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Transcript for “Work AND Life AND Balance” series, Episode 06: Life – Birth, Life, and Death in Graduate School

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All 0:17

Welcome, to STEMculture/podcast!

Dani 0:18

Oh, I fucked up! [laughter]

Zach 0:18

Alright, we have an intro.

Dani 0:25

You guys, it's so warm in here!

Will 0:26

Welcome to STEMculture podcast. Today we're talking about LYYYYYYYFEEEE. [giggling]

More specifically, about maintaining the necessities of life while in graduate school. Don't let graduate school conquer you, you conquer graduate school, we're going to try to convince you that maintaining life's necessities is not just a matter of health, but also of success. You have to figure out how to take care of yourself, and then actually do it day to day and people have different needs. So the specifics may not be the same for you, it will sometimes be complicated, and it's work that only you can do for yourself.

I'm phrasing this strongly not to give you something else to worry about. Because God knows we all have lots to worry about in grad school. But because I'm trying to push back against the culture that often doesn't consider taking, taking care of yourself as a valid use of your time. I'm trying to give you tools for negotiating a healthy, sustainable life with the people and projects that put demands on your time.

Dani 1:36
Snaps! [Snapping]

Will 1:38
Yeah,

this episode goes out to all the millions out there who just need to get their red stapler back. See to your hierarchy of needs, and don't burn down the building. Your hosts today will be will

Brooke 1:52
Brooke

Dani 1:52
and Dani

Will 1:54
so grad school can be a long road and in the last episode Keighley, Zach and Dani talked about all the demands on your time from work and graduate school, and that those should be limited so that you can see to the necessities of life, grad school may not be worth it to you. If your life falls apart in the process. Moreover, you won't be as successful as you could be, unless you stay healthy by taking care of your needs. But it's not easy to balance these two realms that everyone talks about work life balance, but how do you even do that?

Brooke 2:29
Well, I'm I really don't follow the idea of work life balance. This is kind of a a topic I've had since undergrad with one of my mentors, we always used to kind of be like work life balance is the lie, you know, because we're balancing family well, specifically me, I'm balancing kids and family and school. But it wasn't until I really had a long conversation with Dr. Rutherford when she was here visiting that there's a term I kind of really adhere to. And that's more work life integration, where you're not putting these components of this is my work. And now this is my life,

I really think that there's this blending of the two existences. And when I'm at work, my family is 100% apart of what I'm doing. When I'm at work, you know, I'm, I'm still making phone calls to teachers, or texting with teachers of my son, I'm having conversations with my oldest son who's away, you know, those are 100% of part of my time at my work. So I think it's just whatever is the top priority at the moment. And knowing which one should take priority. So I really I don't adhere to the work life balance because I think that completely compartmentalize is those two things when it's, it's this flow, it's an integration.

Will 4:03
Yeah, it sounds I mean, I really identify with that. Because I think if you try to, you know, carve your life up into pieces, that's stressful, I mean, you're never allowed to think about your family while you're at work. And conversely, you're never allowed to think about work while you're at home, then it's, I don't

know, it seems sort of, like an unnatural way of being, and, you know, I, the, so I naturally don't have a lot of work life balance, I have to force myself when I'm excited about what I'm doing. Which, luckily, being in grad school is the case I have, I have to force myself to, to take care of what I need, and also to, you know, maintain my relationships and be present for my significant other.

And I think that, you know, recognizing that, that, you know, you spend time thinking about all the parts of your life all the time is much more realistic. So, what is necessary, why, what are some of the things that we do to get what we need, and what happens when you don't get what you need for too long.

Dani 5:19

And so the structure for today's episode is based off of these categories of birth, life, and death, and birth, we will all get into how we are 'birthed' into graduate school and the people we end up bringing with us and experiences, life is about our physical needs, and then death, we'll get into how to cope with tragedies in graduate school,

Will 5:41

a theme of our discussion will be that mental and physical health affect cognitive function, and we'll talk about some of the experiences and uh, that have affected our lives and our graduate careers

and things that work for us. But we may not get into details about how specifically other people should maintain their lives while they're in graduate school. Because it's a complicated set of ideas. And, and it's going to be different for different people. So if there's something that you'd like to hear more about, from us on any of these topics, hit us up on Twitter, at stem culture, or Facebook, Instagram, or email. And all of these ways of contacting us are on our website.

So birth, we're all born into the world as social animals, and the communities that we're a part of the people that are important to us

are important to us in ways that we may not always know. So in the literature of people who study these things, they refer to it the ideas that I'm talking about as social integration and social support. And there's actually science that shows that being a part of a social community that's supportive, has health benefits.

And so one thing that happens when we go to grad school sometimes is that we move away from home. And it's not like a undergrad, common misconception, because this is actually more like moving away to start an intense career, that's going to take up a lot of our time. And so the, the people that are important to us are still there, even though we've moved away. And if we want to maintain those relationships that may be conferring a level of psychological stability and other things to us, that's going to take a different level of time and effort than maybe it did before. So another thing that you can do is build a new community of graduate students, which can be very fulfilling and rewarding. And so if you want to hear more phone or thoughts about that, you can listen to our second episode "grad interactions". So then, on the other hand, if you become isolated when you go to grad school, that can have negative health effects. And that's going to affect your ability to perform as a graduate student.

So what do you guys think about that,

Dani 8:29

I think it's 100% true, you know, I think about my first year here, and how I really felt alone. And I was trying to find that connection with other people. And, and, you know, building connections takes time. And so that's okay. But that first year was definitely harder. Because I didn't have those connections, yet harder on me physically. And emotionally.

Brooke 8:56

I was extremely lucky in that I started a graduate program where I did my undergrad. So I was already interacting with all of y'all. And that really was helpful for me to kind of just step into a different role at school. But that was very, but it was a very different role of expectation from a family perspective. So, you know, my family had to get to know me as not an undergrad student any longer, which, you know, I've been going to school for quite a long time. So they've already always see me as the student. But then to really make that shift into "this is my work" and not just school, that was a big change for me.

Will 9:48

Yeah, so I'm very, so I did move away like Dani, and we're actually sort of equidistant from our homes, but in opposite directions. But when I first came here,

yeah, I had, I had some pretty meaningful interactions with grad students almost right away. But I was very lucky in that. And I, again, talked about that some, in Episode Two. But the other thing is that I'm really lucky in that I have really good relationship with both my parents. And it hasn't always been really good. Although I would say that, you know, on the whole, I'm very fortunate and who my parents are, but as an adult. And since I started grad school a little bit older, I had already put a lot of work into those relationships. And so when I came here, they were sort of ready to,

to survive the distance, and still be really supportive for me.

So I have a standing appointment to talk to my mom every Sunday afternoon.

Brooke 11:01

That's so cute. I love that.

