Developing the “Thing You Do”/Academic Identity

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Swimming as a Framework

With a special thanks to Terry Stancin, PhD for this model
Stroking vs. Treading Water vs. Drowning
A Developmental Framework

Just like our patients and children:
- Don’t be in a hurry to grow up
- There is a time and place for everything
Having a “The Thing You Do”

- What is your sound-byte?

- Specific (not just “clinician”) AND flexible
  - Will allow you to take advantage of opportunities
  - Most of us have to pick a stroke but might do the Individual Medley

- May change over your career
  - Careers are only linear in hindsight
  - Katie Ledecky doesn’t want to be known just for age
When it Becomes “The Thing You Do”

- Need evidence that is the thing you do --
  - Have a “product”
  - Evidence of peer review

- Transition occurs to something you DO (rather than WANT to do) when have a product (e.g., enduring materials, evidence of peer review, and quality)
Choosing the “The Thing You Do”

- Be specific and flexible to take advantage of opportunities
- Fits with departmental/division mission
- Opportunities for evidence/product
- Passion
- Skills
- Adequate resources
Types of Evidence

- **Enduring materials**
  - Published
  - Disseminated and have evidence of that
  - Continuous

- **Peer Review**
  - Published in a peer review journal
  - Presented in workshop at national/regional meeting
  - Chapter in a well-established book (e.g., Rudolph’s)
  - National committee membership, leadership
  - Awards

- **Evidence of Quality**
  - Evaluations from students/de-identified patient comments
  - Quality improvement projects
  - Awards

- **Ability to get 12 people to write you letters 😊**
Establishing Independence

- Do need to be seen as independent from your mentor: and don’t have to have evidence of independence the first year.
- Establish a niche within the bigger picture of your mentor
- What is the stage of career of your mentor (s) – what are their worries?
Decision-Making in Creating the “Product”

- **Prioritize.**
  - Don't let things that benefit you alone get pushed to the bottom of the list while you meet other people's needs.
  - Prioritize scholarship – talk/write/present about what you know and do.
  - Sustained efforts are more efficient and valued more highly than flashes of activity.
  - Manage time: 5, 10, 15 minutes add up. Schedule things that take longer than 30 minutes, even if you move them.

- **Advocate for yourself.** Watch how others do that successfully. Don't sit in the corner and just do your work.

- **Don’t put more time into something than you control the outcome.**
When to Say Yes

➤ **Implement the “24 hour rule” but not longer than that.** Don't ever say "yes" until 24 hours have passed. You can use that time to seek advice. But **answer** in 24 hours.

➤ **Six things to consider in those 24 hours.**
  - Does it provide a line on your CV that you need?
  - **Can you make it count twice?** Turn all presentations into papers; have students work on projects that result in papers.
  - Where do you need to be noticed? Regionally, nationally, or internationally
  - Is it a favor for someone who understands pay back?
  - Will it make your boss/mentor/division/institution look good?
  - Can you under-promise and over-deliver?
Saying “No” and Letting Go

➢ Ask: “Is this the best time for me to be doing this?”
  - Don’t be in a hurry to take on administrative roles (e.g., Division Director = Associate Prof)

➢ Make a “no” sound like a “yes”
  - “I don’t think the timing is right for me to do X, but perhaps I can be helpful by doing Y.”
  - Advocate for colleague/junior faculty

➢ And don’t make a No sound like a Yes
Making Time

Stay on a subject – always ask can I make this fit into the thing I do
  – Tie clinical work to “thing you do”
  – Do reviews of journal articles directly related to what you are working on
  – Agree to be on committees that fit the thing you do and have something to offer you

Plan for establishing evidence
  – Need to know where you started to know how your program has grown
  – Have a plan to obtain evaluations
Timely Ambitiousness

- Be willing to be visible and responsible.
- Understand human resources and finance.
- Understand and work with leadership.
  - Don’t always just focus on you
  - Don’t use every meeting to ask for something
  - Use social occasions to be social
  - Be respectful of time
  - Confront issues, not people
Reduce Stress: Allocate Recourses Wisely

- Hire as much help as you can afford
  - Hire help to reduce stress (AMH and the babysitter)
  - Hire help for the things you hate or are not good at
- Consider bartering for some activities
- Use commute time wisely
- Know your biologic rhythms and adjust your schedule
- Non-work activities should fit your schedule and be fun
Know when to Stroke, Tread Water
Avoid Drowning
Find Advocates and Mentors

 Advocate vs Mentor
 - Advocate
   • Individual who promotes, supports your interests
   • Not necessarily relationship based
 - Mentor
   • A more experienced individual who helps & guides your development
   • Relationship based, longitudinal

 Set reasonable expectations for their impact
"I expected more from my mentor than 'Been there, done that.'"
What Collaborators Do I Need In My Sandbox?

- They are making a castle – no outside infrastructure.
- He is making a building – slow going and isolated. Appears to have a lot of tools he is not using.
- Can they collaborate? How will they manage the range of experience?
Pick Colleagues Carefully

➢ Sharks:
  - Treat you poorly – don’t give credit; doesn’t collaborate
  - Not honest; not transparent
  - Don’t follow through – leave you hanging

➢ Key to avoiding the sharks
  - Start relationships slowly
  - Work on small projects together first
  - Test the relationship conversations
Diversity in Relationships

- Diverse teams can enhance creativity
- Be sensitive to “unconscious bias” - social stereotypes that form outside of our conscious awareness
  - Derived from early experiences; putting things together that commonly (but not always) co-exist (e.g., thunder and rain)
- Helps us organize our social worlds efficiently, AND
  - May ignore evidence that contradicts our assumptions (confirmation bias)
  - May give influence of especially memorable events (saliency bias)
  - May weigh 1 piece of information too heavily (anchoring)
Celebrate Your and Others’ Successes

- Keep a “pats on the back” or “yahoo” file
- Keep track of what you have accomplished as you go and celebrate each step of the way
- People won’t know about your successes, if you don’t tell them, but be graceful about it
- Most of the time, opportunities for success are not competitive, everyone can win
- Nominate yourself and others for awards
Developing CV to Provide Evidence of Coherent Career Story

- Imagine person who doesn’t know you reading your CV
- Your CV should provide evidence of:
  - your clinical, educational, research interests and focus
  - your academic accomplishments and contributions
  - your teaching and mentorship
- Use selective annotation to highlight your noteworthy contributions and those of your mentees
- Your CV should show progression of skill acquisition, leadership, responsibility
- Identify accomplishments not included or well presented and consider how to rectify this
Take Home Messages

- Taking charge of your career and personal life will decrease stress and energize you
- It takes a whole team to cover all the strokes and relays – thanks to the ones on my team!
- It is okay to tread at times, but know when to stroke and sprint forward.
Final Thoughts: YOU!

- If you are stroking – where are your vulnerabilities to getting off track?
- If you are treading – set a deadline for when you are going to starting stroking.
- If you are drowning, what will be your life preserver? (e.g., doing less, doing it more efficiently, gaining new skills)