

A mentoring guide for sciencing during this pandemic, quickly written up by Gina Baucom and Baucom lab members (based from and starting with recommendations linked below).

*Note that these are recs developed for Baucom lab members, and will certainly change given potential developments!

Step 1. Focus on health -- physical and mental

Physical health

Focus on not getting sick and on keeping yourself active. Limit travel and practice social isolation. If you must go out in public, carry purell and spray bottles of bleach solution, clorox wipes. Do some form of exercise every day -- go on walks at the park, run around the neighborhood (but avoid gyms!), mix cardio with strength exercises, consider yoga.

Mental health

Establish new boundaries with work while you work at home. Work in chunks of time and take breaks, set new boundaries around work and life, use timers and be faithful to productive or planned unproductive chunks of time. Hug your pets. Don't **completely** isolate yourself. Don't watch pandemic videos or movies.

Remote social networking. Check in on your people and develop networks for personal or professional online interactions. Set up networks of **small** visits, working at each other's homes (note: this may need to change to no in-person interactions), complete disconnection is a problem.

Do mindfulness work *daily*. This is super stressful. Work in some mindfulness meditation into your daily schedule and touch base with yourself often. There is currently a free 20 day meditation series through MHealthy, also the Calm app -- meditation for anxiety, focus, sleep, etc. Try [Virtual museum](#) exercises.

On that note, be sure to reach out to a lab mate or advisor if you start to feel sick either physically or mentally. We need to keep track of each other and that includes either coming down with cold symptoms or feeling like we're going off the rails. Watch out for signs of anxiety and depression. Expect your mental health to suffer and know that it's ok when/if that happens.

[Practical advice to manage coronavirus anxiety](#)

Step 2. Set some fluid goals

Set your individual goals for the rest of the semester recognizing that this is a fluid situation where you are now managing your physical space and mental health in a very new way. Have an idealized version of what you'd like to have accomplished in three months, but give yourself leeway with actual outcomes. Talk out these goals with your advisor and/or an accountability partner. Give yourself space, ie forgiveness, if you are unable to be productive. Be versatile with your expectations -- maybe you can't do that bench based project right now but you certainly can analyze data or read papers for a new review article.

Step 3. Plan a *tight* schedule

Working from home is novel to many of us, and we're making this switch rapidly and in a stressful, developing situation. One way of not losing focus on work is to develop a tight schedule. As in, schedule each 30 mins (or hour) of your day from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed. This will give you the anchor point of an idealized schedule to refer to when needed, and will help calm the anxiety associated with life quickly taking a pivot. You don't have to hold to each planned half or full hour, but you will have something to refer back to when you get off schedule.

Step 4. Figure out what accomplished and what not per week, start the process over

Every week, reassess. Assess what you were able to accomplish compared to what you set out to do, and assess what is left to do. This will be an iterative process and it counts as work.

Step 5. What counts as work?

Don't be picky here -- many things we do are important work items but often discount things that are not active paper or grant writing. However, it all frickin counts: prepping for work, establishing a schedule and organizing your time, reading tips on productivity, writing, data analysis, reading papers, talking to colleagues about science, talking to your accountability partners -- this is all part of the process and it's valuable.

Step 6. Find an accountability partner

What's an accountability partner? An accountability partner is ideally someone in your lab or a close friend with whom you can discuss your daily plan. Check in with them once or ideally twice a day -- a quick note via either text or Slack to 1) report your ideal plan for the day and then 2) report back in later with what you managed to accomplish. Accountability partners should give each other support if goals aren't met, props if they were, and just general props for hanging in there regardless. Try to have a 1X meeting per week either in person (if safe!!) or via online mechanisms.

Step 7. Maintain good contact

Social isolation sucks but is necessary right now. Transition your expectations of social time to online interactions with your accountability partners, advisors, lab group overall (the Baucom lab

is having virtual lab group meetings 2X/week moving forward), friends, and family. Maintain good contact with people so nobody worries about you!

Reach out to grads in the program -- especially those that might not normally be involved in departmental things -- and develop a strong support network. Check in with grads about their work, how they're feeling, are they running out of food? Let people know if you get sick, ESPECIALLY if you live alone.

Step 8. Step away from social media and news

Too much information is not going to limit the spread of this virus. Try to limit yourself with social media and news reports. Unfollow people on twitter that are writing doomsday scenarios without adequate information. A couple of programs that will help you limit social media and media in general are [StayFocused](#) and [Self Control](#).

Step 9. Be chill, meditate, relax your expectations

Other visual conferencing mechanisms

- Zoom
- WhatsApp, video (good)
- FB messenger
- Facetime
- Google hangouts
- Skype

[From Dana Turjeman](#)

1. Maintain a routine - even more than you were (not) doing before.
2. Find an accountability partner - someone you "promise" to show measurable progress of work to, and who will nudge you gently in the right direction if you're not holding up to your promises.
3. Arrange virtual coffee breaks or lunches with colleagues, even if you didn't have those before.
4. If progress is paused or delayed because you unable to collect data / run studies in the lab etc., think of all the things you can do otherwise - literature review, writing introduction of a paper, ideation for another paper etc.
5. Update your advisers and co-authors even more than you were used to. Schedule weekly meetings - even short ones - and find measurable results of analyses / writing to present each time.
6. Schedule meetings with people you wanted to meet. For example: email seminar speakers who were suppose to come, or people you hoped to meet in (now cancelled) conferences, and ask to meet them online instead.

7. If a partner / housemate is staying with you at home, make sure to respect each-other's work time and routine. Being in the same (closed) space more than you're used to might cause stress and tension.
8. Take advantage of the reduced commute time, and learn something fun and new - cooking, art, meditation - whatever can be done indoors in a healthy, respectful way.
9. All of these might become obsolete if you have young kids who stay with you at home. I am not sure how to handle such scenarios (yet) but will be REALLY happy to hear from you...