

# Managing Your Career as a PhD

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# What is a PhD?

- ⦿ Definition: Doctor of Philosophy, abbreviated PhD or DPhil, for the Latin philosophiæ doctor, meaning “teacher of philosophy”
- ⦿ open to qualified individuals
- ⦿ original and significant research
- ⦿ demonstrate in-depth knowledge via thesis

# What is a PhD?

- ⦿ Doctoral Education: “a program of **research**, **teaching**, and **scholarship** which develops a broad skill set that can qualify one for a wide variety of **career paths** and not as a progressively specializing process for a singular career path”

-- UC Berkley Career Center

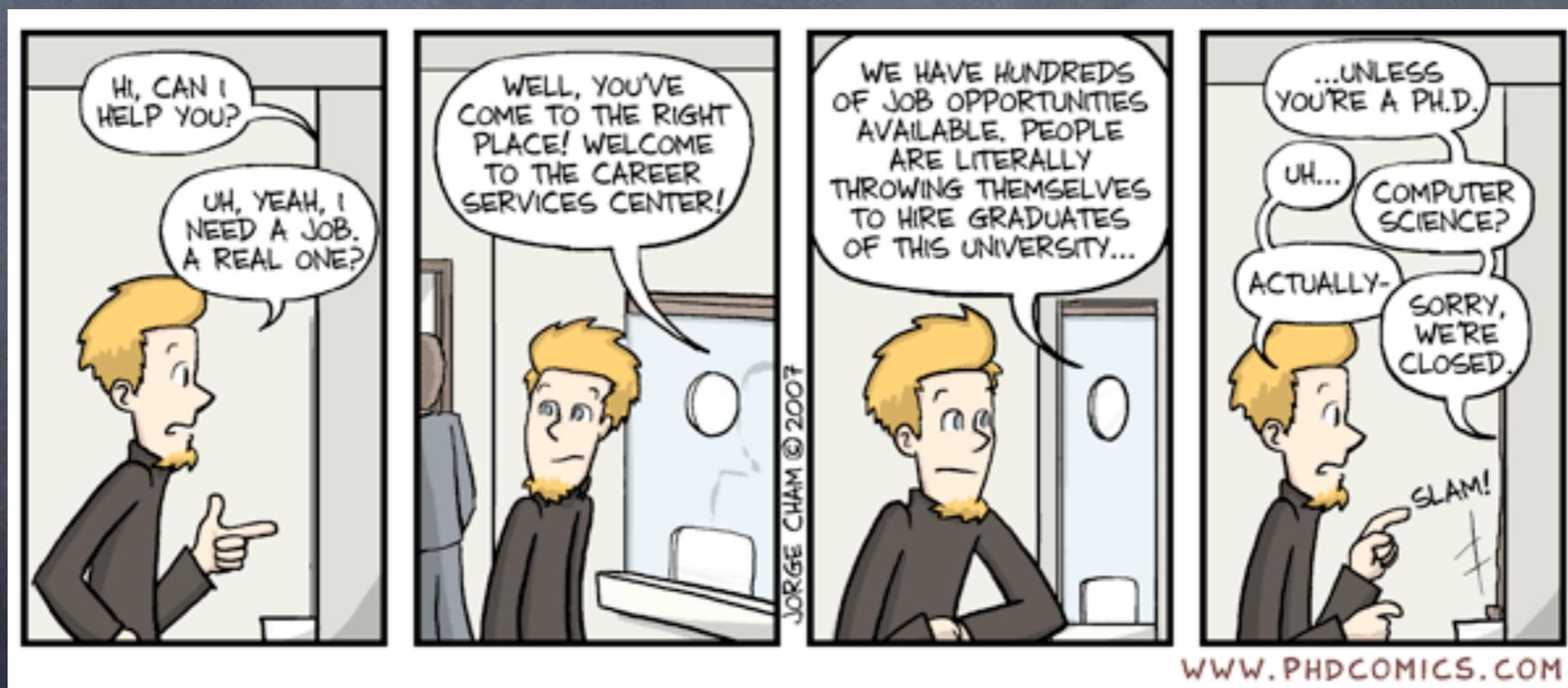
# Why do people do a PhD?

- ⦿ subject interest
- ⦿ desire for career progression (avoid “glass ceiling” in some professions)
- ⦿ broader career choice (stand out in a crowd)
- ⦿ personal benefit (self-confidence, sense of achievement, develop skills)



# PhD and a Career

- Thinking about career plans during a PhD can be very stressful!



