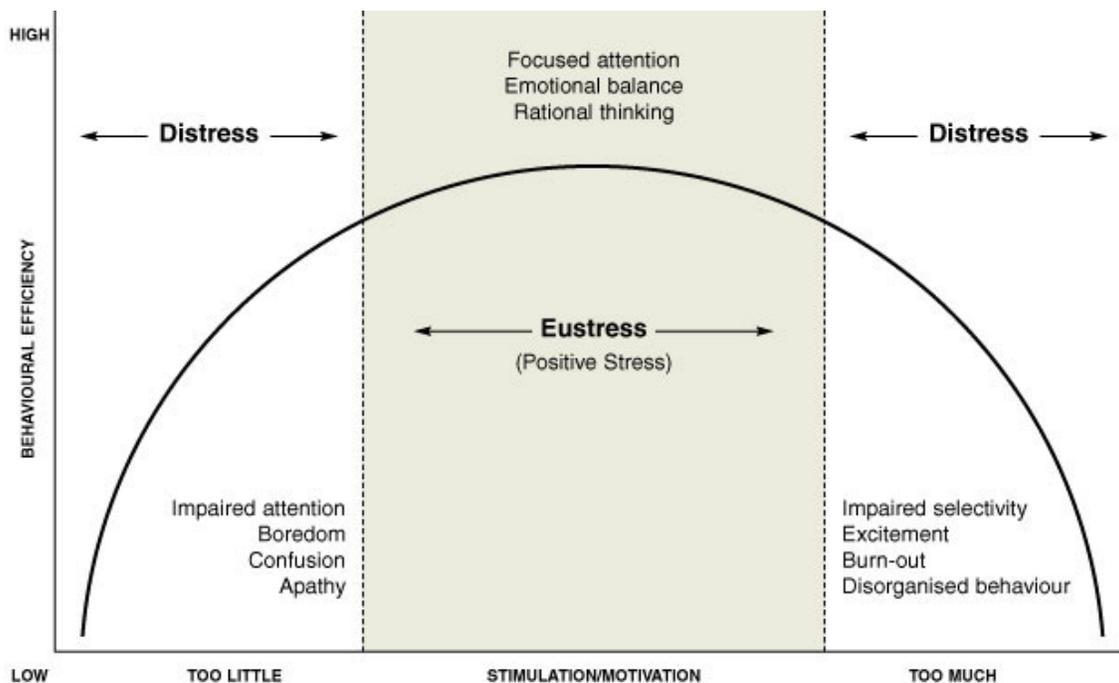


Time Management: Focusing on Meaningful Activity

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Outcomes: By the end of this session, participants will be able to...

- Identify short and long-term goals in the context of their values
- Prioritize tasks that help achieve their goals
- Identify and utilize strategies to maintain productivity and manage stress



Not all stress is bad!

We actually need some stress in our lives to motivate us to work, give us a sense of accomplishment, and feel that we are improving in our daily lives.

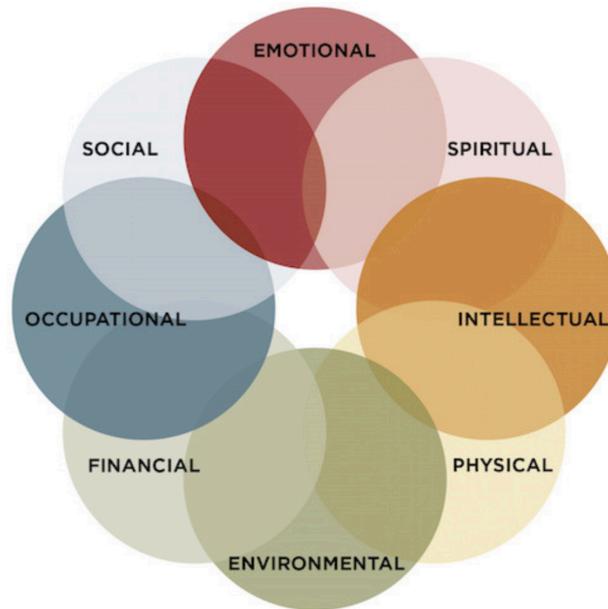
Too little stress causes distress – this may happen when there is plenty of time and you don't complete the few things you need to do. This is why having deadlines and other external pressures can be helpful and motivating.

When people talk about stress, they're often talking about distress (right side of the graph) where you may feel overwhelmed or as though you don't have the time or skills to complete it in time.

The colored middle section is eustress – this is positive stress! This is when you feel your abilities can meet the challenge.

Think about the positive stressors in your life that make you feel motivated and jot down some things that help you manage stress.

How to decide what to do every day - your values and your goals!



