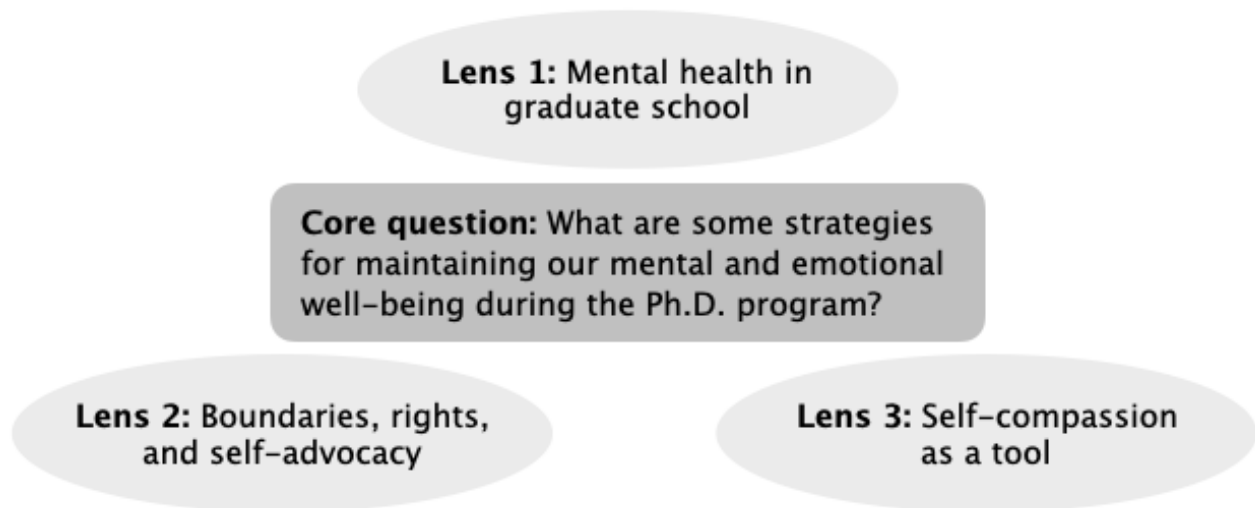


Week 5 Pre-Class Activity

Due 11:59pm Wednesday, March 2 via Canvas

This week's **core question** and **lenses** are motivated by the fact that a PhD can be mentally and emotionally difficult, but that there exist many established tools, strategies, and resources (some at CMU!) that can help us be the happiest and most successful versions of ourselves.



Instructions

Goals of this activity:

- ✓ Hone your *own perspective* on the core question by exploring evidence related to your [assigned lens](#)¹.
- ✓ Prepare to bring helpful evidence, framed through your own perspective, to in-class discussion.

1. Engage with 2+ different sources on your lens for 45+ minutes.

As you go, document points that relate to the core question, and which you think might be helpful to share with your peers in class. These can be, e.g., definitions, examples, resources, questions, arguments, self-reflections.

- For an intro to your lens, see the “topic introduction” sources (also, recall the [Class Glossary](#))
- You can also introduce your own sources (they need not be in English).

2. Summarize the points you want to share in 150+ words and submit this response on Canvas.

For some options on what you can write in this response, see [slide 2 of this presentation](#).

¹ You are free to trade lenses with your group members, as long as all lenses are covered.

Extra page for all students: CMU-Based Resources

You do not need to read these for next week, but they are here as a reference for you!

