

Chapter 4 Resources

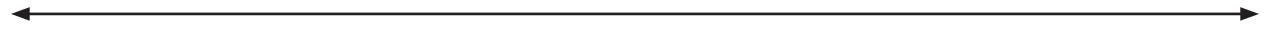
Choosing a Thesis Advisor: Familiar Paths and Unexpected Curves



Preparation Steps for Chapter 4 Discussion and Activity

- This *Facilitator's Guide* will lead you step-by-step through the chapter 4 discussions and activities.
 - Duplicate as appropriate the needed handouts for the activity section.
 - During the group activity, participants will need to take notes. Arrange to have a pen available for each participant.
- Return to the [chapter 4 homepage](#).
 - Watch the chapter 4 video and download it in preparation for leading the session.
 - To **download** the video, scroll to the bottom of the chapter 4 homepage and click on the .mp4 link under “Additional Files.”

Chapter 4 *Facilitator's Guide*



→ Summary of facilitation steps:

1. Lead the discussion of chapter 4
2. Prepare the group for the chapter 4 video
3. Watch the chapter 4 video
4. Lead the chapter 4 video discussion
5. Lead the chapter 4 group activity

Practical Points

- The time estimations provided for the discussions and activities may vary significantly, depending on the number of students and the group dynamics.
- Information contained in this document that is intended to be read verbatim to the participants is italicized.

Step 1. Lead the chapter 4 group discussion (15 minutes)

→ Read aloud and discuss with the participants.

1. *What lessons can you take away from Nahyr's experiences with advisors?*
2. *Do you think that Nahyr's preparation for interviewing with potential advisors was effective? Why or why not?*
3. *Describe what Nahyr did not do in preparation for her move to the graduate program at Purdue University that caused her difficulties in terms of her advisor. Could she have done something different?*
4. *How would you handle the situation if you found yourself mismatched with your graduate advisor?*

Step 2. Prepare for the chapter 4 video

Note to Facilitator

The purpose of this video is to illustrate that (a) major change events can occur during the course of graduate study, (b) solutions can be worked out, and (c) one should persevere and not become discouraged. The chapter 4 video is the sequel to the chapter 3 video. If the students have not seen the chapter 3 video, you might consider showing it as well.

→ Read the following video introduction to the participants.

Six months after Dr. Harrison moved his lab to McGinley University, we hear what happened to Alicia, Elena, and Max in the wake of this major change in their graduate programs. Alicia is now finishing her second year, Elena is now starting her third year, and Max is now starting his fourth year. The video you are about to see is titled Reflections.

Step 3. Watch the chapter 4 video (10 minutes)

Step 4. Lead the chapter 4 video discussion (10 minutes)

→ Ask the participants the following questions.

1. *Do you think Alicia made an error in judgment by not going with Dr. Harrison in the first place? Discuss your reasoning.*
2. *How many different but satisfactory outcomes resulted from Dr. Harrison's move? What did the characters do to make their endings positive?*
3. *If you were Max and decided to change universities, what might you have done to make the change go smoothly? Recognize that students change universities all the time without difficulty.*
4. *What would you have done if you were in Elena's shoes?*

Step 5. Lead the chapter 4 activity (25 minutes)

→ Read the following to the participants.

Graduate school can present students with difficulties that they have to learn to manage, as the characters in the video demonstrated. The challenge is to look at and learn from one's missteps. In this activity, you will reflect on challenging experiences as a way to evaluate and improve your decision making.

→ **Pass out a copy of the handout to each participant.** If your group is large (twelve or more), you may wish to split the participants into two groups, have them work independently, and then bring the groups back together to have them share their responses.

Some students may not be able to come up with a difficult experience to share. A list of suggestions for students to consider is provided in the handout.

As you lead the discussion, listen carefully to the participant responses with regard to unhelpful and helpful ways of dealing with difficult situations. The lists below suggest points to listen for and suggestions for alternatives. The participants may come up with these themselves, or you may wish to bring them into the discussion.

→ **Unhelpful**

- Push it away and never think about it or talk about it
- Blame others for this bad experience
- Drown your sorrows in some form of excess (e.g., food, drink)

→ **Helpful**

- Take responsibility for your part in the difficulty
- Talk about it with a friend or counselor
- Join a support group
- Read articles or books written by people who have gone through similar experiences
- Keep a journal and reread it periodically
- Write down the lessons you learn from bad experiences and reflect on them once in a while

Now you are ready to lead the students through the handout questions. Give the students a few minutes to collect their thoughts before starting.

Chapter 4 Activity Handout (one copy per participant)

EXPLORATORY QUESTIONS

1. Do you enjoy looking back on difficult experiences you have gone through in your life? Why or why not?
2. Are your reflections helpful, or do you repeat the same mistakes?
3. Think about an unexpected or difficult experience. If you are having trouble thinking of such an event, look at the list below for suggestions. Now reflect on that event.
 - a. Remember your original goal
 - b. Describe the unexpected event and how it influenced your direction
 - c. Assess how this event affected your pursuit of your original goal
 - d. Redesign your strategy for achieving your goal

Experiences for Reflection

- Changing your major or adding/dropping a class in your undergraduate program
 - A family move from one house or from one city/state/country to another
 - Dealing with a sudden physical injury and its impact on your studies
 - Changing schools (college or elementary or high school)
 - Changing jobs while you are in school
 - A change in family income and your ability to pay for school
 - Any major change that happened in your life or the life of someone you know
4. What are some ways that people respond to life's difficulties that are (a) unhelpful and (b) helpful?

Notes: