

*Adapting to COVID-19: Developing a Work/School/Life  
Balance during Graduate Studies*

July 22, 2020

DR. KAREN FLOOD – UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

LEVONNE ABSHIRE - UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

SAMANTHA MCGEE - UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

## Contents

Opening.....	3
Territorial Acknowledgement.....	3
Hopes for the Session.....	3
What is School/Work-Life Balance? .....	3
What Does it Look/Feel Like to be Out of Balance? .....	4
Connection to Wellbeing .....	4
Literature of Work-Life Balance .....	5
Graduate Student Realities.....	6
Take Inventory of Current Priorities and Commitments .....	7
Choice Point.....	8
Other Strategies.....	10
Q&A.....	12
Resources .....	15
Closing .....	15

## Opening

Karen Flood:

Hello. Welcome. I'm Karen Flood. I am a psychologist with UBC's counseling services, and I'm joined today by Levonne and Samantha, and I will let them introduce themselves.

Levonne Abshire:

Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Levonne Abshire from the University of British Columbia as well. In my role I am the co-director of the health promotion and education unit in vice president students office. So much of my work is directed toward creating educational materials, and resources, and presentations for students, as well as providing support in capacity building for staff and faculty as they support student wellbeing in all learning environments.

Samantha McGee:

Hey everybody. I come to you in many roles today, but I'm a pre-doctoral intern at the counseling center. I am from the US and I'm a mom, and I currently live in British Columbia, and I'm a mom, and a wife, and all that good stuff. So, lots of roles.

## Territorial Acknowledgement

Karen Flood:

Next slide. So, we wanted to acknowledge that although, of course we're not on campus, three of us are from UBC, and the Point Grey Campus is situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people. I'd also just like to acknowledge that you are all joining us today from very many places and want to acknowledge the traditional owners and caretakers of those lands as well. Next slide.

## Hopes for the Session

Karen Flood:

So today our hopes for the session is that we refine your conception of school/work-life balance, and help you to define what it really means to you, to help you take inventory of all your current priorities and commitments, to increase the understanding of what's called the choice point in decision making, to help you reflect on thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that may lead you to turn away from, or to turn towards to a life that you want, in this case a balanced life, and to understand the connection between values, commitments, choice, time, and wellbeing. Next slide.

## What is School/Work-Life Balance?

Karen Flood:

So we also want to first ask you a few questions about what is school/work-life balance for you? I think [inaudible 00:03:10]-

Duane:

Yeah, in order to annotate, you can go up to view options at the top and select annotate, and you can either put in emoticons or words.

Karen Flood:

Yeah, and so we just want to get a sense of what does this mean to you? What is school/work-life balance for you? What would that look like? So paying attention to both. Anything else that comes to mind? You're right on there by going up to the very top. It says view options, and annotate, and scroll down from view options and it says annotate. Try and write somewhere else on the board because they all tend to fall on each other here. So making time for what's important, not neglecting the important things. Time to do it all. Time management, flexibility. Self-care, meeting expectations.

Karen Flood:

So I'm seeing a lot of kind of management, trying to meet expectations, making sure you don't neglect the important things. Now it's all coming. Nice. Forgiveness, self-compassion, options, flexibility, avoiding burnout, staying motivated. Nice. Okay. And maybe we will move to the next slide as well, which would be what does it look or feel like to be out of balance.

## What Does it Look/Feel Like to be Out of Balance?

Karen Flood:

This one I think probably belongs on the other slide, the one that's up there. So guilty, feeling out of balance. Overwhelmed, out of control, yes. Out of sorts, frustrated, tired. Even just reading these, my mood kind of comes down, doesn't it? Not wanting to go on, neglect, unmotivated. Yeah, and so when we're feeling out of balance, these are really good clues for us. They're like little red flags, like, "Do something, do something." Unsure of purpose. Okay. Great you guys. That's fantastic input. I think we can go to the ... Fleeting goals, nice. We will move to the next, the next slide.

