



the online magazine for monash postgrads

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It's academic

A PhD beginner? get ready for a bumpy ride

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"Prepared for Happy Death" is my favourite acronym for a PhD. Being a third year PhD student, I have been preparing for this for almost two and half years. A look back on my research life confirms to me "the first year, the hardest". Why

Doing coursework in the first year is not an easy task; it certainly takes a lot of time. Hence students might think that coursework is a waste of time. Probably at first the majority is blind to the benefits. Thanks to some coursework, students gain the basic knowledge needed in order to commence a higher degree in their department. Besides, that learning immensely helpful to understand the literature papers up to the level every PhD student ought to be throughout their research degree.

Confirmation presentation is considered as the next biggest challenge at the end of that first year. However it is not that tough a call if you make full use of the help available. Skills Essentials Seminar Series organised by Monash Institute of Graduate Research (MIGR) are extremely beneficial in this regard.

"Doing a PhD is intense and stressful. Never think that you are the only one suffering. EVERYONE SUFFERS."

When you find yourself miserable and desperate, share your feelings with someone else. Talk to your friends - surround yourself with people you can trust and share your experiences with them. Talk to your supervisor – having little or less background of the research area at the start can make the path rough to continue. It was in fact hard for me to understand the research materials as I did not have any background. My supervisor guided me well when I let him know this. Indeed supervisors can be the best mentors.

Monash provides services concerning students' mental health. Stress Release Seminars are presented by the University Counselling Service. There is also Mindfulness for Academic Success (MAS) Sessions and SMART Sessions – which include Strategies for success, Time management, Motivation and procrastination, and Stress management. If circumstances are more complex, make an appointment with counsellors at Monash Health Services.

Try changing your habits is another golden rule to follow. Do something which you find makes you happy, active and optimistic. I found myself very passionate in participating for volunteering activities. I have been elected as the Research Students' Representative on Faculty Research Degrees Committee. In addition I serve for postgraduate community by being a General Representative on the MPA Committee. The experiences gained working as a volunteer make me a better person and obviously develop my skills.

All in all, the PhD life is not a smooth one. Be prepared for a bumpy emotional ride!!

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Do something which you find makes you happy, active and optimistic. 🍌

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