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Transcript for Episode 02: Grad Interactions

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All 0:00

Happy New Year!!!

All 0:24

Welcome to STEM culture/podcast.

Dani 0:24

Oh, I fucked up!

Dani 0:24

It's really warm in here!

Zach 0:30

Alright, we have an intro.

Brooke 0:32

Welcome to stem culture podcast today our podcast is called grad interactions. This is where we'll be discussing grad to grad antics, you'll inevitably be spending a lot of time with your cohort, your department, and your fellow graduate students. There's no real cookie cutter grad student and, we all have different backgrounds and styles and that kind of makes navigating interactions a minefield.

Keighley 0:59

But graduate school puts you with some of the most interesting people around giving you the chance to form great friendships and find talented collaborations. Let us share our stories of how smoothly or not so smoothly we handled those grad interactions. And what we learned along the way.

Will 1:17

This episode goes out to all those people eating lunch in the bathroom to avoid their lab mates.

All 1:22

Wha whaaaaaaa.

Will 1:25

In this episode, you'll be hearing the voices of Will,

Keighley 1:28

Keighley

Brooke 1:29

and Brooke. So I'm going to give a little bit of background on how this episode kind of was created. Um, Dani and Keighley kind of appointed me as lead on this just saying that I brought people together and I gave them a look like I don't know what you're talking about. And we just started kind of having a conversation on how I have the ability to bring different people from different groups into like the same working sphere easily.

They kind of come hang out in the lab, and we talk about a lot of the topics that we talked about on this podcast. And so it really forced me to kind of do some self reflection on how it is I do this because I do this unconsciously without even thinking. And so, you know, self reflection sometimes is a scary thing to like, break down how you actually do things, but it really had me reflect back on some of the first classes that I had in biological anthropology, where we really started talking about how humans interact and on what level they create relationships and if you think about it. Like we are the most connected we've ever been on this worldwide scale at any time. You know, in recent history, we have social media to connect with.

We can between Twitter and Facebook and Instagram, and Snapchat, and you know, we have these huge social networks, but how many friends do we have that are in the flesh? And how how do we nurture those friendships and how do we make those connections and how does that reflect back to graduate school? And I specifically remember talking about a paper by Robin Dunbar who's an anthropologist that studied primates and how how these social interactions within primates reflect into the social interactions that we have as humans and really looking at those interactions, you know, they say you can only really have a social network where you can really create meaningful interactions between 150 and 250 individuals.

And depending on your graduate program that could be the size of your graduate program, or maybe the stem community that you're interacting with. But within that you can really only have five people or around five people that you can make really close, close connections with. So the people that you lean on emotionally about certain topics. And so kind of bringing that all into my way of thinking about how I'm interacting with people in my program, I started kind of asking myself questions How, how am I bringing these interactions out into a way where people are feeling comfortable with coming to me for certain topics that maybe they're having problems with, or they just want to share with me. And so I think the first question that I wanted to address is just how we're making connections.

So one of the first things that I want to say is that I love learning about people's stories and backgrounds. It's I wouldn't, I don't want to classify it as a hobby, but I just I really love making those connections. I love learning about people and kind of what, I know this sounds like a strange term but like what their heart tug is like what what's their what makes them tick and so I'm always asking questions about their background how they got to this point where how they got to graduate school, there's so many different factors that bring somebody to graduate school and their backgrounds are always unique and special.

I really enjoy learning about what type of science they're doing what they're doing now seeing the light and fire in somebody's eyes when they're excited about what they're doing and what they're working on and, and really what they're trying to or wanting to accomplish in life. You know, it might not be graduates or it might not be academia or industry. I think one of the reasons why I love having conversations with Keighley is because she's doing something so unique and really making her own path in a lot of ways and that's so fun to watch her develop as a person.

Keighley 6:54

So what I'm hearing you say is that for you when you find a person you want to dive deep into who that person is. And like, that's your driving motivation for making a connection. Even more, you know, specifically in our program, you can ask those more fine tuned questions of like, well, what are you doing here? How did you get here? What's your story? What science are you doing? What are you doing now? What do you wanna do later?

Brooke 7:15

Exactly!

Without inundating them and freaking them right out.

Yes. Because, you know, yes. I can't just jump in with those questions, even though I really, really want to most of the time, but you have to kind of, you know, build a comfort level that people will want to answer those questions.

Keighley 7:35

One of the reasons Dani and I want Brooke on here because she's kind of mom of our program. Yeah, she does bring that very like, comforting sense where like, if shit hits the fan like and you just need somebody be like, it's okay. I'm a fix it well, you're gonna probably fix it. I will help you. You know, that's Brooke like she definitely has spun this personality. You know, in this persona that we all have glommed onto, and like feel very safe around her.

Will 8:07

the word, glom, just, I

Brooke 8:09

it's my favorite.

Will 8:11

Yeah, I Yeah, right. I think that that just is a great starting place to talk about all the different kinds of personalities that you might run into, and how that can be sort of, sometimes blessing and sometimes make it difficult. So for me, you know, I feel very much like Brooke does in that I just love people and talking to people and learning about them. It's always my favorite part of pretty much any place that I go like, grad school is especially good for me for that because I feel I guess like there are a lot of kindred spirits here have mentioned before people who like to, you know, think about complicated stuff and don't mind getting into deep conversations and there's lots of opportunity for that here.

Brooke 9:01

So I've definitely, I think blossomed as a person coming to graduate school just because I feel like I'm surrounded by kindred spirits. But everybody's not like that, you know, one of my closest friends who was sort of like my, I don't know, big brother program dad or something like that. When I first got here, if you're listening, I think you probably know who you are, you know, he is. I don't think he is an extrovert in the way that I am but he figured out a way to build a really close community for himself that I'm fortunate enough to have been included in and so that really got me through the first couple years before I met these marvelous folks that I'm hanging out with now, but you know, his personality is very different. I mean, I think he likes people, but it doesn't energize him and the way that it does me, I think I'm hearing Brooke, say also I don't know, how do you feel about that sort of basic side of things  
Keighley

Keighley 10:12

yeah so I think it makes sense that the people who do a podcast obviously are energized by being around people and talking to people and having interactions with people through whatever forum they can get their hands on. And I mean, I don't think I'm any different obviously I'm rather extroverted. I shove myself at people and I'm like, Here I am, let's be friends. And sometimes that doesn't, but I felt like that's that's kind of how I do it is I'm like, Okay, cool. Like, let's just be friends now.

We'll figure out what we have in common later. But like we're have something in common, like we're either in the same program or we're living in the same place or we know the same people. I'm like, cool. Like, obviously, this is awesome. I like people, your a people, let's be people together. And I think that's kind of been because there's no like, set way I do this. It's just like, plop me in your lap and figure it out. I've had a very big variety of connections. You know, I have people who are like, yeah, you're a lot. Cool. So let's just be professional friends. I'm like, yeah, that's fine.

And so then we temper that relationship. And we find that that's really what's comfortable for us. I've had other people where we worked on the same cohort below me, and we just like went out one night, and by the end of the night, I'm like, Oh, my gosh, where have you been my whole life. And that was just a happenstance. Even though we were working together all the time. I didn't even really know who she was until we just happen to have that opportunity to like really be part of each other life for like an hour to and there may or may not have been assisting environmental factors in that relationship building  
exercise

Brooke 12:05

but it worked out well.

Keighley 12:06

Worked out so well. Um, so I think that's for me how I build my connections is that I don't have like an end goal other than like, I'm going to show you everything that I am and then let you kind of decide what parts of that makes sense for you. And that's like set myself up for some really big wins and some really big losses but it definitely it fits the extrovert personality that I come in swinging.

Will 12:33

So what you're probably hearing is that we've all learned quite a bit about this in the course of graduate school but I just really quick wanted to point out and maybe hopefully get your thoughts on something that that you said hinted at, during what you were just saying, which is that one of the unique things about graduate school and one of the things that makes it different about other types of school undergrad or you know, the business world or other professions is that there's not always really a clear distinction between personal and professional interactions.

And so that can get people into hot water and sticky situations fairly frequently. It was also a blessing and a curse because it means that we get to develop these great friendships with people that we also work with. But yeah, what do you what do y'all think about that?

