SUPERVISION, MENTORING AND NAVIGATING A SANE ACADEMIC LIFE

George Lewith
Southampton
Why become an academic in Primary Care?

• Poor pay, poor future security and not a 35 hour week!

• Because its intellectually challenging, good fun to work in groups with likeminded people and it’s a vocation that can really help to deliver effective health care.

• It makes us all feel we are making a difference and sometimes we really do!
What sustains us?

• Being valued
• Being part of a team that works well together
• Being supported (when that grant doesn’t work)
• Enjoying the good bits
• Not moaning too much, it doesn’t help and reinforces the negative
• Looking after ourselves so we remain resilient and bounce forward
• Working in resilient structures
SUPERVISORS AND MENTORS
SIMILARITIES BETWEEN A PhD SUPERVISOR AND A MENTOR

• Effective mentoring and supervision develops and sustains resilient environments and individual resilience
• Mentor and supervisor will both be interested in your future but from different perspectives
• Will both need to understand the academic system in which you’re involved
• Will both care for you as an individual and their roles may well overlap
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A PhD SUPERVISOR AND A MENTOR

Mentor
- Anyone in or out of your department
- Focused on you, your life, your needs, your family
- Will often have no academic relationship with you
- Is likely not be involved in departmental politics
- Often an older academic
- Can be just one meeting or maybe a much longer term relationship.

PhD Supervisor
- Departmental line manager
- Mainly focused on you delivering the PhD
- Will want to publish with you
- Will probably be involved in departmental politics
- Maybe a relatively recent post-doc or an older academic
- You will be meeting a lot over the 3-5 years of your PhD.
“In no relationship is the Physician more often derelict than in his duty to himself”
I'm a little stressed right now...

(Just turn around and leave quietly and no one gets hurt.)
Hans Selye (1907-1982)

It is not the stress...
it is the state of mind,
that matters when one is stressed

Keep Calm Stay Safe
Resilient structures are

• Effective, competitive, lucrative and resilient C21st environments are team based, collaborative, creative, bottom up and speak truth to power

• Because then the people within those environments assume ownership, are more committed and work harder and achieve more, it brings out the best in us!

• Departments often struggle to become resilient within Universities which are fundamentally old style business structures that still tend to be white male dominated

• Resonant and engaged Leadership is the essential ingredient (Mowbray 2013)
Corporate Resilience Framework

Mowbray 2013

• Purpose : clear focus to provide context
• Vision : Clear Ambition to achieve
• Values : Taps into features that drive individuals
• Culture : Adopts triggers to provoke trust & engagement
• Corporate Strategy : workforce is at the centre
• Structure : Flat, Flexible & Adaptable
• Rules : That provoke commitment & Engagement
• Problem Solving : rapid problem solving
• Partnerships : strong partnerships
The Moan Zone

• Having a moan may feel therapeutic – but actually it can wind you up or grind you down....

• However, it sometimes helps to share your problems
What stresses you?

In Groups:

• Safety/Chatham house rules
• Groups of 3/4
• Stressors and sources of stress
• Groups to come up with themes
• Back to whole group for discussion of themes

Keep Calm Stay Safe
Were these on your list?

- Personality types - stress prone
- Your experience/lack of
- Cyberlife
- Technology
- No off switch addictions
- Needs of other for immediate gratification
- Finance: more with less

- Sense of entitlement
- Other peoples stress
- Demands of other staff
- Family expectations and responsibilities

Keep Calm Stay Safe
Unchecked Stress

- Fatigue
- Sleep disturbance
- Health changes: high BP, immune compromise, weight changes
- Disruptive behaviours
- Self defeating behaviours: irritability, poor communication
- Interpersonal problems
- Self medicating: drink, drugs
- Low mood, anxiety, depression
- Academic or clinical dishonesty

Keep Calm Stay Safe
Five systems: model for self care

- Body
- Mind
- Spirit
- Behaviour
- Context

Keep Calm Stay Safe
5 Star Stress Free Safety

Body

Mind

Context

Behaviour

Spirit

Keep Calm Stay Safe
Your body

- Awareness
- Tuning in to how you really are
- What goes in and why?
- Stress-busting activity
- Rest
- Relaxation

Keep Calm Stay Safe
Take the Body quiz

I don’t drink harmful levels of alcohol
I exercise at least 20 minutes 3 times a week
I don’t smoke
I eat regular meals
I keep myself well hydrated at all times
I ensure I take natural breaks whilst at work
I make sure I get plenty of fresh air
I practice good sleep hygiene
I don’t take illicit drugs
I make an effort to rest and relax
Your Mind

- Self awareness
- Mental Fitness
- Positive mental attitude – healthy thinking
- Emotional health
- Wellbeing and resilience

Keep Calm Stay Safe
Where are you on the human function curve?
Your mind

Mind Full, or Mindful?

