



National Center for Faculty
Development & Diversity

Writing Your Next Chapter: How to Find Your Mojo at Mid-Career

Mindi N. Thompson, Ph.D., HSP
National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity
www.FacultyDiversity.org

TODAY'S FACILITATOR:

Mindi Thompson PhD, HSP



- Tenured professor at University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Registered Health Service Psychologist
- Faculty Success Program Director of Coach Training

TODAY'S WORKSHOP:

Mid-Career Challenges

What's Holding You Back?

Writing & Resistance

Moving Forward

Full Professor

Administration

Disciplinary Super-Star

Public Intellectual

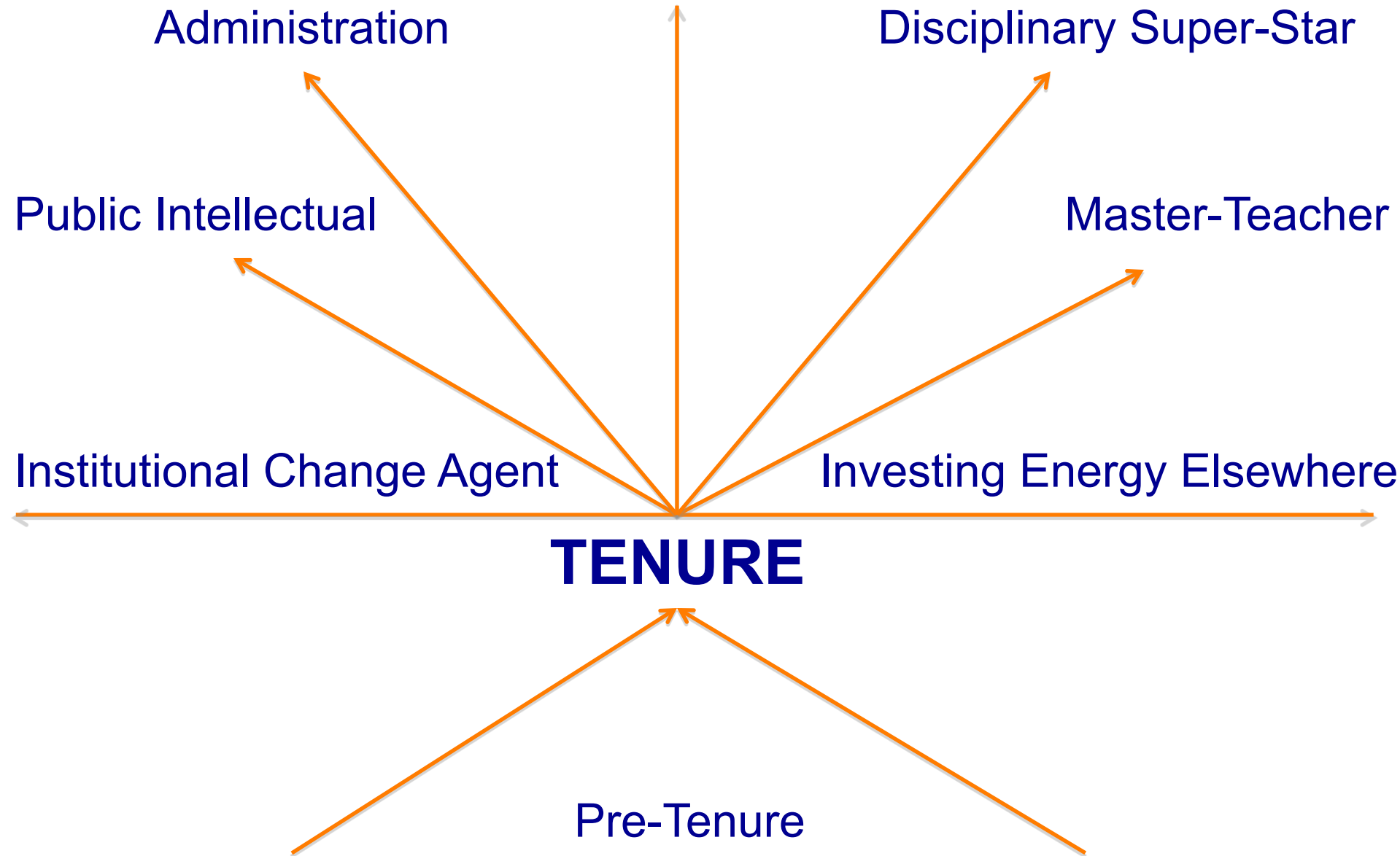
Master-Teacher

Institutional Change Agent

Investing Energy Elsewhere

TENURE

Pre-Tenure

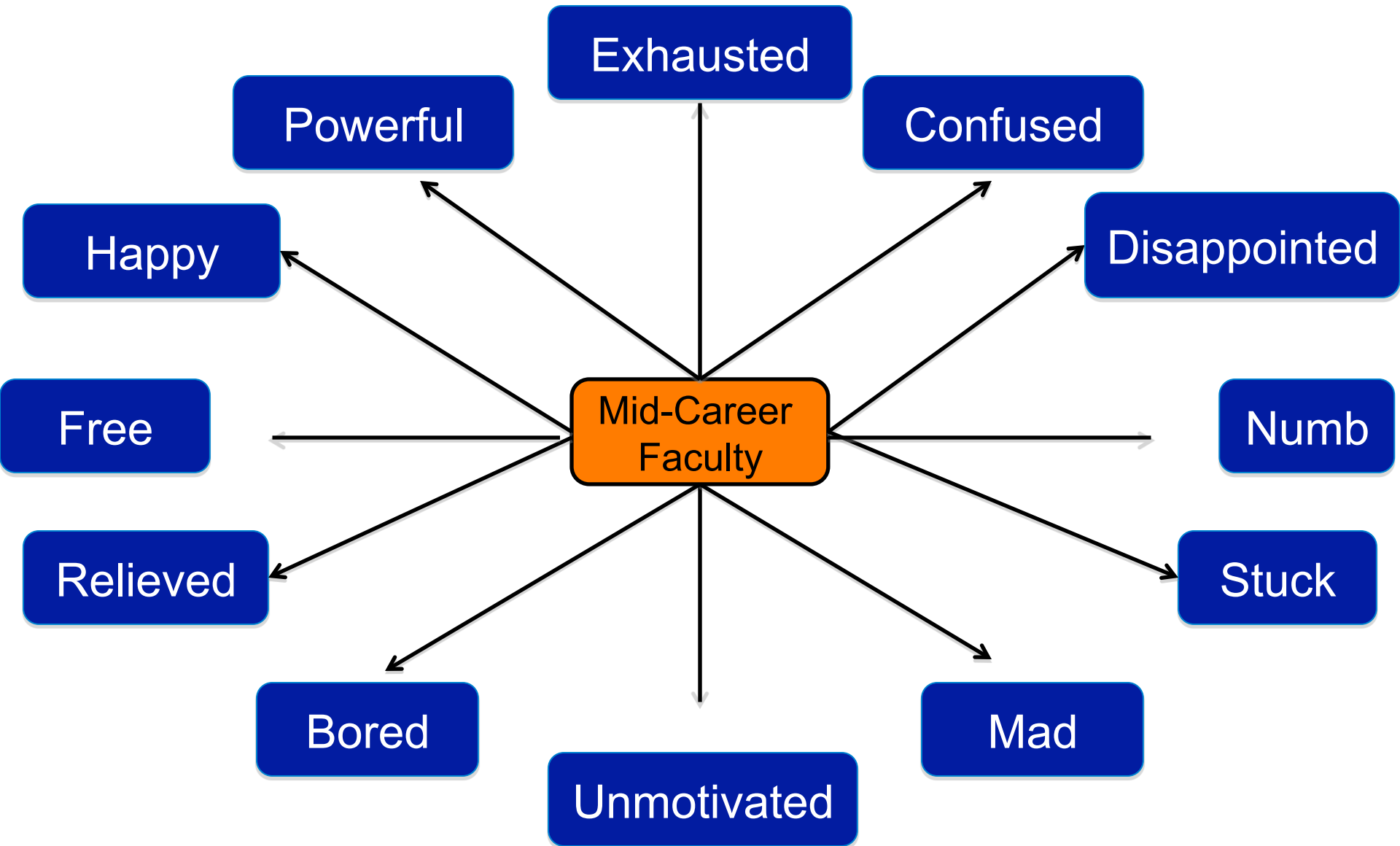


“SOLO” CHALLENGES

Additionally, under-represented faculty commonly describe:

- ❑ Struggling to find time for research given diversity requests
- ❑ Experiencing emotional exhaustion from differential classroom dynamics
- ❑ Managing visibility, invisibility and belonging
- ❑ Lack of collegial acceptance (mentors but not sponsors)

Mid-Career Emotional Spectrum



**What path are you on?
Where are you
on the emotional spectrum?**

Getting Lost At Mid-Career

The most common ways faculty get stuck at mid-career:

1. Healing/recovery
2. Not consciously choosing a direction
3. Not consistently moving towards goals
4. No Writing/intellectual productivity
5. Not aligning time with goals & priorities
6. Not planning an exit strategy (or side hustle)

Finding your Mojo

At mid-career:

1. Healed/Recovered
2. Consciously choosing a direction
3. Consistently moving towards goals
4. **Writing/intellectual productivity**
5. Aligning time with goals & priorities
6. Planning an exit strategy (or side hustle)

**What is YOUR
biggest writing challenge?
What keeps you from writing?**

THE CORE CHALLENGE

The structural challenge of faculty work:

The Problem:

- ✓ We tend to prioritize based on accountability
- ✓ Writing has no built-in accountability.

WE KNOW WHAT WORKS

A DAILY WRITING PRACTICE

At least 30
minutes

First thing in the
morning
(if possible)

Daily writing leads to steady productivity and fewer feelings of anxiety over failure to meet expectations for productivity.

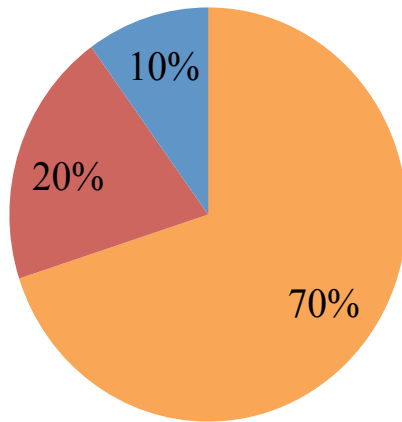
Mental shift: writing is the most important part of my success, therefore it's my top priority.

Behavior shift: I write every day and create a way to be accountable that's meaningful and works for me.

WE KNOW WHAT WORKS

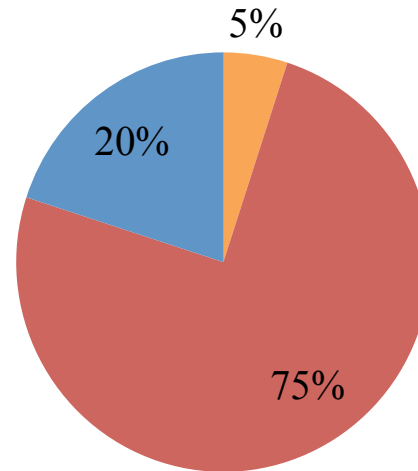
Daily Writing Helps to Align Your Time With Your Evaluation Criteria

Tenure & Promotion Criteria



■ Research ■ Teaching ■ Service

Typical New Faculty Member



■ Research ■ Teaching ■ Service

SO....WHY DON'T WE DO IT?

EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

VS

INTERNAL CHALLENGES

WHY DON'T WE DO IT?

**What Does Resistance Look Like For
Academics?**

PROCRASTINATION

AVOIDANCE

LIMITING BELIEFS

WHY DON'T WE DO IT?

Limiting Beliefs About Writing

I need huge blocks
of uninterrupted
time

I must be inspired
to write

Writing is what I do
when I'm done
thinking.

What We Know From Research

The most productive
writers write regularly, in
small increments

No you don't. You show up,
the inspiration happens
once you get started.

Writing ***IS*** thinking

**What does YOUR
resistance look like?
How does it manifest in
YOUR work life?**

RESISTANCE

Resistance

A human defense mechanism to keep us from doing anything that might be dangerous

It arises in response to anything that increases our anxiety

Driven By:

RESISTANCE

Resistance



Driven By:

1. Impostor Syndrome
2. Fear of failure
3. Fear of challenging the status quo

ASK: How can I dance with my resistance on a daily basis?

What's Holding YOU Back?

When you're feeling stuck,
a powerful question to ask yourself is:
What's holding me back?

The most common writing blocks are:

1. Technical Errors
2. Psychological Blocks
3. External Realities

Technical Errors

You know you *should* write
and *need* to write,
but you aren't putting conscious effort into
making it a daily priority.

Technical errors occur because you are *missing
some relevant skill or technique*.