Brooke 13:27

I think that's a really good point is that how do you I guess, approach it with strictly professional or strictly friendship or a marriage of the two? How do you know where that line is? Or what's appropriate for each interaction? I don't really have any insight on that for myself, because I think building into a friendship takes time for me it's not you know, I love learning about people and I love interacting with people. But to build it to this place of friendship takes a little bit more time. And so maybe I just start as more of a professional approach in grad school before I jump to that friendship bond. That's, that's just the way that I navigate that.

Will 14:22

Yeah, I think that's actually really good advice that you've intuited there. Because they're all different types of personalities. And unless you somehow are able to just like, define the personality and the, you know, ethical character of the person that you're talking to, because there's this gray area that we all live in, it's a great idea to take your time and engage to whatever level you feel comfortable, but realize that there are less clear rules in grad school and academia than there are other places

Brooke 14:56

So yeah, yeah, that's a really good point.

Keighley 14:59

all of that goes into Brookes idea that she was talking about Robin Dunbar's talking about the five close friendships and relationships that you're going to build. And as we kind of hinted at, in our first episode, grad life takes up a large amount of your time. And so the people you're spending all of your time with are likely to be grad students. And it is inevitable that the core five is going to, at least in some regard,

be built up of people who are working with other grad students or, you know, your mentors or what have you.

And so to discern professional and personal relationships as Will was saying, when it's hard to tell that difference in grad school and in academia, that's probably the reason why because our life becomes so much of this it's not a nine to five where we like leave the office and Okay, we have our work friends and we have our quote unquote real life friends. We need that mix but it's not possible to completely separate those two ideas.

Will 16:01

You know I would even go further than that and say it's not a good idea to try and separate them I I guess I wasn't suggesting that you should draw strict line between professional and personal and actually to specifically draw some language from this Dunbar paper that that you were talking about its Hill and Dunbar 2003 was what I was looking at and we'll put that in the show notes a link to that article based they call them support circles which are the five person groups that that Brooke was talking about and it's defined by them as "individuals from whom one would seek advice support or help in times of severe emotional or financial distress" and I would just like to throw my hat in the ring and say that describes grad school from top to bottom

Brooke 16:54

One hundred percent.

Will 16:54

Not all the time but severe emotional or financial distress, I think is probably an experience that pretty much every grad student will tell you that they've had as a part of grad school and having people who are there with you, in person who have gone through this or are going through it, to talk to about that, to give you advice to help you through it, whether it be peers or mentors, or whoever people that really understand are almost definitely going to become a part of your support, circle your primary five, and the sooner I think you're able to develop a little bit of that, the better grad school will be for you.

Brooke 17:39

Yeah, agreed.

Keighley 17:41

I think another part of this that would be remiss to not even mention is how do you know what are the actual steps that are taken to find friends because you might have one or two but like, how do you really grow that network of people and, you know, the more professional side the more personal side that makes you know how how do you build that network so I don't know Brooke you explain your perspective on that.

Brooke 18:04

Well I mean I think that it's one a natural process you can't really force friendship but the more you put an effort into getting to know your cohort the more you'll be able to kind of filter out who is that good fit for you like I'm not it sounds almost like a dating scenario but that's absolutely not not it but I think

that one of the onus on on what, Okay, so one of the approaches that I take is that when I meet people along the way, and I find people that I think are good fits for each other. I like to play kind of a friend matchmaker.

So I like to find people who I think would really complement each other or work well together, or maybe are working on the same topics in grad school or their science and kind of, I guess, facilitate networking between the two. Like, it's not really serving me, except for the fact that I get to watch two people that I highly respect now create beautiful friendship together, collaborations together, science together. And I think that's a really important part of our professional aspect in grad school. Because when we have one grad students who are interacting together in a very positive way, it can only mean that you're going to be creating wonderful things

Will 19:58

If you're not that person. And so if you're not the the the matchmaker so to speak, there might be somebody like that in your grad program, whether it's in your lab or your department, or in the sciences, more in general. And it's, it's, there's nothing wrong with keeping an eye out for somebody like that. Who can maybe connect you with people have overlapping interests. If you don't have something like that, but you're more of an introvert, what are some things do you guys think that people who are in a situation like that might do.

