

**Evaluation of Defeating Self-Sabotage: getting your thesis finished**  
**Masterclass**  
**Macquarie University July 2007**

**1. What specific steps will you now take towards completing your PhD as a result of this program?**

- Bracketing time for PhD only writing. Make it a firm routine. Make me off limits to other distractions in my 9-11am timeslot. Keep my supervisor's weekends busy with drafts.
- Write second part of my framework and lit review for my third article (August)
- Adhere to simple discipline
- Write regularly, organise work time, think what to do next
- Breaking steps down, ants, cognitive behavioural coaching, lots of PhD students struggle!
- Start writing and schedule writing, the rest will follow
- Block out dates in diary – where committed then plan diary towards PhD submission; make a three way meeting between self/main supervisor/co-supervisor; quarantine self at specific times; reduce over-commitment; increase determination
- Set up meeting with supervisor to work out a timeline for both of us to finish PhD by completion date
- Continue to write consistently by scheduling routine 'doable' work sessions
- Work out when I plan to finish; look at the specific next steps (every week); write, write, write – 2hrs/day, 5days/wk
- Will block out 2-3hrs/day in my diary; just write! To find my 'voice'
- I will make a plan and put at least 2 hour slots of 'real' PhD work every day
- Time management, project management
- Identify those parts of my work that are difficult or daunting and attack those first
- Daily scheduling of writing time 2hr + reading etc after the 2hr; write chapter 1 context and deliver to supervisor by end next week 3/8; finish working paper by end this week 28/7; draft APROS paper by 11/8; develop deadlines/contracts in writing with supervisor to project manage better

- I will sit down for a min of 2hrs per day and write. I will only reward myself after this 2hrs
- Time management and setting deadlines

## **2. What specifically have you learned from this program?**

- The problems and challenges are not unique and the strategies are around to help. Need to be selfish about the PhD time.
- What if my writing were taken to a panel of academics (I actually got it in the way that – THAT’S how I should write: as if someone is going to read it tomorrow)
- Simple discipline works ok
- Work seriously and then take breaks
- Tools; draft stamp
- That I must plan now; I must act now
- I’m not abnormal in my fears, concerns and perfectionism
- To be assertive in what I need to finish
- The importance of productivity of taking responsibility towards getting the project done
- Importance of project managing the process
- Action, action, action => motivation => PhD; acknowledge distractions and avoid via blocked time 2-3 hours/day. Reward later. The PhD is a marathon, not a sprint.
- Not to wait for motivation to start doing something
- How to set up your target and how to arrange your tasks order to fit the PhD study into your daily schedule
- I have a more quantitative picture of the amount of time spent unproductively. I have a picture of how hard the PhD would have been if I had been married with children then.
- Common behavioural problems for many PhD students. To focus on the dynamic/changing relationship between supervisor and me as I develop my own voice and perspective
- In reality all the negative thoughts are not true. Be mentally strong.
- Encouragement

## **3. What personal insights or awareness have you gained over the last 2 days?**

- All my 'but I need to do this' are avoidance techniques
- That I am terrified about writing and have a major block and to overcome it, I first need to write, even crap, even 30 words, but write and keep doing it.
- It is hard work and must keep remembering: cut down on other things; stick to simple discipline; I really want to do this.
- To be organised regarding working hours
- Am not utilising skills already learned in task management
- I am waiting to fail; that I don't have to do this; that I must act now and start in order to finish
- Continue writing
- That I am not isolated in how I am feeling and to not let these feelings overcome me so I am unproductive
- That there is a structural dimension to writer's block, and I'm part of this
- The avoidance graph – sit in the situation repeatedly until the pain decreases. Knowing what exactly to do next.
- Need to prioritise and recognise only so many 'balls' can fit in the cylinder/life. PhD is work – need to allocate blocked time per day and stick to it
- Every PhD student has similar problems. I realised that PhD is not a hobby but one of the three most important things in my life
- The importance of finding some source of joy in the work. The anxieties all sap the joy. My task focus is a source of strength, but I am attracted to shiny things.
- Reminded of project management scheduling/reporting – have run away from the diary and now need to bring it back. I need to manage the relationship with my supervisor rather than assume he will manage it for me. That I do not have 'all the time in the world', there is an end point.
- I will pass and get a PhD
- I should manage myself better

**4. Would you recommend this course to other PhD students?**

**Yes – 17**

**No – 0**

- For sure. It is probably more beneficial at mid-late term as the introspection that this course produces is both reassuring and motivating to get the job finished.
- Yes!

- Yes – but it is hard to be patient. Would prefer more tangible record of what I've learnt and where I'm going
- Yes – it was great
- Yes – definitely
- Absolutely! Good to gain an insight of what happens and it happens to others, but more importantly learn and develop strategies to 'kickstart' the PhD progress!
- Yes, but it will only work for people who are distressed enough to engage with the group therapy aspects of the program
- Yes – useful for shared experiences and learning about the process from others in different areas and stages

**5. Do you think attending this course will help you finish your thesis?**

**Yes – 14**

**No – 1**

**Undecided – 2**

- Undoubtedly
- I hope so!
- Yes
- Yes, because I would organise my working hours
- Had a nice time. Did not light a fire under my bum!
- Yes, I will update you by email
- Yes, it has relieved some of my tension and I feel motivated to continue
- Yes, it's given me tools/strategy for the journey. Thank you!
- All useful stuff
- Yes – I will be thinking differently about the process