Will 11:06

And, you know, I think when I was younger, I didn't understand how meaningful that was going to be. I'm just knowing, you know, even though we don't get to actually spend time in person together very much anymore,

knowing that there's this person out there who's thinking about being cares about my well being, and who I can really talk to, about the stuff that's going on my life good and bad. And I can trust to, to, you know, respond honestly, and caringly and I think just like, with my awesome few friends that I made, when I first got the grad school, like the first couple years of grad school, I might not have made it

through if it wasn't for getting to talk to my mom, every Sunday, even when it felt like, like, oh, man, it's Sunday morning, I'm hungover. I don't get on the phone and talk to anyone. Just having that habit

made me feel more socially integrated. And I wonder if my health isn't better.

Brooke 12:10

Yeah, I, you know, I have my family with me pretty much all the time, you know, I wake up in the morning, and my family's there. And then I go to school slash work, and I am able to come home to my family every night. But I've really had to,

I don't want to say, train my family, how to be supportive of me. But I had to teach them the what the demands are of graduate school on me, so that they knew how to be supportive of me,

one of the ways that I was able to accomplish that is that I would search out articles that really explained a dynamic of being maybe a partner to somebody who is in graduate school, so they knew

what it was like, so that my husband could really connect with what that partner was saying about being a supportive partner. Because my, my husband's never been to graduate school. And so he really didn't know all the demands that were on me.

And then on top of that, trying to make sure that I'm spending time with my children. But knowing in the back of my mind, I have an exam coming up, or I have a paper to write on. So there's these multiple things that are pulling at me all the time. And he's really put in an effort to make sure that he knows how to be supportive of me during that time. So there would definitely was a period of growth where he didn't know how to do that.

But now, I think we've really hit this groove of, he understands where my priorities are. And he knows when I have to shift into grad school priority, or I want to be mom priority. And so it's been a learning process. But it's important, because that's a majority of the time of my, you know, human contact and interaction as with my husband and my children. And so it's been a period of growth, but incredibly important, because it gives me this perspective to look at my studies through a different lens. I think having kids is so important for me, because it brings a lot of depth to my studies to my work that I do.

Dani 14:42

And you had you had your kids already when you started undergrad, right? Yeah,

yeah. Do you think it would be... do what do you think it would have been like? And I don't know if you're gonna be able to answer this question. But what do you think it would have been like, if you had your kids in grad school, and you had like a toddler,

Brooke 15:03

so that I really like that, looking at it from a different perspective, because we have a lab mate who didn't have children before coming into graduate school, and has had children in graduate school. And

so what's great is that we have these different perspectives, we can look at things from different time periods.

For me, I think it would have been very difficult, because I'm learning how to be a parent and learning how to navigate grad school, I've had this wonderful way, or a wonderful opportunity to learn kind of the ropes of parenting, and then learn the ropes of school, and then how to integrate both of them. But that, you know, I just feel it would have been more difficult to be the other way around. I could be very wrong. But that's not my experience here.

Dani 16:00

So Brooke, and Tory, who Brooke was just talking about, they're actually working on an article right now about parenting in grad school, and what it's like from both of their perspectives. So once that is out in the world, will be sure to share it cause they have a lot of thoughts about that, which I think are really valuable, especially, you know, having kids while you were literally in grad school, and you have a newborn, you have to balance all that. And then what if you're in grad school, but you have kids already and having those two different perspectives. So I'm really looking forward to that.

Brooke 16:33

Yeah, I think we really try to hit the topic of what the culture is like around being a parent in grad school, you know, like how PIs view you how the department views you how graduate school views, you and other graduate students view you, I think that's an important part of the conversation is just the culture around graduate school doesn't necessarily include parents.

Will 17:04

Yeah, I think that's, that's really interesting, because, like you were talking about sort of work life integration earlier, in a broader sense, you know, having families having kids is a big an important part of a lot of people's lives. And we should ask the question, do we really want graduate school academia, science or the workplace to be something that precludes being able to be a, you know, healthy member of a family?

Brooke 17:36

Yeah, I think, you know, I've I follow a lot of other parents have on graduate students who are parents on Twitter. And this is quite a topic that's being thrown around right now is that there's a lot of graduate students. And I feel the same way as what I'm about to say is that they feel that they're studies have been enhanced by being a parent,

knowing time management skills, being able to prioritize the right things. I think all of that is something that I wouldn't necessarily have if I wasn't a parent. And there's, I've seen a few PIs mentioned on Twitter that they've had graduate students who were parents, and sometimes those are the ones that work the hardest and the smartest, I don't want to say like, intelligently smarter, but we know how to put things get things done in a very orderly and successful way

Dani 18:42

and efficient too

Brooke 18:43

Yeah, it's very efficient. But also, I think, you know, when you have toddlers and you raise children, you learn these incredible negotiating skills. [laughs]

So I feel like if you can negotiate with a toddler, you can negotiate with the anyone and I I definitely feel like I bring that to the table

Dani 19:03

[giggling] i love that so much.

Will 19:08

I think I think that the direct comparison between toddlers and PIs from the graduate student perspective

Brooke 19:14

100% getting at that

Will 19:17

hopefully going to offend everyone.

Brooke 19:21

Hashtag goal. So

Will 19:25

I was curious, do you think that that specifically raising children and sort of really exploring that

that nurturing and and encouraging mindset that I think that you probably have to to you know, to be able to raise kids do you think that that or any other part of being a parent has made you a better mentor as a grad student

Brooke 19:55

I think it does play into how I actually interact with everyone yeah I think it I it plays into how I have my friendships it has an impact on how I'm interacting with undergrads

I think it colors every part of my life It makes me feel like I can connect with people in a different way that I then but prior to having children

Dani 20:21

yeah and brick will always turn the light on for you Even if you don't want it on perfect parent status accurate I don't need it on a you like it turning it on

Will 20:32

going to go blind reading [laughs] "thanks mom"

Brooke 20:37

mm hmm yep yep me this is me

Dani 20:42

so another aspect of having you know the we're getting "birthed" into graduate school and we bring other people into [laughing] what

Brooke 20:50

I just love the term "Birthed in"

Dani 20:53

We do alot of a lot of birthing in this podcast.

We talked about brain birthing episode one. So yeah, oh, yeah, we "birth" a lot

But being birthed into graduate school. And we bring other people with us, we've kind of talked about family, both kind of parents, but also children. But also you might have a significant other that you might be bringing with you. So

to give you an example, I, I brought my significant other with me. And it was really scary, though. Because when I was considering coming to graduate school,

I'd already been on this path for a few years before I met my partner. And when I got into school here, I was always it was not like a conversation. At that point. It was "I am going" because we hadn't been together kind of long enough to start planning each other into our lives yet, but I wanted him to come with me. So I remember very much the day that I decided to ask him if he would move with me from California to here. And he said, Yes, very kind of nonchalantly. But for him, it was a really easy decision, because he didn't have anything holding him in California, right then and there yet. So it's kind of good timing for both of us to move here together.