Brooke 20:34

Get involved. I know that's really hard from an introverts perspective to to get involved. But there if there's a seminar session, you can start attending and having these conversations, meeting the people who are in your cohort. I think that's really, really important. You're not going to like everyone and not everyone's going to like you but It's worth it to try to find an interaction that will be supportive in some manner.

Will 21:09

Yeah, so one one thing that usually exists in, in grad programs and departments in labs are some kind of structured events that can be anywhere from very formal to very informal. And those might be good opportunities because they're in neutral locations there, especially for the informal events maybe they're not really time intensive.

So if you find being around people to be exhausting or difficult, you know, you can go for just an hour whatever, you know, whatever you're comfortable with, but participating in like a very common thing that I've heard about is you know the lab goes out for beers at you know, at five on Fridays or, you know, one of the people in your program has a game night every week. These are all great things. And you know, I think grad students tending towards being sort of thinking people will probably understand if you don't want to participate in a very full way but you just want to sort of shop hang out for a little bit that going your way. I think most places that should be fine.

Keighley 22:22

Right. And going on that if you don't have the energy and you know, even though I'm in raging extrovert the hard times I don't want to talk to people and I don't want to be around people, but I still crave

interaction, which is a really weird dichotomy. Like, I don't actually physically want to go out of my house. I don't want to even put on pants but I still want to talk to people. There's a lot of really great online resources to help you build a network of people that you can rely on which I wouldn't recommend doing exclusively but are really good for times when you just want to have other input from other people or you don't want to have to get out of your house.

And it's like one of those that I really recommend this grad slack. I was just at a conference this last week and met up with a fourth year grad student from Georgetown. And she and I met up at this conference and it was amazing because I didn't know how well we would get along until we actually sat down and got dinner together and ended up being like a really great connection that I now will have for as long as I foster that relationship and so even though you know she's not in my department she doesn't really understand the day to day is she's just as valuable to me as somebody who is in my department and that just happened because I was perusing through you know grad slack online I didn't feel like leaving my house one day I don't you guys have any other forums like that?

Brooke 23:49

Twitter.

No I mean science Twitter's Yeah,

Will 23:52

Yeah. Follow us on Twitter @STEMculture shameless plug another whole category of interactions are professional interactions. And I just wanted to make sure that we we got to talk about that a little bit. Because in addition to being personally emotionally important for anyone who's going through grad school, this is also where you're really going to start to bring to build your professional relationships to whether those are people in your department or their people you meet at a conference, the social aspect is important for building a successful scientific career, whether that be in academics or industry or sicomm. So yeah, I mean, you asked about forums, I mentioned conferences. What kind of connections have you guys made it conferences?

Keighley 24:51

There was the GradSlack Oh yeah, I'm option for me. So my mentor is not very hands on at conference. He was great. My first year when I was just a fledgling grad student. And he was really great introducing me to people. And so I have a very small cohort of P is like, you know very well along in their career, but I don't really know a lot of other grad students. And I haven't found that in my cancer field specifically that it's common for people for like PI's to bring their grad students along with them kind of shadow at your elbow. And then they'll be like, okay, meet this important person, but also you grad students, you talk so it takes a lot of effort on my end to like, find other people at my level at conferences, so helpful to go to conferences to meet like the bigwigs not as helpful to find people who are maybe like in that middle to lower end of their career.

Brooke 25:46



So I'm just a little baby grad student and I have not been to a conference that is really related to my field. So I don't really have my my interactions are the interactions that I have in my cohort here at our university

Will 26:02

Well that's that's okay I've only been to one conference but actually

Keighley 26:07

Why is it that I'm the one who's gotten to the most conferences

Brooke 26:09

I love it

Will 26:10

So part of it might be and it's worth mentioning that different people's fields have different culture yeah different so I mean that that that's right subcultures among different fields is really a powerful force sometimes, you know so, you know the stuff that I studies a little more esoteric, you might say and so there aren't as many opportunities probably then for biomedical stuff. I mean, I think some people are interested in cancer research.

