

HOW TO SURVIVE GRADUATE SCHOOL

LE SERVICE AUX ÉTUDIANTS DE
POLYTECHNIQUE



FALL 2022

Let's learn a bit about each other !

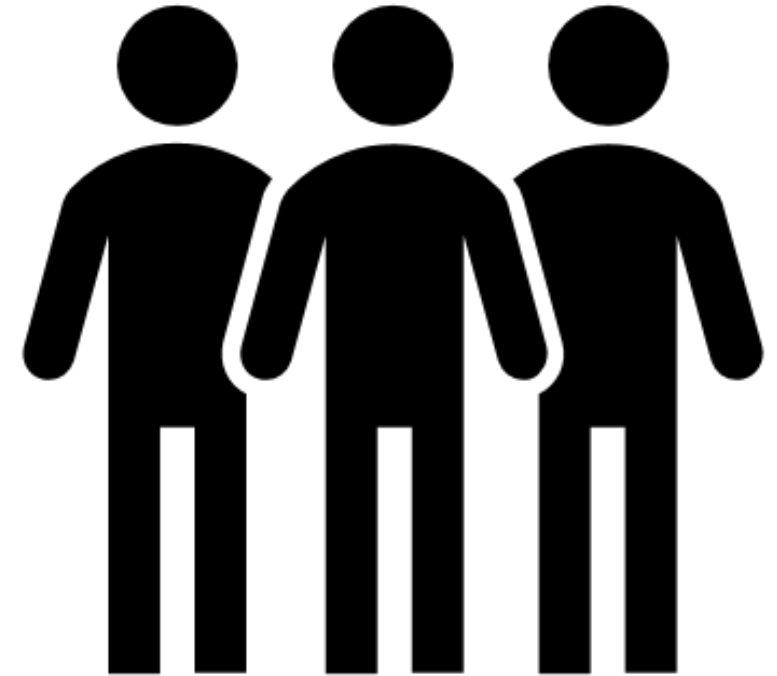
Name

Level of education

Program

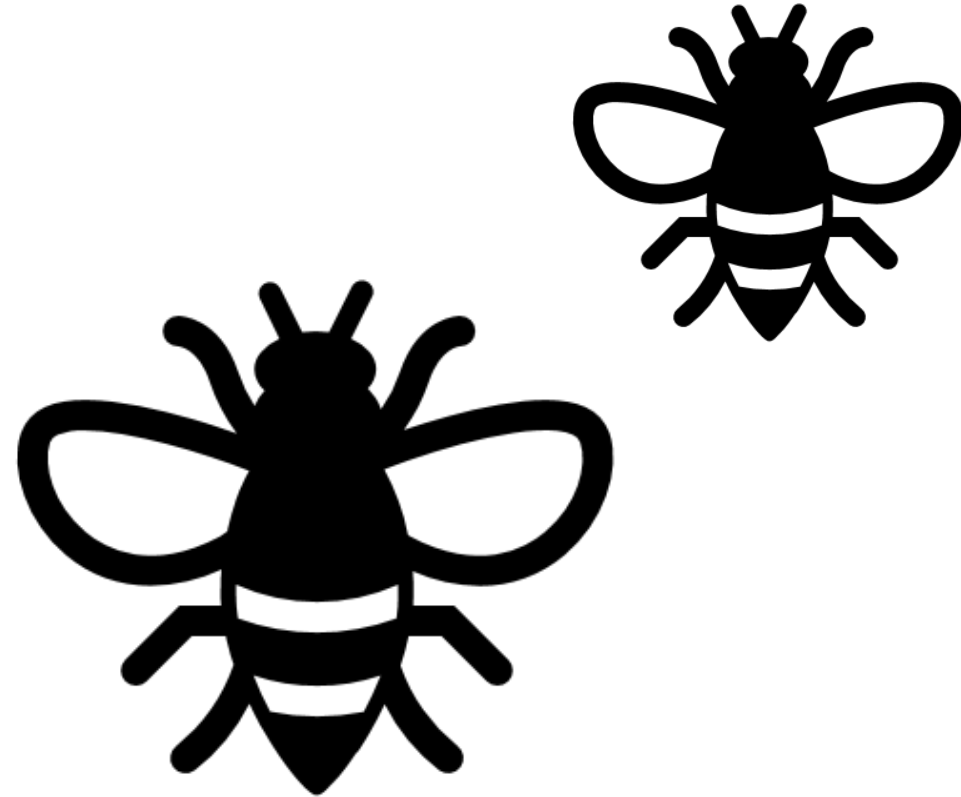
One sentence to describe your research

Reason for your attendance





1. Ergonomics and work environment
2. Time management
3. Motivation and procrastination
4. Student-Director relationship
5. Self valorisation
6. Resources
7. Discussion