Now, when we moved here, though, there wasn't a job for him, he just moved here with me to be with me, which I really appreciate that he was brave enough to do that. But really, what ended up happening is, he would do a job for six months, somewhere else, maybe upstate, or sometimes in the state, but far away, and then he would come back and kind of be, I would call him "house husband" for the time. And we kind of kept doing that until

we thought, well, maybe it would be worth it for him to go get a masters. So we got married last year. And he started a Master's also last year. And now he's kind of in a second semester of that, and then we're doing long distance again. But it's really worth it for us. And it's kind of like this constant conversation we're having. So a lot of people might start relationships in grad school, or before grad school, might get married in grad school, or kind of on that path after. And one of the things with academia is a lot of academics and with other academics. And it kind of leads to what we call the two body problem. And I remember the first time I brought this up with will, his eyes just got really big,

because it's this idea that if you're in academia, and you want to stay there, imagine how difficult it is right now to get one job in academia. But if you have two of you, who are trying to get into the academic jobs, then guess what, it's not even just twice as hard. It's just way, way harder to find a job. Yes, exponentially harder.

And so that's kind of what the two body problem means in terms of academia. And so at least with my partner and I, he's not really interested in going into academia. And we're kind of hoping that since he's interested more in the government, and kind of nonprofit sector that that might make us a little bit, it might make it easier for us to actually find something for both of us when we move for my job.

Will 24:26

Yeah, I have a sort of similar situation, except I met my lovely and esteemed significant other that you all know,

Dani 24:34

Hi Moncie, love you

Will 24:35

while I was in grad school. And so but, but she like your significant other. Hi, hi, Robert. Was actually already employed at a consulting firm when we met. And so she has had sort of very unique opportunity to work remotely all along. And at least for the time being continues plans to continue doing that. So if I get a postdoc somewhere, she she may decide to move with me if she's kind enough,

Dani 25:17

or if it works for her career, right? Yeah, and that conversation is really hard to have.

Will 25:24

It is, yeah, because I don't want to limit her her career options, she could do anything. And I think with the skill set that she has, now, there are a whole lot of jobs that she could potentially do. But the the opportunities for postdocs for me are going to be in specific places with specific people. So sort of another way of phrasing the two body problem is, you know, the likelihood of getting a particular job production academic is fairly low, but then the likelihood that a partner is going to have a job that's as good for them near where your job is, is like zero.

Brooke 26:10

Yeah.

Will 26:14

And yeah, I mean, even more. So in addition to the sort of spatial complexity of the two body problem, there's also a timing thing. Yeah, so Moncie's finished her PhD, and I'm not. And so you know, we're together dealing with the considerable uncertainty of exactly how long it's going to take me to finish my PhD. And it's not nearly as uncertain now as it was a year ago.

But it still makes it hard for her to plan even if she knew exactly what she wanted to do next, when she's going to apply where she's going to apply.

Dani 27:00

Yeah,

Will 27:02

yeah. So it's, it's, it's pretty difficult thing to deal with, but with time and effort, hopefully come solutions and compromises that are good for everyone.

Dani 27:11

Yeah, and then I will say to, when I talk with my partner about this, it's not like we just talked about it once. And we're done. I bring it up probably every three to four months, really, because I just want to check where we're at where we at with this decision. I know, we don't know much more, but how are you feeling? How am I feeling. So for us, it's a, it's a lot of communication. And also part of that communication is, Hey, there may be times where we don't live with each other, which, like, right now, we're not living with each other.

But since he's, he's about two hours away. So we're able to see each other at least a couple times a month. And that's really, really great. But, you know, depending on how postdocs work out, or if I do get a tenure track job someday, fingers crossed, knock on wood, you know, there may be times where I have to move and he's not ready yet. So we've kind of talked about that as well, and how, you know, how we will handle that when it comes?

Will 28:07

Well, I think that flexibility and in terms of, you know, what, what, you're what you're okay, with, you know, it's going to be different for different people. But, and we've, we spent some time talking about here, what we've done and what's important to us. But to take a step back, I mean, how do you figure out what you're okay, with? How do you figure out how much social integration integration, how much social support social interaction you need? Where do you even start? And, and, like, once you figure out what you need, how do you get it?

Dani 28:55

Yeah, when I think it's, I think it's a lot of trial and error, you know, when something's wrong, you know it and then you can work to fix it

Will 29:02

Yeah, you might feel isolated. If you if you don't feel isolated, then maybe it's not a problem. But if you feel isolated, then, you know, maybe try to go and have one meaningful interaction with one person this week.

Brooke 29:20

Yeah, I like that. I think it takes a lot of self honesty, to know what it is that you need, versus, you know, you hear other people may be proclaim what they need, and knowing what's right for you, instead of

trying to tell yourself what somebody else is doing us, right. Yeah, I think that's, that's kind of the first step of just knowing what it is that you need to be physically and mentally healthy.

Will 29:53

Yeah, and this is, this is a way more complicated topic than the next one that we're talking about. Because people so much more different than each other in this. So probably the best thing for us to do is to ask you people out there in the internet, you know, to, if you're willing, share your stories with us about your process of figuring out exactly what you need socially, and hopefully, how you got it. And maybe we can all you know, by hearing each other stories, learn a little bit more about ourselves, and maybe be happier, healthier people.

Brooke 30:37

So the next section that we're planning on talking about his life and where the body is the temple of the mind. Um, but we're just talking about how maintaining your immediate needs for maintaining your life is really about taking care of your body. But that's so important to you keep your mind healthy as well, just like what will was talking about before. And we oftentimes in society or our culture, talk about the mind and the body as two separate entities. And we focus very much on compartmentalize compartmentalizing our physical health and our mental health.

And this is really, I think it's an unhealthy perspective on how you look at it. And really, when you put time and effort into your physical health, it will bleed over into a healthy mind as well.

Dani 31:42

And I think a lot of us don't do that, because it takes time. Yeah. And trying to think about making time for that on top of making time for the work aspect of all we do is overwhelming. And so we're hoping in this next section that there's some tips in here that might work for you.

Brooke 31:59

Yeah, yes, absolutely. And so I just wanted to kind of touch on, there are some studies that are coming out about how important exercise can be in helping our mental health. And I know there was one recently that came out that was about how exercising will help prevent Alzheimer's, that having that short, high intensity training just for you know, small periods of the of the time during the day can help clear the plaques in the brain that that lead to Alzheimer's.

So I thought that was really cool. But it can also help with memory. That's one of my biggest issues in grad school is like, how do you remember all the things that you need to so it it could lead to that but I thought that this could be a great time also to chat about Maslow's Hierarchy hierarchy of needs. And I don't know how familiar you guys are with this topic.

So just to kind of touch on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, I'll just give kind of a brief introduction to it. But it really his his layout was really focused on a five tiered model of human needs, that's really shaped like a pyramid, where your lower structures are really focused on physiological needs, and safety needs. And this is what falls into your basic needs category.

So physiological needs focus on food, water, warmth, and rest. And then a step up from that our safety needs, which is security and safety. And then once those things are taken care of in your life, then you need to focus on some of your psychological needs. And that's belonging-ness and love needs, where you have intimate relationships and friends and self esteem needs, where you need to have this feeling of accomplishment. And then at the very top of this pyramid, you have self actualization. And this is part of the self fulfillment needs, where you're really looking at fulfilling what your own potential is in life.

