

A large, abstract purple ink splatter or blotch serves as the background for the title text. The splatter is irregular and textured, with various shades of purple and some darker spots. The text is overlaid on the left side of the splatter.

Dealing with the 3 Ps: Procrastination Productivity PhD

Violeta Calleja Solanas / IFISC (CSIC - UIB) / May 2022 / NetPLACE

The perfect is the enemy of the good



Do it well, or not at all

Two heads are better than one



Too many cooks spoil the broth

He who hesitates is lost



A stitch in time saves nine

CONTEXT

The perfect is the enemy of the good



Do it well, or not at all

Two heads are better than one



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A stitch in time saves nine

A promise

You will end up with:

- A new vision about how to get your work done
- Some tips about productivity and procrastination that you have never heard of before

Outline

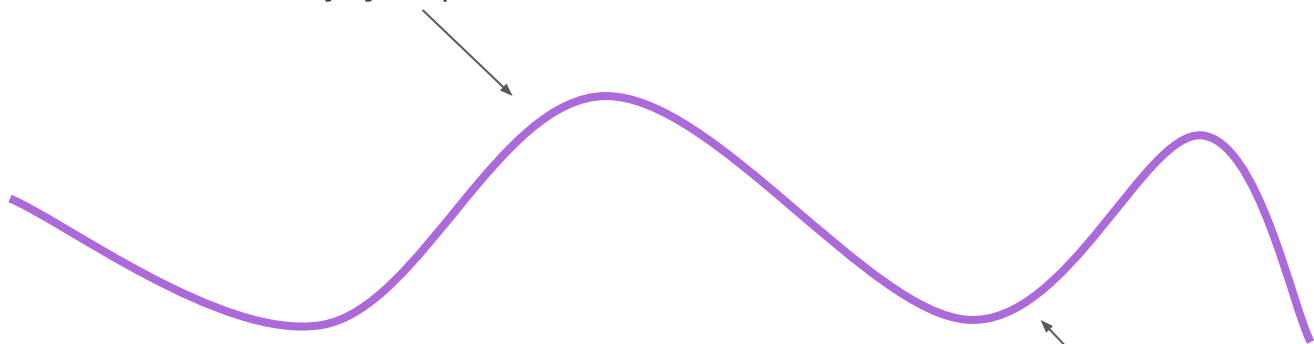
- What is being productive?
 - How to become (really) productive
- What is procrastination?
 - How to overcome the pain to start
 - How to overcome procrastination
- How to PhD
 - Some hints

What is being **productive**?

Work produced \propto (intensity of focus) \times (time spent)

↑
maximize

enjoy & protect



don't exasperate

What is **not** being productive?

Productive \neq Busy

- Multitasking?
- Immediately responding to any sudden task?

Productivity is not linear:

$$\text{Work produced} \propto (\text{intensity of focus}) \times (\text{time spent})$$

- \uparrow hours does not imply \uparrow work done
- Real value = clarity of thought

How?

Manage your energy, not just your time

Why?

Work produced \propto (intensity of focus) \times (time spent)

Kindly reminder to be kind to yourself:

- Self critique
- Working under pressure

OK but how?