Keighley 26:43

Just a few. Yeah.

Will 26:45

So there are there are different levels of conferences, right. So the conference that I went to as an international conference, we will but they're also local and regional conferences that you might be able to find that could get you started. on some of these professional relationships, and since I brought this up, I just have one last point to to get in. And that's that, have you read a publication that you're interested in? You can cold call other scientists.

Keighley 27:16

Really?

Will 27:17

Yes. Right. I mean, it's, it's not

Brooke 27:20

I have done this.

Will 27:21

Yeah, maybe not on the phone because who knows but

Brooke 27:24

But reaching out through email and it was of course a very positive experience because when they email back and address you in a manner that's very professional and respectful, the questions that you're asking, it's empowering.

Will 27:42

Yes. And so you mentioned getting in touch with people who are at your level every time more often than not that I've emailed a PI. What they've done is said, Oh, that's a great question. Here's the contact information of this grad student in my lab or postdoc exactly that's working on the project that's related to that you should give them an email and they can probably help you. So this is a great way to meet people at all levels.

Keighley 28:16

We have been talking about professional relationships and personal relationships and how we navigate and create those relationships. Let me say relationships one more time. What happens though when you encounter somebody you maybe don't click with, maybe you have active conflict with and what to do when it is either professional or personal or a both relationship.

Brooke 28:46

I think that you're not going to make it through grad school without having some sort of a conflict in some manner. I mean, that's just a nature of being very close in close proximity with others. We don't all like everybody in our You know, everybody's going to have the people they like the people they don't like. But I really do think, you know, being kind to somebody, even when you are not fond of them, you know, my mom always taught me treat others as you would, you know, want yourself to be treated. I don't think that's the exact terminology. But I truly try to live that way. I want to treat others how I would like to be treated, even if I'm not fond of them.

Will 29:31

You know, science can be really cutthroat. And that is a choice that we all make day to day in the way that we interact with each other. And I think you can be kind to people and at a minimum civil and professional to people but not not let them hurt you. Yeah. And so that baseline of civility and professionalism I think is a good place to go back to and drawing boundaries and relationships is just a good idea in general. But when you come to a situation like that, and you got to make it work, having things like sort of a set of rules that you establish for yourself, and maybe communicate with them either implicitly or explicitly, sometimes

things like schedules. I know Brooke, you guys have a bunch of people working in your lab doing all kinds of different things. And some of its kind of messy so it can be Yeah, I'll have are there y'all have a schedule?

Brooke 30:40

Yeah. So, um, you know, especially, I think there's seven of us and in the lab and so when you're working in these one tight quarters, people are all needing to use the same machinery the same you know, lab space there is definitely a well, this approach didn't work. So let's try it in a different manner I think

trying I think when you approach it as, let's find something that works the like, it's not going to serve everyone, but try to find something that's a compromise for everyone.

Sometimes it's the approach that you take being more abrasive, and, you know, saying something in a way that could be taken offensively is not essentially going to win for the whole lab, right? And so when you're living in that close quarters, you really want to find a solution that empowers everyone to because you don't want to be putting somebody down because they're interfering in some way what you're doing, you want them to be empowered as well because the more empowered everybody is that you're working with the better science that's going to happen. The science that's coming out of your lab is a reflection on who's in your lab as well. So that's just those are my inner thoughts.

Will 32:10

Yeah. Well, I mean, one of the important undertones of that is that you have to be proactive about it. It's not going to work itself, right? Yeah. And being a new grad students, I didn't really have experience in really needing to draw boundaries around relationships that were not so good for me and being really proactive about, you know, what do I need to accomplish in interacting with this person if you have to actually actively work with them? or How can I get what I need to do done and still also be healthy and, you know, because, you know, if you just if you have to interact with someone for an hour, once a week, that's one thing, but if you've got to be around them six hours a day, seven days a week, you've got to come up with some kind of plan. Yeah, and be proactive about

Keighley 33:01

You know it's communication and that's nothing new I'm sure to people who are listening to this or anybody in this booth is that communication is key. Right? It's talking about hey the think we have a misunderstanding and we need to address this right away or I anticipate a conflict happening can we plan for something that I think is going to be problematic I don't think you know any civil human would respond negatively like no I don't want to create a plan to make our lives easier like that would just be insane and and so I mean there's something to be said about communicating with the people in your space and being exactly as well said proactive about it.