## Connection to Wellbeing

Karen Flood:

And so, we know there's good stress. It's called eustress, E-U-stress. And so a moderate amount of stress really helps increase our efficiency, helps our mental sharpness, it kind of gives us that energy. But too much stress, it's just like what you guys were writing, it really feels like you've lost control of your life, and you feel guilty because you feel like you're neglecting maybe different roles and responsibilities, or you might have difficulty concentrating at the task at hand on your work. You might think that you're really not doing a very good job with some of the responsibilities. Like everything's kind of just half done, and you're always tired.

Karen Flood:

But I would like to mention with these things a little bit of a caveat here, that during this pandemic where you've been trying to do your academic responsibilities, often in isolation, often on Zoom like this, and from home, and you may have not been set up to actually work at home before, let alone worrying about your health and the health of the people you love. So the caveat is that some of these

experiences might be happening also because of living through this pandemic. So please be extra kind to yourself and understand that we are in this kind of weird environment. Next slide.

## Literature of Work-Life Balance

Levonne Abshire:

Thanks, Karen. So we thought because we're all members of an academic community that we would take a look at what the literature has to say about work-life balance. In the last couple of years, there's been a lot of attention and interest to this construct of work-life balance, and so as we think about our own individual work-life balance, it's important to have a good understanding of what we mean by that.

Levonne Abshire:

So the literature suggests that work-life balance is the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities. So this particular definition was constructed from six other different constructs that exists out there in the literature, and really there's been a lot of attention paid to work-life balance as it pertains to one's satisfaction with work, as well as one's satisfaction with non-work, in addition to performance in each of those areas and wellbeing.

Levonne Abshire:

So if we move to the next slide, we can take a look specifically at some of the criteria or the qualifications that help us develop a better understanding of what work-life balance means for ourselves. So in thinking about, how do we achieve better work-life balance, it's important for us to define what that means for us in our current context at the current time.

Levonne Abshire:

So one of the ways that work-life balance has been defined is looking at it as multiple roles. So it stems from the recognition that non-work, i.e., whether it's family responsibilities or personal demands that you have, carry over into your working day, and that it's bi-directional. So it could be that work sometimes spills over into your non-work activities. So reflecting on how that happens in your life could be one way in how you define work-life balance.

Levonne Abshire:

Another way is to look at work-life balance as equity across multiple roles. So in thinking of that, do you spend equal time in each of those different non-work and work related activities? And is there equal satisfaction coming from activities related to work, or in this case your graduate student life work? And is there a satisfaction coming from the non-work activities as well?

Levonne Abshire:

Another way to look at it is satisfaction between the multiple roles. So are you achieving satisfaction from all the domains? Are you receiving and giving just as much energy to work as you are to non-work activities? And thinking about the commitment level. I saw that someone mentioned motivation, are you just as motivated with how you perceive your non-work activities as well as you work activities?

Levonne Abshire:

Another way to look at work-life balance is the fulfillment of role salience between multiple roles. So salience is really defined as importance, the importance you attribute to what you do at work or the grad work related activities, whether it's the research, the interviews, the collecting of data, all of those different pieces. Is it important? Is it salient to you?

Levonne Abshire:

And then the relationship between conflict and facilitation. Some of the words that were mentioned in that opening question were guilt, neglect. What is the relationship there? Is there conflict when there's not equity or equality of time and satisfaction amongst those roles?

Levonne Abshire:

And finally, perceived control between roles. So often, sometimes the feelings we have in the inability to achieve work-life balance stems from the fact that we don't feel that we have control, or autonomy, or self-efficacy in deciding which of the activities do we get to participate in and complete in related to non-work and work related activities.

Levonne Abshire:

So, when we begin to feel like we're not in balance and we're out of balance, and we asked that question earlier, some words and emotions that came to mind were frustrated, tired, low motivation. It's important to step back and take inventory of all the commitments and the different priorities that we have, that are both non-work and work related. Next slide, please.

## Graduate Student Realities

Levonne Abshire:

So, I'd love for you to take some time now to think about grad student realities, and in your introduction, I saw that a few of you are working, and you're professionals, as well as working on your graduate studies. So right now it'd be great if you could maybe list some of the grad school commitments that you have, and some of the non-school or non-grad school commitments that you have currently, or expect to have if you're about to begin your grad studies in the fall. So thinking about that and using the whiteboard function, going to options and annotation and choosing text, maybe begin to think about what those commitments are.