Take breaks

Sleep - Eat healthy - Workout - Quality interactions

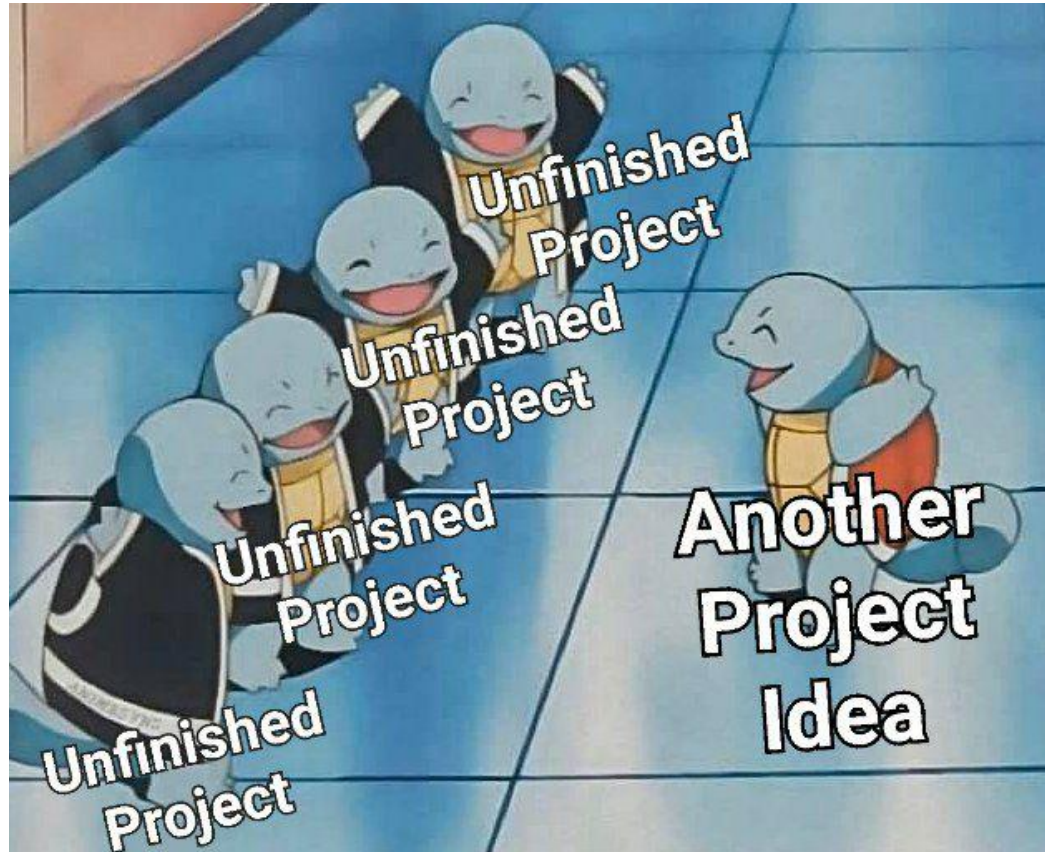
Learning to **prioritize**

Lists and scheduling

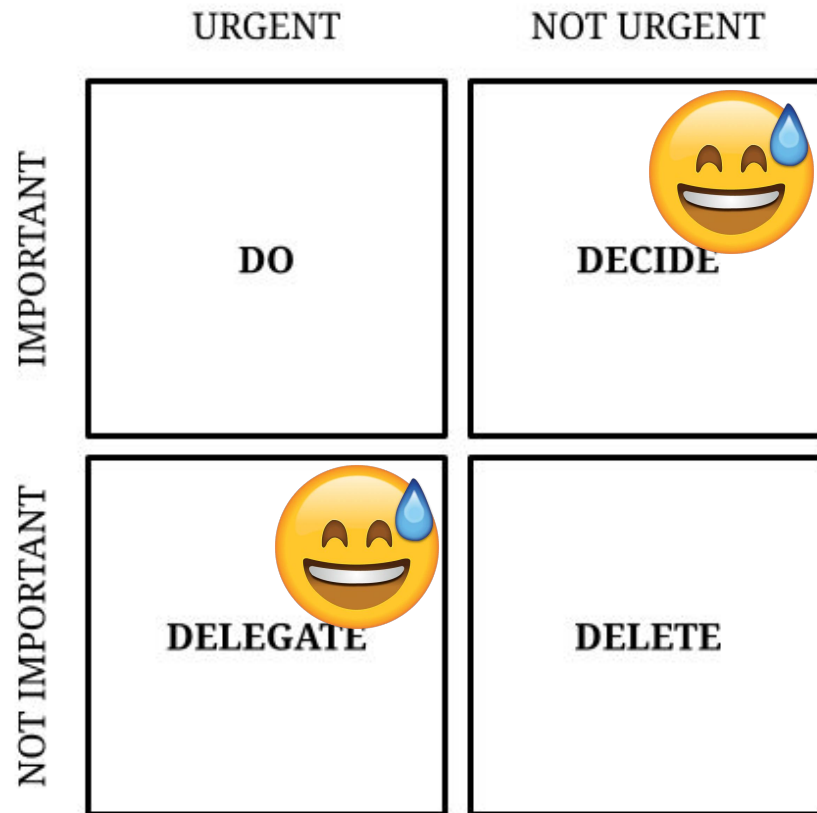


more to come...