DIFFICULTIES FREQUENTLY ENCOUNTERED BY STUDENTS



Difficult Relationship with
Research Directors

Procrastination

Impostor
Syndrome

Problematic Work
Environment

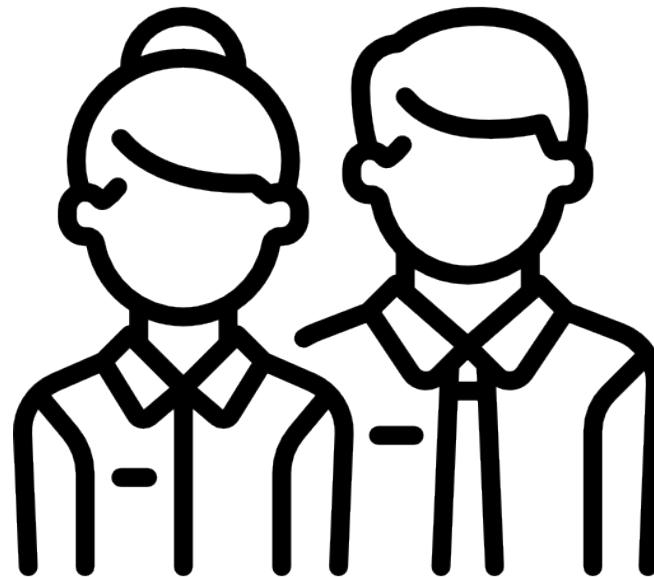
Poor Health Habits

Overloaded Schedule

Solitude

Fatigue

Lack of Self-
confidence



Lack of Motivation

Lack of Efficiency



ERGONOMICS AND WORK ENVIRONMENT



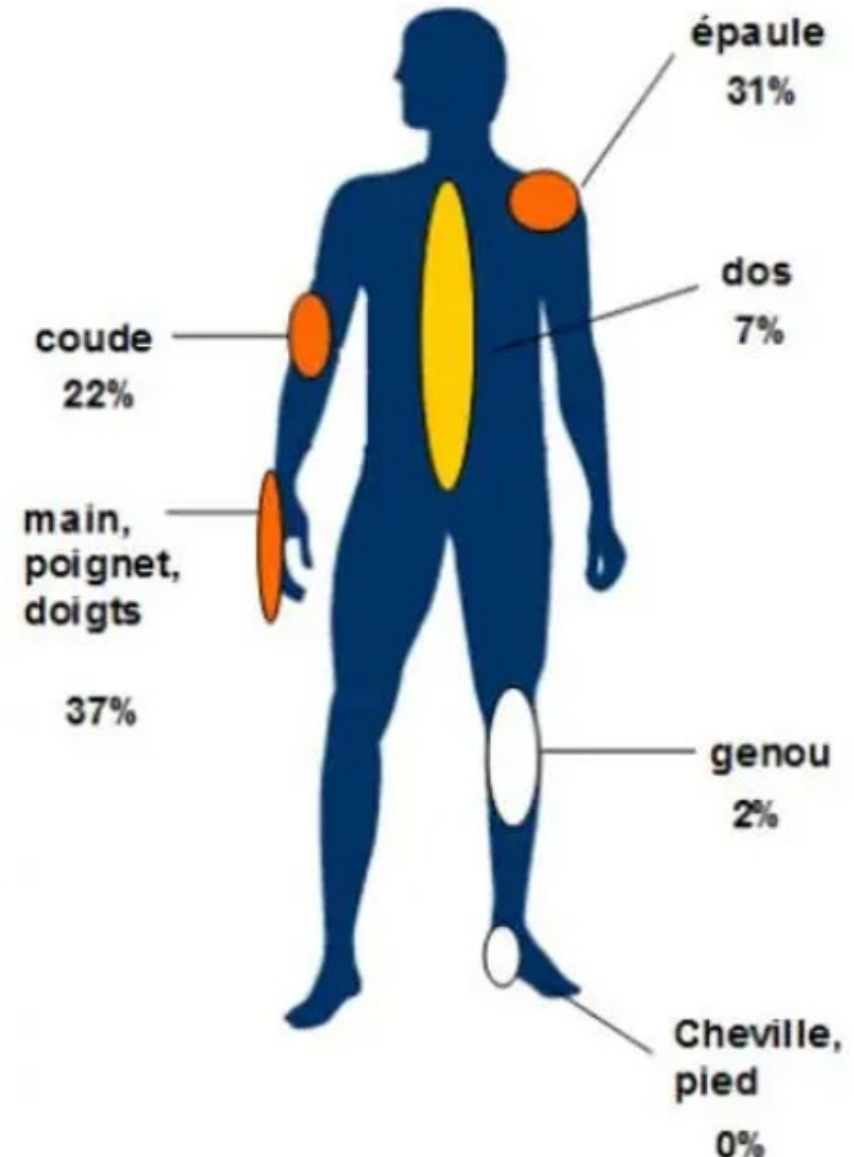
Pain you may feel due to musculoskeletal disorders:

Back : Mainly pain in the lower back, middle back and neck with the possibility of radiation in the arms and hands.

Shoulders : Difficulty mobilizing the arm, pain in the trapezoids, heaviness in the shoulder, ants in the hands.

Elbows : Difficulty bending the elbow, pain in the forearm, pain in points on the outside or inside of the elbow.

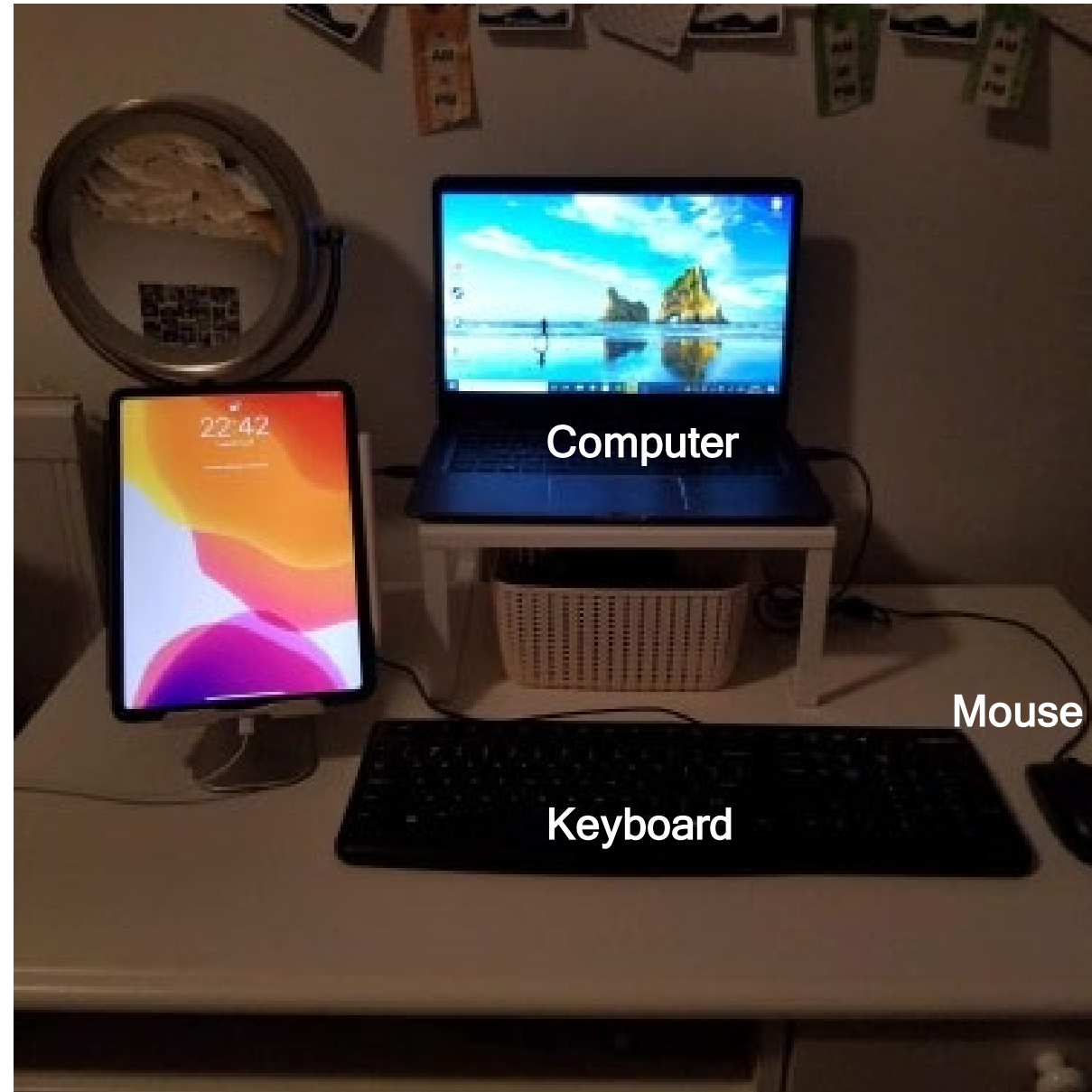
Wrists : Pain on mobilization, sensation of electricity in the fingers, tightness in the forearm.