Resource	Description
CMU Cares Guide	A guide for CMU resources to contact in many situations, and a guide for how to approach someone who you are concerned may need help.
CMU Health and Well-Being Resources	A guide to all manner of student health and well-being resources, compiled by Angie Lusk, the SCS graduate student liaison.
CaPS main page	Contains information about services provided by CaPS (Counseling and Psychological Services), and info about how to contact CaPS to talk to someone about accessing these services.
CaPS Group Therapy Options	Describes CaPS' many support groups for students, including a PhD student support group, where students can gather to talk in a facilitated environment about struggles they're facing.
CaPS Equity, Inclusion and Mental Health	A source for finding a culturally responsive therapist at CaPS, and links to identity group-specific groups and supportive resources.
Thriving Campus , Zocdoc , PsychologyToday	Websites for finding mental health providers in Pittsburgh external to CMU. Thriving Campus is recommended by CaPS, and specifically allows you to search for providers who want to work with students.
Liberate + Wellness Apps	Instructions on how to download the Liberate and Wellness Apps provided to students (including Headspace)
Student Rights at CMU	A web page listing CMU student rights broadly and options students have to protect these rights.
Community Standards at CMU	General statement on CMU community standards, and processes that exist for when standards are violated.
PhD Advising Values for SCS Advisors	A written values statement describing aspects of healthy advising relationships, compiled by several SCS faculty, staff, and students. This can be a starting point for thinking about + communicating the kind of advising relationship that works best for you.

Lens 1: Mental health in graduate school

Source	Description
Topic introduction	
What is mental health? (Felman 2020)	A written article defining mental health, and describing common mental health issues and treatment options.
10 misconceptions about mental illness (Grasso 2021)	A written article about common myths surrounding mental health. You can test your ability to distinguish between myths and facts via this CDC Quiz .
Mind Body Wellness (Univ. Michigan 2020)	A written article about the interactions of mental and physical wellness. There are health tools on the next page.
Mental health and the graduate school experience	
I wish I'd taken my mental health more seriously in grad school (Dickerson 2020)	A written article describing the author's experiences with graduate school culture of people not taking their own mental health struggles seriously.
Why You Procrastinate (Lieberman 2019)	A written article describing research on procrastination as avoidance of unpleasant emotional experiences, rather than a lack of self-control.
Mental Health of Graduate Students Sorely Overlooked (Forrester 2021)	A written article about graduate student pressures, the impact of COVID, and resources for mental health.
Intentionally cultivating your support system	
Building your team Ch. 2 of A Field Guide to Grad School (Calarco 2020)	A book chapter on how to build a supportive team of mentors within your department, and how to navigate common, potentially stressful aspects of a PhD (e.g., overwork, lack of advisor support, professional relationships...).
How to build a support system (Camins 2022)	A written article providing a step-by-step process for beginning to cultivate or expand your existing support system.
How to create social support in your life (Scott 2021)	A written article giving higher-level steps and strategies for how to maintain fulfilling, supportive relationships and let go of unconstructive ones.
Taking action and asking for help	
Where do I begin to improve my mental health? (Leinwand, 2016)	A written article describing how being intentional about three core lifestyle factors can be a great place to start for improving mental well-being.
Why is it so hard to ask for help? (Leinwand 2016)	A written article describing key psychological challenges associated with asking for help, along with potential benefits of doing so.
How Does Therapy Work? (Raypole, 2019)	A written blog post giving an overview of the variety of ways in which counseling / therapy works.
What to expect in therapy (Psych Hub 2020)	A video illustrating what therapy is like and what it can help with.

