Strategies for Success
Leadership in Health Disparities Program

Lisa Medoff, Ph.D.
Learning Specialist
Stanford School of Medicine
lmedoff@stanford.edu
Extremely high volume at rapid pace

Shift from content-driven to time-driven
- Study based on what you needed to know to study based on what you have time for
- Different lecturers with different styles; may feel disjointed

New demands
- Academic
- Professional
- Social
- Identity
Confidence and Belonging

- Your voice and contributions are important
- Growth mindset vs. fixed mindset
  - Dealing with setbacks
  - Don’t be afraid to be participate and be wrong
- Sense of belonging
  - What do you need?
    - What are some signs that you’re not getting what you need?
    - What can you do when you’re not getting what you need?
  - What do you have to offer others?
Importance of Relationships

- Mentors
  - Get to know professors, TAs, professionals, other students, etc.
  - Network, ask for connections
- Help you learn where your blind spots are, what you don’t know
  - Why variety is important
  - Study groups; sharing work
- Ask for what you need
  - Go to office hours, talk after class, send emails
  - Don’t worry about imposing
  - Ask for help early and often
Importance of Relationships

- Seeking help
  - Make use of resources
    - Know what resources are
  - Early intervention
  - Know support/social groups available
    - Start one if there is not one that fits your needs

- Importance of social support
  - Appropriate social support
  - Boundaries
  - Tell others what you need
  - Do what is right for you
    - Can’t always see what is going on for others
Emotional knowledge & regulation
Know your red flags & try to prevent problems
Recognize how your attitude affects motivation, learning
2012 study of Stanford grad students (Martinez):
  Top Four Factors Affecting Academic Performance:
    ◦ Stress ~ 21%
    ◦ Anxiety ~ 17%
    ◦ Sleep difficulties ~ 12%
    ◦ Extracurricular activities ~ 6%
    ◦ Med students highest proportion users of services (33% lifetime use)
Coping With Stress and Negative Emotions

- Neglecting/suppressing emotions takes cognitive energy away from other tasks.
- Problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping are both important and work together.
- Avoidance coping linked to higher levels of stress.
- Coping is usually reactive, but proactive coping seeks challenges and does not view them as threatening.
Understand How Automatic Thoughts Affect Performance

- Watch your automatic thoughts & how they affect your emotions, motivation, and work
  - All-or-nothing or black & white thinking
  - Predicting, mind-reading
  - Overgeneralization
  - Process for change:
    - Is it true?
    - How do I know it is true?
    - Is it useful to think it right now?
    - Does thinking this help me?
    - Do I want to accept or reject it?
- PRACTICE
Study Skills

- Process as deeply as possible
  - Recall vs. familiarity, recognition
    - How do you prove you know something?
    - Think of cues for when you can’t remember
  - Pre-reading, other prep
  - Be careful with highlighting
  - Predict exam questions
Study Skills

- **Active learning**
  - Elaboration
    - Link to what you already know, make it meaningful
  - Reorganization
    - Charts, outlines, diagrams
  - Mnemonics
  - Visualization
  - Act it out
  - Explain to someone else
    - How would you help them remember?
- **Cumulative review, rather than cramming**
  - TIME & REPETITION
Study Skills

- Organize
  - Learn major concepts
  - Big categories
  - Major headings
  - Successively smaller layers of details as much as you can
Study Skills

- Studying with friends
  - Select the right partner/group
  - Agree on goals, norms
  - Teach each other

- Using practice exams
  - Don’t save for right before the exam
  - Go over right and wrong answers
  - Think about how the question might be asked differently
  - Work backwards from answer choices to question
Study Skills: Lectures

- Preview/pre-read
  - Big concepts
  - New words
  - What might be hardest to understand

- Know what works for you during lecture
  - Note-taking
    - Know what notes will look like ahead of time
    - Taking notes by hand vs. computer
  - Where to sit
  - Minimize distractions
  - Note when you did not understand, were not focused
  - Reading before vs. after lecture
Study Skills: Lectures

- **Review**
  - Within a day or two
  - What was clear, what needs clarification
  - Reorganize, restate, reformat
  - Integrate
    - With previous lectures
    - With books, other study aids
Study Atmosphere

- Know where you learn best
  - Some distractions or none?
- Home, library, classroom, coffee house, etc.
  - Why getting off campus can be helpful
- Desk, couch, table
- Lighting
- Music
- Food, drink
- Caffeine
Learning Style

- Some examples:
  - Visual/ graphic
  - Auditory
  - Read/ write
  - Kinesthetic
  - Interpersonal

- Importance of multi-modality

- Be flexible and willing to analyze strategies, change if not working

- http://www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-learning-styles-quiz
Time Management

- Plan ahead and set a schedule
  - Be both strict and flexible
  - Include free time and cushion time
  - Be accountable to someone
- Be realistic
  - Keep track of how long things actually take
Time Management

- Prioritize
  - Learn how to say no
    - Think about what you are getting out of it ~ know what you value
  - Think of your own needs, not only what others are doing
- Categorize
  - Need to, like to, would be nice
- Plan for procrastination and obstacles
  - How to ease into it when you don’t feel like working
- Monitor concentration
Time Management

- Use alarms, timers
- Break should really be a break – get up & offline
- Avoid unscheduled leisure, social, media time
- Limit going down the “rabbit hole”
  - Will this help me understand/remember? Do I have time?
  - Note what you would like to spend more time on and do it at a later dedicated time
Know and take care of your body
- When you are most alert, how much sleep you need
- Hunger, caffeine, break time
- Exercise, sunlight, fresh air very important to learning
Time Management

- Multi-task thoughtfully or share tasks when you can
  - E.g. Listen to audio review while cleaning or driving, watch lecture at the gym, share shopping and cooking with a friend
  - Carry flash cards, podcasts, etc. with you
  - However, know when you need your sanctuary
    - Planning ahead avoids guilt, anxiety
Test Taking

- Know where to sit
- Prepare to deal with test anxiety before, during test
  - Know what worries you and have strategies to deal with it
    - Relaxation, breathing
    - Combating automatic thoughts, positive thinking
    - Write down what you know, need to remember before you look at test
- Plan for timing, how you will handle it if you don’t know something
Test Taking

- Think about multiple choice as short-answer instead
- Consider each multiple choice option a separate question
- Note key words in question
  - Note use of words like not, always, never, except
- Work backwards from answers to question, if needed
- Check answers
  - Do not change unless you misread question or have other proof your answer was wrong
Test Taking: Analysis

- Did not study
  - Did not know to study
  - Did not have time
- Misunderstood information while learning
- Learned but could not recall
- Ran out of time
- Misread question
- Test anxiety
- Physical issues
- Overthought question
- Got down to 50/50
Remember What Is Important to You

- Select 2-3 that are most important to you
- Write 2-3 sentences each about why these concepts are important and how they are central to your life
- Refer back periodically, especially in times of difficulty

For example:
- Creativity, artistic expression
- Relationship with family
- Relationship with friends/significant other
- Helping others
- Influencing politics/policies
- Learning & gaining knowledge
- Athletic ability/physical fitness
- Belonging to a particular group
- Spiritual, religious values
- Sense of humor
What Can We Do For You?

- Help
- Support
- Advice
- Guidance
- Assistance