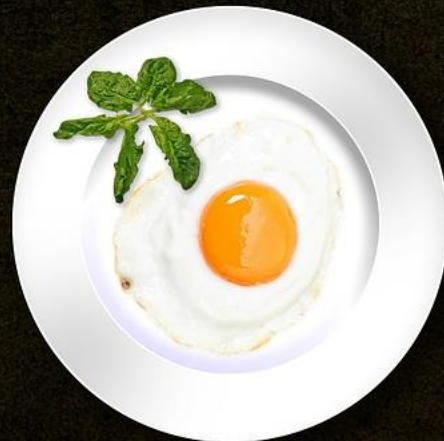
Harder to regulate emotions when you've skipped a meal.

Thinking

Veggies are especially good for memory, but habitual late-night snacking might hurt your learning and memory (at least in mice).

Eating habits

Skipping meals now contributes to overeating later.



TWO MORE SELF-CARE TIPS:

Meditate.

Formal or informal, the key is consistency.

Exercise.

2 hours of moderate (or 75 minutes of vigorous) activity every week + muscle-strengthening on 2 days per week

10 minutes at a time counts!



**STEP 3: LEARN HOW YOU RELAX
BEST.**



BREATHE (repeat)

diaphragmatic breathing

4-7-8 breathing: inhale for 4 counts, hold breath 7, exhale 8.

slow + controlled

exhale > inhale

yoga breathing

STOP-LIGHT MEDITATION

What do you normally do when you're stopped in traffic?

Use time waiting at a red light (or any natural waiting time) to breathe and take in what's around you.

A top-down view of a watercolor palette with numerous circular wells containing various colors of paint, including reds, oranges, yellows, greens, blues, and purples. The paint is slightly mixed and textured.

PLAYTIME

Laugh

Create – research shows coloring books work!

Move

CALLING THE PARTY- PLANNING COMMITTEE:

Socializing → life satisfaction → SUCCESS (even in grad school)!

Do something social with only three rules:

Something positive/productive/creative.

NO SCHOOL TALK!

With the people who support you.

STEP 4: THINK LIKE A CHEF



GET YOUR TIME IN ORDER

Work in batches: Group like tasks together rather than switching between tasks for more efficiency.

Pomodoro technique: 25 minutes of focused attention, 5 minute break, repeat for 4 cycles, then take a 15-30 minute break.

Plan according to both urgency *and* importance. Some tasks are urgent but not important (i.e., a phone call), important but not urgent (i.e., a long-term project), both urgent and important (i.e., studying for an exam coming up in a few days), or neither (i.e., absentmindedly reading a blog post).

THINK CONCRETE STEPS

- Think like everything can be figured out.
- Focus on questions with answers and solutions to your problems.

BE PREPARED

- Have a plan B for exam prep.
- Be prepared to use short breaks in the day effectively.
- Have materials prepared (i.e., notecards, articles printed) **before** you sit down to work.
- Always have a snack + water handy.

STEP 5: GET YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME.



THE MARY POPPINS REMEDY

Spoonful of sugar: Make the situation a little better and give yourself a little something positive.

Practically perfect: Be PRACTICAL about expectations, goals, and interpretation.

PLUS: Quick boosts in your mood have been found to also boost cognitive skills.

ZOOM IN OR OUT

Zoomed in too close = obsession, dwelling, taking things out of context

Zoomed out too far = getting WAY ahead of yourself, trying to please everyone, trying to do too many things at once

Bring it back into focus for the “perfect” picture.

SUPER QUICK AFFIRMATION EXERCISE:

Spend a few minutes answering these questions:

What's the first defining moment or big accomplishment that comes to mind?

What is it about you that made that possible?

Do you see that anywhere else in your life?

Can you use those strengths now?

STEP 6: DON'T FORGET TO LIVE.



WHAT YOU DO MATTERS!

Happiness =
50% genes +
10% life circumstances +
40% what you do



DOES THIS FILL ME UP?

Does this fill me up or does this drain me?

Try taking an inventory for a week:

+ for fills me up, - for drains me

What kinds of days are you having?

Raise awareness of the things that do fill you up and when you might need some more of them.

Raise awareness of the things that drain you that are in your power to change.

HERE'S YOUR RECAP.

(#NOSTRESS)

Step 1: Know when enough is enough.

Step 2: Take good care of yourself.

Step 3: Learn how you relax best.

Step 4: Think like a chef.

Step 5: Get your head in the game.

Step 6: Don't forget to live.

www.health.arizona.edu/counseling-psych-services

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