Levonne Abshire:

So lots of grad school research, dissertation, readings, coursework, assignments. Some of the non-school: clinical practice, current 50 hours plus per week in your job, your current profession. Yes. The added piece of COVID-19 and what it means to work in that specific context. Being a parent, personal fitness, so important, still under non-grad school. And back to grad school: supervisor laboratory involvement, yes, having another relationship, navigating that relationship with your supervisor or a committee, yes. Time to study, read, 250 hours per grad courses based on past courses, so being engaged in actual coursework. Teaching, yes. If you're teaching or possibly TA'ing as well. A neighborhood watch, extracurricular volunteer activities that you're committed to, hobbies. Yes, dependence, important, your relationships that you currently have. Great. So these are the grad student realities of non-school and school related commitments. Yes, having a pet, also dependent care. Great.

Thank you so much. So we're going to continue to think about this as we explore what work-life balance means. Can you go to the next slide, please? Great.

## Take Inventory of Current Priorities and Commitments

Levonne Abshire:

So a great strategy when we're beginning to feel like we're out of work-life balance, or we don't have that, or we're wanting to achieve it, is to take inventory of current priorities and commitments. And you've done some of that already, and I'm sure you're already reflecting on that from time to time. But here are two ways that you could actually make it a more tangible activity. Please go to the next slide.

Levonne Abshire:

So, one way is to think about the different hats that you wear. So I'm just sharing some of the hats that I wore about a year ago during this time, and some of the hats that I had were mom, that was number one in the middle there. I also was a grad student. I also was a full-time health promotion strategist professional at UBC. And then I did some volunteer work around wellness advocacy for individuals with disabilities. And then a daughter and sister. So sometimes people won't add that in, but I added that in for me personally because I'm a Filipino descent, and making sure that I saw my parents at least once or twice a week was important to them, and it was a responsibility that I had. So making sure that I had time to spend time with them, as well as support them with things that they needed help with, was really important. So one way to help look at those priorities that you have is to think about the different hats that you wear. Next slide.

Levonne Abshire:

And then once you've done that, think about the different activities that are involved with each of those hats. I'm quite tangible. I like post-it notes. So the next step in this activity would then be to list down all of the different activities related to each of these different hats that you wear. And potentially listing down the number of hours related to each, or how you're involved in each of those different activities. Next slide. Thank you.

Levonne Abshire:

There's also a handout, if you prefer just to write and type things in, that we can also share. So thinking about the different hats that you wear as well as the different activities and the amount of time. And then maybe even thinking about salience and importance, and rating that, starting which of those is most important to you, which of those activities bring you satisfaction, perhaps even joy. And then thinking back to that definition that we shared earlier around compatibility with one's life's current priorities, as well as the ability for each of those activities to promote growth.

Levonne Abshire:

So some of the questions after you've completed this activity to think about are, what are your current work-life priorities? And those priorities could be completing grad school. That's a priority. Another priority could be being a supportive and loving, available partner or parent. Maybe it's a financial goal of purchasing a home, so that might require you to work a bit more. It could be training for a marathon. Someone had listed personal fitness as something that was important. So, some of the questions to think about and reflect upon when you take inventory of your current commitments and priorities. And

then thinking about do each of these provide growth, do they lead to my bigger goals, and are they in alignment with my values? And I'm going to stop there and pass it over to Karen.

Karen Flood:

Sorry. I muted myself. So, as LeVonne was asking questions, after you've looked at all your priorities, think about, and I can just ask you to reflect quietly now, what takes up your time? And what helps you decide how you're spending your time? Is it coming from within? Is it distractions, unable to focus? Is it other people that are deciding how you spend your time, your sense of responsibility to them? And what needs to change? So if you're feeling all those experiences of stress, and fatigue, and burnout, what needs to change is something to ask yourself. Next slide, please.

## Choice Point

Karen Flood:

And so I wanted to share with you the choice point. The choice point is an idea that comes from acceptance and commitment therapy, and it's a place where we make decisions. And I thought it fit really well in terms of helping us decide how we want to spend our time. And with the choice point, we can turn away from the person we want to be, from the life we want to live, or we can turn towards that life or that person that we want to be.