Learn to say NO



Eisenhower matrix



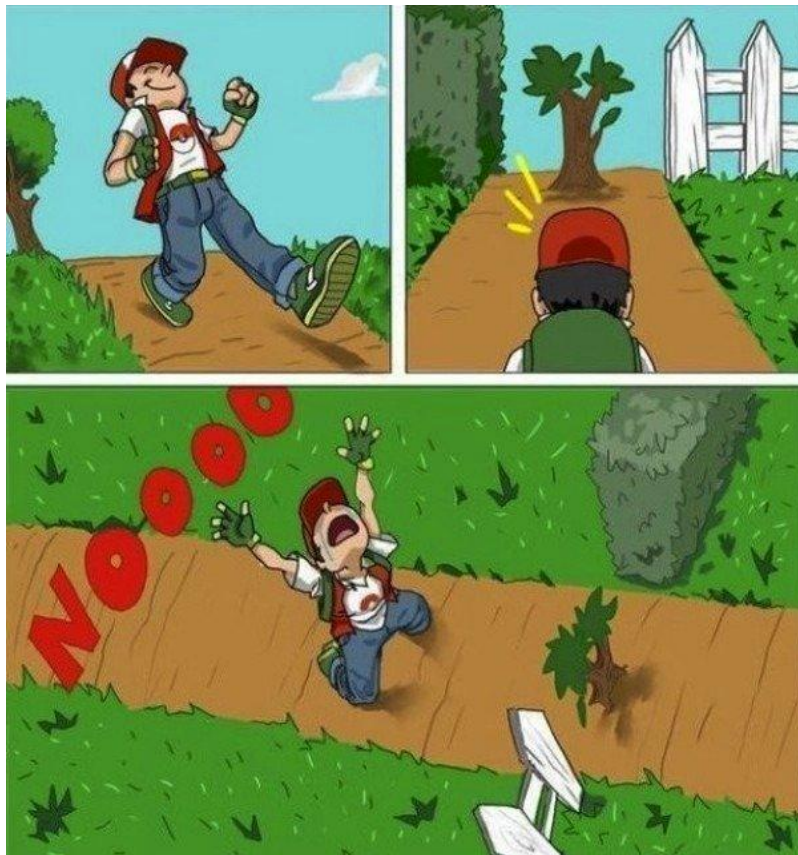
“Swallow a frog in the morning if you want to encounter
nothing more disgusting the rest of the day”

Nicolas Chamfort

To not sacrifice your best cognitive energy!

Work produced \propto (intensity of focus) \times (time spent)

BUT... some tasks may drag you down!



BUT... some tasks may drag you down!

PROCRASTINATION



What is procrastination?

procrastinate

verb [I]

UK  /prəˈkræs.tɪ.neɪt/ US  /proʊˈkræs.tə.neɪt/



to keep delaying something that must be done, often because it is unpleasant or boring:

- *I know I've got to deal with the problem at some point - I'm just procrastinating.*

A task you don't want to do activates the brain region responsible for **pain**

Hope: but it disappears shortly after!