1. Emotional - Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships
2. Spiritual - Expanding a sense of purpose and meaning in life
3. Intellectual - Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills
4. Physical - Recognizing the need for physical activity, healthy foods, and sleep
5. Environmental - Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being
6. Financial - Satisfaction with current and future financial situations
7. Occupational - Personal satisfaction and enrichment from one's work
8. Social - Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system

Wellness is more than just your physical health – you need to feel fulfilled in multiple areas to have good well-being.

Your goals should be motivated by your values. *Take a moment and note what goals you might have this term and this year. Consider non-academic goals too!*

How to prioritize the things you need, want, or are expected to do!

It's easy to get carried away with a never-ending to-do list. Try these strategies:

- Create concrete goals so you can definitively say “yes” or “no” if someone asked whether you met your goal
 - “I want to get as much done on this paper as possible” is not concrete enough. Instead, try “I want to spend 30 minutes working on the rough draft.”

- Results are not always guaranteed, so phrase your goals in a way that lets you control whether or not you're successful
 - "Obtain results from this simulation/experiment" might not pan out the way you want it to. Instead, try "I want to test [this specific variation] today."
 - Other words to use: Engage with, start, try, run
- Too many items on your list? Try starting with 3 items (or even just 1) per day. If you insist on more, finish the first 3 first.
- Estimate how much time your tasks will take (realistically, not optimistically). Do you genuinely have enough hours in your day to accomplish what's on the list?
 - Try this the first week of term. You may notice some tasks take less time as you get more comfortable with them.
- Break down your task into smaller pieces so it feels less intimidating to start. You don't have to finish the entire analysis, all of the samples, etc. This includes working in shorter intervals – you don't have to work for the next 4 hours. Pick an interval where you want to do the work, and pair it with a break.
- Take meaningful breaks – more than just a lunch or bathroom break. Check-in using **HALT**: Are you feeling **H**ungry, **A**ngry, **L**onely, or **T**ired? If you said yes to any of these, it's a good time to take a break and address these needs.
- Don't multi-task! Multi-tasking is a misnomer, because we're actually task-switching. While it feels rewarding, you actually get less done. Choose to focus on a task, and disconnect from your work entirely when taking your breaks.

Try ranking your tasks using the following scale. Though it would be ideal to spend all of your time only working on "A" tasks, you probably have other responsibilities to attend to. Instead, try to do an "A" task first, even if just for a short while.

A – These are high-value tasks that have the most impact on your short and long-term goals, and often the ones people procrastinate on.

B – These tasks also have value, but not as much impact on your short and long-term goals. These are tasks that other people may want or expect you to do.

C – These tasks are "nice to do" but don't have impact whether or not you do them.
Example: Making your PowerPoint look nice

D – These tasks should be delegated, reduced, or avoided if possible because they don't provide any positive impact to your goals. Sometimes we can't avoid doing them.

E – These tasks are not meaningful and should be eliminated entirely from your list.

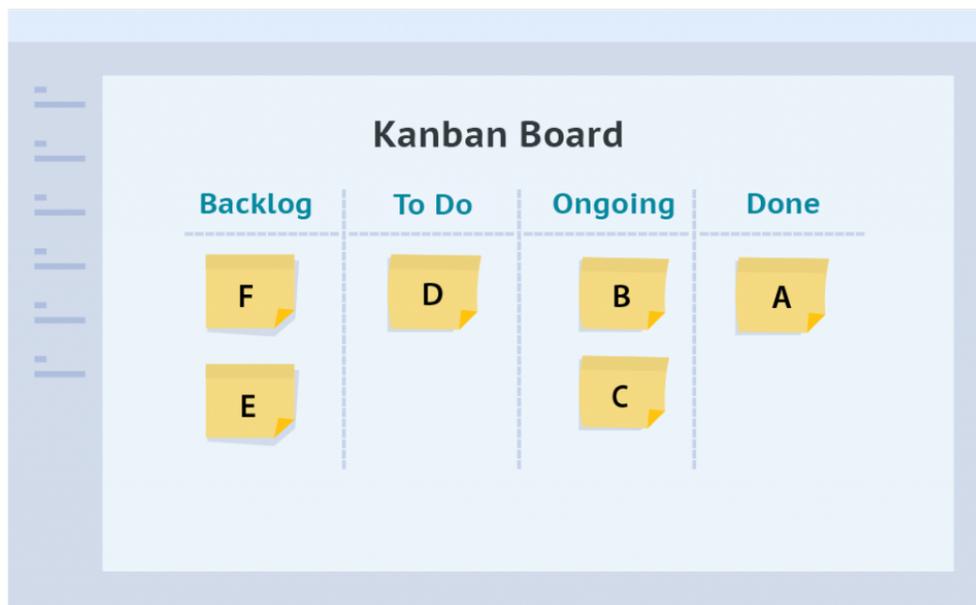
What are some "A" tasks that you really want to engage with most days? What is the next small step of these "A" tasks?

