

# On (PhD) Balance

*The official newsletter of PhD Balance*



The season of change is upon us, and we are seeing it within PhD Balance. Long-time team members are graduating and moving on to jobs and academic posts. Others are still seeking opportunities after years of working toward this huge milestone. I finished my PhD this year and I've spent equal parts reflecting on the experience and worrying about the future.

I am one of the lucky few to get a postdoctoral position, but the specter of worry lingers—about the future, about what comes next, about if it was worth it. I know many graduate students experience the same. We are continuously told that the job market is in shambles, that we are destined to move from temporary position to temporary position. But I propose we try to ride the wave of change rather than letting it overwhelm us.

Change can happen to us or it can be driven by us. Sometimes it's inevitably the first because many things are outside of our control. But in places where we can it's important that we exert agency in our lives. You have the PhD, but you may have to take workshops on how to get a non-academic job. You have the PhD, but you may have to move to a strange city for that one unicorn position. You have the PhD, but you may not have found the right post, and you take a break instead. Own these changes.

I wish I could say that the journey is easier after the PhD, but I will say this: the grit and determination you cultivate in a PhD will be the most important part of your journey forward. And if you need additional support, always know that the community at PhD Balance has your back. Join us on Discord, read others' stories, or submit your own. Change happens to everyone, but you don't have to face it alone.



*Courtney Applewhite*  
PhD Balance President

The end of the year often brings about a myriad of things: festive foods, cozy sweaters and colorful decorations. It also signifies the end of a year, and a sense of slowing down. In a fast-paced environment of academia and our ever-connected world, it is important to take a break, slow down and recuperate so that we can enter the new year refreshed and renewed. In this newsletter, we've collected several stories from our archive that focus on the theme of slowing down, reflection and rest.

## Ensuring You Have Time For Yourself

by Ignacio García-Perrote Martínez

An important question to ask yourself is whether or not you have enough time for yourself. One of our community members, Ignacio García-Perrote Martínez, relayed their thoughts on this topic, reflecting on their busy last year of their PhD. While balancing thesis writing, teaching undergrads and their hectic sleep schedule, **Ignacio offered three tips that kept them afloat throughout the chaos.** One tip that they placed emphasis on was respecting scheduled break time to rest and replenish.



## Take a Proper Break!

While it may seem indulgent to pause from your research, it is not the only event that warrants breaks. Taking a proper break from all activities related to graduate school can help mitigate burnout. **Learn more and access a helpful visual** here to remind yourself that breaks don't have to be "earned."



## Getting it Done

Taking the time to reflect on the past allows us to identify beliefs and thoughts that work for us as well as ones that are incompatible with ourselves. Perhaps those beliefs and thoughts that fall into the latter category need to be redefined, such as our beliefs about productivity. It's time to think about **different perspective on productivity**. These important perspective shifts help us make our way to the end of our journey, like how **shifts in perspectives** and honoring oneself got Sharon Bolanta through graduate school.



*Sharon Bolanta, author of "No 'one size fits all' rule for completing a PhD"*

*As the year comes to an end, we at PhD Balance wish you all a restful and reflective remainder of the year, full of much needed clarity that will help with your future studies and beyond.*



# The Founder's Corner

*with Susanna Harris*

Are you pretty sure everything is about to fall apart and that you will remember this moment forever? Take a moment to play a little game with me.

**1** Think of all of today's individual worries and fears that felt like a big deal: the email you should have sent, the errand you can't get to, the comment that upset your colleague, the assignment that wasn't perfect, anything that you think might become a memorable disaster. Write down the number of items in your "daily" list.

**2** Setting aside today's items and without looking back through your notes, think of the issues you faced over the past week. Be specific and dig deep to find every interaction that *felt* like a nightmare. Only count something if you can remember the who, what, and when of that situation. Write down the number of items in your "weekly" list.

**3** Jump back even further in time to last month, and do the same thing. What calls were you dreading, which deadlines were you about to miss, and why weren't you able to sleep some nights? Write down the number of items in your "monthly" list.

**4** Compare your daily, weekly, and monthly numbers. If you could really remember every daily disaster, your monthly number should be ~30x your daily. That means if you had two fears per day, you should have fourteen per week, and around sixty per month.

I do this exercise maybe once a week to remind my brain that it's not actually very good at doing its own math. Ten disasters a day can't add up to just fifteen nightmares a week, and it certainly doesn't lead to only twenty catastrophes a month.

Our numbers will differ, but what I'd bet doesn't is how few of your daily emergencies can even be remembered. What feels life-altering right now will likely be forgotten in a few weeks.

This isn't to minimize the very real feelings from each day to the next. Rather, I use this game to remind myself that I'd rather do other things with my energy than spending it fearing the outcomes and disappointments I might face. With some basic addition, I can show my brain that few things are irreversible and the odds of today's events causing a disaster I will remember in 2024 is very unlikely.



# Join our new “memes” channel on Discord!



Person: Life is full of ups and downs

Me:



On (PhD) Balance brought to you by:  
Jennifer Ngolab, Kathrin Leicht, Courtney Applewhite