Getting Through Your Masters Project
While Maintaining Your Sanity

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Making It To Graduation

- Completing your project requires persistence and hard work.
- You will be faced with a major shift in instruction:
  - From instructor as manager to self as manager.
  - From group support to self support.
  - From Learning community to Learning individual.
Planning is the Key!

- Set the Timeline, with Specific Goals and Objectives for Each Time Period
- Plan the various stages and activities of the project.
  - This has been partially done for you by your Masters advisor, however it is your responsibility to work within that framework:
    - Meet all deadlines
    - Do high-quality work
Time Management is critical!

- A useful tip is to work backwards from the end goal, a completed project, identifying all the things that need to be put in place and done, in reverse order.
  - Map these out in advance and resolve to stick to each step in the time required.

- Keep in mind: Complex tasks such as a Masters Project require some tasks to be completed in parallel
  - A Critical Path Analysis can help you organize a complex task.

Adapted from: http://www.businessballs.com/
Critical Path Analysis

- Is a very logical and effective method for planning and managing complex projects.
- For example, let’s say you must plan a breakfast for a large group of people.
- If you list all of the activities you will need to accomplish, you will see that many must be done in parallel.
  - If you tried to make breakfast by doing one task at a time, and one after the other, some food would be cold and unappetizing. Certain tasks must be started before others, and certain tasks must be completed in order for others to begin:
    - The plates need to be warming while other activities are going on.
    - The bacon goes under the grill with sliced tomatoes, while at the same time the sausages are frying, and the toast needs to begin toasting.
    - The eggs need to be fried last, while the toast needs buttering and the bacon and sausage must finish cooking.
    - Beverages are poured as people sit down to eat.

Adapted from: [http://www.businessballs.com/](http://www.businessballs.com/)
A critical path analysis is a visual representation of what needs to be done and when.

Here's the critical path analysis for making breakfast:

From: http://www.businessballs.com/
- The critical path analysis example shows just a few activities over a few minutes.
- Your Masters Project will require the analysis to extend several times wider than this example, and the time line would be based on weeks and months.
The Masters Project by Order of Magnitude of Work (and Pain) Involved

Chapter 2
Literature Review

Chapter 3
Methodology

Chapter 4
Product Description

Chapter 5
Findings, Conclusions, etc.

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The Project Itself
Snapshot of several stages in a critical analysis of project

**Chapter 1 Final**
- Send program and Surveys to Individuals for Field testing
- Write IRB and Informed consent letters

**Chapter 2 Lit Review Draft**
- Collect surveys; Call individuals who have not returned surveys; organize data for analysis.
- Outline product description

**Chapter 3 Begin Methods draft**
- Draft of Methods due

**Feedback**
- Collect surveys; Call individuals who have not returned surveys; organize data for analysis.

**Timeline**
- February 1-15
- February 15-28
- March 1-15
- March 15-30
Your Masters Project is the Final Push After Months of Hard Work!

- This is not a time to slow down or to take a break.
- You will be supported by your advisor, but you must do the work on your own!
  - This requires a shift from Group Support to Self-Support
    - Think, Write, Pair, Share
Plan in advance for Focused Work

- Ask your family and friends for their patience and thank them for their cooperation while you work.
- You should spend the first weeks of the semester defining your critical path analysis with your advisor so that you will be aware of when the parallel tasks will pile up, and you can plan for increased effort and decreased distractions during those periods.
  - Numbered heads: 1’s tell 2’s possible distractions. 2’s tell 1’s possible solutions. Switch.
Plan in Advance for Stress

■ **Exercise**
  - Go for a short quick really brisk walk outside.
  - Find time for regular intensive exercise.

■ **Breathe!**
  - Use mantras or chants, depending on what you want to do and how far you want to get away from the stress causes.

■ **Go get a big cup or a bottle of water.**
  - Most of us fail to drink enough water - that's water - not tea, coffee, coke, 'sports' drinks, Red Bull or fruit juice. All of your organs, including your brain, are strongly dependent on water to function properly. If you starve your body of water you will function below your best - and you will compound your stresses.
Plan in advance to celebrate

- Reward yourself with a dinner out or some other short period of relaxation after you finalize each chapter.
- Celebrate with family and friends in June!
The Magic of Motivation

- **M** - Make up your mind that you will hit every due date with a completed assignment
  - Remember your advisors have done this before and know the pitfalls of poor time management!

- **A** - Attitude is everything.
  - You have earned the right to finish your Masters studies. You are ready and able.
  - Know that times will get tough, so plan for those times in advance, and stay positive.

- **G** - Goal setting and "go getting"
  - Plan with your advisor and stick to the plan
  - Plan for writer’s block and frustration with ways to get through them.

- **I** - Inspiration and perspiration
  - You will be awarded a Degree for your hard work, but you must earn it!
  - Because you won’t have your group to motivate you, you will have to rely on yourself and your advisor for inspiration. Plan for that in advance.

- **C** - Celebrate yourself and your successes
  - AFTER you send your project to be bound!

Motivation is an Inside Job:
It's up to You!
Q and A:

- What issues have come to mind about your final semester that we can answer for you today?