# PhD and a Career

- ⦿ Thinking about career plans during a PhD can be **very stressful!**
- ⦿ inability to articulate and recognize transferable skills
- ⦿ lack of opportunity to develop wider skills

# PhD and a Career

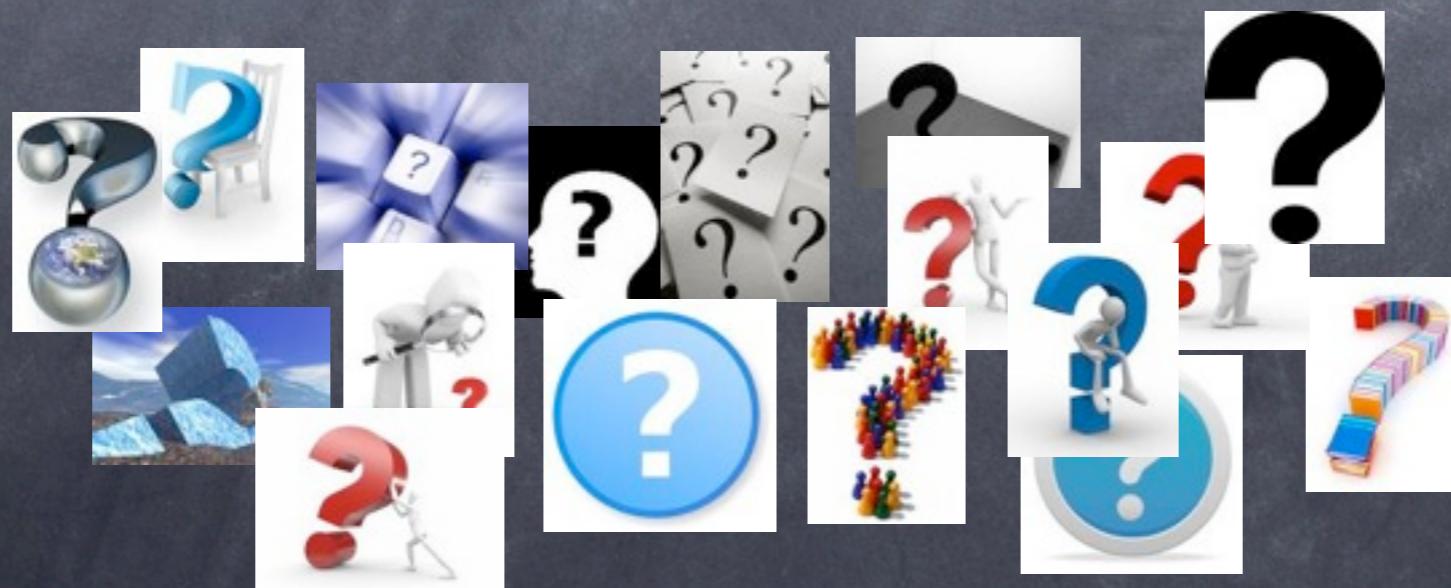


# PhD and a Career

- ⦿ SOCIETY NEEDS PhDs:
- ⦿ most highly educated and skilled group!

# PhD and a Career

- ⦿ At the heart of a PhD is a QUESTION
  - ⦿ problem defined, investigated and answered



# Transferable Competencies

- ⦿ questioning and inquiring attitude
- ⦿ self-confidence
- ⦿ ability to defend new ideas
- ⦿ problem-solving skills
- ⦿ determination to find better ways to tackle challenges
- ⦿ maturity and autonomy
- ⦿ ability to make impact
- ⦿ critical judgement
- ⦿ ability to rise to the challenge
- ⦿ ability to learn quickly
- ⦿ ability to acquire new skills quickly
- ⦿ expertise at analytic thinking
- ⦿ adaptability
- ⦿ ability to make impact
- ⦿ talent to bridge different areas and communicate with others in different disciplines
- ⦿ capability to handle high pace of knowledge economy

# What is a Career?

- ⦿ chosen pursuit
- ⦿ long-term; built during lifetime
- ⦿ spills over into personal life
- ⦿ work as long as it takes
- ⦿ matures gracefully like a fine wine

Suited for PhDs!