And it can be further looked at as what they call deficiency needs, which are essentially the first four layers of that five layer pyramid, whereas the top layer is just focused on self growth. And so what it has been described about as is that you need to be able to fulfill those lower levels of the pyramid before you can go up the pyramid into the different levels. And that as the motivation for your deficiency needs are decreased, meaning that those needs are being met. There's kind of an inverse relationship with the motivation increasing for self actualization needs.

It's really interesting, because I, I've actually experienced something like this, when I was about 30, I started having some some issues with a family member that I decided to go to counseling for,

and this family member, I had always had these issues. But it didn't become a true issue to be were really bothered me on a psychological level until I was 30. And I remember going asking this to my counselor saying, why is that I'm 30 and it's just now bugging me, it's just now causing me all of this rife. And she said, it's because the needs in your life have been fulfilled, to a point where your brain can actually address this issue, like other things have been fulfilled,

you know, you're now you're not worrying about shelter, you're not worrying about safety, you're not worrying about paying your bills. And now your brain says, Okay, now I can focus on addressing this one need. And so I felt, I always thought that was such a strange like, period of my life, to actually all of a sudden have this issue and be able to address it, but it wasn't until I was, you know, past all of those other things.

Will 36:42

So I think that's, I think that's really interesting idea that, that you might have sort of subconscious mechanisms that prioritize things for you. And until you realize that, you know, you're that, I think that first of all, this is interesting, because you may not be fully aware of what your brain is doing in different situations. So I think just to put it into the frame of the Maslow's hierarchy, um, maybe the, the family relationship that you were talking about, might fall into, like the love and belonging layer, which is the third one up, and so you weren't getting all your safety and physiological needs met, or you weren't secure in those needs being met before that, or maybe you're secure in you being able to do all that stuff for yourself, which, like, I'm 34, and I'm not even sure I can take care of myself.

And so your brain wouldn't even let you look to the third level. Yeah, right. Yeah, so most of the stuff we were talking about in the first section is probably on that third level, to the love and belonging. And grad school, you might argue, is actually all at the very top of the pyramid. So you might have so much

untapped potential for success in grad school that your brain is not letting you tap into because you are aware on some level that some of your needs are being are not being met.

Brooke 38:32

Yeah, it's a really good point.

Will 38:35

And another another side of this is that even though we talked about the love and belonging stuff for us, and that's very relatable and seems very important. Of course, it is important, we think, so we're talking about it, right. But you might want to start and maybe we should also start by thinking about this section of stuff, the immediate needs for your life first, because there's, there's plenty of effort to be put in, in this arena. And you might be able to do better in the love and belonging category. And the other ones if you thought about this stuff first.

Dani 39:14

So I'm going to start off talking about nutrition and exercise. Now, I'm going to start off talking about these two topics just was saying, These are both extremely personal topics, you might have different nutrition needs, or you might have allergies, or you might like one kind of diet over another, that's very personal to you. And I'm certainly not going to tell you what to eat.

And when it comes to exercise, that too, is also very personal, you know, will and I love going to the gym and pumping iron, that's, that's our thing. But you might really enjoy bicycling or walking. So I'm also definitely not going to tell you what kind of exercise to do. I'm also going and tell you that doctors consider me obese. So I really hate talking to strangers about nutrition and exercise. Because I really do feel like it is to each person in their own space to decide what they want to do about those things. But I did want to share my experience with nutrition and exercise.

So for me, I was on my first diet when I was 10 years old. And I was told that and diet culture does this a lot to you basically have the metabolism you have. And it's not going to change which science and nutrition science and exercise physiology really refutes that quite strongly. your metabolism changes, I really just want to focus on.. on the fact that you can prioritize nutrition and exercise if you want to, if you're ready, if that's something you want to engage with. And for me, I really got to that place when I started grad school,

or specifically when I started my PhD. So I'm just going to tell you a little about that, that journey for me. So when I started my PhD program here, the building that I work in the gym is literally right across from that building. So I decided for myself, I wanted to be a healthier individual. And that didn't necessarily mean losing weight. But that meant I wanted to do good things for my heart. And so what I knew at that point was, I should just get to the gym three times a week and go from there. So I started doing kind of cardio stuff. And then after taking a class on exercise biochemist or the biochemistry of exercise, I, that's when I learned that your metabolism changes with your activity level, and also with the amount of food that you eat. And that, for me, was like a huge moment. So I decided after that, you know, I,

I kind of switched my focus for exercising. And so I was at the gym three times a week doing mainly cardio stuff. And so kind of the next switch I made after that was, well, I'll keep in kind of one of those cardio days, and I'll add in the other two days will be lifting and then that is slowly morphed and changed over time to the point now where I am power lifting four times a week. And that whole process took me four years to get through and it's still morphing all the time, you know, I might want to add more power lifting days. Or sometimes I get a running because cardio is still good for some stuff, I guess. [giggles]

And that's how I really think about exercise is that, you know, for me, I wanted to include it to make myself healthier. But it wasn't to punish myself. It wasn't too.. It wasn't to please anybody else it was to please me and make myself healthier.

So the way that I would protect that time is, like I said, I started off kind of low level three times a week. I didn't care when, but I wanted to be at the gym. And then as I became more and more important to me, I would actually start putting it into my calendar so that if anybody wondered, where Danny was at lunchtime, they would know, Oh, she went to the gym. And now I'm at the point where I get up quite early in the morning to get it in before my day even starts, because that works really well for me. So that's how I prioritize my exercise.

So when it comes to nutrition, really, my main thing is, I set aside time on the weekend to do some meal prep. So meal prep means different things to different people. But essentially you're prepping your meals for the week while you're at work. You're prepping your meals for the week, so you can have them at work. And the idea for me is that it really reduces my stress during the week. And I don't have to make time to leave campus to find food or spend money where I don't have to.

So making my own food saves me money, and it saves me stress. And you might have seen some people are like this. This is not how I function. But some people are able to make the food and the weekend and then put it beautifully and individually in each one of their 15,000 Tupperware containers. And that looks beautiful. And if that works for you all power to you that I cannot function that way that takes too much like mental energy for me on the weekends. So instead of what I do is I basically make a few proteins that I like, on the weekend, I'll make some vegetables, I will make some kind of carbs. Like I love rice. So it's almost always rice. And then morning, or maybe the night before I'll prep.

I'll prep my lunch. And maybe like another snack together a combo that I like. So some days, I might have more protein and and less carbs, or more veggies and more carbs and more protein kind of depends depends on the day. And that's really what works for me. And so some weekends though, I not able to do that. And then I have to squeeze it in to the week itself. And it's doable. But it's much nicer if I'm able to do it on the weekends. What about YouTube.