Lens 2: Boundaries, Rights, and Self-Advocacy

Source	Description
Topic introduction	
A Conceptual Framework of Self-Advocacy for Students with Disabilities (Test et al 2005)	An academic article giving a conceptual framework for self-advocacy with four components: <i>knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication, and leadership</i> . (see “Conceptual Framework of Self-Advocacy” +Figure 1). This paper specifically considers self-advocacy for students with disabilities, but applies more broadly.
The no B.S. Guide to Protecting Your Emotional Space (Chesak 2018)	A written article that serves as an introductory guide to setting and enforcing boundaries, and how rights play a role in this process.
How to create healthy boundaries (Univ. KY, 2014)	A written article describing <i>healthy</i> versus <i>unhealthy</i> boundaries, why setting boundaries is hard, and giving advice on how to approach the difficult task of setting boundaries.
Strategies and tools for communicating boundaries	
DEAR MAN strategy (Rizvi 2020)	A video describing a step-by-step recipe for communicating boundaries, even in difficult settings with power dynamics. This is a great tool.
The Spoon Theory (Miserandino 2003) (alternate link)	A written article illustrating why different people may need different kinds of boundaries (written from the original standpoint of chronic illness). For further reading, see F.A.Qs on Spoon Theory .
The beginner's guide to assertiveness (Wignall 2019)	A written guide on assertiveness - why it is, why it's hard, and how to be assertive. If this guide doesn't speak to you, there are lots of others, e.g.)
How to advocate for yourself (Campbell)	A written article by a former graduate student offering motivation for and advice on self-advocacy in graduate school.
Boundaries and rights in the graduate school context	
PhD Advising Values for SCS Advisors (several SCS faculty, staff, and students, 2021)	A written values statement describing aspects of healthy advising relationships. This can be a starting point for thinking about + communicating the kind of advising relationship that works best for you.
Syllabus for Eric's Ph.D. Students (Gilbert 2020)	One professor's syllabus for his PhD students. Can be a helpful resource for identifying aspects of an advising relationship that work well for you.
APAGS Position Statement on the Rights of Psychology Graduate Students (APAGS 2015)	A written document by the American Psychological Association on the rights of psychology graduate students. This can help identify rights you hold for yourself + boundaries you want to set in graduate school..

[Time Management and Setting Boundaries while Teaching](#)

(Princeton 2022)

A **written article** about some suggestions for TAs to protect their teaching boundaries while still helping students.

Lens 3: Self-compassion as a tool

Source	Description
Topic introduction	
Self-compassion (Warren 2022)	An interactive introductory module on self-compassion, including a self-compassion questionnaire to help evaluate your current level of self-compassion. (Here is a different version of similar resources).
The Five Myths of Self Compassion (Neff 2015)	A written article dispelling myths about self-compassion, e.g., that it leads to complacency.
The benefits of self-compassion	
The space between self-esteem and self-compassion (Neff 2013)	A TED talk by Dr. Kristin Neff, a leading expert on self-compassion, on how self-compassion compares in its constructiveness to self-esteem, and how it can reduce our tendency to compare ourselves to others.
The Scientific Benefits of Self-Compassion (Seppala 2014)	An infographic describing the researched-based benefits of self-compassion, including increased productivity and less stress.
Self-compassion increases self-improvement motivation (Breines and Chen 2021)	A research article on how self-compassion can help make us more motivated to improve after we make mistakes (in social contexts, academic contexts, etc.).
Four Ways Self-Compassion Can Help You Fight for Social Justice (Neff 2021)	A written article about how self-compassion can help us fight for what we believe in by helping us process difficult feelings and change the circumstances causing them.
Tools for increasing self-compassion	
Listening to shame (Brown 2012)	A video from Brené Brown about the importance of vulnerability and the power of confronting shame, and how it can increase our power to innovate, cultivate belonging, and experience self-compassion (the talk Brown in the intro is The Power of Vulnerability).
How to use the RAIN method for difficult emotions (Responsival 2018)	A written article describing RAIN, a four-step process to acknowledging and processing difficult feelings and reactions with self-compassion and without self-judgment.
What are cognitive distortions? (TherapistAid, 2019)	A video introducing students to <i>cognitive distortions</i> , which are common thought patterns that can be barriers to self-compassion (but can be mitigated by learning to identify them!).

[Self-compassion guided practices and exercises](#)

A **set of resources** by Dr. Kristin Neff (both guided meditations and short step-by-step exercises) to build self-compassion.

[Self-Compassion Meditation Series on Headspace](#)

A **collection of meditations** designed to focus on Self-Compassion. Feel free to do as many as you like! ([download Headspace via CMU](#))