Protecting Your Time: Balancing Research, Other Work and Life

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Five thoughts

- No objective truth. Chaos is the natural state.
- “Non-promotable” tasks can be made promotable.
- Put the stress on someone else: AHSUS: Always have something under submission.
- Study yourself as you would a subject, e.g. diagnose and own your self-control problems.
- Non-academic friendships: more valuable, harder to maintain.

Disclaimers: There is no single way to be. I am no expert!
1. Everything in life takes work.
2. Use your small pockets of time wisely.
3. Find a (fun) hobby that counts for your exercise.
When life shuts a door... open it again. It’s a door. That’s how they work.
Work/Life Balance
– As Elusive As the Holy Grail

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Work is Dynamic, and so is Life

• Work/life balance is going to mean something very different at different points in one’s life
  – You need to find your own definition, and you will have to reevaluate it now and then
• Work can be very different, e.g. depending on whether you are PhD-student, a post doc, on a tenure track, tenured, etc
• Life can also be very different, e.g. depending on civil status, health, the presence (or not) of children, elderly relatives, etc.
• So: don’t strive for finding The Solution, because it does not exist
Life

• Don’t try to do it all: Outsource!
• Get help with the “right” things:
  – Outsource the less enjoyable/meaningful things first (even if others do it differently)
• If you have a partner, be fair to them and expect the same in return
  – Be explicit about tasks (harder to be unfair then)
  – Plan ahead together (harder to be unfair then)
• If you have kids, share the responsibilities with your partner
  – Even if your kids are not thrilled about it
• Have a default plan, but expect it to change
  – Your default plan should allow you to get enough sleep, some minimum of exercise, and some kind of me-time
Work

• Don’t try to do it all: Outsource!
• Good enough is often, indeed, good enough:
  – Service
  – Teaching
• Try to steer your effort to where it will have the highest long term return
  – Not where it is easier to steer it, or where the short term returns are the most salient
• Say no to some (sometimes even many) things, so that you can do the things you say yes to really well!
Balance

• Evaluate, re-evaluate and take action when needed
  – That something worked before, or seems to work great for someone else, doesn’t mean that it works well for you in this very moment

• Be grateful for the good things
  – For example: think about 1-3 things you are grateful for before going to sleep

• Be forgiving – of others, but most importantly of yourself
  – Know that you are enough, and that you are doing the best you can