

Succeeding as a Graduate or Medical School Student



Succeeding in graduate or medical school means more than simply doing well in your course work. In fact, much of what you will learn during your graduate school years will not come from classes but rather through doing activities such as research, clinical work, internships, attending conferences, serving on departmental and university committees, preparing papers for publication, and joining professional organizations.

Self-motivation, self-discipline, time management and the ability to prioritize are all essential ingredients to graduate or medical school success. The following tips can help you to develop what you will need to succeed in graduate or medical school and beyond.

Manage your time

Time Management is a key component to academic and professional success. It is an essential skill that will help you to concentrate your efforts on what is most important.

- Plan your schedule
- Make a weekly to-do list
- Prioritize your work
- Break large tasks into their smaller components
- Set goals and deadlines for projects
- Avoid perfectionism
- Do an honest assessment of the amount of time you waste

Seek out a mentor

Research shows that students who are mentored enjoy many benefits, including better training, greater career success, and a stronger professional identity.

Qualities of a successful mentor

- Approachable
- Have good personal and communication skills
- Have good technical skills
- Are able to provide you with needed support

The most effective mentors:

- Welcome newcomers into the profession and take a personal interest in their career development and well-being
- Want to share their knowledge, materials, skill and experience
- Are patient, enthusiastic, and supportive as they challenge and guide their mentee to new levels of competence
- Expose the recipients of their mentoring to new ideas, perspectives and standards, and to the values and norms of the profession
- Are more expert in terms of knowledge but view themselves as equal to those they mentor

How to find a mentor?

- Identify professors with areas of expertise most similar to your interests
- Talk to your academic advisor and to your instructors for suggestions
- Friends, classmates and other students may also be able to suggest faculty members that have a reputation for being good mentors

Beware of too much stress

Stress keeps us focused and aware of all the things that need to be done. It can motivate you to study harder and complete assignments and projects on time. But when your stress level becomes more than a motivating tool, or when pressures are too intense or last too long, you may be in stress overload.

Signs of Stress Overload

- Anxiety or panic attacks
- A feeling of being constantly pressured, hassled, and hurried
- Irritability and moodiness
- Physical symptoms, such as stomach problems, headaches, or even chest pain
- Allergic reactions, such as eczema or asthma
- Problems sleeping
- Drinking too much, smoking, overeating, or using drugs
- Sadness or depression

Ways to Relieve Stress

- Exercise. Regular exercise is one of the best ways to keep stress levels under control
- Learn ways to relax your body through meditation, massage, and breathing exercises
- Increase your Vitamin D. Take short walks in the sun. Studies show that Vitamin D increases a positive and focused mood
- Make the best out of stressful circumstances - Be optimistic. Your outlook, attitude, and thoughts influence the way you see things
- Ask for help. People who have a strong network of family and friends manage stress better

Maintain a healthy lifestyle

Your physical and emotional well-being plays a major role in your academic, professional and personal success. Take time to establish and maintain an active and informed wellness plan.

- Exercise and sleep regularly
- Eat healthfully
- Make time for yourself
- Enjoy and spend time with friends and family

Seek assistance

The Johns Hopkins Student Assistance Program (JHSAP) is committed to assisting students in managing the challenges they face during their academic careers. JHSAP provides support to students in dealing with personal, academic, and relationship problems

Getting help is free, easy, convenient, and confidential. Our goal is to get to know you, understand the challenges you are facing, and to discuss how to move forward in a healthy way. To this end, the JHSAP offers a variety of services including:

- Assessment of your current concerns
- Brief, supportive counseling
- Referral to appropriate and accessible community services and resources
- Consultation that supports academic and/or professional development
- Immediate support and management for crisis situations
- Dean, Faculty, and Staff consultations
- Risk assessment for students
- Training, education, and outreach

For more information contact the Johns Hopkins Student Assistance Program at 443-287-7000 or visit our website at www.jhsap.org.