Will 33:42

Yeah. So what happens then if - Brooke's up in here taking glamour shots of us while we're trying to report thanks for

Brooke 33:50

Sorry

Will 33:51

I guess you are our leader for this endeavor. So what happens Yeah, what happens when despite your best efforts somebody refuses to compromise refuses to act professionally or civilly. And and your success and your emotional health are being compromised by a fellow grad student, whether it be allowed made her a classmate or just somebody on campus with you. What can you do then?

Brooke 34:26

Challenge them to a duel!

Will 34:29

Pistols at midnight.

Keighley 34:32

Pipette wars! That's why your mentor is there, right? They are in charge of the lab for a reason, you know, if it's somebody you work with, that somebody you have to go to. And if you know, it's cross labs, then you can either talk to your and their mentors and ask for support there, or, you know, the program director, if you want to bring it there, like Zach, and Dani will be talking about it, navigating the bureaucracy. And there's very a ton of layers of this, that this that nobody's gonna be able to fully get through in, you know, a 45 minute episode. But it's that idea of, you have to find the people who will help you and push on it.

Will 35:14

Yeah, get get help with the problem, if you tried, and you just can't get any traction with it. There are lots of people out there, you know, it's not a bad idea, especially if you've got a good relationship with your advisor, with your mentor, or with other mentors that are in the department to go and talk to people about it. Don't suffer alone and try to Yeah,

Brooke 35:37

I'd like to add to that to somebody that I work with, they actually went to the counseling department, and we're getting just kind of some feedback on how they should navigate some things because they were struggling with some things within our department. And that was a great resource for that person as well. So that's another thing avenue that you can, you can maybe go and just talk things, sometimes you just need to talk it through. It's not that you need somebody to give you a solution. You just need to like let it out in a safe environment.

Will 36:13

Yeah, and I think most universities have some kind of counseling center if they don't,

Keighley 36:19

Should be able to refer you to one.

Will 36:20

Right.

Brooke 36:21

Yeah.

Will 36:22

There's also this thing called an ombudsman, which, if you haven't heard on that,

Keighley 36:34

O-M-B-U-D-S-M-A-N. I didn't know how it was spelled. And so when I was googling things, I didn't know what I was looking for. So for the for the people who are listening to our podcast and don't know what it is, can't say the word

Will 36:44

Yeah, it's okay. Just just Google it. take a stab at it. And if you get it wrong, Google give you the sassy italics. "Did you mean...?"

Keighley 36:53

Just basically, what I just did to Will, right now.

Will 36:56

By the way, that joke belongs to somebody else. sassy Google, I think it's Russell Brand,

Keighley 37:02

It's ok, it's yours now. But the ombudsman.

Will 37:07

Om, Om whatever, something then ombudsman, yeah, oh, but find your universities ombudsman and, and, and contact them if you're having a problem.

Keighley 37:18

That's exactly what they're there for it. Mm hmm. But I would like to put out the disclaimer that the correct people to talk to are not necessarily other grad students. And this is the one time I might advise you to not talk to a grad student, when you're having issues with another grad student. I mean, obviously, talk to the person, you're trying to fix things. But it is a very slippery slope, to talk to people in your department. And as well meaning as you know, you are about just trying to find someone even to and as close as you think that person is to you, and how strong that relationship is, it might not always be the best idea and you know, there's

Brooke 37:58

It could create more conflict in the end.

Keighley 38:00

Right. And so, you know, I urge you to be aware of the people you are speaking to, whenever you're having conflict, because it does not need to be a bigger thing. And you don't want to be the person contributing to a bigger conflict. That's exactly we've been saying, you know, if you are the person who keeps a level head, people will notice that, and your reputation will not be tarnished, because you were trying to do the right thing and navigate this conflict, whether or not it was your fault, you're still trying to handle it in the best way you can. And, you know, talking to other grad students can make things muddy.

Brooke 38:36

Yeah.