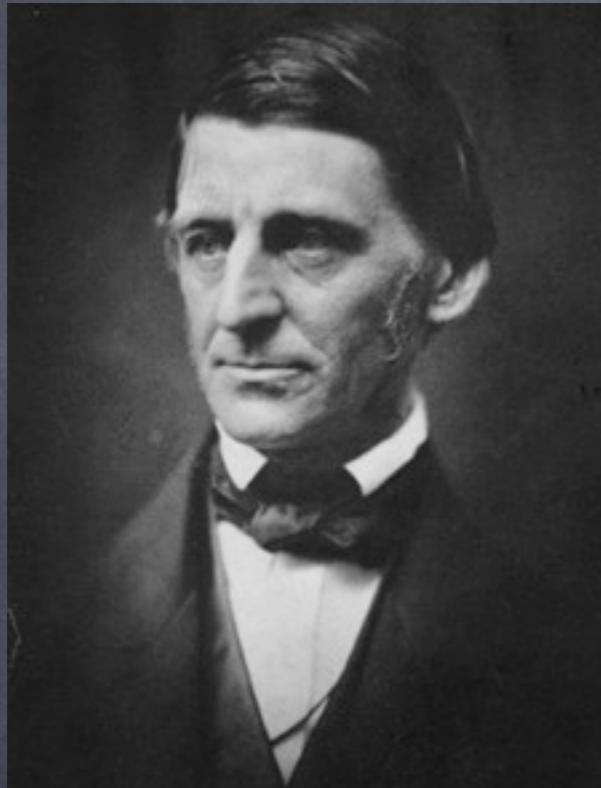
# What is a Successful Career?

- ⦿ What is success?
- ⦿ Dictionary definition: the accomplishment of an **aim or purpose**
- ⦿ Must set career goals.
  - ⦿ level of responsibility, job function, title, salary, etc.
- ⦿ other **qualitative definitions** of success ...

# What is Success

by

Ralph Waldo Emerson



To laugh often and much;

To win the respect of intelligent people  
and the affection of children;

To earn the appreciation of honest critics  
and endure the betrayal of false friends;

To appreciate beauty;  
To find the best in others;

To leave the world a bit better, whether by  
a healthy child, a garden patch  
or a redeemed social condition;

To know even one life has breathed  
easier because you have lived;

This is to have succeeded.

# The American Dream

- ⦿ Opportunity exists (through hard work and free choice) for every individual to achieve their goals.
- ⦿ Often equated to material prosperity or opportunities for education.

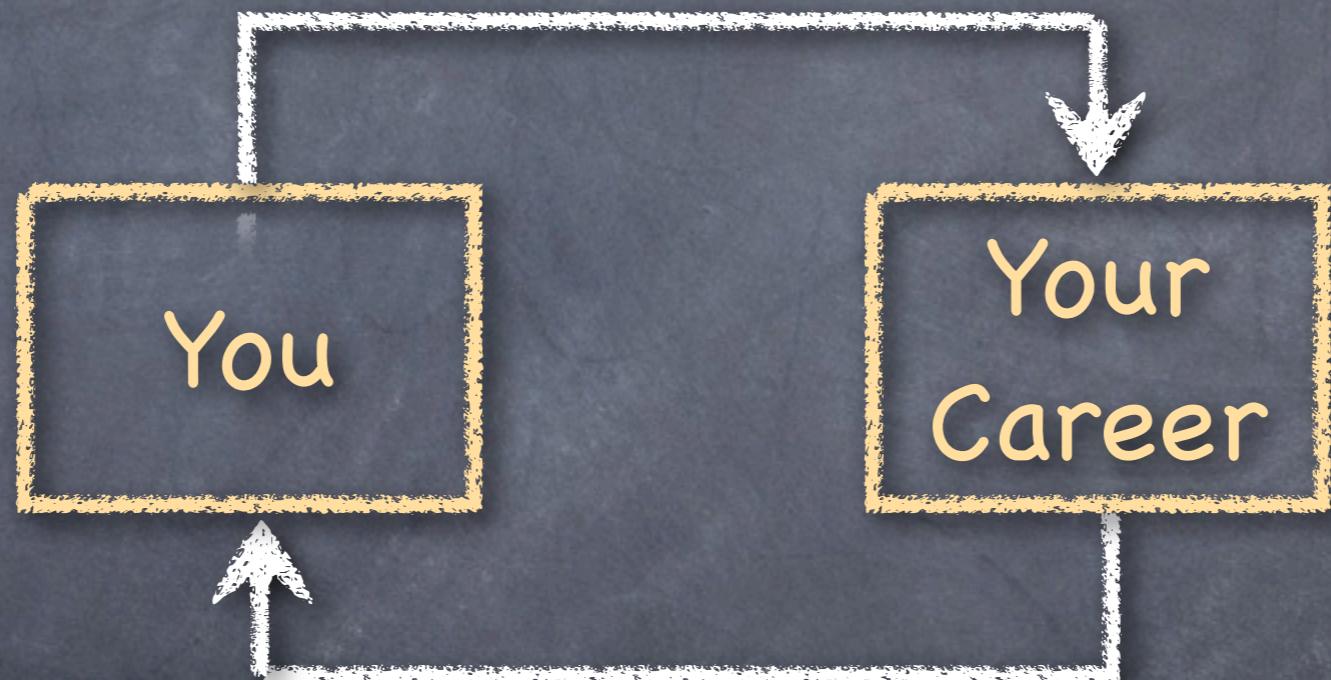
# How should a PhD set Career Goals?

