

Part 9: Addressing External Stressors

Addressing Conflict:

- **Accommodating:** The goal is not really important, but the stability of the relationship is very important. The tendency is to accommodate the other person and abandon your goal in order to maintain the relationship.
- **Avoiding:** The goal is not really that important, but neither is the relationship. If neither the goal nor relationship is of priority, the tendency is to simply do whatever is easiest to avoid the conflict and stress associated with it.
- **Compromising:** Both the goal and the relationship are important, but neither is especially important. In these situations, the parties can negotiate so that they each win a little and lose a little. You might push a little to reach that goal, but not too hard.
- **Collaborating:** Both the goal and the relationship are really, really important. It may even be impossible to decide which one is *more* important. In these situations, the use of a problem-solving approach can help all parties to reach an agreement that satisfies everyone.
- **Competing:** The goal is of the utmost importance and the relationship is not, or at least not in comparison. In these cases, you often do what it takes to achieve your goal, despite the potential impact it may have on the relationship.

Addressing Bullying:

- Find outlets to reduce stress
- Build identity outside of work/academia
- Speak up
- Document your experiences
- Expand your network to include allies
- Know institutional resources for support

Sources:

https://www.graduate.ombudsman.vt.edu/disrupting_academic_bullying.html

Closing Tips:

1. **Conflict and stress are normal parts of life. Bullying is not.**
We must learn how to cope in positive ways and combat harassment.



2. Reflect on the importance of the goal(s) and relationship(s) first.

Some things can't be taken back.

3. If you are unsure where to start, contact the ombudsperson.

It's their job and you'll retain control.

Additional Resources:

- **Conflict & Bullying:** The Ombudsperson and Graduate School can help Graduate Students navigate conflicts and address bullying.
 - **Graduate Ombudsperson:** Confidential assistance with conflicts, mediated support, advice <https://www.graduate.ombudsman.vt.edu/index.html>
 - **Disrupting Academic Bullying:** Reporting options, strategies for dealing with academic bullying, tips for recovering from academic bullying https://graduateschool.vt.edu/student-services/we-hear-your-voice/disrupting_academic_bullying.html
- **Discrimination & Bias:**
 - **What should you do if you experience or witness instances of bias/discrimination at Virginia Tech?** Learn more here: <https://news.vt.edu/notices/2023/09/oea-reporting-discrimination-harassment.html>
 - **Gender-based discrimination or violence can be reported to the Virginia Tech Title IX Office:** Learn more about Title IX, the reporting process, your rights, etc: <https://www.stopabuse.vt.edu/> and see the training material https://oea.vt.edu/title-ix-vawa/titleix_training.html
 - **Options and Resources for Dealing with Discrimination & Bias** from the Office for Equity and Accessibility <https://oea.vt.edu/harassment-discrimination.html>
- **Meet your research/writing goals:**
 - **Develop a semester schedule using the mode taught in the “Every Semester Needs a Plan” NCFDD Webinar (recording):** This planning webinar helps you identify your personal and professional goals, create a strategic plan to accomplish them, and identify the types of community, support, and accountability you need to make this a productive and balanced semester. After clicking on the link below, click on “Join Now”, select the institution and register for free. <https://www.facultydiversity.org/webinars/semesterplan18>
 - **Meet weekly with a Writing Coach:** At the Writing Center, you can request a weekly appointment with a Writing Coach to help with long-range projects. We recommend booking a regular appointment first to be sure you find the right coach before booking more regular appointments. At the end of a session, you can ask your coach to reserve a weekly appointment slot for you. <https://lib.vt.edu/study-learn/writing-center.html>



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● Support for Teaching & GTAs

- Teaching & Learning in Fall 2020 Resources: <https://www.provost.vt.edu/teaching-and-learning.html>
- Technology-Enhanced Online Learning Strategies (TLOS): <https://tlos.vt.edu/>
- TLOS Professional Development Network (free trainings!): <https://profdev.tlos.vt.edu/>
- VT Graduate Academy for Teaching Excellence (VTGrATE) related information: <https://news.vt.edu/articles/2022/04/gta-academy-for-excellence.html>
<https://teaching.vt.edu/hub/graduate-student-resources.html>

● Hokie Wellness Workshops: Workshops on topics such as financial management, relationships, and resiliency: <https://hokiewellness.vt.edu/students/workshops.html>

● Financial Support

- Graduate School info about funding: <https://graduateschool.vt.edu/funding.html>
- The Dean of Students office offers emergency grants that help students (including grad students!) with issues such as food, health, and housing needs. Contact the team at 540-231-3787 (after hours number: enter 540-231-6411 then press 1) or dean.students@vt.edu.