Adequate Posture for the Office

SITTING POSITION





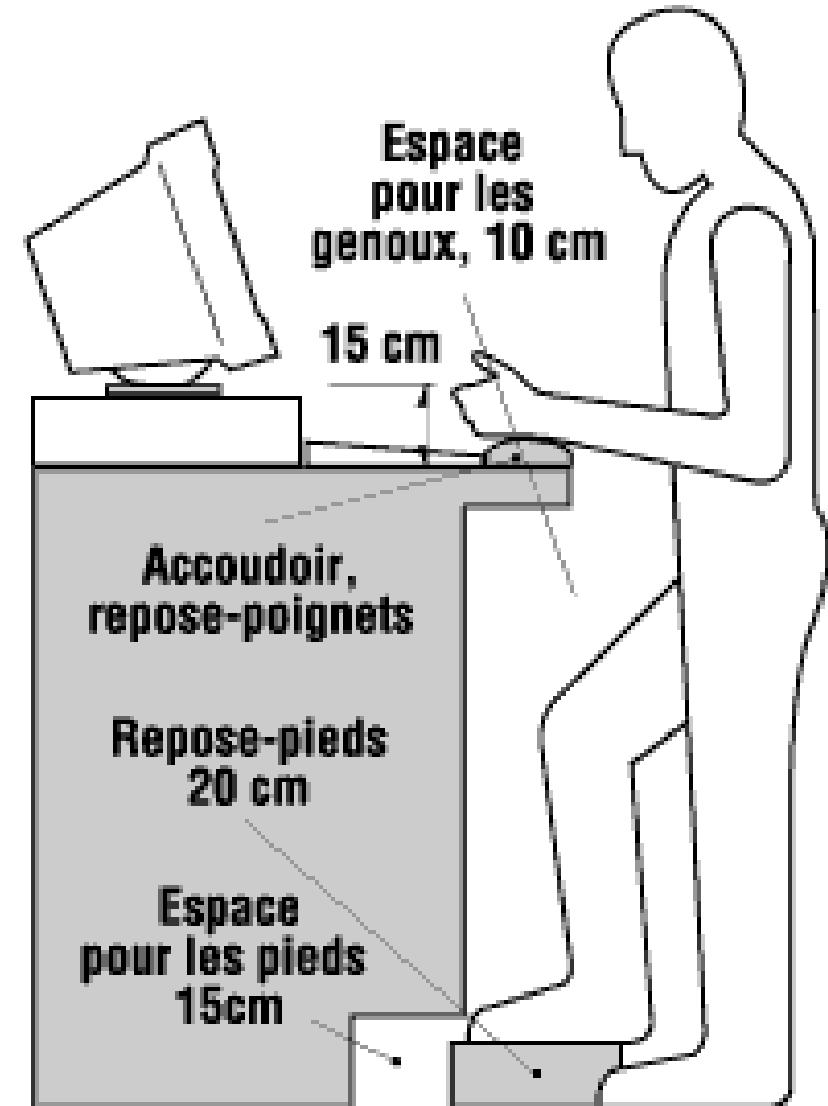
Adequate posture for the office STANDING POSITION

Adjust the height of the work surface according to your physical dimensions. Use the height of the elbow as a reference point.

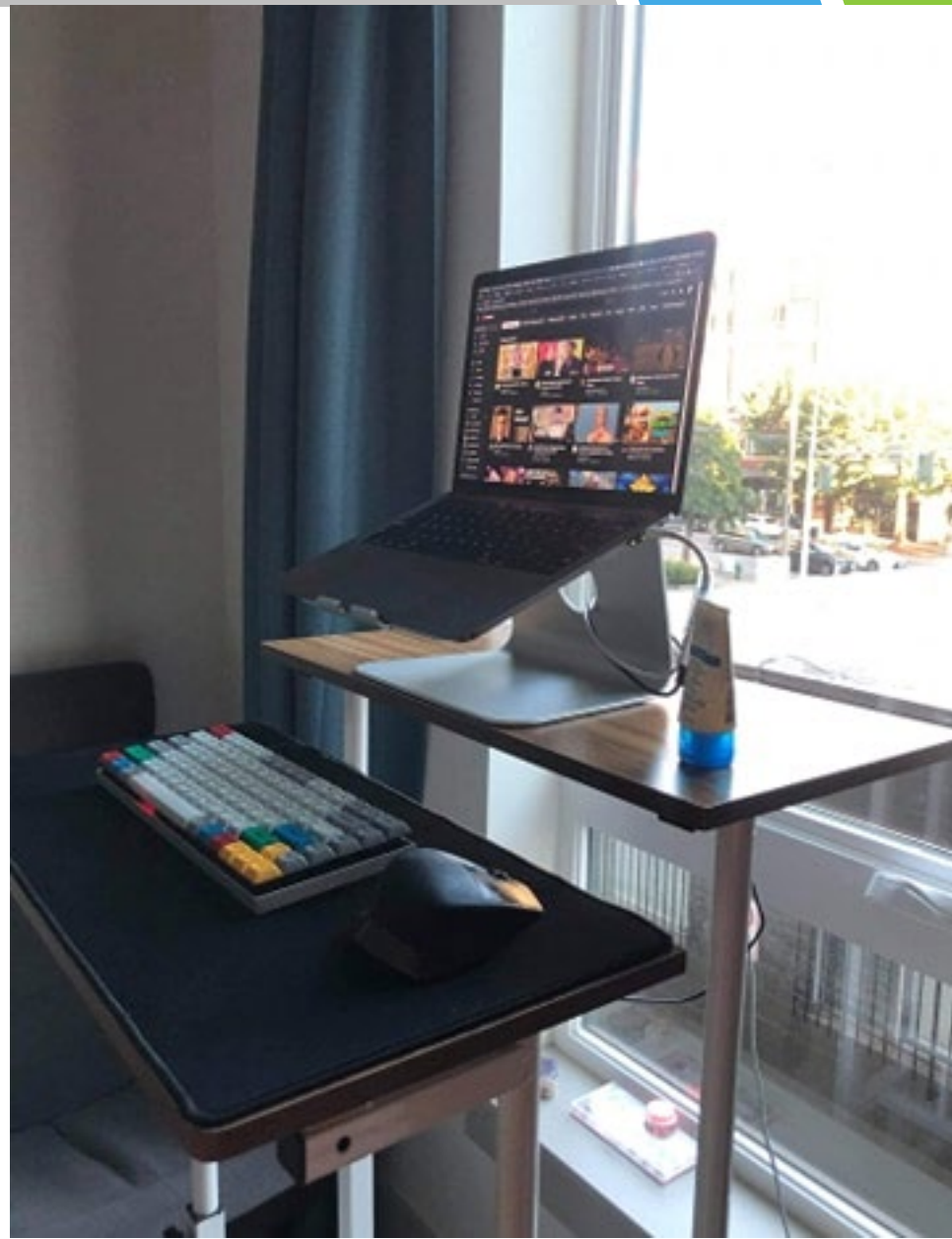
Organize your workspace so that you can easily reach the objects you need most frequently.

