

MBP FACULTY TIP SHEET

Tips compiled by the MBPGSA Mental Health & Wellness Committee. Tips are categorized by common grad school-related stressors that we have found to be prevalent among students in MBP.

Motivation and Stagnation in Research

- 1) Open the conversation: ask your students if they are feeling motivated, and are satisfied with the pace of their project and their productivity.
- 2) Remind your students why their project is important and useful to you, and how it fits into the bigger picture.
- 3) Set deadlines for your students to do specific tasks, draft outlines, etc.
- 4) If you don't already, meet with your students regularly to check in on their progress (this can be in person or even over email).

Career Anxiety

- 1) Ask your students what their plans are after graduating, and discuss how you can help them achieve these goals.
- 2) Provide your students with opportunities to discuss your knowledge of the job market, and how they can best describe their transferable skills on their CV.
- 3) We recommend that the Department purchase a few copies of [“Success After Graduate School - A Guide for Professional Development for Graduate Students in the Biomedical Sciences” by Lee & Reithmeier](#). These can be kept in the MBP admin office for students to “rent” out. Supervisors may also want to have a copy in their offices to share with their students if they are unsure of their options post-graduation.
- 4) Advise the Career Development Association to ensure faculty input is a part of their events.
- 5) If your students have a physics background, emphasize how they are using this knowledge when you discuss their research.
- 6) MBP Admin can work with the Mental Health & Wellness committee to create a department-specific career roadmapping brochure, following the format of the Pilot Grad Maps initiative by the Faculty of Medicine.

Work-Life Balance

- 1) Remind students to measure their productivity in terms of their research output, rather than the hours of work that they put in per week.
- 2) Clarify expectations about how much time students should be spending in the lab/working.
- 3) Plan social activities or outings with your lab group.
- 4) Encourage your students to attend the many events planned by the MBPGSA Social Committee. Many students will not go to events due to guilt felt from not doing lab work.

Supervisor/Coworker Relationships

- 1) Consult the School of Graduate Studies' Graduate Supervision Guidelines:
<http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/Documents/Graduate-Supervision-Guidelines-faculty.pdf>
- 2) Teach your students how to get the most out of supervision meetings - discuss what has worked for you in the past, and negotiate a joint framework.
- 3) Ask more questions. Issues can be complex and layered – dig beneath positions to uncover interests and test assumptions.
- 4) Listen before problem-solving. Setting the stage can take time – build time into key meetings to let stories unfold.
- 5) “Big picture” goal-and-purpose discussions may be more useful than “nuts & bolts” strategizing.
- 6) Have your students summarize conversations and next steps each week to engage them and thus create “buy-in”.
- 7) Be specific about what you can and can't do for the student, and where they can find support outside of the supervisory relationship.
- 8) Your interests matter too! Share responsibility for setting the agenda for conversations.

Pressure to Succeed

- 1) When your students hit a roadblock in their research, remind them that this is a common and necessary part of the process. Relate to them with a personal story of your own roadblocks as a grad student.

Financial Struggles

- 1) Be aware of major scholarship application deadlines and encourage your students to apply for them.
- 2) Specifically for Faculty Executive Committee - continue to push for stipend increases in Faculty of Medicine meetings.
- 3) If you feel comfortable doing so, ask your students if they have a part-time job and, if so, ask if they feel as though they are able to balance it with their research work adequately.

Social Isolation & Loneliness

- 1) If possible, give students a variety of “jobs” related to their research project that allow them to collaborate and work alongside other students.
- 2) Plan lab social activities to facilitate building connections.
- 3) Promote major MBP social events such as Geneva Park and the MBP Olympics.

Lack of Access to Resources

- 1) Inquire with the University about student access to mental health resources that are provided at Sunnybrook or Baycrest.
- 2) Have the MBP Mental Health & Wellness Committee list of resources (on following page) on-hand or available in a shared work area for students.