

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR WORK-LIFE BALANCE



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WHO AM I TO GIVE PEOPLE ADVICE?



Early 1990s:

- Former Soviet Union;
- Poor English
- Education in solid state physics
- immigrated to US in mid-1990s

2025:

- Fellow of American Geophysical Union
- Assistant Director, MIT Haystack Observatory
- Mother of 3 children
- Wife to someone who is home at 8:30pm

1 : WISELY CHOSE YOUR SIGNIFICANT OTHER

- Life is a tough road to travel. Get a good co-pilot
 - If your significant other does not support you now, do not expect them to be supportive in the future
 - It does not matter how brilliant you are and how hard you work – if you do not have a supportive partner, life is very difficult

NO PARTNER? ESTABLISH SUPPORT NETWORK:

Your network:

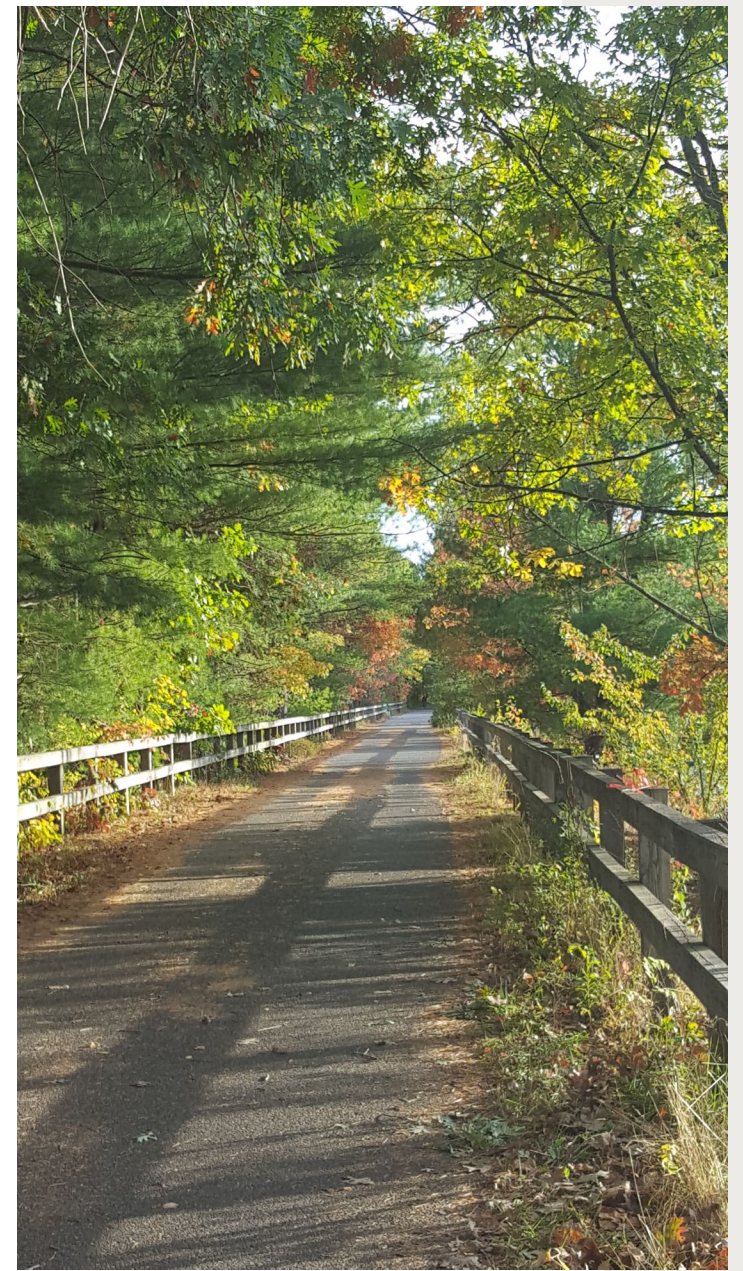
- Your friends
- Your neighbors
- Your colleagues
- Mom and Dad
- Make sure you have people you can talk to
- Invest your time in key relationships



Exploring Montreal with Lynn Harvey during IUGG 2019

IF YOU HAVE A CHOICE, CHOOSE TO WORK FOR ORGANIZATION THAT OFFERS FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULE

- Higher pay and rigid schedule make it super difficult to balance a job and a family life
- The '996' work culture leads to a quick burnout
 - 9am-9pm, 6 days a week



A nearby bike path that I regularly use – perfect for biking or walking in any season.