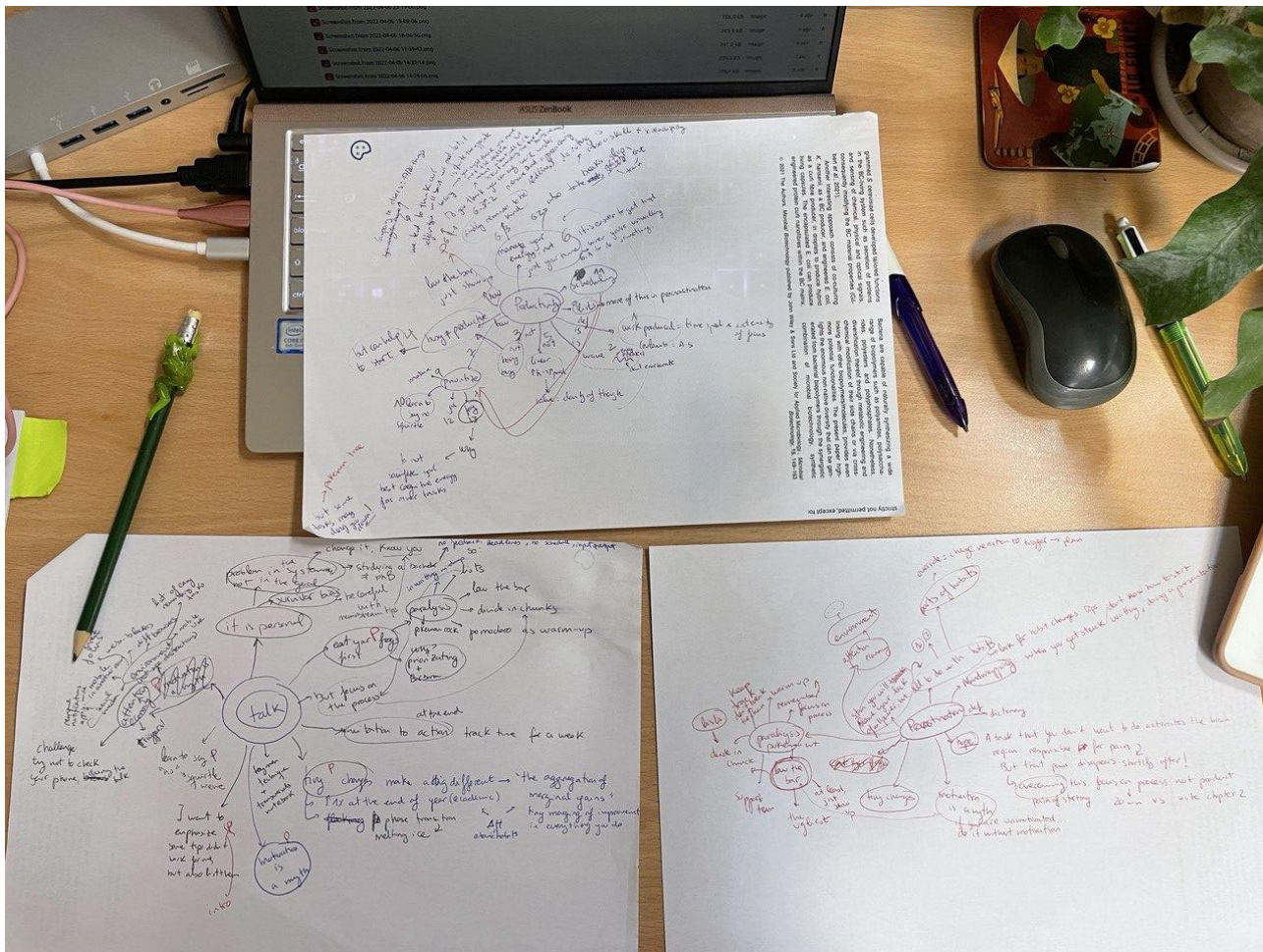
Overcoming the pain of starting:

Focus on the process, not the product

20 min of writing about method X vs write section 2.1

Mindmapping

not to organize, but to inspire



Overcoming the pain of starting:

Focus on the process, not the product

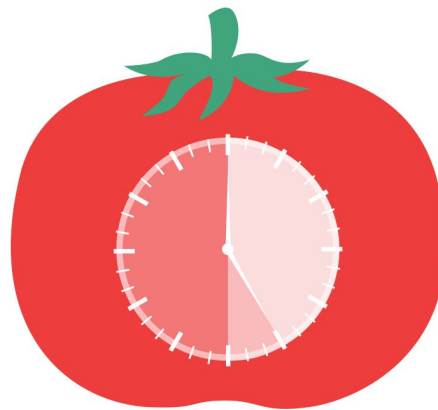
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Mindmapping

not to organize, but to inspire

Pomodoro technique

as a warm-up!



25 min working
5 min resting

From 🕒 clockwise

Overcoming the pain of starting:

Focus on the process, not the product

20 min of writing about method X vs write section 2.1

Mindmapping

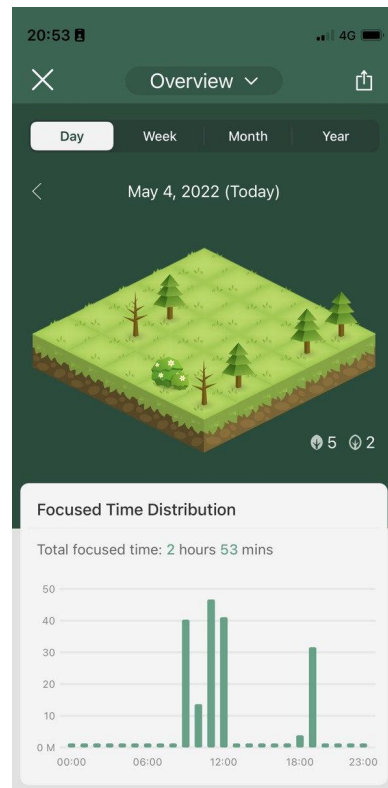
not to organize, but to inspire

Pomodoro technique

as a warm-up!

