Challenges at Midcareer

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Dealing with challenges at midcareer

- Common challenges
- Strategies for moving research forward
- Strategies for sustaining optimism
Challenges at Midcareer

- Relief – achieved tenure, but
- Higher work expectations in teaching and service
  - More leadership
    - at institution
    - in professional organizations
- Greater demand to mentor others
- More teaching responsibility
Challenges at Midcareer

• Research career challenges
  • Less attention
  • Less funding targeted for midcareer scientists
  • Fewer honors and awards available at midcareer
  • Can reach a plateau with research progress
Challenges At Midcareer

• Interviews with three nursing research deans
  • Relaxing too long after achieving tenure
  • Taking demanding administrative positions
  • Failing to show progress in teaching and service
  • Working on one grant at a time and becoming lost when it does not work out
  • Research stalls, becomes discouraged, and quits doing research
Strategies for Addressing Challenges

- Have clear expectations for achieving promotion
- Seek mentoring
  - Re-evaluate your strengths and weaknesses
  - Create a new individual development plan
- Maximize resources
- Increase research activity
- Fight discouragement
Maximizing Resources

• Supplement your knowledge and research skills
  • At the university
  • Professional Organizations
  • Plan strategic sabbaticals to expand skills
  • Travel to spend time with investigators who are using methods you want to learn
  • Network with potential collaborators
Maximizing Resources

• Volunteer to serve as a grant reviewer
  • Gain insight into the review process
  • Learn how to frame persuasive arguments
  • See examples of responses that were responsive or unresponsive to prior critiques
  • Learn from hearing other critiques
  • Opportunity to network within the scientific community
Increase Research Activity

• Have a mindset of doing more
  • Grant proposals
  • New co-investigators
  • New funding sources
• View learning research skills as being continuous
  • Learn about new areas
  • Develop new skills
  • Identify new collaborators
  • Network with others in a new area
Strategies for Moving Research Forward

- Advocate for resources at your institution
- Ask administration for money to pay for consultation
- Identify speakers to invite to visit your school who can consult with you
- Seek internal funds for pilot work in a new area
- Get external reviews on grant proposals
Seek Supplemental Funding Sources

- Meet with university research office to explore funding opportunities
- Regularly monitor funding sources
  - CTSA
  - School and University
  - State government
  - Professional Organizations
  - Disease focused foundations
  - Private foundations
Fight Discouragement

• Take care of yourself physically
  • Know your pitfalls
  • Set up a strategy that helps you comply

• Take care of yourself emotionally
  • Plan pleasurable events
  • Reward yourself
  • Avoid negative self-talk
  • Manage your anger
4 C’s of Hardiness

Committed
Be **Committed** to what you do

Control
Believe you can **Control** some things

Change
See **Change** as offering opportunity

Connected
Stay **Connected** to your community
Monitor Your Inner Thoughts

- Do not overgeneralize or ruminate
- Do not assume a paranoid explanation
- Confront irrational beliefs
- Be persistent
  - Think of yourself as a long-distance runner
  - When things go wrong, keep moving forward
  - Make one step each day that moves you forward in one area – make it a habit
Talk With Colleagues

- Select the right people to talk to
- When things are not going well,
  - Talk to people who are successful
  - Avoid people who might encourage you to give up on your goals
- Projects always get better with feedback
  - You may never learn to like feedback, but always accept it graciously
  - You can decide if you want to follow it
Reframe Being Too Busy

• Leading a full life means that you always have a full desk
  • View a full desk as a problem of success
  • View having a lot to do as meaning that your work and advice is needed and valued
  • View challenges as part of having a full career
Summary

• When facing midcareer challenges
  • Develop a new plan to build on your strengths and to address weaknesses
  • Maximize resources for increasing your knowledge and skills
  • Increase efforts to seek funding
  • Be proactive in fighting discouragement