

# **Work-Life Balance: Keys to Successfully Managing the Graduate School Life**

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## **Graduate School Stressors**

**Academics**-tests, papers, projects, research/teaching, participation

**Relationships**-romantic, family, friends, colleagues/peers, professors

**Career/Vocational**-job openings/market, best training, job search skills

**Environmental Features**-low/no money, competitive context, limited play

## **Problematic Coping Symptoms**

- \*Anxiety/Stress
- \*Increased Alcohol/Drug Usage
- \*Procrastination
- \*Denial/Avoidance
- \*Low Motivation
- \*Vocational Uncertainty
- \*Low Focus, Concentration, or Attention
- \*Distractions (eat, sleep, spend, sex, travel)
- \*Thoughts of Quitting or Dropping Out

# Work Life Balance: The SPICES Model

The **SPICES Model** provides a framework for examining your work life balance in graduate school. Based on an evaluation of your work life balance, results can lead to the importance of:

- (1) Skills associated with healthy coping with graduate school stressors
- (2) Wellness behaviors to be implemented both during graduate school and life outside of school
- (3) Key campus and community resources

**Activity:** Evaluating Wellness Expressions and Detractors

## Social Wellness

- **Social Wellness** involves developing & maintaining healthy personal and professional relationships.

### Examining Skills/Coping

- How do I manage being constantly evaluated (meetings with professors, grades, comparisons to peers)?
- How strong is my social support network? Do I use it?

### Wellness Behaviors

- Plan for fun/social time. Make time for non-school friends
- Nurture professional relationships-shared projects/interests

### Key Campus and Community Resources

- Student Organizations <http://www.uga.edu/stuorgs/>
- Athens Organizations <http://www.connect2athens.com>

## Physical Wellness

- **Physical Wellness** encourages regular exercise, proper nutrition and quality sleep.

### Examining Skills/Coping

- Is good exercise, eating, and sleep a regular priority?
- Is caffeine, nicotine, & alcohol often my “go-to friend”?

### Wellness Behaviors

- Schedule physical activity during study breaks/weekends
- In times of high academic strain, prioritize nutrition & rest

### Key Campus and Community Resources

- Ramsey Center <http://www.recsports.uga.edu/>
- Nutrition (Health Promotion) [www.uhs.uga.edu/nutrition](http://www.uhs.uga.edu/nutrition)

## Intellectual Wellness

- **Intellectual Wellness** is creative and stimulating mental activities providing ongoing intellectual growth.

### Examining Skills/Coping

- How am I improving and enhancing my capacity to learn to optimize my graduate school experience?
- How am I preparing for a career after graduate school?

### Wellness Behaviors

- Work smarter-Work that is good vs. good enough?
- Building mentor relationships that support job search

### Key Campus and Community Resources

- Career Center <http://www.career.uga.edu/aboutus.html>
- Professional Organizations (locally and nationally)

## Cultural Wellness

- **Cultural Wellness** is the process of engaging and learning through involvement with diversity.

### Examining Skills/Coping

- How skilled am I at building healthy diverse relationships?
- How would I become cultural competent in my field?

### Wellness Behaviors

- Increase diversity self awareness: Comfort vs. Discomfort
- Use class assignments to increase diversity knowledge
- Use breaks from school to travel and experience diversity

### Key Campus and Community Resources

- UGA Intercultural Affairs <http://www.uga.edu/ica/>
- Athens/Atlanta Events [www.entertainment.georgia.com](http://www.entertainment.georgia.com)

## Emotional Wellness

- **Emotional Wellness** is the ability to acknowledge, accept, and accurately express various feelings.

### Examining Skills/Coping

- How skilled am I at expressing feelings that can facilitate relationships and connections?
- Can I successfully manage stress, anger, & sadness?

### Wellness Behaviors

- Be aware of feelings to help quality decision-making.
- Utilize support networks for venting, support, and help.

### Key Campus and Community Resources

- UGA Health Center-CAPS <http://www.uhs.uga.edu/CAPS>
- Dr. Andy Case-Simonson [www.drandycasesimonson.com](http://www.drandycasesimonson.com)

## Spiritual Wellness

- **Spiritual Wellness** is the willingness to seek meaning and purpose in human existence.

### Examining Skills/Coping

- Am I aware of what brings me personal and professional meaning and purpose?
- Do my choices help me attain greater spiritual wellness?

### Wellness Behaviors

- Prioritize “spiritual investment” time (yoga, worship, volunteer)
- Engage in spiritually directed goal setting/planning

### Key Campus and Community Resources

- Local Religious/Spiritual Groups [www.libs.uga.edu/athens/religion](http://www.libs.uga.edu/athens/religion)
- Athens United Way [www.unitedwaynegs.org/index.html](http://www.unitedwaynegs.org/index.html)

## Defining & Assessing Stress

The result of a perception of helplessness in facing serious life demands. Stress does not exist out in the world. It is our perception of events that elicits a stress reaction (Matheny and Riordan, 1992)

### Check List of Stress Symptoms

Read each symptom carefully and indicate whether or not you believe the symptom to be characteristic of you at the present.

#### Symptoms At Work/School

Subtotal \_\_\_\_\_/10

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Difficulty concentrating  | 2 Feel constantly pressured & behind |
| 3 Chronically complain  | 4 Uncertain how I am being evaluated |
| 5 Loss of motivation  | 6 Confusion regarding my duties      |
| 7 Generally bored   | 8 More absences/desire to stay home  |
| 9 Trouble with professors, peers, or students I supervise         |                                      |
| 10 Feeling that my school work/responsibilities is out of control |                                      |

## **Stress Symptom Checklist**

### **Symptoms in Relationships**      Subtotal \_\_\_\_\_/10

- |                              |                                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Thoughtlessness to others  | 2 Preoccupied/Unable to listen       |
| 3 Restless or Irritability   | 4 Emotionally withdrawn              |
| 5 Humorless                  | 6 Limited joy from parties/vacations |
| 7 Avoid by staring at the TV | 8 Increased fights with loved ones   |
| 9 Sexual difficulties        | 10 Choosing alcohol over friends     |

### **Symptoms in Physical Health**      Subtotal \_\_\_\_\_/10

- |   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 Insomnia/more need for sleep                                  | 2 Unplanned changes in eating |
| 3 Increased aches & pains                                       | 4 Abuse of alcohol or drugs   |
| 5 Topical sores, blisters, rashes                               | 6 Recent allergic reactions   |
| 7 Chronic worry and anxiety                                     | 8 Chronic fatigue or apathy   |
| 9 Increased headaches, backaches, or ulcer flare-ups            |                               |
| 10 Feeling of dizziness, queasiness, or tightness in my stomach |                               |

## **When More Help is Needed**

### **Warning Signs for Yourself and Friends**

- |                |                     |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Panic Attacks  | Alcohol/Drug Abuse  |
| Failing Grades | Depression          |
| Hopelessness   | Thoughts of Suicide |

### **Campus Resources**

- The Graduate School      Counseling & Psychiatric Services  
Trusted Peers, Friends, Family, Professors

### **Community Resources**

*Andy Case-Simonson, Ph.D. Licensed Psychologist. Accepting Pearce & Pearce Insurance in providing graduate-student centered individual and couples counseling in areas not limited to anxiety, depression, relationships, grief/loss and wellness.*