Will 38:38

Of course, guys, if things get really bad, and, you know, sometimes grad school and a department can feel like a closed system, it's still a part of the rest of society and the rules apply. So you know, don't be afraid you know, of making a stink. If somebody does something that is really not okay. And you need to call the police or the title nine office at your university. Do it.

Keighley 39:09

All this hopefully should help. I don't, I feel like really like, Oh, God, we're ending it on, like, call the police. Like maybe it'll be fine. It'll all be fine.

Will 39:19

Obviously, don't like, you know, don't don't knee jerk call the police they'll get

Keighley 39:26

I feel like we need a better ending for this moment.

Brooke 39:33

Let's see.

Keighley 39:33

We can do some cutting of things.

Will 39:35

Funny story.

Keighley 39:35

How do we fix this? How do we fix this transition?

Brooke 39:39

Exceptional stories.

Keighley 39:40

Speaking of exceptions to the rules, in academia we did just recommend the pipe war, maybe you'll have to start doing that.

Will 39:49

Yeah, so sometimes bad stuff happens. But there's a lot of good stuff in grad school, I think we all have some great stories that we can share. So we want to end on a better note than call the police.

Keighley 40:03

Let's say call the police like 16 more time.

Will 40:06

Okay. Instead of that, we'd like to share some of the better experiences that we've had in grad school.

Brooke 40:15

Everyone's looking at me. So I, um, I do have kind of an exceptional story. As far as friendship. For me, that has been kind of a lifeline in graduate school, my first year of grad school was pretty chaotic, and pretty dramatic in a lot of ways, in a way that I think we will touch on in later episodes. But I had a lot of turmoil going on, I was involved in a situation that lasted a good year, my first year of graduate school.

So it added a lot of stuff, and I had Dani who has been an extra exceptional and extraordinary friend, because through this time, she is somebody who championed for me in a way that I don't know I could ever repay her for she really went to bat for not only myself, but kind of this little group that we really needed a champion during this time. And she, you know, took on administration in a way that really made some powerful changes. And so that if I had not had that connection, I'm really not sure that I would have stayed in graduate school, if I had not had that person, I could, you know, talking about our five close people that I could confide in one and,

and share with her that I was scared and worried about my future and not feeling like, you know, I could continue on and a lot of ways and she, she listened to me and she took on a fight that she didn't have to take on. So having a connection like that changed my trajectory in school, and is the reason that I'm sitting here with you guys today. So you know, those connections can be powerful. So shout out to Dani.

Keighley 42:41

Hopefully, all the tears when she hears this later.

Brooke 42:45

I will make her cry in a good way.

Keighley 42:48

Yeah, we absolutely love her Dani for what she has done for people. My story, my uplifting, happy story is not so much of the friend who fought for me when a friend who was I know my back my support and in a different way, really in a little bit more, you know, the day to day when I was having a hard day or whatever, she knew exactly what to do. And, you know, our friendship started from such happenstance. I actually had a friend from my hometown coming and visiting me. And because I wanted to convince that friend that I actually had friends in my new hometown, I invited everybody I knew to come hang out.

And our night ended with us walking down the middle of a street at like, an ungodly early hour, like 3am or something ridiculous, telling each other weirdly personal details about our lives, and realizing that we felt so safe around each other. And that, you know, we could continue to have these conversations in any time or any space. And, you know, it really is really just block into I go over and hang out with her cat when she's not home.

Because that makes me feel good. Because, you know, he's like, our cat. And if you have just literally she's the person I call up on any night of the week for support when I'm lonely, or when I want to just,

like dance around and be ridiculous, or binge watch an episode or do anything. And so she's really been somebody I can lean on through the thick through the thin. And for all the cat Snapchat videos I could ever want

Will 44:42

Cats. Oh,

Brooke 44:47

Staring at you there Will.

Will 44:48

I think for me, there's, I've expressed this before that, you know, I found more understanding and feeling of, you know, beyond that even kinship, I think, with a number of the people that I've met in grad school. But I always just go back to, you know, one of my really close friends that I mentioned before, in this episode, who, you know, really got me through my first year, you've probably figured out that the first year, grad school can be tough, you're in a new place, you don't know a lot of people. And sometimes those first few months can be really lonesome.

