

## Self-Care Proseminar

### Opening Points

- I failed English in Grade 7 and Grade 9
- Put on academic probation in college
- Failed to get into first round of grad programs
- Novel rejected by 30 publishers

What does Halberstam mean by “the queer art of failure?”

“Under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world.” (3).

“Poke holes in the toxic positivity of contemporary life” (Ibid).

Sara Ahmed: “When you expose a problem, you pose a problem.”

Happiness is not something you owe to people

### Academic Ableism

Jay Dolmage, *Academic Ableism*

“Academia powerfully mandates able-bodiedness and able-mindedness, as well as other forms of social and communicative hyperability, and this demand can best be defined as ableism” (7)

Margaret Price, *Mad At School*

“Some of the most important common topoi of academe intersect problematically with mental disability. These include: Rationality...Resistance...Participation...Coherence...Collegiality.”

### Dealing With Breakdowns

Mention my mental breakdown after my comps

Committee was not concerned with my mental health

Anxiety Attacks vs. Meltdowns

An anxiety attack can be triggered by lots of environmental factors

A meltdown is often the result of suppressing anxiety or too many stimuli

Grounding Exercises

Name 5 things you can see

4 things you can hear

3 things you can touch

2 things you can smell

1 thing you can taste

Color Grounding

Pick a color and categorize everything in the room according to that color

#### Texture Grounding

Find a pleasing texture and interact with it in some way

Wear a layer you can fiddle with

#### Motion Grounding

Fiddle with pen; ball; fidget spinner

*Stimming*: everyone stims!

#### Time Management

“Able academics, I'm sure some of you're reading/seeing disabled colleagues/connections discuss or post about how tired they are. Remember that the temporal logic of academic life operates to exclude disabled people. Time is a tool for excluding ‘unproductive’ bodies.”

- Cody Jackson, Sept 9 2019

Work at your own pace

Make friends with Google Calendar

Build in breaks

#### Space Management

Find sensory-friendly spaces

Use headphones and sunglasses

Get outside when you can

#### Public Speaking and Anxiety

You don't have to control the conversation

Questions are good—just spin them towards what you know

Humor is good

Tone/eye contact aren't totally necessary

Do what you want with your body—move around

## Twitter Suggestions

Make a list—have a plan in place

4-point/square breathing

Code words with friends (emergency contact person)

Schedule time to do nothing

Let your instructors know

Shower/running water

Watching familiar TV show

Comfy clothes

Tekla Hawkins: “Respect your body, because your program won’t.”

Headphones

Walk around campus

Quiet space

Make a “panic box” including sour candies, fidget toys, etc.

## Questions/Strategies

How do you approach a professor to get help?

Where are counselling services?

Where are safe spaces?

Erin Soros: Composition and disability—don’t force your mind to fit the assignment

How to write in short bursts

Developing a project through associations

Don’t force students to “go linear”

Don’t remove yourself from your work

It’s OK to disengage from your work

Managing the anger response when an able-bodied person makes it about them

Believe that you *deserve* care

How to get over the anxiety of disclosing a disability

You don't have to work like everyone else

### Neurodiversity

Nick Walker: "The idea that there is one 'normal' or 'healthy' type of brain or mind, or one 'right' style of neurocognitive functioning, is a culturally constructed fiction."

John Loeppky: "Every brain has a different operating system."

Melanie Yergeau: When you define rhetoric, you define humanity—who is *rhetorical* and who isn't? Who counts in composition and who doesn't?

### Logistical Strategies

Colored folders for classes/projects

Taking notes with supervisor and storing notes in separate folder

Storing all drafts of project with comments

Scrap file with ideas you *might* use

Write down questions you want to ask in class

Use scheduling apps that build in breaks

Check out classroom space early

Email instructor with topics you'd like to discuss

It's OK to be late if being late will save you

It's OK to come early to an appointment and say *I need help with my topic*

It's OK to change topics

Meet with librarians

Order your ILL texts early

Scan all the reading but concentrate on what you're most interested in

Leave class when you need to