life's work

ruminations on the inelegant art of failing forwards

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perennial work in progress *Tuesday 14 May 2019*

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Chapter 1

preamble

What if one practices mathematical science like music?

My goal is to spend four hours a day on work with intent.

For sanity, efficiency, and inspiration, I intend to balance my time between categories:

- research, φ;
- skills, θ;
- busywork, ψ; and
- wellness, π

Chapter 2

what is this?

This manuscript is a triptych of

- analysis of my productivity data
- rituals rituals to facillitate flow in practicing mathematical science
- ruminations a reminder to self about why I chose what I did

2.1 version

Captain Marvel GIF from Captainmarvel GIFs

operation	instantiated	last updated
phoenix	Tuesday 2 April 2019	Tuesday 14 May 2019

2.2 how was it made?

`bookdown::` + `tidyverse::` + `googlesheets::` + `softloud/dontpanic::`

todo: refs

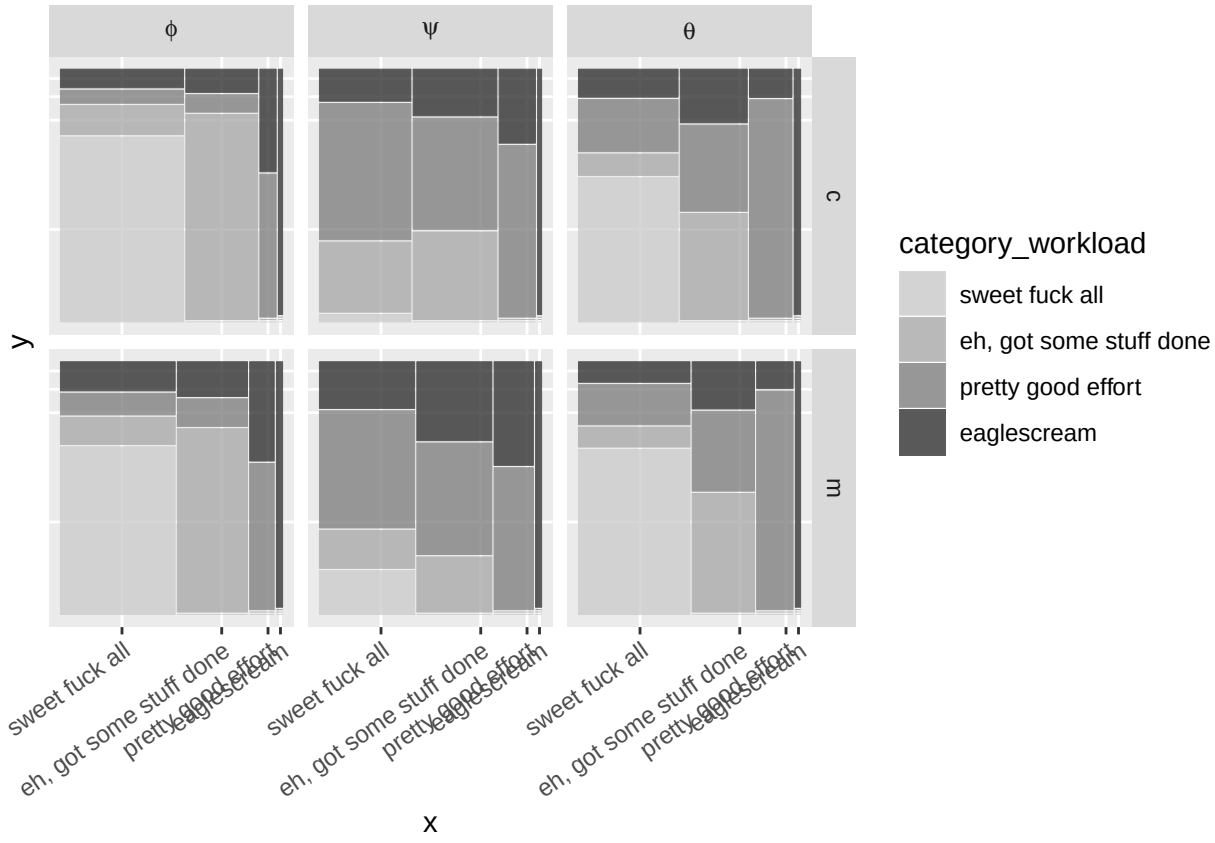
check out the code

feature requests

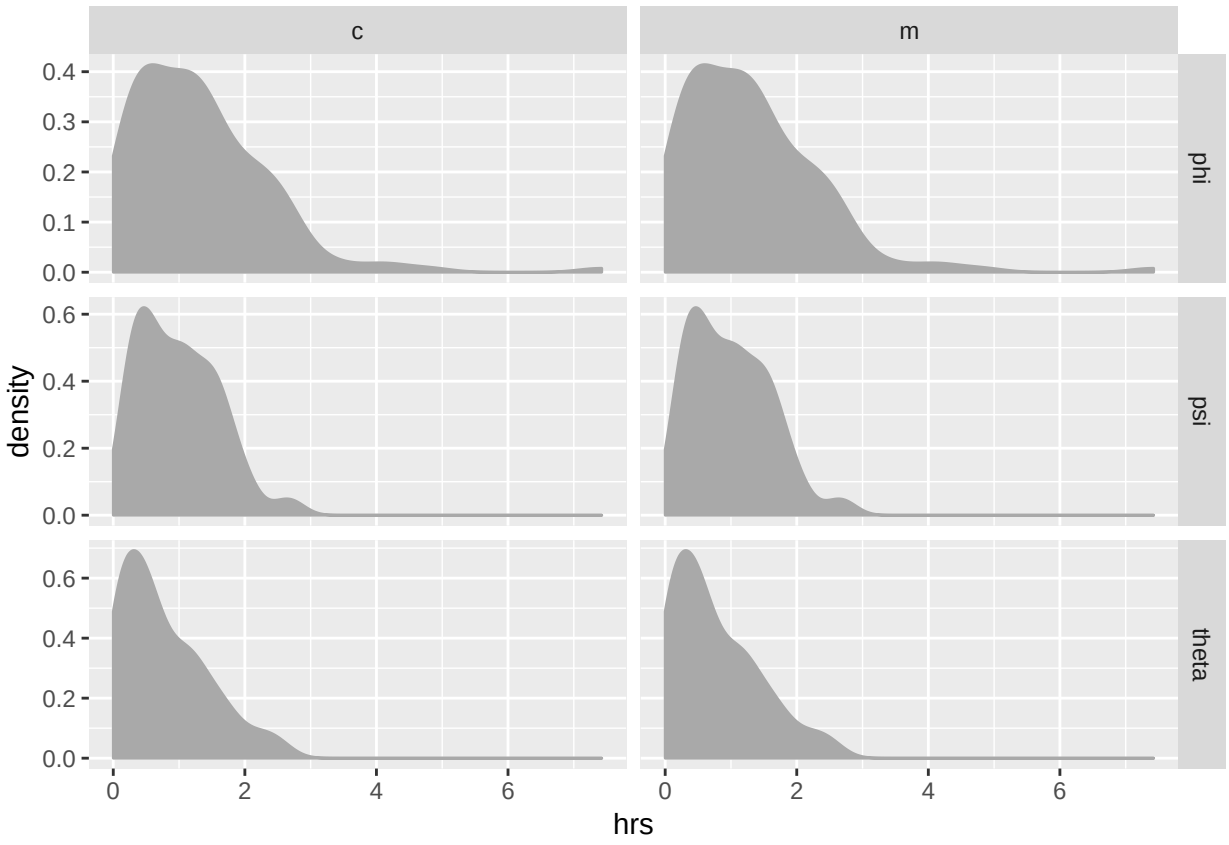
Chapter 3

analysis

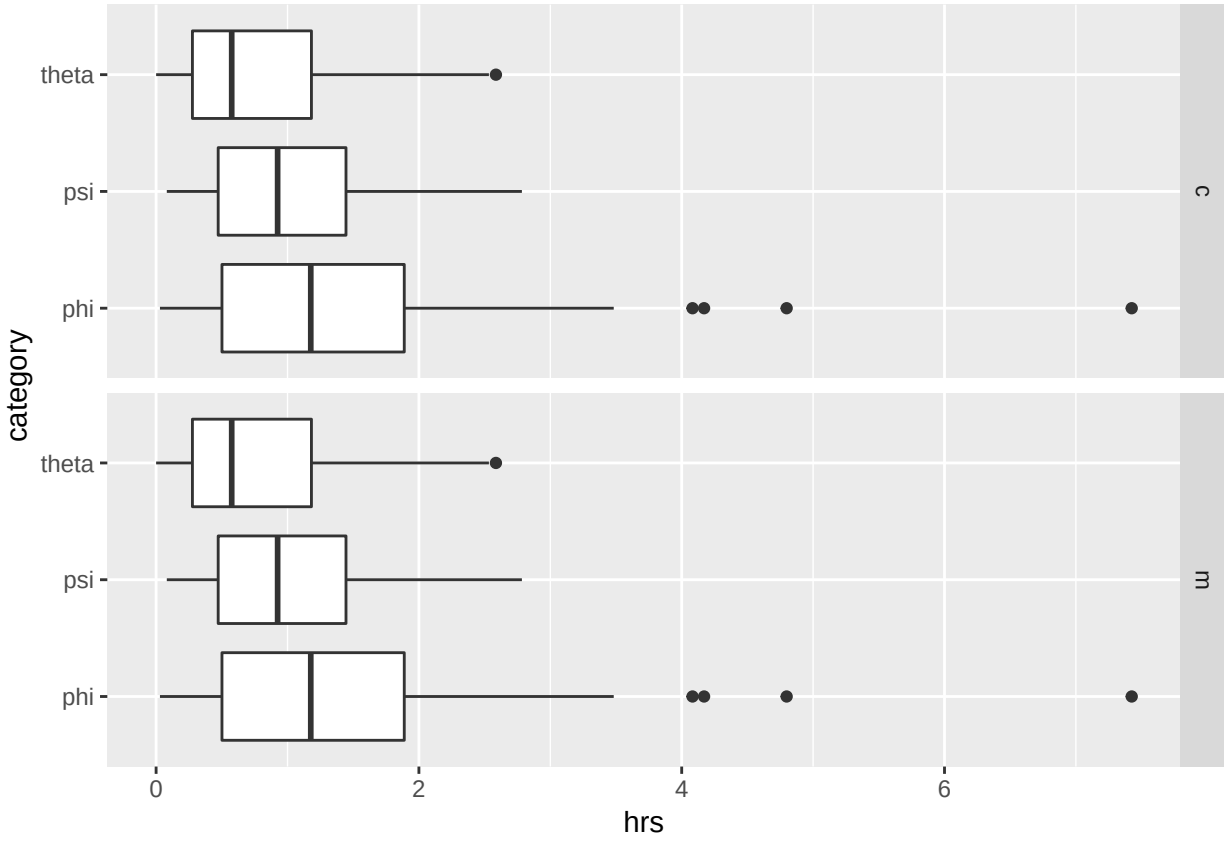
3.1 workload intensity goals achieved



3.2 distribution of hrs spent per day per category



periods-1.bb



categories-1.bb

Chapter 4

rituals

4.1 instantiate

Ask albert to instantiate.

Start each day by drawing up a day view.

Begin the daily log, and add priority ($*$) daily tasks.

`review`.

