Strategies for Success

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Strategy 1 – develop a circle of advisors

- 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, delineated by carol dweck (2006)
  - trait as fixed entity that can't be changed or trait as malleable and responsive to learning
  - dweck finds people persist through setbacks more when they have a malleable view of a trait than when they have a fixed view
  - effort is not a sign of weakness or lack of ability but a sign of understanding how skills develop
- success in academia is a skill that one can acquire
- learn what a professional product is: analyze successful models and copy them; try them out; get feedback
  - grant proposals
  - vita – be sure it's perfect
  - job talks of different lengths
- practice, practice, practice
- rewrite, rewrite, rewrite

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• Consult your circle of advisors
• Don't focus on how smart or talented you are or are not, but on learning and enjoying learning
  o Failure is inevitable; persevere

**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
  o figure out what works for you, even if it's embarrassing
  o if the "wrong" method gets results, it's the right method
• there's no single right personality to have
  o maybe work comes easily to you, maybe it doesn't; either way, you can be productive
  o 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
• regular meetings – or not – with supervisor
  o workshops
  o work ally
  o decide on parameters
    ▪ work every day?
    ▪ work at particular time of day?
    ▪ work for set time or set amount of work completed?
• VVV’s dissertation method2: 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
• 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
• develop emotional resilience to failure
  o ability to not take failure personally and persevere is a key element
• 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
  - 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

References
Gender Equity Project, Hunter College. See short documents and references on many topics. [http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/genderequity/searchBySubject.html](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/genderequity/searchBySubject.html)