DO NOT BE AFRAID TO SAY “NO”

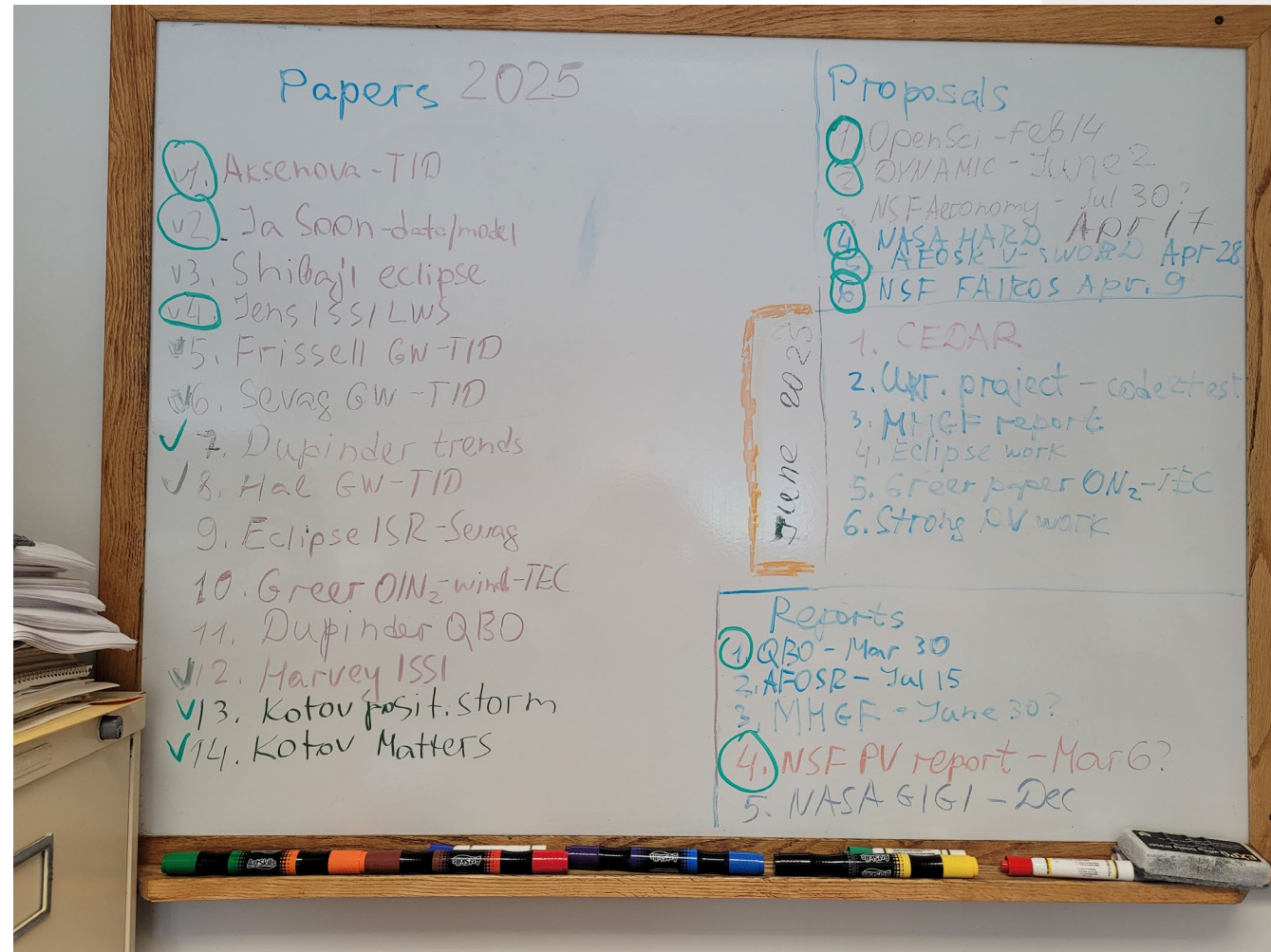
- It is easy to get overcommitted on multiple tasks
- Learn to establish boundaries and stick to them
 - My personal goal: 7am-8am + 9am – 7pm
 - Having a dog really helps to keep timing 😊
- Separate clearly work time from home time
- Be realistic regarding commitment to new tasks – do you really have time to mentor one more student, review one more paper, serve on another committee?



Emily was my perfect office mate during COVID. She quietly stayed next to me all day and would start barking at 6:30pm when it's time to go for a walk.

LEARN GOOD TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND PRACTICE THEM REGULARLY

- Establish a way to combine long-term, mid-term and short-term goals
- My solution: long-term (1 year) + mid-term (1 month) + short term (1 week & 1 day)
- Weekly planner with daily goals
- Write goals for the next day in the end of the day
- You see the evidence of your productivity – avoid the trap of ‘I can’t accomplish all I need to do’
- Send yourself a positive message



A picture of my whiteboard taken just prior to CEDAR/GEM – combination of 1-year goals for 2025 and monthly goals for June. Yes, I am working on 14 papers, 6 proposals, and 7 projects as PI.

EXERCISE IS A MUST. FIND WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

- Combination of short-term during the workweek and longer on weekend
- My aspirational goals:
 - Workday: 15-min exercise in the morning + 15-min walk during lunch + ~20-30 min or walk or bike ride in the evening
 - Weekend: 1.5 - 2-hrs bike ride or hike
 - Achieved ~60-70% of time
- Your own physical and mental health are a high priority.
 - Put your own oxygen mask first before helping others
- If you can, get a dog!
 - Have somebody in your life who is always happy to see you 😊
 - Have somebody who wants to go for a walk even if its very cold 😊



Emily was a great dog who loved to go for long walks in any weather. Weekends walks with Emily for 1.5-2 hrs were a part of my regular routine for many years. Emily passed away from cancer at age 13.

- You will lose your balance more than once
- It's OK
- Just keep going

