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THE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

**THE GRADUATE MENTORING CENTER**

Indiana University Bloomington

## The GMC Newsletter

*December 2019*

*Rest without Resistance*

### **Dear Graduate Mentoring Center Community,**

If November began the season of intentional gratitude, then December ends the year with a reminder to take refuge in people and places that help us heal from the year and celebrate life joyfully. This time of year requires us to slow down and to pay attention to what we need and want, to ask for help when needed and to give it when possible. Of course, there may be consequences, but do the consequences outweigh having "your peace" as I've heard so many of you say this year.

I am thinking of this as I wrap up class and GMC activities. I have moved much slower this semester. I have done less than planned and desired. And, that's okay. As some of you know, in May I suffered a concussion while teaching my overseas class. It has taken these seven months to feel that I am almost recovered. A steady recovery has meant acknowledging that I needed to rest my body and my mind. It meant letting people know when I couldn't meet deadlines. This can be scary; however, my editors and collaborators appreciated my honesty. It meant spending the summer reading great science fiction books because anything else hurt my head.

I developed a new level of patience and being with myself. When I needed sleep, I slept. When I needed exercise, I danced. When I needed to be quiet, I meditated. When I needed help, I consulted medical professionals. I needed these things a lot. I eliminated social media for over a month. I have never been one to push through my pain or frustration, but this experience made me be even

more vocal about my limitations. In short: I rested without resistance and allowed my body and mind to guide me towards being whole in a new way. More than anything, I renewed my sense of awe and gratitude for everything and everyone.

With this story of listening to what the body knows, I invite you to respond to the questions below as a way of reflecting on your year through free-writing and/or journaling. Over the next week or two, set a timer for each section, 20-30 minutes, and allow yourself to respond as honestly as possible. Then, put away your responses until the end of the calendar year when I invite you to review what you wrote and revise where necessary as you prepare for the New Year.

*Check in with yourself.* If you did not do all you wanted to do this semester, what was the reason? What did you do instead and why? Do you need to revise any agreements you made? Were your goals realistic based on your circumstances?

*Have an end-the-semester plan.* How will you honor the work you accomplished this semester? With whom will you celebrate? What can you do during break without overwhelming yourself or sacrificing time off/away?

*Draft a new semester plan.* Are your goals realistic? What needs to move forward into the new year?

*Rest.* When and how will you make time to rest without resistance – or guilt? How will you honor what your body and mind need to refuel and renew before the new year? When will you sleep?

*Practice Gratitude.* How do you thank yourself and others for reaching the end of the semester?

Some [TED Talks on sleep](#) that you might find interesting. And, some [music to sleep by](#) .

I want to encourage you to reach out to others, especially if this is a difficult season for you. Finally, don't forget to check out the resources available to you at [NCFDD](#) .

We know that the end of the semester / year can bring unexpected stresses, anxiety, and needs in many areas. If you or someone you know requires assistance or additional resources for food, perhaps [this information](#) would be helpful in dealing with some of the unexpected.

As you read the newsletter, you will see a theme from The GMC staff: rest, pay attention, listen, take care of yourself, rely on peers. We all learned or recommitted to these things as we transitioned into different roles or projects.

Before ending, I'd like to thank those of you who emailed me last month to share how the newsletter touched you in various ways. We appreciate hearing from you. You may also email me directly or the center at [iugmc@indiana.edu](mailto:iugmc@indiana.edu).

Maria Hamilton Abegunde, PhD  
Director

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### Upcoming Events

- The GMC Open House: January 27th (5:30 pm)
- Money Smarts: January 29th (11:30 am)
- CMind - Mentoring as Contemplative Practices: January 29th (4:00 pm)
- The Preparing Future Faculty Conference (PFFC): February 7th

Each month, Jen and Shanalee will write about mentoring, their graduate journey, or anything else that interests them or you. Please feel free to share your questions and ideas with us at [iugmc@indiana.edu](mailto:iugmc@indiana.edu).

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### *Peer Mentoring by Jennifer Park*

How much do we learn from our peers? How much do the people around us influence us?