Avoid excessive stretching that causes discomfort.

Avoid reaching an object behind or above the shoulders.



ERGONOMICS



Separate each room of the house and create spaces

✓ **Study area:** create a work space

- 1) As far as possible from the relaxation areas
- 2) Closed corner, with a window when possible
- 3) Tidy and conducive to work
- 4) Motivating, add images or photos that are meaningful to you



✓ **Dining area:** away from the study area, organize it in advance as you would normally do

Prepare your lunch and snacks in advance, ready to be reheated or eaten. Avoid eating in your workspace.

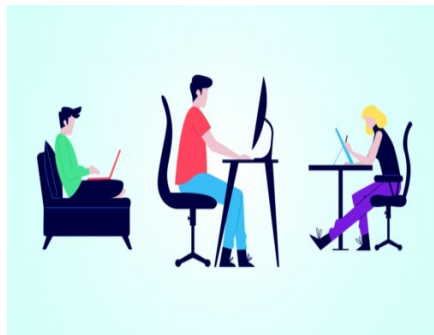




Share your space with others

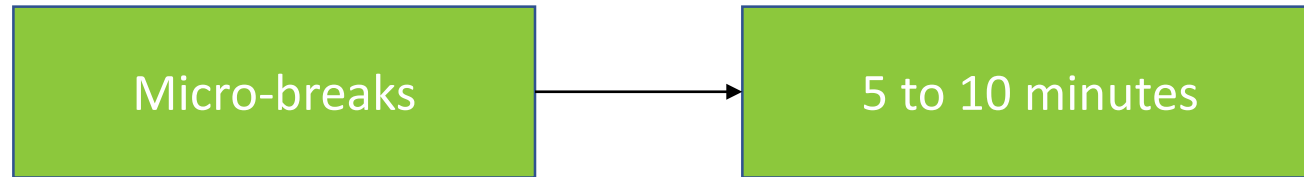
3 essential rules to succeed in focusing on your goals:

- **Organization:** Establish a daily work routine with a specific schedule
- **Communication:** Share your work/study schedule with your family members, roommate(s), etc.; leave notes as a reminder; explain the usefulness of what you are doing to your children (they will understand)
- **Rigour:** Stick to your schedule. This will set an example for others to follow. However, don't beat yourself up if you have to make adjustments.

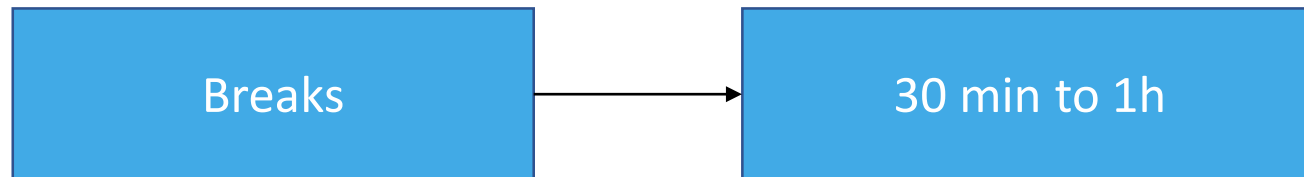


The more consistent you are, the easier it is for everyone involved.

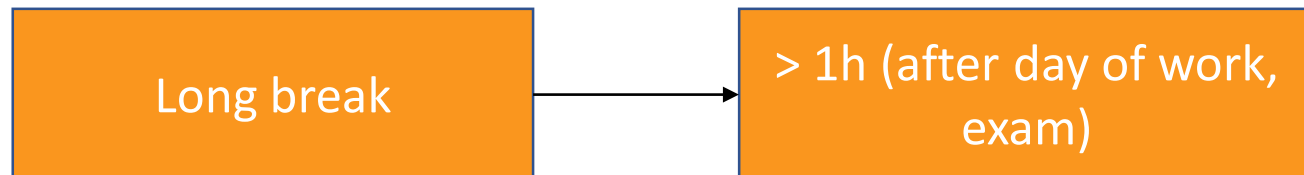
Types of breaks



- Snack / glass of water
- Go to the bathroom
- Get up and stretch
- Try to take a break from screens



- Have a real lunch
- Go on a walk
- Listen to a podcast
- Enjoy talking to your colleagues



- Close your computer
- Close the Teams app on your phone
- The goal is to have a clear separation btw work and the rest of your day.

Stretch at each
micro-breaks!