- ⦿ Determine your commitment and desires.
- ⦿ Identify your strengths and assets.
- ⦿ Identify your weaknesses.
- ⦿ Select what you may compromise on.

Mature and Personal Perspective

# You and Your Goals

- You and your career are both a work in progress.



YOU HAVE SIGNIFICANT  
CONTROL OVER WHO  
YOU ARE AND WHAT  
YOU DO

STRATEGY 2: YOU MODIFY YOUR  
CAREER GOALS TO SUIT  
WHO YOU ARE



STRATEGY 1:  
YOU MODIFY YOURSELF  
TO MEET YOUR CAREER GOALS

YOU HAVE  
PARTIAL CONTROL  
OVER YOUR CAREER

NEED BOTH!

STRATEGY 2: YOU MODIFY YOUR CAREER GOALS TO SUIT WHO YOU ARE



STRATEGY 1:  
YOU MODIFY YOURSELF  
TO MEET YOUR CAREER GOALS

# It helps to ...

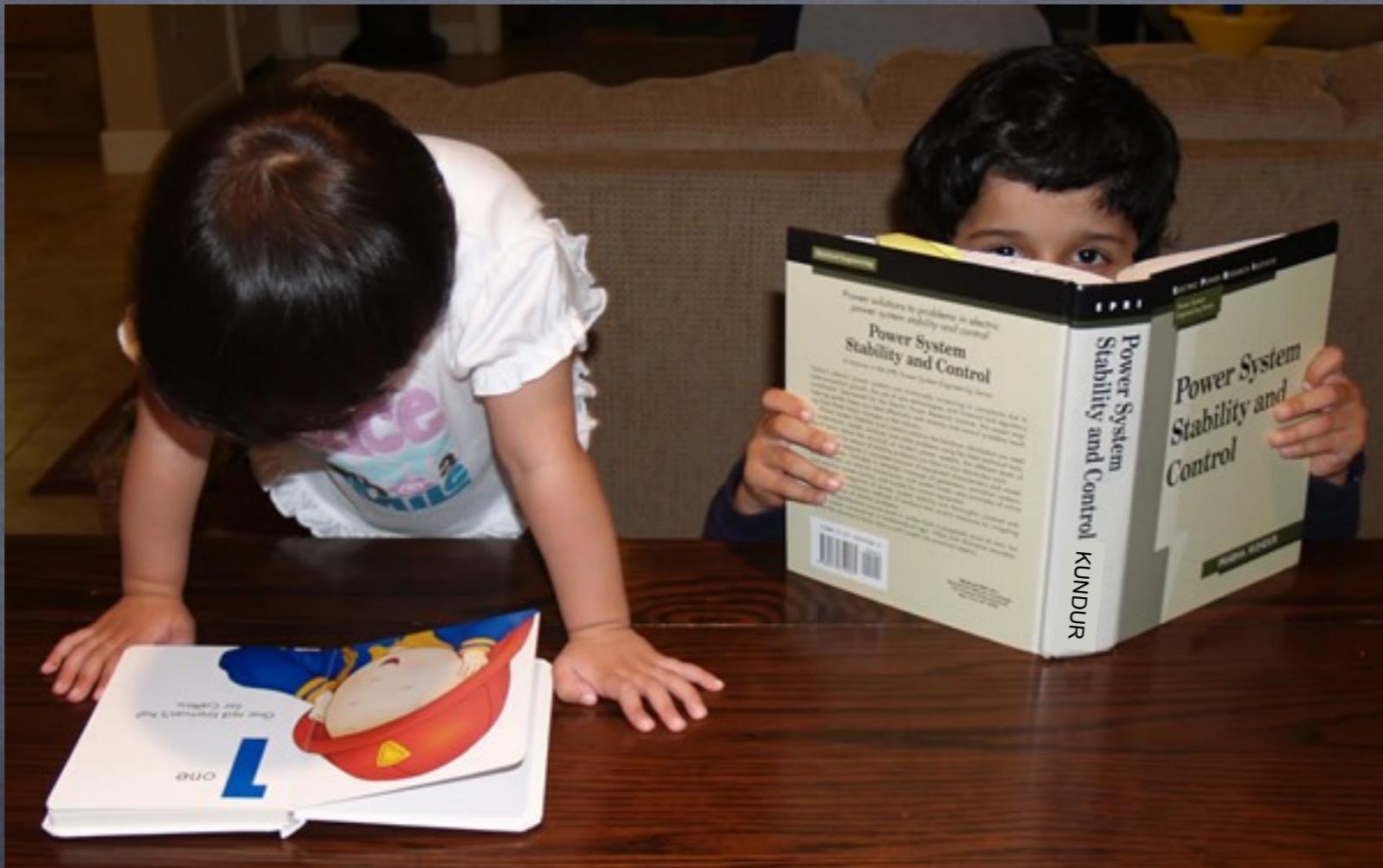
- ⦿ have your career goals aligned with:
- ⦿ your interests
- ⦿ your strengths
- ⦿ the existence of a critical mass of supporters

