Krista McLennan - Time Management and Resilience

Top Tips for Time Management

Different strategies work for different people, so we collated a list of things that work for people attending the workshop. They may not work for you, but they could be worth trying!

1. **Schedule your day**
   o Block times into your calendar for specific activities.
   o Plan your schedule according to when you work efficiently – use your most productive periods for important or difficult tasks and leave less productive times for e.g. emails.
   o Include breaks in your schedule.
2. **List your tasks**
   o These may be on post-it notes (beware the lost post-it), hand written (the process of writing it out can be helpful), on the computer (saves re-writing the same uncompleted tasks out again) or in an app (Todoist was recommended).
   o May help to split into a short and long term list.
   o Could be a list of jobs just to complete today, but make it realistic otherwise it can be demoralising.
3. **Prioritise**
   o A grid approach can help to prioritise the tasks, which are most urgent and which most important. It can be easy for urgent but not important tasks to displace those important tasks with longer deadlines, so you can use this to focus on which should be prioritised.
   o 'Eat the frog' – it can be best to do the worst task first, rather than putting it off by "just doing an odd job or two first" and never getting it done.
4. **Find a way to find your focus**
   o Can use the tomato timer (45 mins work followed by 15 min break each hour), but have to really focus (switch off e-mails / ignore the cat / doorbell) in these periods,
   o Block out time for a task.
   o Can use focused Zoom meetings, where everyone tunes in to have focused work time (like being in the library).
   o Complete at least one job each day before turning on e-mails.
   o Accountability meetings can help, book a meeting in advance so you have a target date for completing tasks.
5. **Take breaks**
   o This can be especially important when working solely on screens (which is exhausting).
   o Can use timers or schedule a walk or time outside within your day.

Top Tips for Resilience

These were ideas that were discussed by attendees of the ECR Monthly Meet Up.

1. **Develop your self awareness**
   - Learn to spot the signs of overwhelm in ourselves (often better at spotting it in other people).
   - Think about what your key triggers might be and plan in advance for periods that might be difficult.
   - Make self care part of your routine, don't leave it until you are overwhelmed.

2. **Take time off**
   - Make sure that we take holidays from work and that these are long enough to actually switch off and relax (it can take a few days just to stop thinking about work).
   - Actually switch off, turn off your e-mails and focus on other things.
   - Be as good about scheduling your time off as you are about scheduling work – it is just as important!

3. **Create clear borders between work and time off**
   - Some people find compartmentalising life easier than others do.
   - It has been especially challenging when working from home, but need to put measures in place to help you to take time off, whether that is putting the laptop away, turn off e-mails or moving into a different part of the house.

4. **Find things that make you feel better / build your confidence**
   - Spending time outdoors
   - Exercise
   - Crafts (form of mindfulness as focus specifically on task)
   - Mindfulness
   - Meditation
   - Volunteering
   - Socialising
   - Set up a happy e-mail folder in which you store e-mails with positive feedback / things that will make you smile

5. **Try to keep things in perspective**
   - There is always a bear in the woods.
   - Remember that failure is common, particularly in academia (anti-CV would show that even nobel prize winners have grants turned down / papers not published), important thing is not to dwell on them.