● Food Insecurity: Unfortunately, it is very common for grad students to experience food insecurity. There are resources available to support you.

- **209 Manna Ministries, Blacksburg, VA (adjacent to campus):** VT students can shop for food on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 4 - 6:30 p.m. While the organization is located inside a Methodist campus ministry, all are welcome. Learn more: <https://www.209marketplace.com/>
- **Interfaith Food Pantry, Blacksburg, VA:** qualified residents of Blacksburg and McCoy are welcome to shop at this pantry, which is open weekly Monday and Tuesday from 4 – 6 pm and Wednesday and Thursday from 10 am – 11:30 am. Learn more: <http://newrivercommunityaction.org/IFP/>
- **The Giving Tree, Christiansburg, VA:** NRV residents can shop for groceries every three weeks. Open on Friday evenings, see their website for more information about their schedule. Although the organization is located in a church, all are welcome. <https://givingtreechristiansburg.weebly.com/>
- **Other community resources** can be found in the NRV Food Assistance Directory: <https://newrivercommunityaction.org/blog/2023/05/12/nrv-food-assistance-directory-2023-2024/>
- **If you are not in the Blacksburg area,** this site may help you find food banks in your area: <https://www.foodpantries.org/>

● Resources for Grad Students with Partners and/or Families

- Information about support for spouses, partners & children including child care: <https://graduateschool.vt.edu/student-services/spouses-partners-and-children.html>



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- **Little Hokie Hand-Me-Down:** The Grad School, in partnership with the Graduate Student Assembly and Women's Center at Virginia Tech sponsors the Little Hokie Hand-Me-Down event annually. This event offers university students and staff members with children the opportunity to "shop" for a wide range of infant and children's clothes, accessories, and other items they may need, free of charge. Watch the GLC weekly listserv for event announcements.
- **Resources & Info about Housing (on-campus & off-campus):**
https://housing.vt.edu/contracts/apply/graduate_students.html
- **Student Legal Services at Virginia Tech (SLS at VT)** provides free and confidential legal advice to currently enrolled Virginia Tech students (including Blacksburg VCOM students) and Virginia Tech registered student organizations (RSOs) at the Blacksburg campus. The legal services at SLS are provided by a VA licensed attorney in good standing with the VA State Bar. The SLS attorney provides legal advice on a variety of matters such as, but not limited to, leases, criminal charges, traffic violations, contracts, employment, consumer issues, immigration, etc. Also, the attorney can prepare basic legal documents such as wills, powers of attorney, and some contracts. Limited advice and assistance is provided in tax, and family law matters, such as divorce and custody. If the matter is such that the SLS attorney cannot help you, the attorney will try and provide you with referrals for outside lawyers who can assist you. <https://www.legal.sga.vt.edu/>
- **Taking Leave for Health or Emergency Reasons:** Life happens, and sometimes it's too much to handle all that life is throwing at you while still taking classes. If something happens, contact Schiffert Health Center, Cook Counseling and/or the Dean of Students (DOS). Providers from Cook Counseling can communicate with DOS on your behalf if need be.
 - **Academic Relief:** If you experience a major medical, psychiatric, or psychological problem during your time as a student, the 'Academic Relief' program gives you the opportunity to take incompletes or withdraw from one or more of your classes. Cook or Schiffert providers must sign off on this; students may use Academic Relief during no more than 2 semesters during their time as a VT student.
 - Academic Relief for psychiatric or psychological reasons: (through Cook Counseling): https://ucc.vt.edu/academic_support.html
 - Academic Relief for medical reasons (through Schiffert Health Center): https://healthcenter.vt.edu/medical_records/academic_relief.html
- **Changing course if a PhD doesn't turn out to be what you want:** It's not uncommon for students to transition from a PhD to a Master's degree; if this route makes sense to you and you're worried about discussing it with your advisor, seek support from the Graduate school and/or the Ombudsperson. The following highlights the experience of a VT student who decided to earn a second MS instead of finish her PhD: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/08/05/why-mastering-out-phd-program-might-really-be-mastering>



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