

# Learning to fail successfully: adapting to PhD life

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# The trials of research

- Research is tricky.
- Sometimes you will fail:
  - Because the problem is too difficult.
  - Because the problem is impossible.
- Learn when to persevere and when to give up.
- Beware the sunken cost fallacy!
- Learn from failure.
- Hofstadter's Law:
  - *"A task always takes longer than you think, even when you take into account Hofstadter's Law."*

# Self-esteem

- Research is difficult.
- You're surrounded by smart people.
- Imposter syndrome!
- These feelings are normal.
- Learn from failures and celebrate successes.
- You can talk to:
  - Your supervisor(s)
  - Other PhD students
  - University counsellors

# Organise your life!

- Keep track of everything you have to do:
  - To-do list of individual, bite-size tasks
  - Projects you're working on
  - Tasks for when your brain isn't working
  - [wunderlist.com](https://wunderlist.com)
- Use a calendar!
  - [calendar.google.com](https://calendar.google.com)
- Never try to remember anything.
- Treat your PhD like a job – get into a routine.



**“I made a list of 100 things I need to do this week  
and numbered them in order of importance.  
Unfortunately, 99 are ranked #1.”**

# Get involved!

- Teach
  - Excellent opportunity to interact with students and build your CV
  - Tutorials, seminars, examples classes, lab sessions...
- Societies
  - Over 140 societies, from Real Ale to Pokémon
  - Interests, nationalities, religions, lifestyles, charities...
- Sports
  - Over 50 sports clubs, hall sport, recreational sport...
- Volunteering

# Support

- Academic:
  - Supervisor
  - CAPOD
- Personal:
  - Advice and Support Centre (ASC)
  - The Chaplain
  - Friends and family

# Good luck and enjoy!

## HOW GRAD SCHOOL IS JUST LIKE KINDERGARTEN

ALL DAY NAPPING IS ACCEPTABLE



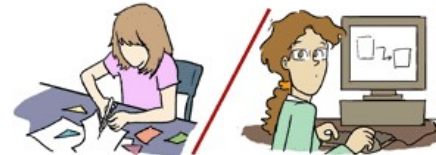
THERE IS CONSTANT ADULT SUPERVISION



YOU GET COOKIES FOR LUNCH



MOST COMMON ACTIVITY:  
CUTTING AND PASTING



THERE ARE NO GRADES  
(YOU JUST HAVE TO PLAY WELL WITH OTHERS)



CRYING FOR YOUR MOMMY IS NORMAL



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