

## ASA Early Career Researcher Mentoring Workshop – Session summary

Session Topic: Managing yourself: work/life balance

Discussion Leader: Alicia Oshlack (panel discussion with Carole Jackson, Tara Murphy, Peter Quinn, Alicia Oshlack, Rachel Webster, and Matthew Colless)

If you only remember three things from this talk, remember these...

1. If you have a 'me time' thing you want to do, don't let anyone make you feel guilty about not spending that time on work.
2. Your mental and physical health is just as important as research.
3. Only one person knows what your optimal work/life balance -- you!

Session summary/notes

### **Ask yourself:**

What are your main priorities in life? How much time would you like to spend on them? How much time do you really spend on them? Do your answers to these questions align? Why/why not?

### **Advice on life balance:**

The meaning of 'balance' depends on your needs and wants. If your priorities and lifestyle match up, then your life is 'balanced'.

If you are single and/or don't have children, then protect your time.

Learn what/when you can say "no", and when you might need to be less of a perfectionist (i.e. at what point is a task done well enough to move on?)

When you retire, you'll want to have something to other than work to enjoy.

Your work/life balance will change over the course of your career. When you need to make a work commitment for several years, make sure you can make the commitment, and you have the home support to do so.

Listen to your body. Consider your concentration and efficiency levels; pull back when required.

Have your family whenever you want to, don't wait for it to be a convenient point in your career because it can't be scheduled. Only start planning your work around children once you are actually expecting.

Have your work and your life – if something is a priority for you, do it!

You shouldn't have to work your life away, and no one should make you feel like you have to.

**Tips for time management:**

Learn how to say no!

Teach someone else the things you are good at so you can delegate, or recommend them to someone else in your stead.

Be clear about when you are, and are not, working.

Prioritise

Learn when and how to do things 'just well enough'

Allocate how much time you think something is worth so you don't spend infinite time perfecting it.

Get a diary and schedule your time – **STICK TO YOUR SCHEDULE!**

Schedule blocks of time in your schedule. Allocate time for research, but don't expect to know exactly what you will achieve in that time, research is unpredictable. Also schedule blocks for non-research time.

Pay for things you don't want to do yourself (e.g. cleaning)

Go to as many talks as you can, but prioritise conferences and don't attend too many meetings. Try to keep meetings short.

Change up your workspace to suit your working style (e.g. standing desk)

It's OK to have lots of projects, but be ruthless in killing the ones that go nowhere. Keep an ideas folder of things you don't have immediate time for.

Once you commit to a project, finish it! You can't put 80% of a paper on your CV.

**Interesting quotes from the discussion**

"Don't let anyone tell you that you're wasting time not doing astronomy" (Peter Quinn)

"Learn when and how to do things 'just well enough'" (Matthew Colless)

"Balance is when you don't feel guilty" (Tara Murphy)

"You won't be working forever" (Carole Jackson)

"This isn't a counselling session!" (Alicia Oshlack)

"No child ever comes out the way you planned it to" (Carole Jackson)