

Supporting Department Chairs: Self Care During Unprecedented Times

2021-22 ADVANCE Leadership Workshop
Dec. 1, 2021
2:30 – 4:00 pm



NOTE TO SELF:

I am doing the best I can
with what I have in this
moment, and that's
all I can expect from
anyone, including me.

tinybuddha.com



Agenda

2:30 – 2:40 Welcome and Introductions

- > Your microphone is set on mute
- > Slides: <https://tinyurl.com/Fall21LW-Slides>
(view only, shared version coming post workshop)

2:40 – 3:30 Speaker presentations and Q&A

- > Dr. Jane Simoni, Professor & Director of Clinical Training in the Department of Psychology
- > Dr. Julie Kientz, Professor and Chair of Human Centered Design & Engineering
- > Q&A: raise hand feature (under reaction menu in Zoom)

3:30 – 4:00 Breakout Rooms

Evaluation: <https://tinyurl.com/Fall21LW-Eval>

Self-Care for Academic Leaders in the Midst of a Pandemic

Jane M. Simoni, Ph.D.
Professor & Director of Clinical Training
UW Department of Psychology

Workshop for the ADANCE program, Dec, 2021.

Photo credit: Dennis Wise/U. of Washington. Acknowledgements to Kim Eckart of UW NEWS and UW Psych Dept Grad Students

The Context

Syndemics: Covid epidemic, BLM, Anti-Asian assaults, climate change, political divisions, economic uncertainties

Increasing rates of substance use and mental health distress

Signs of Distress

- **Trouble concentrating or prioritizing**
- **Lacking motivation, procrastinating**
- **Doubting the meaning and impact of our work**
- **Loss of pleasure in doing what we once enjoyed**
- **Absenteeism, AWOL**
- **Stress, distress, burn out, anxiety, sadness**
- **Feeling simply numb**

Caveat

- If you or someone you know are truly struggling – unable to function at home or work, drastic changes in sleep or weight or substance use, or thoughts of hurting yourself – you should reach out to others and perhaps seek professional help.
- Stigma around substance use and mental health problems can be a barrier to addressing these issues and getting help.
- If you can face these challenges head-on and get help early, you'll be better off in the long run.

The Crisis Connections phone line (866-427-4747) and Crisis Text Line (text HEAL to 741741) are available to the UW community.

Step #1: Recognize and Validate Your Emotions

- **Acknowledge how you're feeling now:**
 - Overwhelmed, sad, disappointed, grieving, hopeless, anxious, fearful?
 - Frustrated and disappointed over the seemingly endless cycles of the pandemic?
 - Tired of constant crisis management?
 - *NY Times*: “languishing”?
- **REMEMBER: All emotions are understandable, and you're not alone in your pain.**

Positive Coping Strategy: Cultivate Appreciation

- Identify three good things about each day and what you appreciate about them. These should be very specific events or experiences.
- Write them down. Explain why they went well, how they made you feel, what caused them to go well.
- Come up with three new things each day, and focus your attention on them, rather than ruminating on the things that bother you.

<https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/three-good-things>

Fundamentals of Good Mental Health (1)

- Practice good “sleep hygiene”: Get the right amount of sleep (7-10 hours) and go to bed and rise at the same times each day
- Stay hydrated and eat enough healthful foods each day. Your nutrition can affect your mood.
- Go outside. Connect with nature and remind yourself that there’s more to life than a computer screen.
- Stay active. Movement boosts energy and mood.



Fundamentals of Good Mental Health (2)

- Be mindful of changes in your substance use.
 - Alcohol and other substance use rose during the pandemic, as people started consuming earlier in the day, and more often.
 - Relying on substances can interfere with successfully coping with stress.
 - Monitor what you're doing and cut back as needed, seeking help if necessary.
- Connect with other people. In-person is best.

Thank you

The Crisis Connections phone line (866-427-4747) and Crisis Text Line (text HEAL to 741741) are available to the UW community.

Jane Simoni, jsimoni@uw.edu

How I Learned to Stop Worrying and (kinda) Love the Chair Life

Julie Kientz

Professor & Chair, Human Centered Design & Engineering

Context

I am a reluctant department chair!