Brooke 45:24

So I.. I just recently started exercising. And again, I I kind of want to preface this by saying I have a chronic illness and it causes me to be extremely tired. So sometimes exercising is not always the best thing for me to do. But I wanted to make an effort to move my body because I know that being stagnant is not the best thing for me either. And

I started recently going walking, I used to walk all the time, about five out of five miles every day. Um, but with grad school and family and everything. I don't have the time to do that. So what I've recently started doing is two days a week, I get up really early, I get up early, four days a week. But two of those days, I go to the gym at the school, and I walk for an hour on the treadmill. And then two days a week, I get together with another graduate student and we take over a racquetball court and we do yoga in there.

So I have at least I'm moving my body. I'm taking deep breaths into my lungs. And I'm, you know, getting my heart rate up a little bit while I'm walking. And that's what works for me. As far as meal prep. You know, I'm, I'm looking at meals for an entire family. So I go grocery shopping once a week. And I take the time before I do that, to plan out meals that are nutritious but fast. So if a recipe ever takes more than five steps, it goes in the garbage.

This is just how we work in our household. But I always make sure that one meal lasts for two nights. So I mean, it was if that means doubling or tripling it. That's what we do. We make sure there's enough for two nights because we're trying to minimize as much energy into cooking as we possibly can. And out of that I always take lunch. So leftovers become lunch for me. So that's, that's how our household manages and how I manage my my movement time.

Will 47:58

Yeah, I think I think that's really important to say that, like, we may talk about power lifting or, or some other specific, you know, you know, sous vide gourmet, whatever. [giggles] But any effort that you put into being mindful about nutrition and exercise is probably going to improve your life. And, you know, walking is exercise, walking, I think, in my experience is really good for me. And I do I have played sports for most of my life. And I've been lifting weights in a number of forms pretty consistently for like 10 years.

And at this point, I'm pretty comfortable in the gym, though I wasn't always and I think I know a fair amount about all that stuff. And still for me, you know, you might think, oh, like somebody like that would look down on walking, but actually like the people myself, and also the people that I know they're like the most serious about building robust physical strength and ability walk, you know,

a person in my life who's been really influential in the last few years, few years is actually the owner of the gym that Dani and I go to. Yeah, and he walks every day. And that dude is like, one of the strongest people I've ever met knows more about throwing heavy weights around than almost anyone I've ever met. And he swears by 10 minute walks like not even going out and hiking the AT, that's Appalachian Trail, every day or even an hour. But he goes out walks 10 minutes. And he really believes that that has salutary effects for him.

Dani 49:57

Yeah. One, it's a low intensity steady state activity. That really is amazing for you.

Will 50:03

Yeah, yeah, yeah. So the, you know, the, the kind of things that that I think we're suggesting aren't necessarily .. they don't necessarily have to cost any money when it comes to exercise, except maybe invest in decent pair of shoes if you're walking. And and i think that the time that you put in pre planning for meal prep on the weekends, or whatever works for you is actually in the long run, going to save you save you time and money because you don't have to say, oh, now I'm hungry. So I have to go figure out what I mean. It's going to be McDonald's.

Oftentimes, I use exercise as the thing that sort of breaks me out of work mode. So when I'm exhausted, I've been in the office for, you know, however many hours and I want to really go into sort of, like, get myself out that headspace, I'll go to the gym and just do some familiar movements, you know,

and I'm not trying to impress anybody, or break any records or anything like that. But it gives me something to focus on that isn't work and isn't stressful. And it took me You know, it took me a while to get to the point where I was that comfortable doing that. But I think it's something that's achievable for a lot of people. So if you're interested in strength training, you know, find somebody that knows some stuff and start slow, but it's been a really valuable part of my life.

Dani 51:38

Yeah, and there's a lot of free programs online too be all that to say about nutrition and exercise, you know, you don't have to start doing both right away perfectly. That's just not how it works. So if you're interested in looking more into nutrition exercise for yourself, like I said, My way of doing it was I added one thing at a time. And, and I have had to be consistent with that effort. But it has really paid off with my physical and mental health.

Will 52:10

Yeah, yeah, I still, I still struggle to keep these things going all at the same time. But I think the times that I'm most productive are actually the times when I have these other sort of more, you know, foundation level bricks of my life in place. solidly,

Dani 52:31

Yeah, me too. And it's kind of amazing. You think you have so many, you know, balls that you might be juggling, that would be hard to keep them all going at the same time. But for me, once I have a habit going is easy to keep it going. And then getting it started again, is where it gets really hard for me. It takes you know, a good three weeks before something is kind of wired as a habit now,

Will 52:52

and then you don't, it's it feels like it's going to take more time and be harder when you start doing it. But what you realize is that once you get into the habit of it, you don't have to think about it anymore. So that meal prep that you do on Sundays. How hard Do you have to think about doing that?

Dani 53:14

So I mean, not really, not really hard at all. I will be honest, the last four months or so my meal prep has not been happening. And so I've been scrambling during the week to get things done. And it has not been ideal. It takes me more time. So you know

Brooke 53:31

that that way versus on the weekend?

Dani 53:33

Yes, yeah, thanks for the clarification. Yeah, it takes me more time. Yeah. And so you know, even as we're here talking to you about this stuff, there's other things that take priority sometimes, or it just doesn't happen. And then, so I've lost I've currently lost the habit of doing my meal prep on on the weekends. And it's something that I'm I'm now in a place where I can consider bringing back in kind of bringing it back to the Maslow's hierarchy of needs, I had some other stuff going on. And that was one of the main things that dropped off is my meal prep. So that's something I can add back in now.

Will 54:16

So we're going to talk a little bit more about habits here in a second. But I just want to mention that I'm going to put a recipe for a really good meal prep framework that I've been using lately on the internet, where basically, you just cook a bunch of stuff all in the same baking tray, and add things successively, according to their cooking time. And I'll get eight, nine, ten.. meals out of it. And it takes probably an hour and a half, or something like that to cook. So I'll have lunch and dinner for three or four days,

Brooke 54:51

sounds amazing,

Will 54:52

I need this, and I'll put it on the show notes. And you can access it on STEM culture, podcast. com, I just do that all the time.

But back to So you mentioned, we're talking about habits a little bit, I think one of the most important habits that you can get into is resting effectively. So your brain needs sleep. It's just a fact, that are all these really non helpful, noxious aphorisms that our society has, like, "I'm going to sleep when I'm dead", or "sleep is for the weak". And, and, you know, it's and there's, you know, actual science that shows that even a single night of non optimal sleep, not even a sleepless night, but a night where you don't get good sleep results in reduction and cognitive function. And in addition to that sleep is associated with flushing out

amyloid bodies, which are associated with the development of brain diseases later in life. So, you know, here's a strong vote for everybody getting as much sleep as they can. So just like everything else, this is going to be personal, you know, some of the details, but some things I think, that are generally thought to help is, first of all, having sort of a circadian rhythm. So if you get up at the same time, every morning, or close to the same time, and you go to bed about at the same time, every night, that's actually gonna prepare your body for rest in a way that you wouldn't be able to otherwise.

And so keeping a keeping a circadian rhythm as a habit is, I think, really crucial to getting good rest.