Keep track, better with a support team

don't-break-the-chain effect



Forest app. But better to go analogical

Overcoming the pain of starting:

Lists

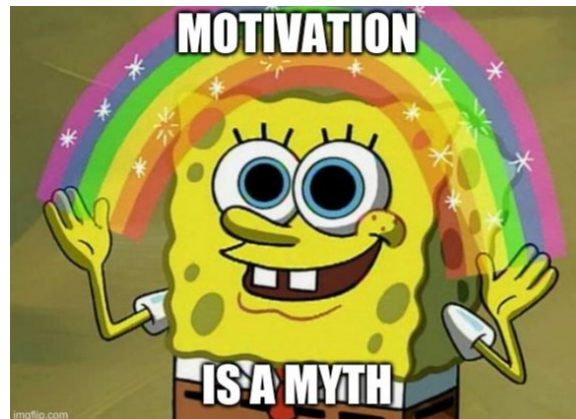
- Divide in chunks (SMART)
- List of what you have already done to boost you
- List of easy rewarding tasks to warm you up
- With tick boxes
- The day before
- List of interesting things to do if you procrastinate

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	DO	DECIDE
NOT IMPORTANT	DELEGATE	DELETE

Overcoming the pain of starting:

Low the bar

- Challenge yourself to do the bare minimum
- The ugliest
- At least, just show up



if you are unmotivated



do it unmotivated

Procrastination is not about motivation,
it is about **habits**

Habits

Switching from procrastination to other habit (ex pomodoro) is resource-saving because routines use less energy!

Work produced \propto (intensity of focus) \times (time spent)

1. Trigger
2. Routine
3. Reward
4. Belief

Habits

Switching from procrastination to other habit (ex pomodoro) is resource-saving because routines use less energy!

1. Trigger an email
2. Routine start web surfing
3. Reward moving your mind's focus to something more pleasant
4. Belief "I am a fraud", "I will never overcome procrastination"

Habits

Switching from procrastination to other habit (ex pomodoro) is resource-saving because routines use less energy!

1. Trigger an email → **Change reaction!** Here is the only part willpower is needed
2. Routine start web surfing → **Have a plan:** Hidden phone, pomodoro, stand up and go to the bathroom
3. Reward moving your mind's focus to something more pleasant → The feeling of control or pride, reward
4. Belief "I am a fraud", "I will never overcome procrastination" → You can do it! **1% improvement**

Challenge: track your triggers, create a plan

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Challenge: track your triggers, create a plan




Attention is the new currency

Challenge: not checking your phone during the rest of the talk

Journal of Physics: Complexity

PAPER • OPEN ACCESS

Quantifying the drivers behind collective attention in information ecosystems

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Samir Suweis^{2,5} , Javier Borge-Holthoefer³  and Sandro Meloni^{7,1} 


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ARTICLE

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-021-22184-2>

OPEN

An ecological approach to structural flexibility in online communication systems

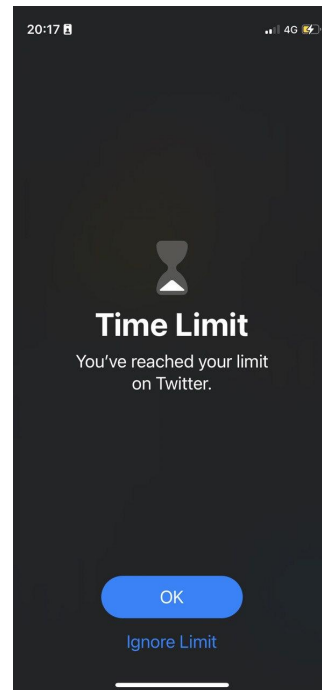
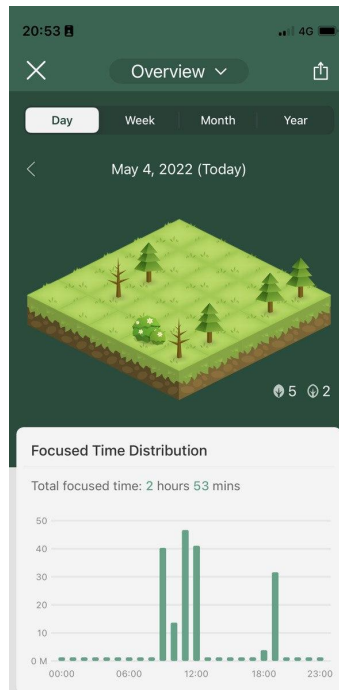
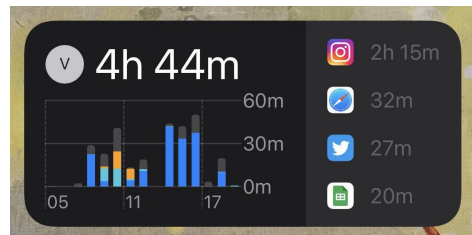
María J. Palazzi¹ , Albert Solé-Ribalta^{1,2}, Violeta Calleja-Solanas³ , Sandro Meloni³, Carlos A. Plata^{4,5} ,
Samir Suweis⁴  & Javier Borge-Holthoefer^{1,2,3} 