Started as Interim Chair in September 2019,
became full Chair in April 2020

I chair a medium-sized interdisciplinary
department (25 full time faculty, 10 staff) in the
College of Engineering with 160 BS students,
240 MS students, and 70 PhD students

I have 2 kids aged 9 and 6



This Job is HARD

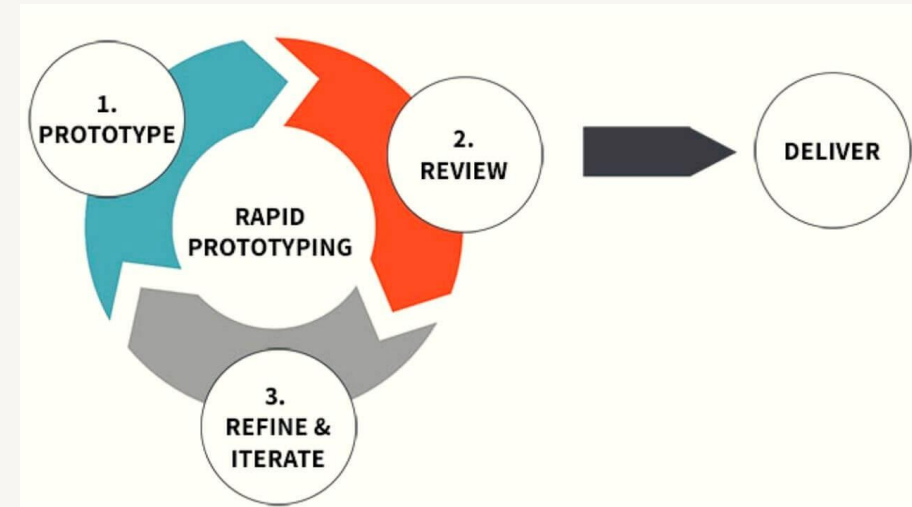


The daydreams of cat herders

- Herding cats (er, managing faculty)
- Dealing with student complaints
- Managing limited financial resources
- Decision making under uncertainty
- “All of the responsibility, none of the authority”
- Rapidly changing contexts
- Transitioning from a peer to a “boss” with people you’ve worked with for years
- Managing both up and down

What Helps Me Manage the Load?

- Having two Associate Chairs I trust implicitly and that complement my skills
- Adopting a spirit of prototyping and iteration within the department reduces the pressure to get things right the first time around
 - Aiming for “80% good” rather than perfection
- Developing policies and procedures for everything I can -
 - So much work load comes from uncertainty about who is doing what in what way
 - Every policy also comes with “values” or “guiding principles” that we agree on before implementing in specific cases



Building an Amazing Support System

My support system

- Group of other chairs I can vent with over margaritas and nachos
- My ATC who makes sure I don't drop (too many) balls and knows the faculty code inside and out
- A supportive dean and college HR manager
- My spouse who is also an academic and equal parent
- Kids that keep me accountable to a personal life and are proud of their mom
- Friends who are NOT academics
- A nanny that picks up our kids after school and makes everyone dinner M-F and also runs personal errands for us
- My cat and dog
- Academic Mamas Facebook Group

My cat listening to my rants:



Work Things I DON'T do...

- Answer every email
- Send emails on evenings or weekends
 - I do occasionally work on email in the evening or weekends but I schedule send for the next morning/Monday
- Fight every battle
- Write every policy from scratch
 - Most every policy you can think of likely has already been written and you can remix
- Teach every quarter
 - I mostly teach seminar classes
- Micromanage staff



H/T Eric Klavins

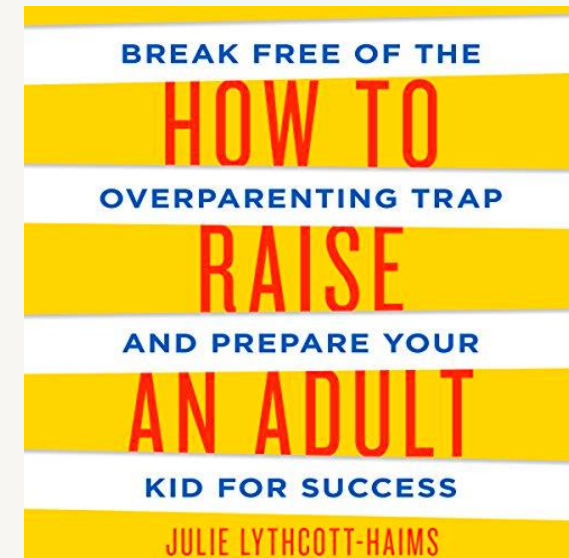
Things I Prioritize Over Work

- Time with my family on weekends and evenings
- Going to the gym
 - 3-4 times per week in the mornings
- I make a yearly strategic plan for my personal goals
 - This year's goals:
 - (Re-)Learning Piano with SimplyPiano app
 - Hike 20 hikes
 - Read 12 non-work books
- Having regular social activities with structure and accountability
 - Bi-weekly D&D games, Book Clubs