Another thing that is, makes a really big difference from me is the place where I sleep, I like to be very dark, you know, maybe not as dark as the inside of a bank vault. But if I have lights shining on me, while I'm sleeping, I just don't sleep as well. And sort of the meeting place between those two things, that keeping a circadian rhythm and having your place where you sleep be dark is.. I don't sleep well at all, if it's light outside, so I spent years of my life being a night person,

which really was just, you know, I would like get into some, some, you know, thread on the internet and, and read things until four o'clock in the morning, or be working on a paper or something like that. And the problem with that is that then if I'm going to sleep at three, four o'clock in the morning, and then getting eight hours of sleep, which is a number you hear a lot half of that sleep is with the sun up. And what I found out is that if by sort of time, my wake up time to when the sun's coming up,

I feel way more rested, even if I'm getting the same amount of sleep. And that's, that's me. I don't know, you guys might have different feelings about how to get good rest.

Dani 58:17

No, I very much subscribe to the idea of going to bed at the same time and getting up at the same time. So since I switched my gym schedule to the morning, my bedtime is 8pm. And I get up at 4:30am. And

when I first thought about doing that, I was like, ayeee that's going to be really a hard transition. But essentially, for me, it ended up being actually really great transition. It took me a few days and will it took me like a full week for it to start feeling. Not like hot dog shit. But [all laugh]

But once we got there, I was actually actually get more sleep now than I did before. Because I know that my bedtime needs to be at eight. You know, I need to be ready and in bed by eight o'clock. Maybe I have half an hour to like Toodle on my phone or read for fun. And then it's got to be lights out. Because if I'm getting up at 430 in the morning, and I'm not well rested, to go to the gym, it's going to feel really awful. So yeah, absolutely. I'm, I'm all for it.

Brooke 59:21

I actually I follow a or I calculate my sleep. So I just get online and find a sleep calculator. And so whatever time I go to bed, I set my wake up time to be whatever the sleep calculator tells me Should I should wake up that's closest to the timeframe that I want to. So I like to get up before school, go to the gym, and workout. And so I just whatever time I go to bed, I look and see what the most optimal time is to wake up so that I'm not waking up in the middle of the sleep schedule or sleep time. I think it's like an hour and a half is you you have like a cycle sleep cycle. And when you wake up halfway in that you can be really groggy for the rest of the day. And so that's how I tried to come back. That is using a sleep calculator.

Will 1:00:17

That's really interesting. I would have to try that out.

Brooke 1:00:19

yeah, I love it. It's it's really changed my ability to wake up early.

Dani 1:00:25

Nice.

Will 1:00:25

Cool.

Dani 1:00:26

Yeah. And the nice thing about having a schedule, like you go to bed and get up at the same time, every day, roughly at the same time, is it goes through your body's basically learning a new cycle, and then it sticks with that cycle. And then when you wake up, it's like, your body's already preparing you to wake up because it knows it's coming soon. So I often wake up a few minutes before my alarm goes off.

Will 1:00:48

Yeah, that's funny. I, I do the same thing. It's like, almost eerie. Yeah, you know, because you can't see the time or I mean, so what is your brain keeping track. And I think it really is, like your brain is, is able to keep track of time with remarkable accuracy. Yeah,

Dani 1:01:09

sleep scientists tell us why this happened.

Will 1:01:11

Yes, please reach out and tell us.... You know, in order to, to get restful sleep, you have to have a place that is safe to rest in. And, you know, it's I think this is one of those things where it's so obvious that maybe it doesn't occur to people that it can be a problem until it's a problem. And so one of the needs that is on the second level of Maslow's hierarchy in the safety category is going to be shelter someplace to, to, to lay your head down at night,

where, you know, that's your space. And you don't have to worry about, you know, people, other people, you know, rain, the elements, other stuff like that. And, you know, if, if you don't feel secure in in your home, you may not be able to, to get good rest or have food around to cook or, you know, the list goes on and on. And I never would have thought again, I'm very fortunate in that I never had any sort of shelter insecurity before I got to grad school.

So I got to grad school and, you know, found an apartment that appeared to be a good distance from where I would be working and, and took up residence in this place. And it turned out that the landlords weren't really taking care of the building very well. And so in a fairly short period of time my apartment went from where I thought it was fine.. to being so infested with insects that I physically, I did not want to be in it. And, you know, I'm not the world's most organized person. But I can tell you honestly, that it wasn't because I was stalking pizza boxes in the corner with, you know, ranch dressing open for for the cockroaches to eat.

And I actually had to immediately move my work stuff out of my apartment. And I was lucky enough to be with my significant other at the time and have a place to go. But and it's not something this is whole

category of thing is not something that I really thought about that much before it became an issue for me. So, you know, if you're looking for some place to live in grad school, maybe look for some reviews for the landlord, and see if they seem to be responsive and responsible as a landlord.

Dani 1:03:59

Well and being, you know, as grad students are, stipends are amazing, you know, and so there's definitely grad students out there who go to school and don't, you know, and work and they don't have a home base, you know, so it's, it's definitely definitely a problem.

Will 1:04:15

Yeah, well, and this might be the kind of thing that we need to start a more general conversation not, you know, not tell people to pick themselves up by their bootstraps, although it is a good idea for people to be prepared. So, yeah, you know, there might be, there might be things, structural things that can help you meet your basic needs,

but we hope that you are and please be healthy and happy and, and to the best of your ability and will be thinking about you.

Dani 1:04:48

Yeah, we love you. But also we're not done yet.

Will 1:04:51

Yeah, no, cuz

that story that I just described is sort of a tragedy and unexpected events that just completely throws you off whatever habits that you worked hard to build. That happens sometimes. And that's what we're going to talk about now.

Dani 1:05:07

Alright, so this is Danny. And I am kind of the main focus for this part of the episode because my dad passed away right before my master's program. So my dad had already helped me move to North Carolina from California, we had a really great cross country trip.

And he when he dropped me off, it was to do like, some summer classes before the official semester started. And in the two weeks between when the summer session ended, and the fall semester was supposed to begin, he passed away very suddenly had no idea was going to happen. So super unexpected. And so when that happened, you know,

I was actually I just literally moved into my new house, and my roommates weren't there yet. And I was alone sleeping on an air mattress in my living room. Sorry, I'm laughing so it's uncomfortable. So I remember thank goodness, I had actually already done that summer session because I called one of my friends and I said, Hey, this thing just happened. And I can't be alone right now. So she came and picked me up, which was really great. Hi, Sharon.

And at that point, you know, next day I was on a flight to go home to deal with Memorial be with my family grieve together. And you know, a few days before classes started, I was back and trying to be functional, also adopted a dog immediately who's still with me today. And I think that was actually one of the biggest things to help me was having a dog and somebody I could just hug and not have to talk to and explain anything.

But also my roommates at the time, Vicky and Emily were really, really supportive and, you know, careful not to, like, get to, like, ask me too many questions, I guess. But just being there, and being like, super supportive and also dragging me out to social events. I think that was really amazing. And kind of one of the big things that helped me just not become a complete hermit and stare blankly at a wall thinking about sad things, they would bring me out. And for me, that that was really helpful.

