

Chapter 6 Resources

Balancing Graduate School and Family



Preparation Steps for Chapter 6 Discussion and Activity

- This *Facilitator's Guide* will lead you step-by-step through the chapter 6 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 6 homepage](#).
 - Watch the chapter 6 video and download it in preparation for leading the session.
 - To **download** the video, scroll to the bottom of the chapter 6 homepage and click on the .mp4 link under “Additional Files.”

Chapter 6 *Facilitator's Guide*



→ **Summary of facilitation steps:**

1. Lead the discussion of chapter 6
2. Prepare the group for the chapter 6 video
3. Watch the chapter 6 video
4. Lead the chapter 6 video discussion
5. Lead the chapter 6 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 6 group discussion (15 minutes)

→ **Read aloud and discuss with the participants.**

1. *Which of the stories in this chapter did you identify with the most? Explain why.*
2. *Did you, like Andrew, find graduate school an isolating experience at first? What helped you move beyond that feeling?*
3. *What activities outside of graduate school are you currently involved in? Do they have a positive influence on your life, or are they just taking up valuable time?*
4. *What are the most important messages presented in this chapter?*

Step 2. Prepare for the chapter 6 video

→ **Read the following video introduction to the participants.**

The scene opens with Neil Redfield working late in the lab on a Friday night. Neil is a third-year graduate student working under Dr. Price. Take a look at this video titled Late Night.

Step 3. Watch the chapter 6 video (6 minutes)

Step 4. Lead the chapter 6 video discussion (10 minutes)

→ Ask the participants the following questions.

1. *Can you relate to Neil in the video? What similar experiences have you had?*
2. *Do you think Neil's mother is being supportive or selfish? Explain.*
3. *Do you think Neil's wife is justified in wanting Neil to come home? Explain.*

Step 5. Lead the chapter 6 activity (20 minutes)

→ Read the following to the participants.

In this session, we will take a look at our current and future activities. In the handout I'm about to distribute, you'll see a number of activities listed. We will expand upon this list (individually) and then talk about how to fit a sensible number of activities into a realistic schedule.

→ **Step 1:** Distribute one copy of the handout to each participant. Ask everyone to take a few minutes to add to the items on the list. Then ask participants to prioritize their items. *Do a first pass over all the items on the list for priority. Specifically, label each item as A for highest priority, B for medium priority, and C for lowest priority. Then, do a second pass where you prioritize the items (as 1, 2, 3, ...) within the A, B, and C groups. For example, the item marked A1 would be your highest priority item. A2 would be the next. Items marked C5, C6, C7 and so on, would be at the very bottom of the priority list.*

Give the students a few minutes to finish prioritizing the items.

→ **Step 2:** Lead the discussion on time management.

1. *What activities did you add to your list?*
2. *Look carefully at your list. In a given month, roughly how many of these items can you do comfortably? How many items to you have that you'd like to do, but don't have time to do? Please share some examples.*
3. *What activities have you had to give up because of time constraints?*
4. *Generally speaking, all of us become overcommitted at some point in our lives. We sign up to do more than we can handle. Often we do this recognizing that we already have a busy schedule. Furthermore, it is common for us to repeat the cycle of becoming overcommitted and then dropping out of activities. So then, why do we fall into this trap?*
5. *Let's talk about some practices that can help us manage time. Feel free to agree, disagree, or modify the suggestions I'm about to mention.*
 - a. *Look at your calendar and identify all the nonessential activities you have. Limit the number of them to X (where you choose the value of X—it could be 2, 3, 5...). Essentially, this practice prevents you from adding commitments without removing existing responsibilities. Let's discuss this from your individual and personal perspective. Would this strategy work for you? What would be your challenges?*

- b. *Sometimes we feel obligated to accept a responsibility, and we accept even though we suspect that we might not have the time. We should have said no, but saying no can be difficult sometimes.*
 - i. *Has anyone had this experience? If so, please share with us what happened.*
 - ii. *Has anyone successfully said no in such a situation? How did you say it and feel comfortable?*
 - c. *A suggestion for keeping the number of your commitments small enough to manage is to put time limits on your commitments. For example, if you are asked by your lab manager to join the university ballroom dancing club (after he has seen you dance at the recent office party), you could respond by saying, "Okay, I'll give it a try, but I'd only be able to commit for one semester." Has anyone tried this kind of strategy? Would a strategy like this work for you?*
 - d. *One of the consequences of being overcommitted is being late.*
 - i. *Have you ever struggled at one point or another with being late? Share your story.*
 - ii. *What techniques can you use to keep on time?*
 - iii. *What if you have a spouse or friend who is always late, and who makes you late. What techniques can you employ so that you will both be on time?*
6. *What suggestions (not mentioned earlier) do you have for good time management?*

Chapter 6 Activity Handout (one copy per participant)



Responsibilities as a Graduate Student: *Self-Care, Graduate Program, Off-Campus Life* (add items to these lists)

Self-Care Responsibilities

- Getting regular exercise
- Eating a balanced diet
- Getting adequate sleep
- Doctor and dentist checkups
- Hobbies
- Club sports or intramural sports
- Barber shop/beauty salon visits

Graduate Program Responsibilities

- Attending class
- Reading assignments
- Problem sets
- Lab course exercises
- Thesis research
- Preparing for qualifying exams
- Writing research paper
- Writing thesis
- Preparing for interviews
- Teaching
- Campus organizations
- Professional society organizations

Off-Campus Life

- Helping out at home
- Unplanned downtime
- Dates with your significant other
- Time with your children
- Care of pets
- Phone calls to family and friends
- Birthdays, anniversaries, weddings
- Religious life
- Volunteer activities
- Social engagements with friends
- Meals with family and friends
- Holidays
- Vacations
- Traveling to see family and friends
- Errands: shopping, cleaners