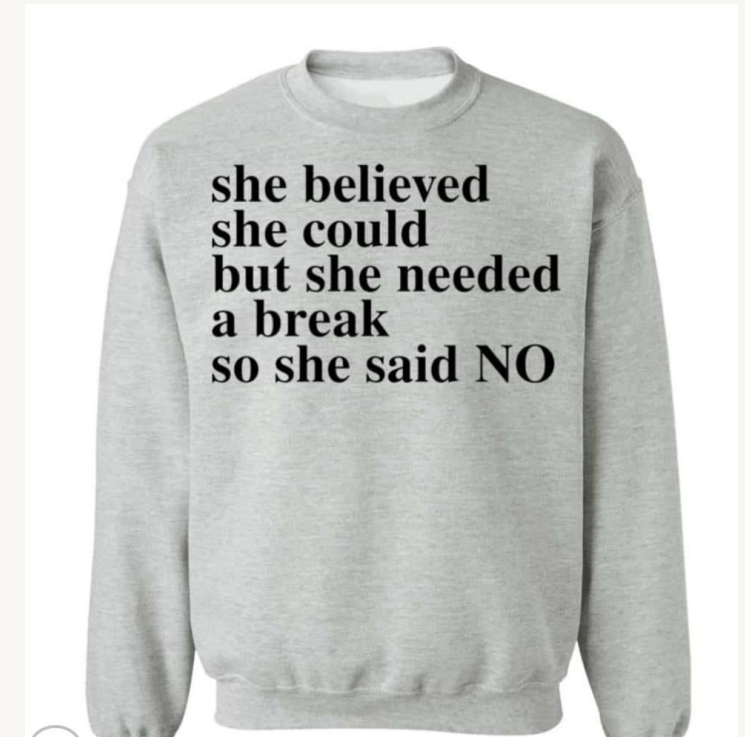
Personal Things I DON'T Do...

- Cook every meal
- Pack my kids' lunches (they do it themselves using a bento box)
- Shuttle my kids to every activity
 - Max 2 at a time, and they do the same ones and/or ones at their school whenever possible
- Go to every birthday party or playdate invitation
- Play with my kids every waking hour or solve all their problems
 - "Good enough" parenting is actually ideal
- Meditation



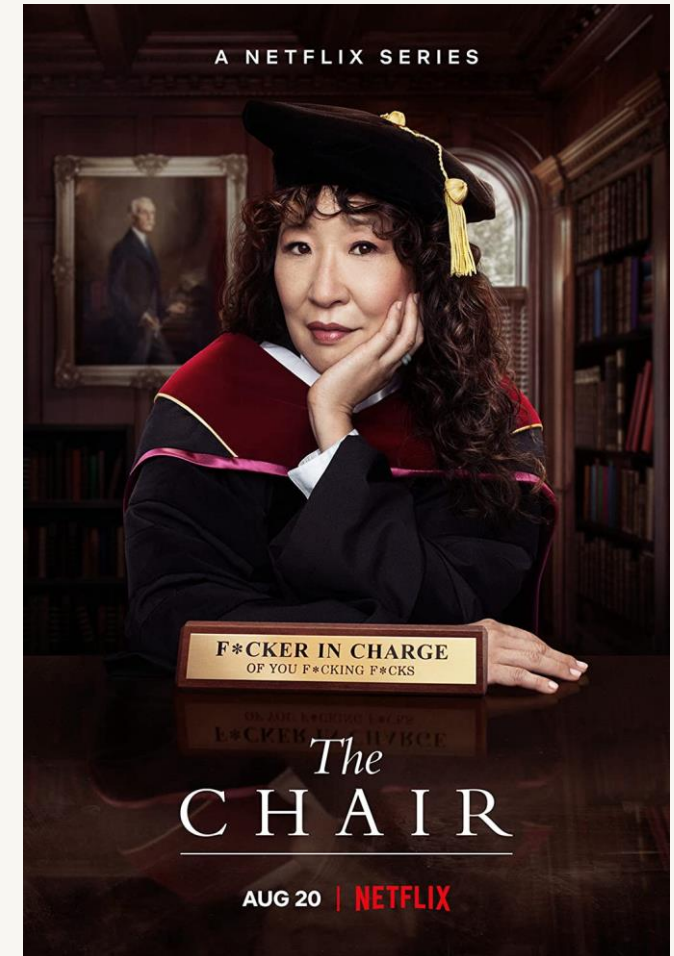
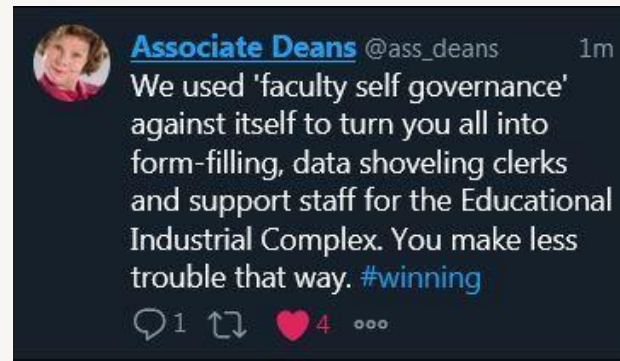
Mantras