TIME MANAGEMENT



Priority Management

Organization of activities

Motivation

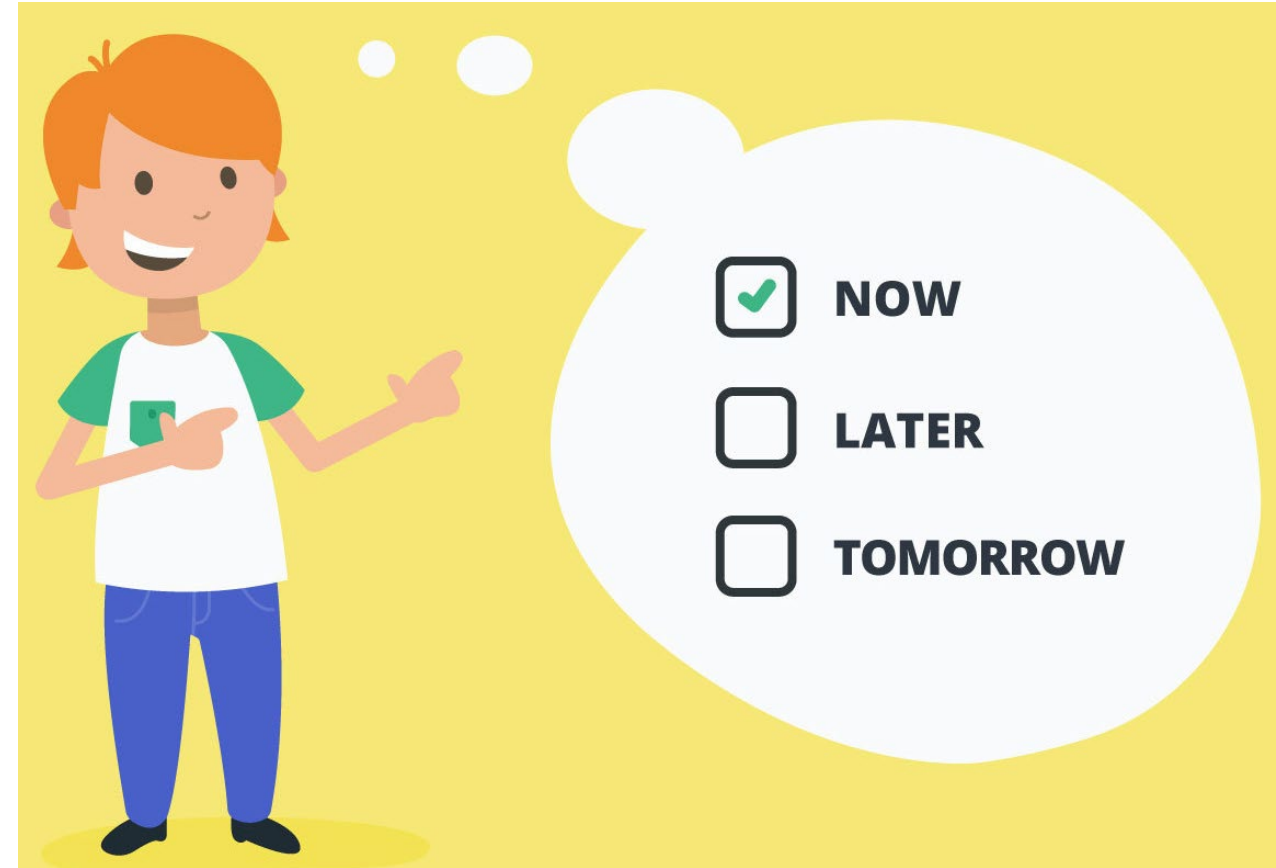
Procrastination

Good methods

Mental
Preparation

What is procrastination ?

It is the habit of unnecessarily postponing tasks or activities to a later date.



Everyone procrastinates ! It is a problem when it becomes systematic.

Where does procrastination come from?



There are many reasons why we may procrastinate:

- **Indecision**: Not being sure of what to do / what to decide usually pushes us to put off until tomorrow.
- **Fatigue**: Energy level reduces our willingness to work.
- **Boredom**: It's tempting to put off boring tasks !
- **Complexity**: Being intimidated by a task to avoid it for as long as possible.
- **Lack of motivation**: Not having a clear vision and goals leads to procrastination.

How to overcome it ?

- ✓ **Indecision and lack of motivation**: Setting clear goals and a timeline
- ✓ **Fatigue**: Opting for a conducive work environment without distractions and planning time slots conducive to productivity
- ✓ **Boredom**: Rewarding yourself at the end of each step
- ✓ **Complexity**: Segmenting complex tasks into smaller tasks

Worst case : Do some useful procrastination (sports, housework, cooking, meditation)

PROCRASTINATION

The sandwich method :

You sandwich an unpleasant / less pleasant task between two pleasant ones.

The reward method :

You reward yourself each time you accomplish a task.

Example : when I was doing my research proposal, I would play 20 mins of Sims 4 each time I finished a sub-part.



The buddy method/ buddy double :

This method is quite popular amongst people diagnosed (or not) with ADHD.

Either you have someone you share your goal with and this person makes you accountable OR

You have someone in the room that may be doing something else but triggers your « buddy double » and stops the cycle of procrastination.

The « trick your brain into working » method :

You divide the task in extremely small steps.

You only do the first one and each time you allow yourself to either continue or stop. This method is adapted from the book « Sit down and write your thesis ». Maybe more suited for exhausted students.

The journal method :

Keep an daily journal of what you did compared to the « to do list » you had and keep yourself accountable !



Motivation and objectives

Objectives will help you:



- ✓ Set **clear** and **precise** steps to be able to prioritize the important tasks

To stay motivated throughout your studies, you need to :

- ✓ Clarify **long-term** goals
- ✓ Break down the long-term objective into short-term sub-objectives
- ✓ Research the classes so that you can connect to your **goals**

Manage your working hours

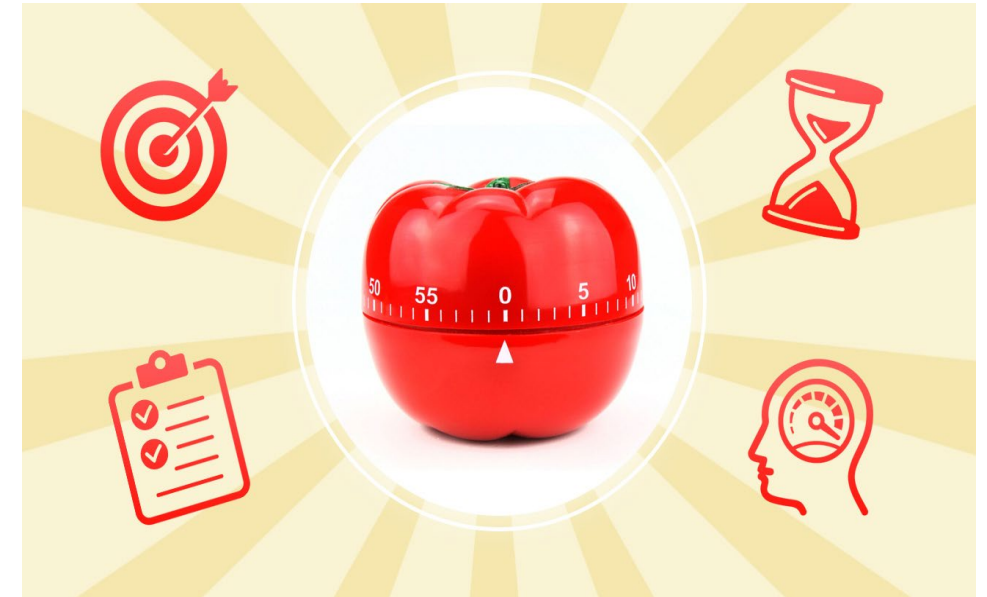
- ✓ Make a schedule or work plan before you start working
- ✓ Make sure **to start your tasks right away** and don't do anything else (e.g. check your email or the weather, send text messages, etc.);
- ✓ Stay focus:
 - * Install ad blockers on your computer
 - * Disable your **internet connection** if you don't need it.



Identify when your brain is wandering: refocus OR take a real break (do something different from what you were doing and enjoy yourself).