Attention is the new currency

For distractions related with social media...

Take care of your environment:

- Track phone use
- Switch off notifications/ phone
- Delete the apps and log out
- Forest to focus and web-blockers
- Phone in another room, out of sight
- Different browsers for work and personal



Habits

Switching from procrastination to other habit (ex pomodoro) is resource-saving because routines use less energy!

1. **Trigger** an email → Change reaction! Here is the only part willpower is needed
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4. **Belief** “I am a fraud”, “I will never overcome procrastination” → You can do it! 1% improvement

Challenge: track your triggers, create a plan

Tiny changes make a big difference

Overestimate one defining moment vs
underestimate small improvement on a daily basis

Habits often appear to make no difference until
you cross a critical threshold

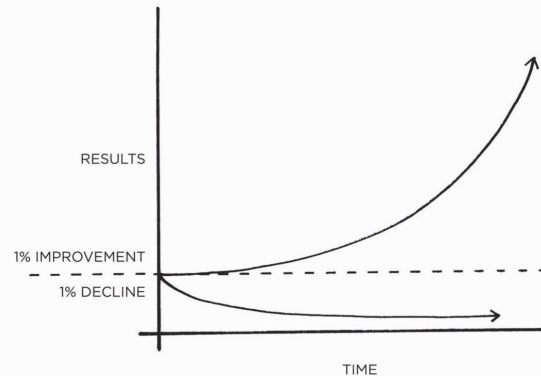


FIGURE 1: The effects of small habits compound over time. For example, if you can get just 1 percent better each day, you'll end up with results that are nearly 37 times better after one year.

1% BETTER EVERY DAY

1% worse every day for one year. $0.99^{365} = 00.03$

1% better every day for one year. $1.01^{365} = 37.78$

Recapping procrastination:

- It is a habit
- Watch out your procrastination triggers and have a plan
- Plan your tasks every day
- Eat your frogs first, but have a back up plan

How to PhD

It is normal if your current approach is not working

Doing a PhD \neq Studying a degree

- Input vs Output
- No fixed schedule
- Diffuse deadlines
- No feedback (exams, homework)
- A bazillion of papers one click away

Some hints:

A lie: “I don’t need to write that down, I’ll remember it”. **Write. Down. Everything.**

- This includes meeting and seminar notes, code annotations, things have not worked, summaries of papers

Back up your work

- Use git, the cloud, your institution server

Organize your workspace

- File system, meaningful labels, notes, comments on code

Never struggle on your own

- Talk to other students, have frank discussions with your supervisor, discuss with her the goals



Resources & Links

These [slides](#), [spreadsheet](#) of your resources

Youth communities:

- [yrCCS](#) (Young Researchers of the Complex Systems Society)
- [SYNS](#) (Society of Young Network Scientists)
- [NetPLACE](#) (Networks, Phd Life And ComplExity Seminars)

[Learning How to Learn](#) free course

Apps to Focus: [StayFocusd](#), [Forest](#)

Inside the mind of a master procrastinator (TED [talk](#))

Articles:

- Pandemic burnout is rampant in academia (Nature [article](#))
- [Twenty things I wish I'd known when I started my PhD](#)
- Writer's block and mindmapping: The publication coach's [blog](#)

A funny [game](#) about anxiety