Keep Calm Stay Safe
Mindfulness moments

Keep Calm Stay Safe
Positive Mental Attitude

• Don’t over think things
• Think and speak positively
• Surround yourself with positive people
• Look forward
• Let go of past grudges
• Be grateful
• Love yourself

Keep Calm Stay Safe
Toxic thinking – cognitive distortions

- **All or nothing thinking.** Everything is all good, or all bad. No grey areas
- **Overgeneralization.** One bad thing happens, the world is ending
- **Disqualifying the positive.** You can’t accept anything positive ever happening
- **Mental filter.** You filter out all good qualities so you can focus on the negative
- **Jumping to conclusions.** You interpret everything in a negatively with no evidence
- **Catastrophising or minimization.** You blow minor things out of proportion
- **Emotional reasoning.** If you feel bad, everything is bad.
- **Should statements.** You try and mold the world to your vision of reality.
- **Labeling and mislabeling.** You believe the overgeneralizations and make them reality in your own mind.
- **Personalisation.** You take things personally. You become very defensive at even the slightest perceived criticism.

Keep Calm Stay Safe
Take the Mind Quiz

I have a positive mental attitude
I never fixate on negative events
I never worry unduly about what others think of me
I often allow myself to feel proud of positive things I have achieved
I never indulge in toxic thinking
I am confident that I’m coping well with my stresses
I never ignore things that overwhelm me – I tackle them head on
I have practices to calm my mind
Your behaviour

• Awareness
• Being proactive
• People skills
• Managing pressure
• Habits
Pop psychology?

Controlling or nurturing

Parent

Internalised messages from carers

Adult

Uses resources from the here and now

Child

Adapted or natural

Thinking, behaving or feeling as we did when we were a child

Can we stay in adult at work?

Keep Calm Stay Safe
Which mode are you in?
Whatever the situation

• Lose the emotion—it is not helpful
• Think about your own feelings and their impact on your behaviour
• What impact are you having on your colleague
• The only person's behaviour you can change is your own
Take the Behaviour quiz

I am always polite and respectful
I am always consider towards others
I apologise when I do things wrong
I never snap at others
I can forgive people
I know how to be assertive
I always try my best
I am always calm
I set goals in my life
The context

• Awareness
• Creating calm around you
• Family and friends
• Leisure and pleasure
• Work and professional life

Keep Calm Stay Safe
Take the Context quiz

I maintain a good work life balance
I have a strong support network
I take time to build relationships
I manage my finances well
I have hobbies
I spend my time off to improve my wellbeing
I always put effort into my work
I practice a positive mental attitude with others
I always ask for help if I need to
I put effort into my goals and dreams
I respect others
Your Spirit

• Awareness
• Core values – know yourself
• Life purpose
• Mindfulness meditation
• Happiness habits and gratitude

Keep Calm Stay Safe
Take the Spirit quiz

I often take time to reflect
I always try to see the good in myself
I always try to see the good in others
I acknowledge the good things in my life
I know and address my needs
I do positive things with positive people
I ask for help
I take care of my mind
I take care of my body
make time for R&R
I am positive behaviours to everyone I meet
Take some time now to make an action plan for YOU

Keep Calm Stay Safe
Set your own goals

One SMART goal for each of the 5 Star Safety areas

• S  - specific
• M  - measurable
• A  - attainable
• R  - relevant
• T  - time bound
I’d like to acknowledge the help of Dr Margaret O’Rourke who developed the SAFEMED programme at the University of Cork for undergraduates and foundation doctors in Ireland.

I would also like to acknowledge Joanna Mountfield and Liz Donovan for their help in the development of the SAFEMED material.
Summary

• Stress awareness
• 5 check points
• Practice
• And maintain your vocation

Keep Calm Stay Safe