Pomodoro Technique

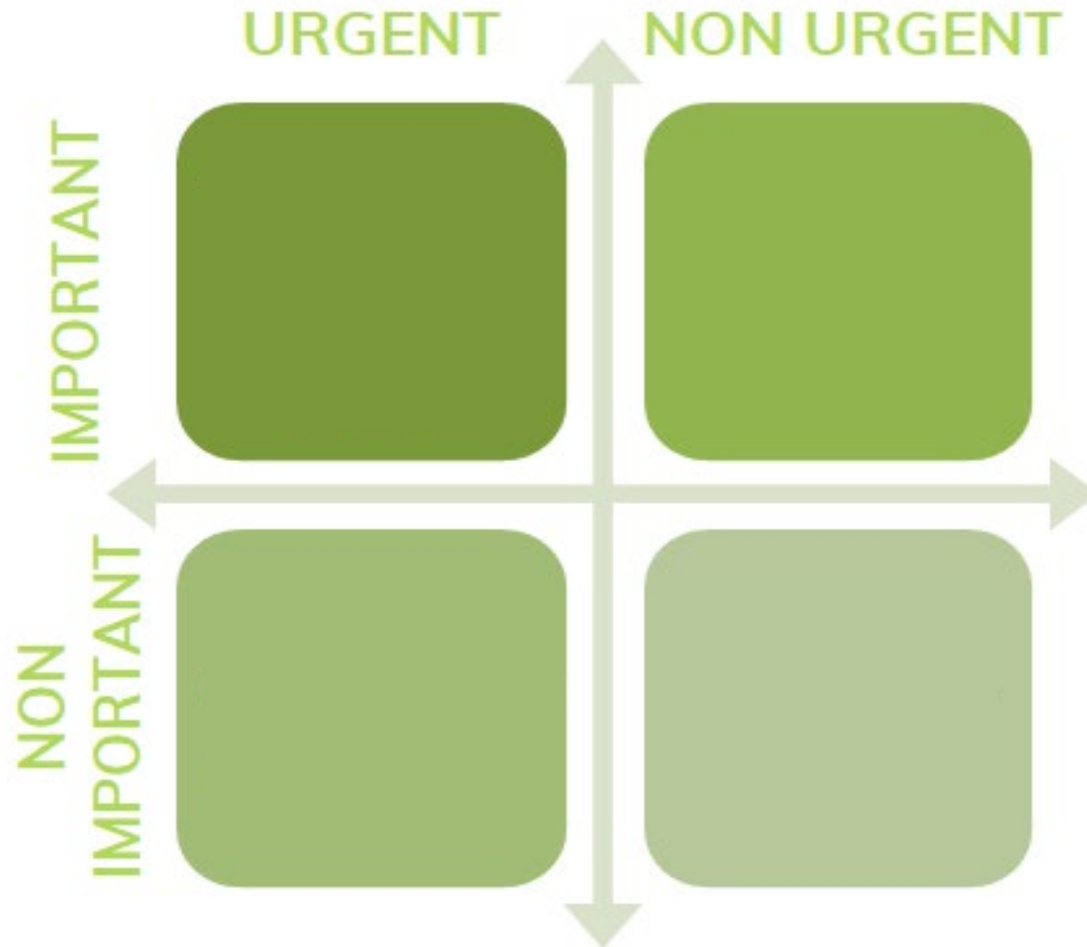
- ✓ **Assign each task an estimated amount of time and try to stick to it**
 - * If the deadline of the task is exceeded, readjust the schedule of the day
 - * It is better to have time goals even if they are too short
- ✓ **Be sure to take a 10-minute break for every hour of intellectual work, this will maximize your concentration during the study;**



**Reward yourself when you've reached your goals!!!
This will keep you motivated.
(e.g. snack, glass of water, short walk);**



Setting Priorities: Eisenhower's Matrices



Origin:

Dwight D. Eisenhower was the 34th president of the United States. He was recognized for arranging his affairs so that only the truly important and urgent matters were on his desk.*

"I have two kinds of problems, the urgent and the important. The urgent are not important, and the important are never urgent."

- Eisenhower, 1954, Northwestern University -

Definition:

Analysis tool that categorizes the tasks to be carried out according to their urgency and importance

*It is not certain if the former president was really using the matrix or if he only inspired the name of the method used today.



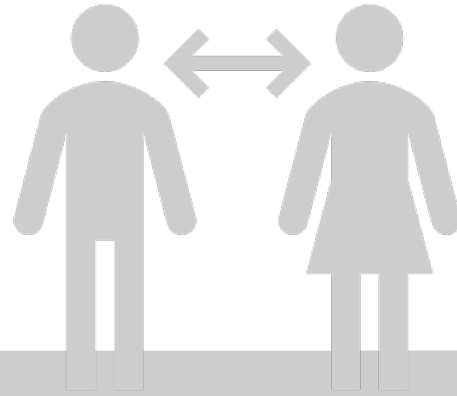
What to do following the task prioritization?

Timeline!

- When building a schedule, it is important to plan it on 4 levels
 - Daily (The high performance planner, To Do list, Google agenda)
 - Weekly (The high performance planner, Google agenda)
 - Quarterly (Google agenda)
 - Total (Work breaking structure + Updated Calendar)



STUDENT DIRECTOR RELATIONSHIP



Role and Types of Directors

Leader



Lead students through the process. Students are followed step by step through each stage of the research. Frequent meetings.

Advisor



Lead students in the development of the project. Acts as an advisor during the intermediate stages and becomes more directive at the time of writing.

Direction free



Let students be autonomous throughout the research process. In general, contact is less frequent

Guide



Let the students be autonomous throughout the research process. In general, contact is less frequent

