Holistic Prep for Grad School Video Transcript

 This presentation is designed to give you a holistic perspective on the graduate school application process. My name is Morgan MacDougall and I am a current graduate intern in the Psychology Advising Center. One of our goals is to not only help students understand the logistical pieces of grad school but to also consider the self reflection and wellbeing while going through the process.

You may not be sure which direction you're headed and that's completely okay. Some people choose to go immediately into graduate school. Some people go through the job search and others may be taking a gap year or years.

When you're considering your graduate education there are many different routes you can go. You can either go for your master’s, your PhD, or your PsyD, and remember this isn't the end all be all. Right now is your opportunity to explore so here's some tips we suggest depending on your year. As a freshman you're going to want to network with your peers and professors, try to get involved with one thing you enjoy on campus. This will boost your confidence when going through your sophomore, junior, and senior years. As a sophomore diversify your experiences within psychology. Begin shadowing and researching what you like and what you don't like. You can do this through research, volunteer work, and leadership positions. As a junior you're going to want to question and keep on questioning. Choose a plan A, B, and C. If research is your jam maybe the PhD would be better for you. If you want to apply that research, maybe the master’s route would be better. As a senior you’re going to want to finalize and believe in yourself. Your networking skills should still be on point through the years. Don't be afraid to ask for those recommendations and begin searching for programs or jobs.

Once you make your decision on what you want to do around the end of your junior year and beginning of your senior year your finalization process should look like this.

Now that you created a plan of action it is your time to apply. I may be a bit biased in saying this but being a Psych major at UCF means that your advisors and faculty have prepared you to be the best applicant to a graduate program or a job. Some motivational tips to maintain your best self and keep your goals in mind are: to schedule out time for completion of your application at least everyday, just remember your deadlines. It does not have to be the same time everyday. Ask a friend, peer review is always helpful to make sure you are not missing any fine details. Frame your experiences to the job or program you are applying to. Always reference your end goals and reward yourself for small wins.

Although this presentation is very general in speaking about the graduate school application process, we understand that you may have a very different individualized experience. As psychology majors may know, mental health has a huge effect on our perspectives. You may be anticipating, waiting, even stressing about stress or many thoughts and emotions involved in this process. Sometimes talking to peers and mentors is helpful, but if you can connect with others going through the same process and you want an unbiased perspective, maybe group or individual therapy may be helpful. Anxiousness takes away from our best assets so don't hesitate to reach out to our counseling center if you feel at any point misguided.

I wanted to put this in this presentation as a reminder that your mental health is just as important as your physical health. I notice this on different outlets of social media and it's just a gentle reminder to self reflect and make sure you're self caring during this process.

Focusing on yourself during the application process into graduate school or even into a job is very important. Family, mentorship, and peer support is important during this time, but it's your time to be true to your independence. You may be thinking things like: Am I good enough? My peers are all getting offers, but what about me? Is this really what I want? Self-comparison is so hard to avoid during the process, but here are some tips to help guide you through: Remember all of the work you've done, celebrate your accomplishments. If you could make a visual list of this, please do so. Psychology has so many broad lines of employment, one does not need a higher degree to fulfill their passions. Take some time off of social media. Don’t seek advice if you're feeling confident about your choices.

There are many different resources available for self-care. On campus we have Wellness and Health Promotion Services. You can take a cooking class, learn how to coupon, do Yoga Nidra sessions, or go to a Ted Talk and Tea Tuesdays. There's also UCF Cares who you can color your stress away, go to a movie night, or engage in a confetti and crafts session. Engage in meaningful conversations with peers outside of your normal circle, especially when talking about grad school. Off Campus and during your free time you can find a “spot”, find a place that you find the most relaxing, create a bit of ambience in your room, or maybe go for a walk and get coffee. And don't forget: treat yo’self!

One of my favorite examples of self-care is to watch Netflix. So in reminding you of the following photos: please remember you got this!

Preparing for the GRE looks different for anyone. We have provided some tips for success and some things that we’ve noticed within some students as they've gone through the process. You don't have to share your score. There are other alternatives to use within your peer group to use, like, “I did well”. Look at the weight of your score and the admissions process as a whole. High GPA and/or relevant experience and positive recommendations are something to lean on. Consider the amount of time you spend studying versus retaking the exam. Will your score look different? How about the testing environment? Study as you would test. If you're not taking the GRE, know your stuff. Research companies or faculty you may be interviewing with and be prepared to show them your interests in their specified duties.

Now you’re ready to interview. This is something to celebrate on its own as it is a huge accomplishment. Prepare yourself for feelings of self-comparison during group interviews, keep your mental list of “I can’s” Be friendly with other candidates, but stray from competitive conversation. Prepare yourself for constructive criticism as you are going to look at the non-personal side of your own self. These are some questions that you may be asked: How will you fit in this setting? What are your places of improvement? What are your places of strength? What’s your biggest worry? And what are you least fearful about? Remember that the interview is a chance to confidence build, you're in control of the situation. Think of the interview as a chance for you to get to know them. And also consider is this a good fit for you?

Utilizing resources will be very helpful throughout the graduate school admissions process. We’ve provided some of the following websites to help you out. We have UCF Cares, Wellness and Health Promotion Services, Career Services, and a website for the best self-care apps.

Finally, we’ll leave you with the comic strip “Message to a Graduate”. You may be experiencing these things as you go throughout this process. If you need any help during this time, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Psychology Advising Staff.