In a higher education setting, learning takes place in various ways (Colven & Ashman, 2010). Education has been shifting from the traditional “lecture” based teaching to a “learner” centered approach. With this shift in instruction, learning occurs more as students work together and, at times, mentor each other in- and outside the classroom. For graduate students, especially, peers are friends *and* colleagues, and research collaborators: they can provide us with emotional support.

Have you had a more experienced peer providing guidance to you? Some of the

factors that affect graduate students' well-being include insecurity, decreased self-esteem, increased workload, and a financial burden (Bowman, Bowman, & Delucia, 1990). Peer mentors are similar in age, share similar experiences, and can develop relationships with us that last longer and that can help graduate students address a number of issues. Peer mentoring can create non-hierarchical relationships because there are less age differences and may serve as a supportive capacity related to both career development and psychological support (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2000).

The following are questions that we might need to consider for successful peer mentoring. How can we facilitate peer mentoring relationships? How can we prolong this type of relationship? Are there any instances when stress is added to peer mentoring relationships? What are the ways we can shift a negative relationship to a positive one in which both mentor and mentee learn from each other?

At some point in our lives, we all experience peer mentoring, even when we are not part of a formal mentoring program. What has worked for you and has inspired you to be a peer mentor yourself? We would love to hear your stories! In our upcoming newsletters, we will continue to discuss various types of mentoring and how we can foster such mentoring relationships.

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### ***Intentionality and Counterspaces by Shanalee Gallimore***

I began this semester with a new look on life, my time and how I choose to use it. My word for the semester was intentionality: being deliberate and purposeful with how my time is spent and with whom I spend it. A lot of things were new for me this semester. I started a new assistantship, became president of the Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA), and continued as the Mentoring and Professional Affiliates co-coordinator for I CAN PERSIST STEM Initiative.

Although we are socialized in academia to always be on the go, we all have our peak times when we are productive. But when life happens, everything ceases immediately. How do we move forward when life makes us stop? Does this make us less of a person? Is our community receptive to us when we are not our optimum selves? As I grapple with these questions, I realized that my previous work speaks for itself and it is okay if I am not 100% each day. The work will get down in the end.

To accomplish my goals this semester, I had to be intentional with how tasks were allocated and how to provide a space for graduate students to feel welcome. As I reflect on the semester, I learned the importance of resting, taking care of my health, and appreciating my community. I have also been lucky to be part of counterspaces, physical, ideological or conceptual safe spaces that are outside of the mainstream (Ong, Smith, and Ko, 2017 ). Why and how did these three things make a difference in my life?

*Counterspaces.* A physical counterspace that has helped me tremendously is L.I.F.T., a weekly bible study group with graduate students. This space gives me an opportunity to engage in conversation about our faith and its impact on our lives. L.I.F.T is a safe space that helps us to celebrate with each other through our praise reports as well as console each other through our prayer requests. This weekly gathering solidifies the importance of gratitude and ceasing the day at the end of each week and gives me fuel to move to the next week and the next item on my to-do list. We all have different faith traditions that support us in these ways. These are the invisible parts of our community, but they can also be the most important.

*Rest and Health.* It has taken me a while to figure out how important it is to listen to my body when I need to rest and how creating a good balance between my work-life and personal life is necessary in order to continue this academic journey. I am glad this semester helped me learn this. I am hopeful for the future and thankful that I am able to just “be” and appreciate the small things around me. My communities are still going strong and this has kept me sane and provided the sounding board I needed to persist.

As the year ends, I will continue to be intentional inside and outside my counterspaces. If you are wishing to do the same, here are some things I would like to offer:

- Listen to your body and take time out when it’s needed.
- Change up your routine to get away from the daily monotony.
- Notice how you spend your time and who you spend it with.
- Be kind to yourself.

*Finally,* we wish each of you a winter break that you need *and* want. Thank you for your support and patience all semester long. The Graduate Mentoring Center would not be possible without you.

- Dr. Abegunde, Jen, and Shanalee



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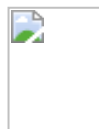
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