Karen Flood:

And when we get to a choice, we do have certain hooks, which can be the feelings, thoughts, behaviors, memories, that kind of hook into us and hold us back, and usually we tend to turn away from who we want to be or the life we want to lead because of those hooks. Because as we turn away, it's an avoidance behavior and we feel some relief. So if I have anxiety as one of my hooks, and I avoid something, that'll reduce the anxiety momentarily.

Karen Flood:

However, we also have helpers, and these might be our values or strengths and strategies, and these are things that can help us turn towards who we want to be or the life we want to live, the choices we want to make. It's usually harder to turn towards what we want because we have to move through or deal with and face the hooks that are holding us back, like the anxiety, for example. So I'm going to give you a bit of a walk through, an example.

Karen Flood:

So say as a grad student, you have a choice, a challenging kind of moment in your mind, to either keep working through the evening, so keeping on your student hat through the evening, or to spend the evening with family and friends socializing, which would be putting on kind of your family and friend role hat. In this case, the interesting thing is you value both. You value both the academic work and the socializing part of your life. And so sometimes your choices between two things that you value a great deal. But if you remember you're thinking about, right now you're trying to make the choice out of getting a better balance in your life, it's valuable to pause. And so on one side of the slide it has the acronym STOP.

Karen Flood:

So you first want to just slow down, breathe, kind of ground yourself, maybe put your feet on the floor, stretch a little bit, and really take note. What are you thinking and feeling? Really notice what you're doing, notice what's around you. But really what are you thinking and feeling about these two choices? Are you getting hooked into something?

Karen Flood:

So in this case, when you're noticing what you're feeling and thinking, what you're doing, you might want to acknowledge that you've already put in a good chunk of time today working on your academic responsibilities. You want to remind yourself that seeing families and friends will really help you meet your needs to feel more balanced, maybe reduce some of that stress if you feel really good around them. Remind yourself your desire for balance, for feelings of greater wellbeing. Especially now during the pandemic, it's so important that we take care of ourselves in this way.

Karen Flood:

And then the O is to open up, just make space for all these thoughts and feelings without any judgment, about them without attaching to them, making them real or anything. They're just thoughts, they're just feelings, let them kind of flow through you. So it's a bit like mindfulness here. And when you choose, know why you're choosing it and act based on your value. Try not to act based on the hooks.

Karen Flood:

So, to watch out for the hooks, keep in mind that they're the difficult, unhelpful thoughts, feelings, sensations. So for an example, in this case, a hook might be feeling guilty. Because sometimes as a grad student, you have that psychological backpack always on your back, like the work is never done. And you don't want to take it off for a minute, and in fact it's really hard to do it, because of guilt. There might also be having thoughts that maybe you haven't done enough for the day, because you keep raising your expectation bar as you go through your day. Maybe you tell yourself that you don't deserve to hang out with your friends or your family.

Karen Flood:

So it's likely those hooks are going to lead you to turn away from the desire to socialize, the choice that offers balance, and keep you working late into the night. Which then you might lead to feelings of resentment and everything that you're not being really who you want to be or the life you want to have. And so your life starts to feel really academic heavy.

Karen Flood:

So if you instead seek out the helpers on this side of the little V, the helpers are going to help you be who you want to be and live the life you want. Strengths and skills might be things like time management. So maybe having allotted of a few hours this evening to actually socialize and recalling the knowledge that actually some social hours socializing has a really good impact on your mood. Or you might want to use some self-talk, which is a strategy. Showing self-compassion for yourself. Such as, "I worked really hard today. I have accomplished enough." So you kind of cut into that expectation bar that keeps rising. It's like, "Wait a minute. I've actually done enough today." fighting that perfectionism. And values are really what you perceive as important and worthwhile. And in this case, living that balanced life.

Karen Flood:

Just a reminder, knowing that choosing towards the life you want is often the harder choice because you have to work through the guilt. You have to work through those negative self statements. Whereas if you choose away, you're basically avoiding working through those things, which provides relief in the short term, but eventually you will feel that resentment, dissatisfaction with yourself longer term.

