

Breakout Session I (A): Early Career Challenges and Opportunities

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Early Career Challenges and Opportunities

- Planning your career (Setting goals)
- Identifying growth opportunities (competitions, trainings, and conferences)
- Finding a mentor and a support group
- Establishing online presence and professional branding
- Work-life balance
- Action items for career growth (individual activity)

Common Challenges Faced by Early Career Professionals/Researchers

- **Coping with change**
 - Transition from doctoral studies to job hunting can be daunting, emotional
 - Major life changes (new job, moving, marriage, children)
- **Career issues**
 - Path to post-PhD employment not straight, many challenges
 - Doubts about academic careers (mix of research, teaching, administration, academic politics)
- **Work-life balance**
 - Time management in new situations
 - Risk of burnout
- **Identity crises**
 - Many PhDs end up outside of academia, yet they spent years preparing for it.
- **Lack of access to resources**
 - Disconnect from previous sources of support (networking, professional development or career advice)
- **Lack of support from supervisors**
 - Most supervisors joined academia in better economic climate
- **Sustaining writing productivity**
 - “Publish or perish” - academic publications make/break careers

Opportunities/Potential Solutions

Systematic efforts needed to address challenges that early career professionals face during training and their career paths.

- **Networking**
 - Collaborating, attending conferences and networking events, very critical
- **Mentoring**
 - Effective mentoring is indispensable
 - Mentoring promotes work satisfaction, increases the sense of personal accomplishment, while stimulating work projects and success rates.
- **Work-life balance**
 - Managing calendars, coworkers, projects
 - Effective time management
 - Work environment - autonomy, time-management, flexibility, and dedicated research (or family) time
 - Mental coaching, mindfulness or personal leaderships workshops - gain skills to optimize work-life balance - efficiently leave the workplace and its duties behind
 - Satisfaction and motivation at work increases in parallel to the sense of usefulness and engagement.

Personal Experience/Advice

- Mentoring – mentors opens doors, provide opportunities
- Recognize your talents – writing, analytical
- Look for gaps within your team/organization that you can turn into opportunities
- Continue learning new skills
- Confidence in your abilities
- Think “outside the box”