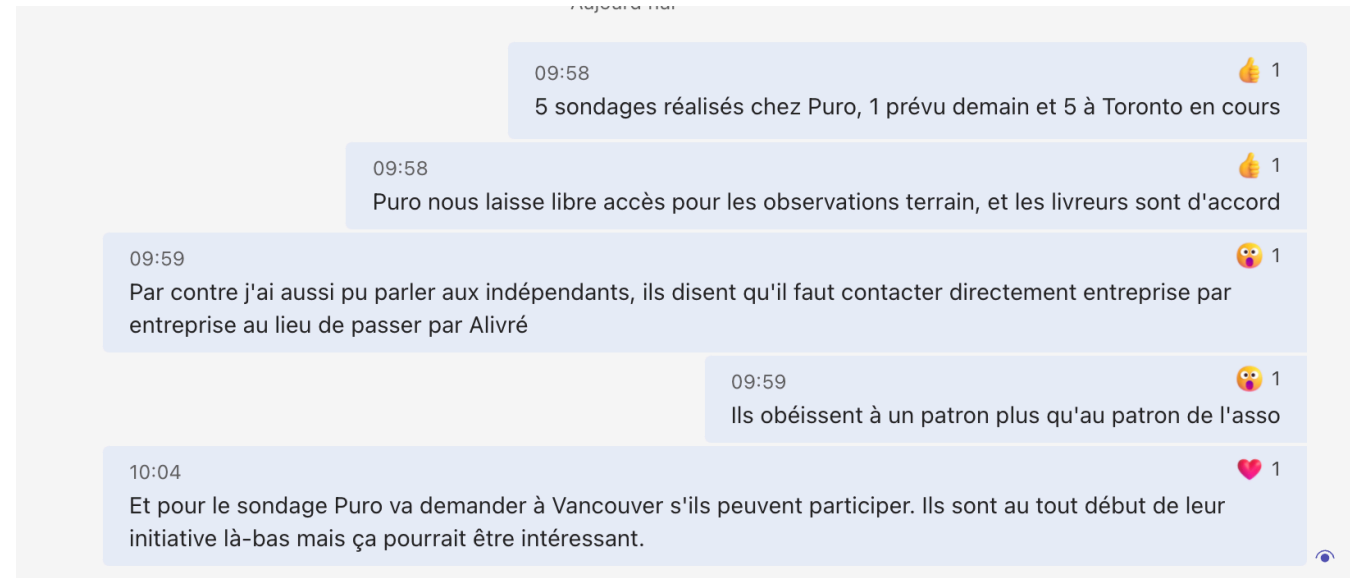


How to maintain a healthy relationship with your director

- **Meetings with the supervisor: the professional approach**
 - Clearly state your needs and issues
 - Also bring suggestions for solutions
 - Sharing key decisions to move forward (shared responsibilities)
 - Reword **your** ideas to show that you understand things "if I understand it right..."
 - Agree with the Director on the frequency of meetings (as required)

How to maintain a healthy relationship with your director

- **Communication is key !**
 - Communicate often and do not hesitate to do so
 - Respect personal time off (yours and theirs)
 - If your question remains unanswered, you can politely ask again
- **Don't assume they remember !**
 - You can prepare a powerpoint with the key points, figures etc.
 - Some students like to send an agenda for the meeting.





Activity - What do you do if :

- You arrive 15 minutes late for a meeting with your director due to an emergency at home and find that your director is no longer on the video conferencing platform.
- Your director questions you on a point that you are convinced you are right.
- You find that your meeting speed is too frequent and this stresses you out (or too infrequent and you feel lost).

SELF VALORIZATION

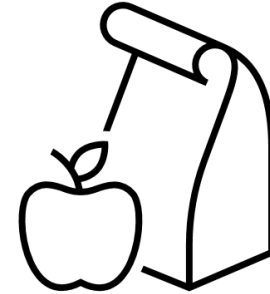


How to reduce the guilt?

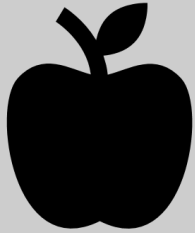
Well-being and healthy living

Imposter Syndrome

Setting your limits



ALIMENTATION



ROUTINE



LEISURE



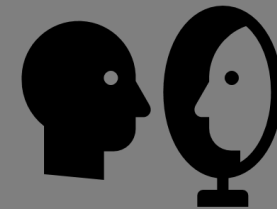
SPORT



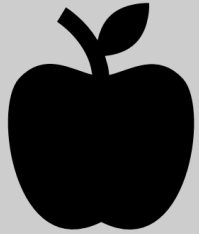
SOCIAL



INTROSPECTION



ALIMENTATION



- Take the time to cook the dishes you like
- Vary your diet (fruits, vegetables, grain products and proteins) to have energy throughout the day.
- Listen to your hunger and satiety signals so you don't eat out of boredom

SPORT



- Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity 5 times a week.
- Sports allowed during the pandemic: Swimming, biking, walking, running, home weight training, badminton, hiking, snowshoeing, skating, etc.
- Start moderately and increase the frequency and intensity at your own pace.

ROUTINE



- If you work from home, avoid staying in pajamas all day even if you don't go out (this will help you to be more motivated)
- Try to keep your daily routine (bedtime, waking time, meal schedule, etc.)

SOCIAL



- The human being is a social being who needs to maintain relationships with others
- Continue to see your friends and family ones on a regular basis. Talk about something else than your studies.

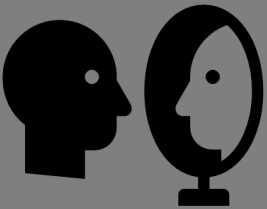


LEISURE



- Make time for your hobbies and passions
- Do not hesitate to try new things (cooking, knitting, gardening, drawing, dancing, poetry, etc.)
- A hobby is not a waste of time because it diversifies your interests and keeps you motivated

INTROSPECTION



- Try to take 15 minutes a day to write about your day to bring out the positive and negative points.
- Establish professional as well as personal and social goals
- Valuing success and allowing yourself to make mistakes

IMPOSTOR SYNDROME

What one thinks

"I don't even have a bachelor's degree in engineering, I don't know what I'm doing here"



"I was admitted like the others, I have just as much place here as they do"

"I feel like I don't have the skills to be in graduate school"



"It's normal that I have new skills to learn like everyone else"

"If I succeed, it's thanks to others"



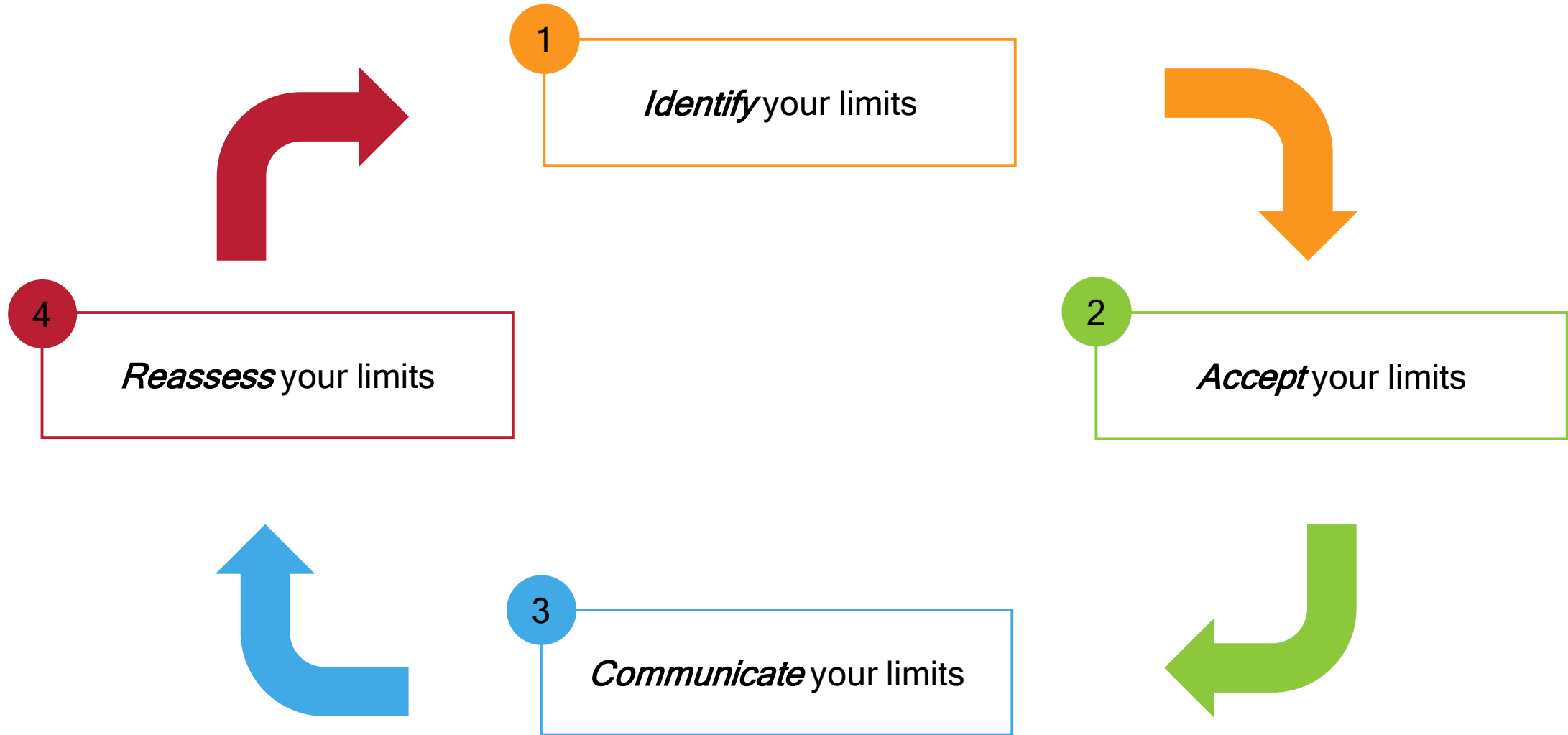
"My participation in the work is essential, I bring added value to the team"