Design your ideal week and track your time

- Be as specific as possible – if you forgot what you did, put that down too.
- How does this compare to your ideal schedule? Are you spending your time in a meaningful way? What changes would you make?
- Can you plan your experiments/simulations/work in a way that helps you make these changes?
- Take advantage of when your focus and energy levels are highest and do the most difficult work then.
- Visit <http://wellness.caltech.edu/services/occupational-therapy/time-management-resources> to download the “Detailed Weekly Calendar” for tracking and organizing your time.

Extra Strategies! – These might come in handy at different points throughout your career.

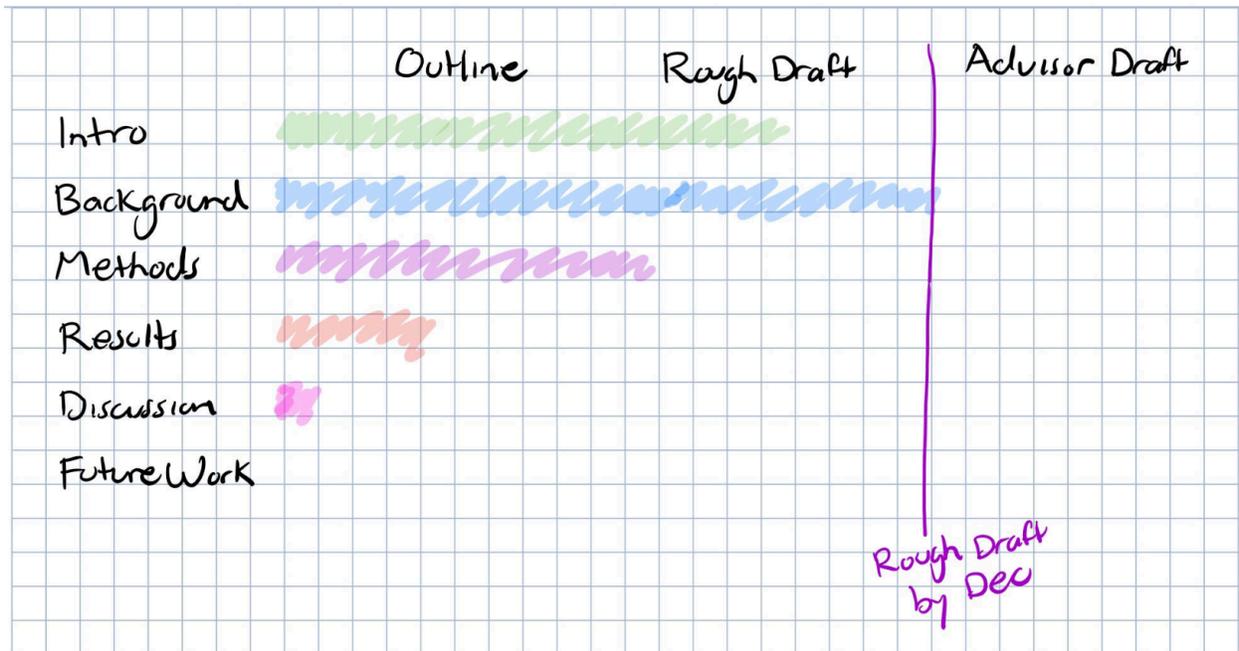
Project Management: Kanban Board



- **Brainstorming/Backlog** – For ideas or tasks you can’t act on yet (waiting for a reply, waiting on a part, application not available yet, etc.)
- **To Do** – For specific tasks you are ready to act on. The most important tasks should be at the top.
- **In Progress/Ongoing** – For tasks you are ready to commit to starting and working on. Try not to put too many in progress at once.
- **Done** – For tasks you have completed. Watch this section grow over time as you build on your achievements.

Writing: Stages of Writing Grid

- Visualize and prioritize your work – Is there a deadline coming up? What stage should all sections be in by that date?
 - Your personal “stages of writing” go along the top row. Example: Outline > Rough Draft > Advisor Ready Draft
 - Left column contains all headers and sub-headers of your paper
- Identify sections where you can or can’t work (waiting for a result, feedback, etc.)
- Frame your goals as continuing to engage in writing (filling in the squares), rather than finishing entire sections in one sitting
- It’s a progress bar, not a checklist!



Need more support?

Occupational therapy services are available to all students

- Individual sessions and consultations for building healthy habits and routines
- Make an appointment online through the Student Health Portal: <https://mycaltechhealth.caltech.edu/> or by calling (626) 395-8331
- Read more at ot.caltech.edu

Popular topics include:

- Time management
- Planning and organization
- Managing stress and anxiety
- Sleep

For more time management recommendations and term calendars, visit:

<http://wellness.caltech.edu/services/occupational-therapy/time-management-resources>