Karen Flood:

So just as I wrap up this little section, some questions to reflect on might be for you right now just, you don't have to share this at all, just to think about a time when you've had to make a choice to spend your time, and it probably happens every day, between varied commitments, or varied values. So the varied hats that you wear if you will. Do you know what the hooks were within that choice, and did you get hooked and have to turn away from the life you want? Or were you able to turn towards the life you want? I think next slide. Levonne is putting it in the chat. The reflection question.

## Other Strategies

Levonne Abshire:

Great. Thank you, Karen. So a lot of thinking about whether or not you have work-life balance or wanting to achieve it, is to do a lot of reflection to think about what are those current hats that you wear, what are the different activities that are work and non-work related, and how do you make decisions based on satisfaction, saliency, equity of time, as well as your own values?

Levonne Abshire:

More specifically, if you're thinking about time management, and time management is another strategy to help one achieve work-life balance, especially if you are struggling or find it challenging to manage your time and provide time to each of the different activities. So some of the suggestions that we often provide to students is to take a look at different time management tools. So examples could be calendars and planners that you already use, whether it's an Outlook calendar, a to-do list, various project management tools. There are lots of apps available such as Kanban, and Monday, and Workflow. So looking at those different ways to manage some of the projects that you're involved in, which you might already have access to and are using.

Levonne Abshire:

Chunking larger tasks into smaller parts and portions, and there are various apps that can assist for that. The Pomodoro Technique is also another time management strategy to help chunk out your time or chunk out larger tasks. And that's with a method of working for a specific amount of time and then taking a break, and then working again for that set specific amount of time, and creating intervals of that for a certain set of maybe four to eight different rounds.

Levonne Abshire:

Another strategy would be to maintain your support network. There is lots of research and literature on the connection between social wellbeing or social connection and belonging to one's wellbeing. So it's really important to think about that support network that you have and including them in what you're learning and the research that you're doing, as well as the work that you have. Really important to have that network around you to support you during this.

Levonne Abshire:

To make a goal outside of work and school. So whether it's personal fitness, like someone had mentioned, or maybe it's volunteering, maybe it's writing, writing your first novel. So thinking of a goal to help provide feelings of competence and confidence that you might not always be getting from the work that you're doing at work or in grad school, or maybe even from some of the relationships that you have in family. So thinking about other ways or places where you can find confidence and feelings of competence.

Levonne Abshire:

Creating physical boundaries is also essential. Prior to COVID-19, if you were going into the office or you were going into a lab, it might have been a bit more easier to create some physical concrete boundaries, i.e., leaving the actual office or space. When we're working remotely, thinking about tangible ways that are concrete to create that boundary. So it could be if you have the ability to have an office space that is just dedicated to your grad studies as well as work, and then leaving that space just for the work and then moving to a different place in your home to do other non-work or non-grad school related activities is a real privilege to be able to have that. Another idea would be able to create routines. So changing your clothes before you begin your research, or before you begin work could be another way that is more tangible and concrete to create some boundaries, and maybe changing clothes after your remote working or researcher learning.

Levonne Abshire:

Another could be physically turning off your laptop. That's a strategy that I've tried to employ as of late. So rather than just putting my laptop to sleep, or not shutting it down completely, actually shutting it down at the end of the work day to create some separation. Another strategy would be to pause and celebrate small successes. I think it's important, especially now that we do that and we take that time to celebrate even the smallest pieces, whether it's a goal of attending a webinar like this, or it's writing for one hour a day, or doing research for one hour a day, celebrating those small successes and sharing those with others in your support network is also important.

Levonne Abshire:

And of course, asking for help, being self-aware of when the coping strategies that we've leaned on aren't working anymore to support our mental health and wellbeing, and knowing what resources are available to then seek out help. So we're happy to share some of those resources that are available BC wide later on in the presentation towards the end. But also would like to hear from you now around other strategies that have been helpful during your graduate studies while you seek work-life balance between grad student life, as well as either working full-time or what your personal life non-work activities are. So this would be a great opportunity to maybe share some other strategies that work either in the chat, which can then lead into questions that you might have about some of the content and information that we have shared.

## Q&A

Duane:

Okay. You're open for questions. You can either type questions in the chat area or unmute your mic and ask them. There was one question asked in advance about whether people are using special tools that assist them during this time, online tools or other tools?

