



# Graduate Students



&

# Mental Health



Tyler Hummer

and Three Hours of Georgie



How do the programs that graduate students choose to participate in contribute to the mental health crisis in graduate students?

I want ...

... graduate students to be confident in their skills and abilities.

... research advisors to place value in the work-life balance of their students.

... graduate students to feel supported by their peers and the academic community

## Who?

- Northwestern Doctoral Students
- Postdoctoral researchers

## How?

- Intercept Interviews, 5-10 minutes
- “Long Interviews,” 30 - 45 minutes

## Data Points

### Insight

Measuring success in academia using comparative metrics causes grad students to use numbers to define their own success.

### Theme

Benchmarking personal value against peers' external portrayals

"I think that's where that whole imposter syndrome maybe stems from, is there's just inherent comparisons that you kind of force upon yourself, even though you know you shouldn't be doing that."

Having benchmarks for research progress and then also having very intense classes makes it very difficult. If I'm not as far in research it makes it very easy to compare to people who are maybe further along, but I'm also behind in classes compared to everyone else.

# Insight

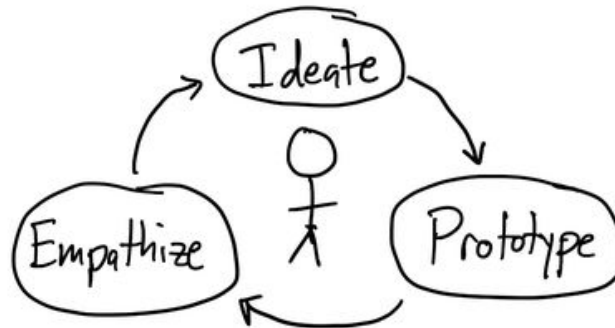
Measuring success in academia using comparative metrics causes grad students to use numbers to define their own success.



# How might we ...

... help grad students see success through a holistic lens?

Design Your Life Workshops



## Insight

Grad students can feel like failures because academia and academics doesn't talk about failure.

## Theme

Talking about mistakes and shortcomings can be therapeutic

## Data Points

"The fact that I talked about the stuff that also helped me realize a lot of things and I've never like I never said any of these out loud, but I feel like being aware of these kind of issues would help."

"I feel like talking to people and talking about this stuff with other people or like not just being isolated in your little bubble in grad school. That will help us."

## Insight

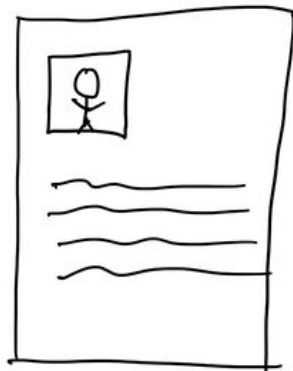
Grad students can feel like failures because academia and academics doesn't talk about failure.



## How might we ...

... normalize discussion about failures in academic circles?

Student Struggle Spotlights





## Insight

Internal processes don't match the external portrayal of grad student mental health support within academic institutions

## Theme

Finding mental health resources isn't easy

## Data Points

Like, in the realm of seeking resources for mental health stuff. I have never felt like being able to get access to resources. People say oh, just go talk to like, University Counseling or whatever or like, go find like, external resources. I have never found that accessible.

"People say like, oh, fine, mental health resources are there. The reality is like, they're not out there. I gotta figure it out myself. So, yeah, like I think the university has a lot of advertising for resources that aren't working."

# Insight

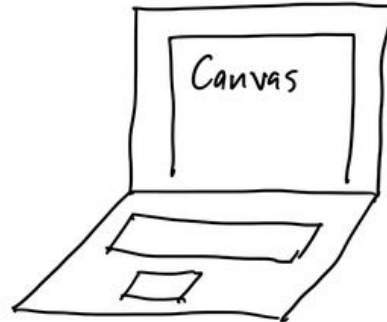
Internal processes don't match the external portrayal of grad student mental health support within academic institutions



# How might we ...

... create new ways for grad students to easily access mental health resources?

Mental Health Resources Canvas Page





Thanks!



# Insight

# How might we ...

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... help grad students see success through a holistic lens?

Grad students can feel like failures because academia and academics doesn't talk about failure.



... normalize discussion about failures in academic circles?

Internal processes don't match the external portrayal of grad student mental health support within academic institutions



... create new ways for grad students to easily access mental health resources?

### **Theme**

Benchmarking personal value  
against peers' external  
portrayals

### **Insight**

Measuring success in  
academia using comparative  
metrics cause grad students  
to use numbers to define their  
own success.

### **HMW**

help grad students see  
success through a holistic  
lens?

### **Data Point:**

Having the having like  
benchmarks and research to get  
to like progressing through and  
then also having like very intense  
classes makes it very difficult.  
Like if I'm not as far in the  
research angle it makes it very  
easy to compare the people who  
are maybe further in that angle,  
but I'm also still very behind the  
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else at least.

### **Data Point:**

I think that's where that  
whole imposter syndrome  
maybe stems from, is  
there's just inherent  
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of force upon yourself,  
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shouldn't be doing that.

**Theme**

Finding mental health resources isn't easy

**Insight**

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**HMW**

create new ways for grad students to easily access mental health resources

**Data Point:**

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### **Theme**

Talking about these things can be therapeutic

### **Insight**

Grad students feel like failures because academia and academics doesn't talk about failure.

### **HMW**

normalize discussion about failures in academic circles?

### **Data Point:**

“The fact that I talked about the stuff that also helped me realize a lot of things and I've never like I never said any of these out loud, but I feel like being aware of these kind of issues would help.”

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