Strategies for Success

Leadership in Health Disparities Program

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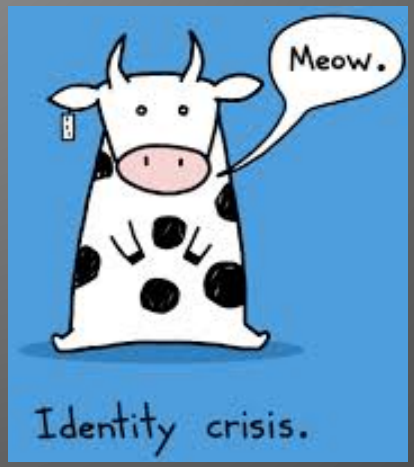
Adjusting to Medical School

- 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

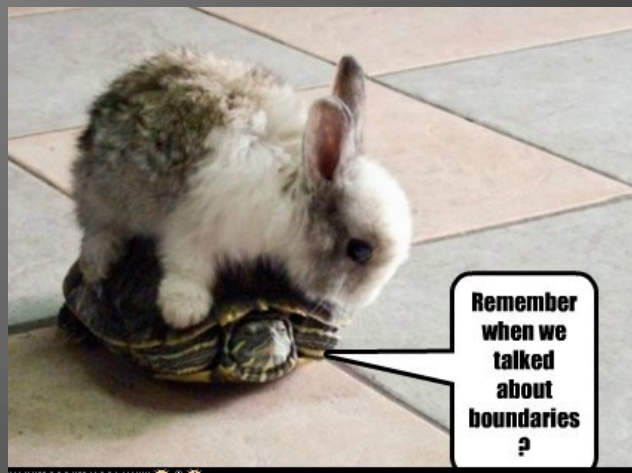
- Your voice and contributions are important
- Growth mindset vs. fixed mindset
  - Dealing with setbacks
  - Don't be afraid to be participate and be wrong
- Sense of belonging
  - What do you need?
    - What are some signs that you're not getting what you need?
    - What can you do when you're not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



Understand How Emotions Affect Performance

- 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

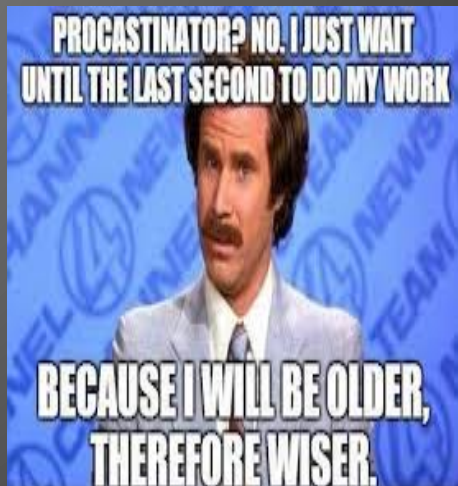
- Importance of multi-modality
- Be flexible and willing to analyze strategies, change if not working
- http://www.vark-learn.com/english/page.asp?p=questionnaire
- http://www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-learning-styles-quiz
- http://www.educationplanner.org/students/self-assessments/index.shtml

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

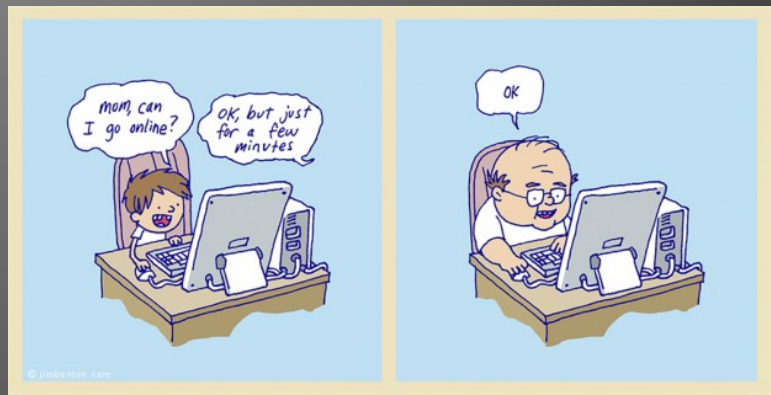
Time Management

- 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



Time Management

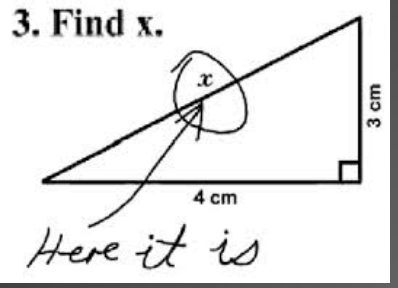
- Know and take care of your body
  - When you are most alert, how much sleep you need
  - Hunger, caffeine, break time
  - Exercise, sunlight, fresh air very important to learning

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

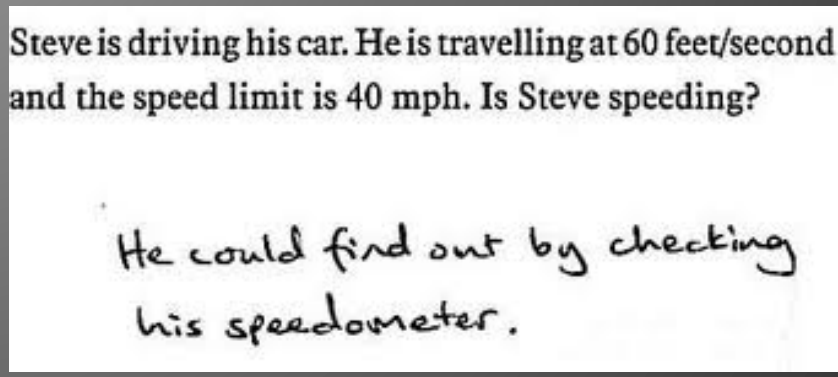


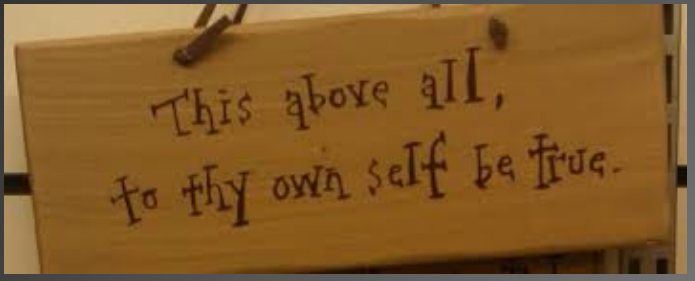
Test Taking

- 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?