Levonne Abshire:

I can share a specific tool that our team has been using. It's a project management tool. I think it's been a helpful tool when working with other team members to complete a project. And so that's been Kanban. It's a project management tool that works on a cloud system so that everyone has access to see where different parts of various projects are occurring, where people can update the status of different activities that they have. It's really been a great project management tool, time management tool, for working with teams collaboratively on projects.

Samantha McGee:

This might be a good time for me to share as a grad student and a mom juggling doing my internship this year at UBC, working 40 hours, and being a mom, and a wife, and moving away from family, there's just a lot of changes and stuff that had to happen. So, this was definitely a good year to highlight all the things you're talking about: making some choices, reprioritizing things often as a mom. So we're used to putting ourselves last, and students, because I just keep working and achieving this goal.

Samantha McGee:

So I love the conversation about goals and values because I myself have definitely gotten caught up in just being goal oriented. And instead of doing those in a way that actually aligns with being kind or compassionate, which is my values, but I wasn't really doing that for myself. I can do it for other people, but I wasn't giving that to myself.

Samantha McGee:

So, I like simple things. Phrases are really powerful for me. So as far as like tools, I read a book that was called Try Softer and it was great, but that phrase alone, when I remind myself, like, "Try softer," it reminds me that I have permission to be kind and pause. So sometimes I just have to tell myself, like, "I don't have to have it all figured out. I don't have to do everything. I just have to do the next thing." So trying doesn't mean I'm not doing something, but I'm trying softer in a way that's more kind and compassionate. So I just feel like certain things like that has been helpful.

Samantha McGee:

I was looking on my wall, I'm a visual person too. So I wrote a wheel of life where I'm looking at all the different areas, and kind of what do I want to see? And I asked this question, "Who am I showing up in those places? Am I showing up depleted or the way that I want?" So it's not really as much as the thing, but who am I being when I am in those spaces?

Samantha McGee:

And then doing the real life showed me for me spirituality is important, so I put a center. For me, my relationship with God is important. So that's at the center and then I want to see that flow into other

areas, but it gave me an idea about what's missing. Where am I not getting fulfilled? And sometimes that is a good visual to realize where you should put your energy a little bit more so that all the other areas feel a little bit more complete. So I think that's good. Yeah. Some are very visual. I'm looking, I have visual stuff all over my wall to remind me.

Samantha McGee:

And then just pause. I was talking to a client today and it reminded me that sometimes we don't even give ourselves permission to breathe. It's simple. Like breathing, and we could teach you there's a million different breathing exercises. But just permission to pause and breathe. So I downloaded an app called Pause that allows me to pause, and you can pick one minute, or three minutes, or five minutes. And even that putting throughout the day has been helpful. So, those are some of my thoughts about tools that have worked.

Karen Flood:

I'm glad, Samantha, you brought up the life balance wheel. I was thinking of that as well. And all it is making a pie, and it's very similar to the hats. And it's thinking about different aspects of your life. So work, exercise, family, study, hobbies, and it's about looking at how big are each of the pieces of the pie and are they big enough? Are they what you want? So that's kind of a self-assessment tool. And I do notice that there is a question.

Levonne Abshire:

Yeah. A common question.

Duane:

Gwen, would you like to ask your question? Yeah. Gwen would prefer us to read it. So Gwen stated one of the concerns as a grad student for the fall term is the lack of physical separation between home office for my job and using the same office for coursework. In the past, all my grad school research was done either at the public library, school library, et cetera, and class sessions was in person. She won't have the option for libraries in the fall and lives in a small condo. Are there ideas of how to build that?

Karen Flood:

So, I'm seeing it's really the work, the school, and the life is all in one space. What comes to mind first is that when you are doing something, whether it's your work or your school, you have that out. But at the end of that time that you're working on that, if you can pack that up and put it away. And so when you get to the end of the day and you're into your evening, and it's not work or school, for example, you still have your kitchen table, or you still have your desk free so that you're not always looking at it. That would be kind of one option.

Karen Flood:

And again, like Levonne was saying earlier, if you're using the same laptop for both work and for school, to try shutting it down before you move to the next task, and maybe do a little mini commute, like a walk around the block, just to clear your hand and come back and then set up for the next thing. Levonne, do you have anything else to add?