So starting a master's program with like, this very huge, very kind of new life that I was living and basically felt like a new life. And, you know, I would call my dad frequently a call my mom frequently, and, you know, I couldn't call him anymore. And I found myself reaching for the phone a lot to do that. So I definitely took advantage of the counseling services, not not right away. But when the six month anniversary of his death was coming around. I definitely got in touch with the counseling services and went to chat with them.

And we had this really great discussion that helps me figure out how I was going to do my masters and get through this at the same time. And that discussion was, well, the six month anniversary is coming up. He said, That's important. Danny Yes, it's important to me. And okay, well, on that six month anniversary, what's kind of the most important thing for you that day? And I said, You know, I just don't want to have to worry about classes that day. I don't really want to interact with anybody. I want to go for a bike ride that something new my dad would do. And the counselor was like, well, what's stopping you from doing that?

And I said, Oh, well, it's because I have class that day. And he was like, do you have to go to that class? do you have? Do you have a quiz? Do you have a test? And I was like, Oh, no, I don't have any of those things. He's like, Okay, do you have friends in the class that could that are like, willing to share notes with you? I said, Yeah, actually, I do. And he was like, so what do you think you're going to do now on the six month anniversary of your father's death, and like, I'm going for fucking bike ride.

So him having that conversation with me at the Counseling Center was really, really powerful. Because that's how I basically manage the rest of my time doing my masters. And my Masters was a professional masters, which means it's basically very structured two years, and that's it. This particular masters the,

you took classes the whole time. And then you had a thesis project, it wasn't necessarily like a dissertation. So it wasn't maybe the main focus, but you could have made it that way. So for me, I approached every class, every decision was like, what, what do I need to do for it to be good enough, but for me to also take care of my mental health at the same time. And so that meant, you know, my GPA wasn't a 4.0, it was less than that, but where it ended up based on, you know, what I was going through, I was happy with that, you know, if it was, if there was a class, like, I had to take an economics class

listeners, you might not know, I'm really not into economics. So that class for me was like, especially had a lot of, but I didn't want to be there. Anyway, not to mention, I would rather have done anything else with my time while I'm trying to deal with this stuff. So that class, I was like, What is the bare minimum I can do in this class, and still get like a certain GPA for that semester. And for me, that is what helped me get through all of that time.

I also found that there was just like, some stuff I could not handle.

There were extra stressors that just did not make it on, I give a fuck my, my, I give a fuck list. And most of that is like home stuff. So getting my oil changed. calling a plumber, I even to this day, have a really hard time doing any of that stuff. Because it's been on my, I don't give a fuck list for so long. And that's where my partner comes in real handy. Because for him, those things are not stressful. And he is fantastic and just does those. For me, I don't even think I've ever actually ever told him why they're not on my list. We were just really hard for me to engage with. And I think it's primarily because my dad used to do all those things with me, or for me when I was younger.

So you know, now it's been 10 years since he died. And like I mentioned, you know, some of these behaviors of like, my stress kind of persist, but I'm doing a lot better because it has been 10 years, but it never, you know, never completely goes away. And even like writing the notes for this section of the episode. I procrastinated on until, like 30 minutes before, and it's not something I do on purpose. But it's just something really hard for me to engage with. And, and think about in real depth like this. But I want to talk about it because it's something that we don't get to talk about, often about, like, what happens if somebody very close to you passes away when you're in grad school? And how, how on earth do you balance all those feelings and all of these perhaps new responsibilities with being a grad student, and, you know, it's definitely hard, but that's how I handled it.

Brooke 1:12:26

I've known you for a while now. And this is the first time I've heard this story. So I appreciate you opening up and sharing it with us.

Dani 1:12:34

You're welcome.

Will 1:12:39

And you know, how you handled it, you know,

maybe you didn't know how it was going to turn out of the time. But from my perspective, anyway, you must have handled it pretty well, because, you know, you're one of the most together and well, successful grad students that I know. Yes, I agree. So, you know, all those things that you did, you know, setting your priorities in your best interest. And, you know, taking the time. I mean, I think that sounds like pretty good advice for a lot of people. Yeah, I hope. I hope that continues to get better. Yeah.

Dani 1:13:28

Yeah. What's the what's the same time heals all wounds are something is that a saying?

Will 1:13:34

that is, yeah, that's right time heals all wounds. Yes.

Dani 1:13:36

Yeah. I don't even know it. I don't, I wouldn't say it heals it. But, you know, over time, I'm able to deal with it better and better. Yeah. Which is nice.

Brooke 1:13:46

Yeah, I'm, I'm curious. Because I know, it's, it's when you're dealing with a tragedy on this level, I think it's really hard to express to others, how painful it is inside? Is that something that you had a hard time doing when you were in graduate school? Because I know there's a lot of pressure on you, especially starting a program initially, and maybe some of the inner turmoil you're feeling that was all compounded

were you, did you feel comfortable enough to share this story with the people who were around you at the time and kind of have a support group in graduate school while this was going on beyond the counselor's office?

Dani 1:14:37

So at the time, I was 22, no 23, and I didn't have a good handle yet on like, how to lean on friends in that way. For me, a really big step was calling my friend Sharon, as soon as I had found out and making sure that I wasn't alone that night. And I'm, you know, I knew I needed support.

But I think very rarely that I actually try to take the energy and time to explain to people what, what it was. And, you know, and I think for the most part, everyone hears you know, someone hears a parent died, everyone knows that. That's like a big deal.

I remember I did tell my advisor at the time that my Dad had died. But it was like a one sentence email. I was like, hey, just to let you know, this thing happened. And I'm going to be dealing with that while I'm like your mentee. So there you go. But no rare, I rarely discussed it with anyone. I think one of the big things I I hate crying, I would rather rage than cry. So if you actually ever hear me raging, it's probably my variation of crying. So I really didn't want to talk about it, because I would start crying.

And so like I mentioned, my roommates at the time were really great. And kind of, I don't know how they knew. But they just knew that I, you know, didn't want to talk about it in detail. But they would check in with me every now and then say, Hey, how are you doing with your dad dying. And you know,

and I would just tell them, you know, I'm just ignoring everything, and just shoving it deep, deep down inside and not really addressing it. And I think I mean, another big really hard thing about it is my family's in California. And I had just moved to North Carolina. So that's an entire country away an entire continent, 3000 miles. So not having my mom close to talk to you about all that was also super hard. But we would talk on the phone very, very frequently.

Brooke 1:16:44

Okay. Yeah,

Will 1:16:46

yeah. But I mean, it sounds like you. So you said this thing that about you shoved it all down, and, you know, and ignored it. And I think that's that something that that you hear sometimes, and then sometimes well, people will say, Oh, well, but you have to deal with it. You have to deal with these things. And I don't, I feel like that's like rushing someone. Yeah, to deal with something that's.. theirs.

