

Hopefully you are acclimated to the hectic reality of your graduate program, at least as far as getting by for the majority of the term. But come the final few weeks and class periods with approaching deadlines, we slowly succumb to stress and become frantic: final classes, grading, emails.... We might tend to procrastinate and avoid the exhaustion of facing everything altogether, but that can be dangerous and stressful in itself. In a spirit of solidarity, the following are some suggestions to my fellow graduate students to make it all the way through the end of your Spring term. The full range of possibilities for regaining composure “lies outside the scope of the present study.”

Be active. When was the last time you sat out in the sun for even just five minutes and got some fresh air? We end up taking for granted some of the small, seemingly meaningless outlets that we have at our disposal that are actually beneficial and *free*! Take a walk in a park or to corner of campus you’ve never been to, find a new fountain or pond or bench. Get out of your cubicle, get out of your apartment, get out of the library. This has to do with removing yourself from what is becoming toxic energy in order to refocus and keep the relationship to your work environment welcoming and pleasant. For the most part we enrolled in graduate programs because we *want* to be part of the university environment? It is very beneficial to leave this environment regularly and recharge by engaging in an activity other than reading, taking notes, typing, grading, in order to avoid developing a relationship to work that is always related to stress.

Reconnect. When was the last time you talked to your parents? To your siblings? To your long forgotten host mom from your study abroad eight years ago...?! Get on Skype, get on your phone, call someone, and reconnect. Social media does *not* suffice in maintaining important relationships. Reconnecting to your loved ones helps evade stress and is a great source for motivation to return to work. Buy some stationery, write a card, send a letter. Do something thoughtful for the people you care about. It sounds cheesy, but it makes a difference by interrupting the routine of your and their day. Plus, you’re able to vent to people that know and love you in a valuable way different from when you rant to your colleagues, even if your parents don’t understand your research or daunting workload or exactly why you’re *still* in school.

Eat up. I will be the first to admit that I am an emotional eater. Comfort food can be part of how we calm or, literally, comfort ourselves with something familiar. We all have our edible weaknesses, but it is important to remember that in order to tackle this insane part of the term, we need to be at our best. What we consume becomes part of our day and life and work! Too much caffeine, wine, or cheeseburgers are harmful to our health and in turn impact our productivity at work! The thing you treat yourself with (here, special foods for instance) is not a treat anymore if you have it ten days in a row just because you need comfort to ward off stress. Eat well, but in moderation.

Indulge. You may have something that you love doing that no one else likes that you might be embarrassed to admit. Reality television, comic books and cartoons, video games, etc. Over the last weeks of the term, make sure that you find the time to do the things that provide that necessary and rejuvenating escape from the everyday. Reread that book you loved when you were in ninth grade. Watch old episodes of your favorite sitcom that no one else will watch with you. Go shopping at that old thrift store that everyone else thinks is worthless. Bake. Draw. Garden. Whatever your getaway, don’t let time that should be reserved for you be overshadowed

by your looming schoolwork. Take an hour or two a week to just escape—and then back to the grind!

Finish! You've reached the end and you've got deadlines to work with. Enough. Take a deep (ujjayi) breath. Make a to-do list. Remember that it's only a few more days (though some of us still have several weeks...). Quit making excuses and get off social media! Stop talking about your horrific work load and start attacking it! Stand up from your desk, walk around for a few minutes, shake it off, sit back in child's pose (*balasana*) for a few minutes. Then put the pedal to the metal! It's *just* a term paper! They're *just* final exams! So, grade your students' papers! A year from now, a month even, what you're stressing over in *this moment* will be the least of your worries. The sooner you finish this particular task, the sooner you can be excited for the next thing on the horizon.

Remember, "it all gets done." Plus: It's summer time...!

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