- There are very few true academic “emergencies”
- There’s always next year!
- Sometimes the chair just needs to be someone’s punching bag
 - (thank you Jim P.!)
- When asked to do things: If the answer isn’t “hell yes!” it should probably be “no”
 - My framework for saying yes - should be at least 2 of 3
 - 1. Will I learn something?
 - 2. Will I have fun doing it?
 - 3. Am I uniquely skilled to do it?
- Give the people in your life a framework in which to do the things you need them to do while also allowing them to be creative



Finding Humor in What We Do

- Watch “The Chair” on Netflix
- Frequent emojis used with other chairs on Slack
🤖 😬 🙄 🤔
- Follow accounts and websites that poke fun at academia
 - @ass_deans, @academicssay, McSweeney’s Internet Tendency

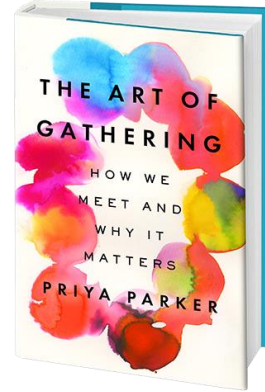


Breakout Rooms

Next up: Breakout Time

- > Engage with some concepts shared by Jane
- > Have a structured format
- > Will be forming small breakout groups of 3
- > If you are unable to stay for at least 15 minutes, you may want to exit now to minimize disruption to the small groups or stay in the large room for a little connecting time with others before you go.
 - Evaluation Feedback: <https://tinyurl.com/Fall21LW-Eval>





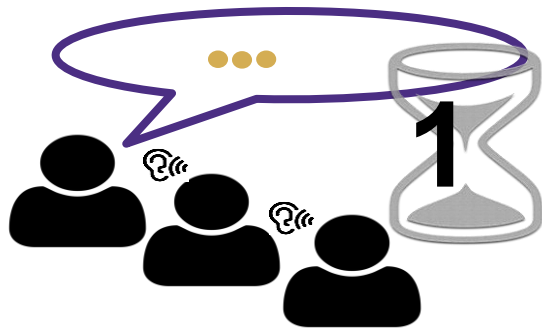
Break Out Room Details

- > **Groups of 3**
- > **Structured Format: 3P, 3M, 3Q**
- > **Reflection: Share ideas via Google Doc**
 - Must be logged into Google Drive with your UWNetID
- > **Open Discussion**

- > **Wrap up:**
 - No return to the large group – leave whenever ready
 - Complete evaluation form and share future workshop topic ideas (<https://tinyurl.com/Fall21LW-Eval>)



3 people, 3 minutes, 3 questions



Counterspace Consulting

- > 3 rounds - each round takes 3 minutes (1 min/person/round)
- > Different person starts each round
- > Each person has one full minute to respond - others remain silent and just listen
- > One person serves as timekeeper
- > After 3 rounds are completed, share insights via Google Doc

<https://tinyurl.com/ADVW3M3P3Q>

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3 Rounds: 3 questions

- > Round 1: What is currently working for me and helping with my self-care?
- > Round 2: What the hardest thing about being a chair (or your position) right now?
- > Round 3: What is something that has been rewarding as a chair (or your position)?

- > At the end, visit Google doc to share insights, themes, thoughts, etc. at <https://tinyurl.com/ADVLRW3M3P3Q> (log in with UWNetID)



Reminder: Breakout activity

- > 3P, 3M, 3Q
 - Instructions and questions at <https://tinyurl.com/ADVW3M3P3Q>
- > Reflection: Share via Google Doc
 - <https://tinyurl.com/ADVW3M3P3Q>
 - Must be logged into Google Drive with your UWNID
- > Open Discussion
- > Wrap up:
 - No return to the large group – leave whenever ready
 - Complete evaluation form and share ideas for workshop topics (<https://tinyurl.com/Fall21LW-Eval>)