"It's been 10 years since I've been on a school bench, I don't know what I'm doing here"

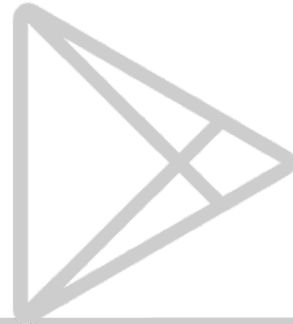


"The situation will require adaptation, but I'm willing to put in the effort"

RECOGNIZE YOUR LIMITS



APPLICATIONS



POMODORO

FOCUS BOOSTER

Data exportable in CSV

FOREST

Possibility to plant real trees, team mode

FOCUS TO-DO

Pomodoro with a To-Do list function greater than the other two

RESCUE TIME

Automatic time tracking software to see how much time is lost and how much time is spent on the different tasks.

TASK MANAGER

1-3-5 LIST

1 Big Thing – 3 Medium Things – 5 Small Things

FOCUS MATRIX

Task manager and Eisenhower matrix

TODOIST

To-Do list sorted by #projects, by priority and by due date

REMEMBER THE MILK

To avoid forgetting important tasks to be done

TRELLO

Categorize tasks

TEAMWORK

SLACK

Discussion channels

TEAM ET WEBEX (Free License with Polytechnique)

Discussion channels, video conferencing, document sharing, timelines

ASANA

To-Do list, schedule and document sharing

GOOGLE DRIVE, DROPBOX ET ONE DRIVE

Document sharing

ZOOM ET SKYPE

Video conferencing

LIFESTYLE

HEADSPACE, CALM ET SMILING MIND

Meditation

HABITICAT

RPG where the objective is to accomplish your tasks and develop lifestyle habits

SAM, ISMART ET CALM IN THE STORM

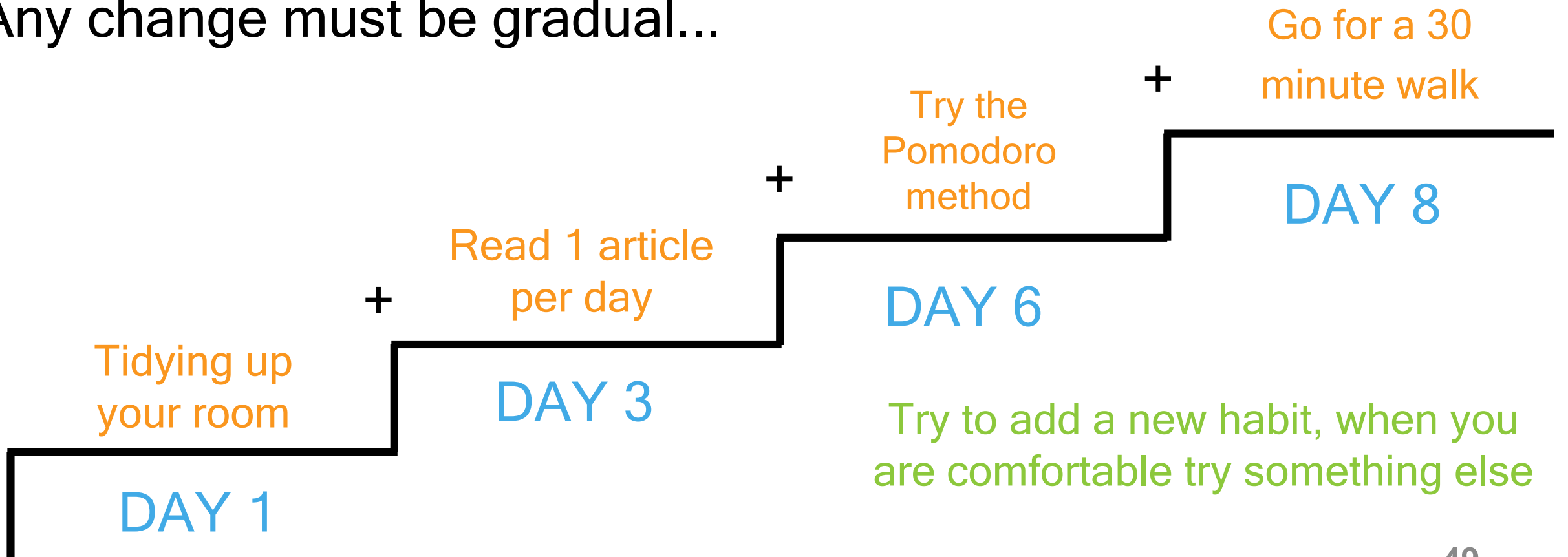
Anxiety self-assessment and symptom-reduction exercises

CONCLUSION

WARNING !

Don't try to implement all the advice given today in one go.

Any change must be gradual...



DISCUSSION



What would I like to **improve** in my graduate studies?



What will be your biggest **challenge** in the coming months?



Which of the information presented today will be most **useful**?

WORKSHOP EVALUATION