And, you know, I wasn't feeling a lot of genuine personal connection with my lab mates. It was sort of awkward and, and, and strange. And it just so happened that across the hall, there was this funny, you know, super smart dude who like to have philosophical, philosophical conversations, like I do, and like video games. And so he really became my, you know, my, my back, you know,

Keighley 46:07

Your lobster.

Will 46:09

Right. Yeah, the person that that I could talk to, when I was having a hard time, day to day, who understood they, you know, knew the people who I was dealing with, and knew what it was like to be a grad student. And, you know, I ended up you know, I guess thinking of him is like a family member, you know,

and in those late nights in the first semester, when you sort of, you can't sleep because, you know, you've been working 80 hour weeks for a month, you know, having a person like him there probably, you know, saved my grad school career, too. So, if you're listening, thank you. You'll never know how much that meant to me. And yeah,

Keighley 46:59

We wish you guys all your lobsters.

Will 47:03

Yeah, go find your lobsters. I don't even know what is that from?

Keighley 47:06



Friends.

Will 47:08

Friends?

Keighley 47:09

Thank you, Ross and Rachel. Go find your lobster. Go find your person. Hashtag Grey's Anatomy.

Will 47:16

Yeah, you don't have to do it alone. You are not alone.

Keighley 47:21

Thank you so much for listening. We hope you have amazing grad interactions. Next time. Dani and Zach will be talking about navigating the bureaucracy will the they will be discussing bureaucracy from the standpoint of a graduate student trying to effect change in their department and how we can make the university work for us.

Brooke 47:38

We also want to wish all of our listeners a happy new year and and kind of ask all of you do you make new year's resolutions? Are there other traditions that you celebrate? We'd love to know on Twitter, and if what your resolutions are, or if you do them, I for one, do not make new year's resolutions. And I put so much pressure on myself for so many reasons that I've just decided that New Year's resolutions are not a good fit for me.

Keighley 48:14

And that's okay.

Brooke 48:15

Yeah, that's okay. It works.

Keighley 48:17

But I'm going to talk about mine.

Brooke 48:18

Okay. What do you do?

Keighley 48:21

So I am going to commit myself to doing sci comm, even though I'm kind of doing that right now. By doing is podcast and all the other things, but I really want to commit to like going to conferences and being an active member for like a full year like very much making this part of my life. I would like to refocus and recenter on my research, I will be getting an RA in the spring for five semesters.

And so I really want to re dedicate myself to the thing that brought me down here in the first place. I can't leave until I finish it. So I really want to find re-find my passion for what brought me down here.

And then I would also like to spend actual dedicated effort into self care, specifically going to the gym and drinking water and separating myself from work, because that has been something that worked for me in the past and I have not focused on and so I would like to renew that focus.

Will 49:14

Yes, my new year's resolution is to purr more. In all seriousness, seriousness, though, I am resolving myself to getting my first publication out, yay, I'm really excited about that. I think that's achievable because I finally actually have data. So that's step one. And I've even started writing. So I think that's Yeah, that's, that's kind of, and I'd also like to submit at least one major grant application

so I can actually be a grown up scientists like some of my colleagues here. And in more personal things I would like to, as Keighley mentioned, do better job of self care. So you know, I do pretty well with getting sleep. But I've been working with intermittent fasting, which is very fashionable right now. But it seems to work with me. So I would like to stick with that and also just doing a better job of proactively expressing my appreciation for the important people in my life.

Yeah, and as Brooke mentioned earlier, we would love to hear about your new your New Year's resolutions. You can tweet us at STEMculture one word or email us at [STEMculturepodcas@gmail.com](mailto:STEMculturepodcas@gmail.com). And if you like what we're doing, please rate us on iTunes to help more people who are interested in improving stem culture. Find us if you'd like to support us. You can find our Patreon on our website, which is [www.stemculturepodcast.com](http://www.stemculturepodcast.com). You'll also find show notes stimulating reference articles and links to our YouTube channel for transcribed shows on our website.

Keighley 51:18

Until next time, don't forget to consensually hug a grad student or at least buy them a coffee.