Levonne Abshire:

Yeah. I just wonder, for your job, Gwen, or maybe even for the research, does everything have to be done on a table and a laptop? Like if there are meetings, could it be done on the phone walking? So thinking of whether or not the work has to occur on a laptop on a table and are there other ways to complete the work and still be productive and have the same outcomes?

Levonne Abshire:

I do love that idea of a mini commute. For those of you who might be parents, some of your students or children might have been online learning as well. And so something that I did was we had mini commutes. My son is small enough that I can still carry him. So we would do a mini little piggyback ride around the house, and then I would drop him off at his next Zoom call. So that actual physical activity of a mini commute was helpful in transitioning and creating some separation between non-work and work, but in your case, Gwen, school and work.

Samantha McGee:

I think the only other thing I was thinking of is environment is so important. And so I was thinking, even if it's something small, you could change ... Like I have flowers, they smell really good to me. You could change your environment maybe between those tasks, just to kind of set a different mood or ... Like I use essential oils, maybe there are certain smells that you could use at different points. It could be something small you could just change about your environment, what you're looking at, the way you're facing, just simple things that I think sometimes can make a difference. So I would suggest something like that, or even music or something, just to put you in a different kind of space where you're at. But we can cultivate that internally too by just shifting some things around us: what we're looking at, what we're smelling, what we're seeing, those senses. So, that's what I was going to add.

Karen Flood:

And again, I'll just add that if anyone watching has suggestions, solutions, ideas, feel free to write those in the chat and share your strategies.

Levonne Abshire:

Yes. That's great, Gwen. I just shared another thing that I've tried, is the changing of clothes. So for work something a bit more business casual, and then when it's just responding to emails or having to write a report, I too am in my PJs. So, that's great.

Duane:

Okay. Any more questions?

Levonne Abshire:

That's a great idea, Erica, changing out the scent. The essential oil, one specifically for work and one for schoolwork. It's a great idea. And yes, Angela, how wonderful it is that you have a work designated laptop and one for schoolwork.

Duane:

Okay. I'll give one more opportunity to ask a question, otherwise we'll close.

Karen Flood:

Also, if there's any questions about the strategy of thinking about the hats you wear, or making decisions based on the choice point, and stopping and pausing and looking at your hooks and helpers, if there's any questions about those, we're happy to talk about those as well.

Duane:

Okay. Next slide.

## Resources

Levonne Abshire:

Great. So we just wanted to share some resources that are available to you as students in BC. Your own institution should have resources. I saw that there's someone from SFU as well as University of Victoria. So they would have student health and wellbeing resources available to you. There's also Here2Talk, which is a provincial resource for post-secondary students in BC, and can be accessed anywhere in the world via their 1-88 number or their 604 number. So just here2talk.ca can provide you with health and wellbeing resources.

Levonne Abshire:

Also thinking about the health authorities in which you're situated in. For those of you who are working, thinking about your own workplace wellbeing, benefits, and resources, whether that's through EFAP or other providers. HealthLinkBC, and Here to Help as well as this crisis center or always good resources that are available. So once again, thinking about your own coping strategies, and if those aren't working anymore based on the current context that you're in and the time that you're in, to reach out for help. Karen or Samantha, is there anything else that you'd like to add?

Samantha McGee:

Yeah, I did. I was going to say one more thing about ACT, if anybody's interested, thehappinesstrap.com has some great free resources and videos about ACT. Russ Harris is one facilitator that does a great job, and he's funny, and I like his accent. So, he really put some of these things in a simple way to understand. So I would recommend that website too.

Karen Flood:

I'll just pipe up that ACT is the acronym for acceptance and commitment therapy, where the choice point comes from. Yeah.

## Closing

Duane:

Okay. Well, on behalf of BCcampus, I'd like to acknowledge our appreciation to Karen, Levonne, and Sam for agreeing to facilitate this session. I'd also like to thank you for participating. You can access this recording or other recordings of BCcampus webinars in the link provided on this slide. There are more webinars for graduate students that'll be coming up in the fall, and for their supervisors as well. You can also visit the BCcampus website to get more information about BCcampus or to subscribe to the newsletter and be kept up to date on upcoming webinars. Thanks again for coming to the webinar. Be well and good luck in your studies. Thank you.