Dani 1:17:22

Yeah, everyone's going to deal with it in a different way. And for me, a very important thing for me was to get through this masters and not let that tragedy derail me. So was really important to me. And I talked to my mom about it at the time, even like, 'Should I continue with this masters?' And she said, 'Look, it is always been a goal of yours, and you already have friends there. And that's great. And we will talk on the phone as much as you want. But if you want to do this master, still, you should you should do it.'

And so that was incredibly helpful, but yeah, for me, I was not ready to deal with it for very long time. And, and it would basically happen in these little spurts, right, and this kind of gets back to the the Maslow's Hierarchy pyramid. But you know, there would be times where things were going well, and I would have a little bit of energy, emotional energy to say, Hey, I'm going to go to the counselor, and I'm going to talk about this thing. And then maybe we can, maybe I can get a little closer to feeling a little bit better about this thing.

And I think one of the best things I started doing was something I just thought would feel nice, but I would do my dad and I would camp together. That was kind of our thing, camp and hike together. And so I would start I would have a camping trip every kind of anniversary of his death. So instead of thinking about, oh, he died on this day, and it was really horrible. Instead, I say, I am I go camping and celebrate that we did that together and go hiking and celebrate that we got to do that together. And I'm not able to take as many camping trips as I would like anymore in grad school takes up a lot of time. But what I've started to kind of morph that into is, you'd also sent a lot of postcards. So I will write postcards to him still, and send them back to me. And I have a little stack at home now.

Brooke 1:19:28

I love that.

Will 1:19:31

Yeah. Thanks for sharing that with us.

You're welcome. You're strong and important person.

Dani 1:19:40

[laughs] Thank you.

Will 1:19:42

Yeah, I mean, I think I can so. So my significant other,

Moncie had her mom have a cancer diagnosis while she was in her PhD program. And she got a little more you did tell us what your advisors response to your your one sentence email was,

Dani 1:20:06

oh, he just said, thanks for sharing.

Will 1:20:08

And I guess maybe there was some awareness there. If he sent if you sent a one sentence email, maybe you didn't want to talk to him about it either.

Dani 1:20:17

Well, I we didn't know each other at that point. Since the beginning of my masters. And because I was doing professional masters. And the thesis project isn't as intense as maybe like a traditional Masters of Science would be, you know, I didn't actually have a lot of contact with him until really my second year, and I just wasn't, I think part of it was like, I didn't want to replace him. You know, brains are dumb, and they do weird things. And so I thought, what, what might happen if I bonded too much with my advisor was that I would start thinking of him as a father figure. And shit would get weird, you know. And so I definitely, like I wanted to have a really strong, great relationship with him. But I also knew I probably wasn't ready. So it's just weird.

Will 1:21:11

Yeah its complicated, actually sounds really insightful. A lot of people would sort of fall into that, and maybe make their lives harder than it needed to be. But I mean, it sounds to me like you are fairly honest. And maybe even then, when you were 22 years old, and just a baby,

Dani 1:21:33

little baby,

Will 1:21:36

pretty honest with yourself about what you needed, and thought about it a fair amount. And I think that's, you know, sort of what I've been trying to emphasize this whole episode is that, you know, no matter what else you do, think about what you need. And, you know, I mentioned Moncie and her mom. I mean, Monte basically told her advisor, like, Look, I'm gonna have, I'm gonna have to deal with this, you know, I'm gonna have to, and she was close to our advisor at the time,

I'm going to have to take some time off, I'm gonna have to, you know, go and take care of my family. And he was apparently very gracious about it, and very supportive, and everybody else in her lab was supportive too,

and that's awesome. But, you know, I think it has to start with you and you being like, this is what I'm going to have to do. In my heart. I know that I need to go and do this and different for everybody. But that's where it starts. Yeah, and I think probably we've all had things... not like that, Danni. But we've all had some things that sort of shake us to our core. And our resilience is probably large part dependent on how honest we are with ourselves about what we need.

Dani 1:23:05

Yeah. And I think also being brave enough to prioritize yourself. Yeah, because what is that usually people talk about, like, what are your priorities that should be you family, and then work, you know, but I think a lot of us and I know, I've definitely been there, and it's really hard to prioritize yourself sometimes, and protect yourself and self advocate. Yeah, and advocating for yourself as well. Those are really hard things to do. And I think it can sometimes feel like it's selfish, but it's not, you know, you're watching out for you, so that you can be there when your family needs you. And so that you can be present in your work and do the work that you want to do.

So I think, yeah, it's brave to make yourself a priority.

Will 1:23:50

Yeah, I couldn't agree more. I think that you have to be your champion. And you can't expect that anybody else is going to do it,

Dani 1:24:05

you know, I was talking about advocating for myself, and that it's really hard and, and as much easier to advocate for others [laughs]. And, and it actually helps to bounce things off of friends. Because then it's like, oh, well, you know, that's fucked up. Right? And that there's these 15 things you can do to protect yourself or to advocate for yourself, or, or etc. And I'm like, oh, but isn't that selfish? No, it's not. It's, it's brave. And, you know, if, if it had been somebody else, I would have

Brooke 1:24:39

done it for them. So yeah, that's a hard thing. Because it's so easy to see when it's somebody else. It's so easy to jump in and say, no, that's not right. I, you know, I'll protect you in some way. But then for ourselves, we just keep giving up more and more of ourselves and not advocating for ourselves. Hmm,

Dani 1:25:01

yeah, so it's tough, but if you're not sure, bounce it off a friend and, and they'll tell you,

Unknown 1:25:08

yeah,

Will 1:25:09

thank you so much for listening. In today's episode, we talked about how maintaining the responsibilities of being a social creature can follow you into grad school and how important social integration and being a part of community having people around you is important for your health. And then we talked about maintaining the immediate needs that you need to have a healthy life and some of

the strategies that we take about that and we talked a little bit about Maslow's hierarchy of needs. And then finally, we talked about what happens when tragedy strikes and heard Dani story about her father passing and has, how she dealt with that. And hopefully, you're getting the feeling that taking care of your needs is an important part of being successful in grad school. Next time, we'll be talking about balance. All five hosts will be talking about the hobbies that make us happy and healthy as whole people in our work and life in grad school.

Brooke 1:26:12

We are on the Tweeters, Instagram and Facebook as stem culture, one word podcast. Search, and you shall find and when in doubt, please visit our website at stem culture podcast.com for show notes, references and information about our guests and contributors.

Dani 1:26:32

Until next time, don't forget to consensually hug a grad student or at least buy them a coffee or an artisanal fair trade sugar free almond milk ice cream and a gluten free cone.

Will 1:26:45

So you guys know how we were talking about like mental health and brain health and stuff a little bit today. Yes. So what did the hippocampus say during its retirement speech?

Brooke 1:26:55

i don't know.

Dani 1:26:56

Don't remember this.

Will 1:26:58

Thanks for the memories.

Dani 1:27:02

I'm upset because i forgot the hippocampus does. And now I'm disappointed in myself.

Will 1:27:09

brooke your joke out way more laughs

Transcribed by Will & <https://otter.ai>