4.2 day view

todo: port in googlesheet instead of hardcoding this

tracker	position	description
goals	top left	pom goals
poms	next to goals	track poms achieved
projects	top right	one project/category
order of events	below goals	live with intent
task cycles	below projects	$\varphi, \theta, \psi, \bar{o}$

4.3 daily tasks

4.3.1 $*$

priority	context	category	task	description
$*$	$\natural$	ψ	calendar	check day, week, month; note events of the day; upcoming deadlines
$*$	$\forall$	ψ	what is on fire?	task or project must be due today and someone else will get stuffed a
$*$	$\natural$	ψ	inboxes	email, 3c2 , handbag, unpack suitcase
$*$	$\natural$	ψ	3c^2 inbox	NA
$*$	$\sharp$	π	handbag	NA
$*$	$\sharp$	π	unpack suitcase	NA
$*$	$\sharp$	ψ	pill	take medication

4.3.2 ∼

priority	context	category	task	description
$\sim$	$\natural$	ψ	needs action	finish pom
$\sim$	$\forall$	ψ	monthly log	each project should either have an associated collection, or a git hub rep
$\sim$	$\natural$	ψ	ynab	finish pom
$\sim$	$\forall$	ψ	thread	NA

4.3.3 ∅

priority	context	category	task	description
$\varnothing$	$\natural$	θ	export measures	download report into files, then email to myself, then downloa
$\varnothing$	$\natural$	ψ	waiting	waiting emails

4.3.4 π

priority	context	category	task	description
$*$	$\sharp$	π	handbag	NA
$*$	$\sharp$	π	unpack suitcase	NA
$\varnothing$	$\natural$	π	write to dani	check in with dani on slack
$\varnothing$	$\sharp$	π	wash brushes	wash brushes
$\varnothing$	$\sharp$	π	kitchen	clean kitchen
$\varnothing$	$\sharp$	π	laundry	put away one basket of laundry
$\varnothing$	$\sharp$	π	floors	vacuum
$\varnothing$	$\sharp$	π	water plants	NA

4.4 email

4.4.1 process

Check inbox once a day.

- archive [and label] emails that don't require actions
- if I know what I want to say, best to do it now
- if it's going to be lengthy or ∼, label as `needs action`

4.4.2 needs action

- start from the bottom, gmail doesn't sort descending
- write a next action
- migrate task to ∼ [todo: quaver] + ∼
- can stop after one pom on this each day

4.5 review

4.5.1 daily log

This is the hard part.

Pare down to one active project per category and process daily list to end of log.

Cross through actions above.

4.5.1.1 if this project will take more than a day

- if (∗) or (∼), create project for next step and migrate to projects waiting to progress
- else if associated with a repo, migrate to issues
- else migrate to monthly log
- add signifiers
- log projects in day view tracker
- add projects from monthly log if all ∗ and ∼ have been completed
- aim to progress at least one ∗ from the monthly log

4.5.2 day view

This is the sparkjoy bit.

- count poms
- log goals
- top up projects from projects waiting to maximum three active projects, one per category
- assign task cycles
  - exclude ∅ categories with no ∗ and ∼ projects where current goal has already been met in poms by category
  - always finish with scheduling review $\overline{o}$
  - consider including a sparkjoy project

4.5.3 assess

plan poms and π to next goal

Calculate number of poms I can realistically do, the floor of

$$14 - t - \frac{3}{2}c$$

where t denotes the number of hours of travel, and c the number of hours of *community*, where the lattter includes teaching, outreach, and research collaborations. That, is I aim to draw a distinction between self-directed time, and time where I have the benefit of external motivations.

```
##
## aim to get 14 poms done today
```

```
## # A tibble: 9 x 5
##   workload usual category  poms pom_diff
##   <chr>    <int> <chr>    <int>    <dbl>
## 1 light        4 phi          2        2
## 2 moderate     8 phi          4        4
```

```
## 3 hardcore    14 phi          6        6
## 4 light        4 theta        1        1
## 5 moderate     8 theta        2        2
## 6 hardcore    14 theta        4        4
## 7 light        4 psi          1        1
## 8 moderate     8 psi          2        2
## 9 hardcore    14 psi          4        4
```

4.5.4 minibreak peeps

- social media & slack

4.6 task cycle

shorthand	description
$\forall *$	complete all priority ($*$) tasks
$\sim \geqslant 1$	complete at least one anxiety ($\sim$) task
$\varnothing \geqslant 0$	complete any or none of the untagged tasks
$\cdot \geqslant 1$	write down as many next actions as I can think of
$\overline{o}$	review

4.7 monthly log

List of projects that will take longer than a day.