“... find your passion.”

My personal DOs and DONT's ...

DOS

# Prepare and Work Hard



# Prepare and Work Hard

“Opportunity is missed by most because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.”

- Thomas Edison

- ⦿ Focus on the fundamentals and work hard!
- ⦿ Make use of the available opportunities.
  - ⦿ Opportunities in academia often stem from volunteering.
- ⦿ Take responsibility for doing well.

# Competent vs. Confident

- Competence can protect you from getting voted off the island, but confidence will not.



# Independent vs. Interdependent

- ⦿ How do you know when you are competent enough? A: you achieve independence/you are awarded your PhD!
- ⦿ interdependence:
  - ⦿ be proactive
  - ⦿ think win/win
  - ⦿ listen first then speak
  - ⦿ synergize and have integrity

YOUR VALUE AFTER A  
PhD IS RELATED TO  
YOUR ABILITY TO BE  
NEEDED BY YOUR  
ORGANIZATION

# Produce Sustainable Results

- ⦿ You should be able to communicate what you can do and have done.
- ⦿ Publish, present and network.
- ⦿ Do what others do not want to do.

# Value your Mistakes

"Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment."

- Rita Mae Brown

- ⦿ learn more from failures than successes
- ⦿ take feedback - don't be defensive!
- ⦿ good judgement takes time to develop ...

# Honesty, Integrity and Loyalty

“It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society.” -Krishnamurti

- ⦿ “walk the talk”
- ⦿ always tell the truth
- ⦿ keep your word - careful what you promise!
- ⦿ do your best (even when no one is watching)
- ⦿ give back however you can; you will reap rewards in the long run

# Manage your Time

- ⦿ Volunteer your time effectively.
- ⦿ avoid procrastination, change your thinking



# Manage Your Emotions



My personal DOs and DONT's ...

DON'Ts

# Don't Take Things Personally

- ⦿ Your PhD is a personal endeavor, but the feedback you get is about the work not about who you are or your potential.
- ⦿ What happens at work is often not personal.
  - ⦿ Leads to unnecessary “drama” and stress.
- ⦿ Understand that what someone does is because of them, not because of you.

# Don't Make Assumptions

- ⦿ You could be wrong and make something negative a **self-fulfilling prophecy**.
- ⦿ Avoid believing “gossip” (it’s often wrong); you’ll play other people’s politics and create unnecessary enemies.

# Don't Give Up

“That which does not kill us makes us stronger.”  
- Friedrich Nietzsche

- ⦿ Don't give up on yourself ... even if others have; if you give up, you will surely fail!
- ⦿ PhD/research success comes from persistence.
- ⦿ quick starts vs. late bloomers - both good!

# Don't be Fearful



“Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering.”

- Yoda, Star Wars

- ⦿ Fear can prevent long-term success and creates dysfunction.
- ⦿ “I'll fail so why should I try?!”
- ⦿ 6 cancers (by Stephen R. Covey):
  - ⦿ cynicism, criticism, comparing, competing, complaining, contending

# Don't Worry about Conflict

- ⦿ Conflict is natural; **healthy** conflict is good.
- ⦿ Avoid **dysfunctional** conflict/situations/people.
  - ⦿ “politics”/“backstabbing” occurs when at least one party is fearful
  - ⦿ Behave **fairly** (even when others are not); focus your energy on the goal, not on the conflict.
  - ⦿ Choose your battles.

# Concluding Remarks

- ⦿ People often have much more influence and control over their career success than they believe.
- ⦿ Regardless of your stage of success, you can be happy. Note: Success ≠ Happiness

“Success is getting what you want.  
Happiness is wanting what you get.”

- Dale Carnegie

# Further Reading

- ⦿ What do PhDs do? by C. Ball, J. Metcalfe, E. Pearce and S. Shinton
- ⦿ The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People and The 8th Habit by Stephen R. Covey
- ⦿ The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom by Don Miguel Ruiz

# Contact

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