Need to incorporate this into managing papers.

Chatting to a colleague and told them about the 30:80 model of writing a manuscript that I find really useful - thought I'd share it here to see if anyone else had something similar…? #writing #academicwriting (1/7)

— Neal Haddaway (**?**) May 6, 2019

4.8 pom goals

pom := 20 minutes

workload	phi	theta	psi	exercise
light	2	1	1	1
moderate	4	2	2	2
hardcore	6	4	4	3

4.9 order of events

Day begins with review $\overline{o}$.

4.9.1 workday

Alternate events:

- $\not{h} + 2$ poms
- π

Around other events such as meetings.

4.9.2 wake up

- wake up
- [read]
- wash & dress
- [yoga]
- day view
- [yoga]

4.9.3 evening

- bathtime + reading
- bed

4.10 signifiers

todo: create a signifiers sheet

signifier	meaning	position
$\eigthnote$	today	4
$*$	priority	5
$i, ii, \dots$	project	4
$\sim$	anxiety	5
$\cdot$	task	1
φ	research	2
θ	skills	2
ψ	busywork	2
NA	project	3
NA	look into	3
$\natural$	on computer	2
o	event	1
$\overline o$	review	1
NA	more than a day	2

4.11 playlists

4.11.1 for the good days

4.11.2 for the not so good days

Chapter 5

ruminations

5.1 daily projects

If a project is logged in the daily-log then I am committing to finishing it today.

5.2 pomodoros

20 minutes seems to be the amount of time I can reasonably expect myself to focus unbroken.

5.3 lowtech

Keep what can be kept on paper, on paper. Keeps screens free of clutter and helps me focus.

5.4 work with intent

This term is adopted from a piano teacher that I studied under, that I subsequently adapted into my own teaching. She encouraged me to *practice with intent*; that is, play what you intend to play. I found this to be particularly useful for discouraging my students, and myself, from the age-old pitfall of playing a piece of music until you make a mistake and stopping and playing that section over until you get it right. It's better to play *through* the piece, which empowers you to adapt to mistakes you will inevitably play and, most importantly, not lose time. Oddly, it appeared to be a universal misconception, myself included, that without careful consideration, the attempt to *get the notes right* inevitably means the **rhythm is wrong**, and thus you get nothing right after all. Best, therefore, to play through the piece. I use my bullet journal to help me focus on work with intent; I've found the simplicity of only timing work when I've written down what I intend to do has been extraordinarily powerful in helping me complete daunting tasks.

5.5 documenting the system is mindful time

I often update my system. I see this as productive mindfulness; it is both meditative, I enjoy making something I find aesthetically pleasing, and functional, the systems do help me work happier.

Something that really resonated with me about Cal Newport's *Deep Work* was that my situation will change, and so, too, may what best facillitates flow. I will pick and choose elements from pomodoro, gtd, task

switching, and so forth to achieve flow. Allowing this to be so flexible makes keeping track of my own system tricky at times.

todo: fix inconsistencies in audience across manuscript - should be to self

I am slowly automating the process of updates, where the manual process is ideally kept to tweaking a set of easy to navigate googlesheets which are scraped using the fabulous `googlesheets::` and rendered with `bookdown::`. It's exciting that using git, I can examine past systems.

todo: refs

This has a dual objective of providing a place to drop my thoughts, but also to test run `bookdown::`, as I will likely write my thesis in something this or `distill::`. Also, I think it'll level up my git-surfing skills.

I enjoy taking breaks from doing mathematics to document my system and analyse my productivity.

I often feel like it's about finding activities that are posisitive experiences *and* productive in some way (for me, φ, θ, ψ, andn π). So, working on my system is π.

5.6 $\sim$ beethoven piano sonata

todo: https://twitter.com/cantabile/status/1112145903203180544

Bibliography