Technical Errors

COMMON TECHNICAL ERRORS:

TRY:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. You haven't set aside a <i>specific time</i> for writing | Hold a <i>Sunday Meeting</i> |
| 2. You've set aside the <i>wrong time</i> to write | A different time (morning) |
| 3. You have no idea <i>how much time</i> tasks take | Track time for recurring tasks |
| 4. You're the <i>wrong person</i> for the task | Delegate/outsource/get help |
| 5. The tasks you have set out are <i>too complex</i> | Map the steps |
| 6. You <i>can't remember</i> what you have to do | Contain in 1 place (not email) |
| 7. Your <i>space is disorganized</i> | Organize your space |
| 8. You have no idea <i>where</i> your time is going | Track your time |

**Which technical errors are
you currently experiencing?**

**What ONE THING
are you willing to try?**

Psychological Blocks

You've tried all the tips and tricks, they work for a week or so, and then you're right where you started (not writing).

Psychological blocks occur for a variety of personal and complicated reasons so they require a different approach than technical errors.

COMMON PSYCHOLOGICAL BLOCKS:

1. Disempowerment

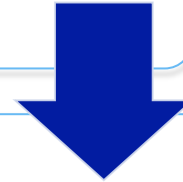
2. Perfectionism

3. Inner critic(s)

Disempowered Writing

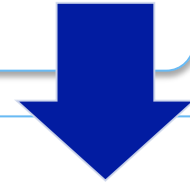
REFLECT:

Who controls the writing process, the generation of ideas, and your creativity?



RELEASE:

Yourselves from the *Myth of the Muse*



RESPOND:

Daily writing with intense initial accountability
[Pro-Nagger, 14-Day Challenge, Skype buddy]

Perfectionism: The Costs

**Perfectionist professors have
LOWER research productivity!**

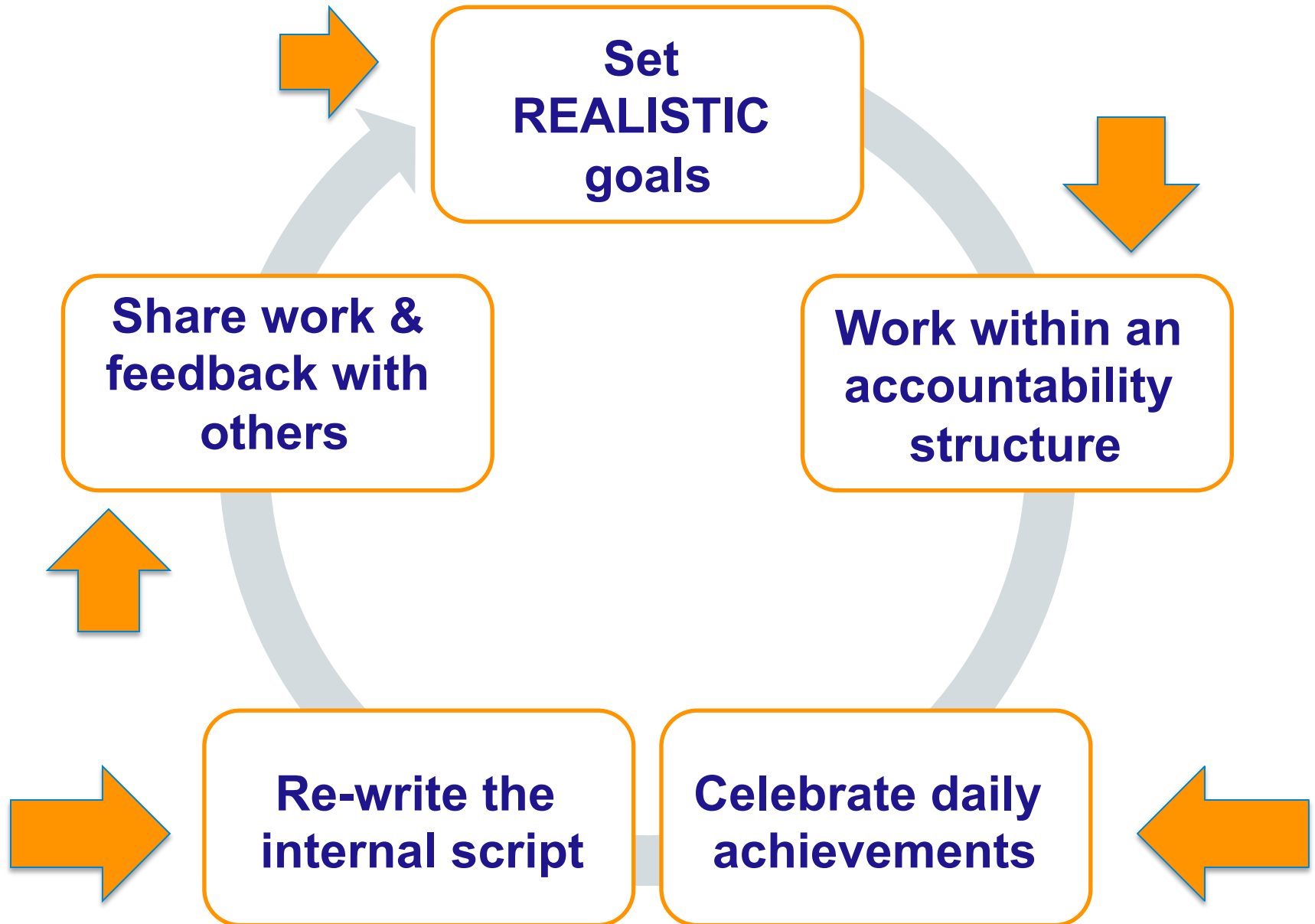
For example, in a study of faculty in the U.S. & Canada, perfectionist professors had:

- ✓ A lower number of total publications
- ✓ A lower number of first-authored publications
- ✓ A lower number of citations, and
- ✓ A track record of publishing in journals with a lower impact rating.

The Cycle of Perfectionism



Breaking The Cycle of Perfectionism

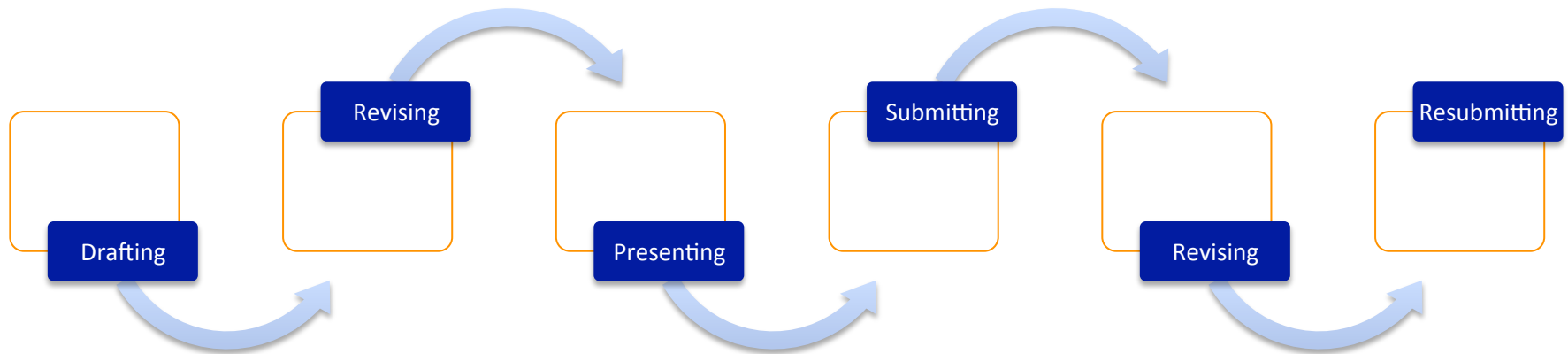


Overcoming Perfectionism

1. Map Your Writing Process

Unrealistic goals often emerge from a lack of awareness of the length and depth of academic writing

ASK YOURSELF: How do I move from an new idea to a finished manuscript?



Overcoming Perfectionism

2) Share Work

Perfectionism FESTERS in isolation!

So don't give it an environment where it will grow and flourish

**0 – 25%
Reviewers**

**25 – 50%
Reviewers**

**50 – 75%
Reviewers**

**75 – 100%
Reviewers**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Overcoming Perfectionism

3) Vary Your Standards

Try an experiment:

- ✓ Lower 1 standard every day this week
- ✓ The only rule: you can't choose writing or self care
- ✓ Everything else is fair game!

What's the point?

Everything doesn't need to be done at the very highest standard. In academic life, DONE is good enough for a wide range of tasks.

Inner Critic(s)



Reflect:

- ◆ Who is your inner critic?

Release:

- ◆ His/her power over you

Respond:

- ◆ Identify your inner critic, record her negative messages, and consciously engage them.
- ◆ Use *Write or Die* to draft without your critic.
- ◆ Invite your inner critic into the process at the editing stage.



Psychological Blocks

| COMMON PSYCHOLOGICAL BLOCKS: | POSSIBLE WORK AROUNDS: |
|------------------------------|--|
| Disempowerment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Daily Writing + Accountability |
| Perfectionism | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Document your writing process• Establish Feedback Loops• Vary Your Standards |
| Inner Critic | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get to know your inner critic• Separate writing, drafting, and editing |

**Which psychological block(s)
are you currently
experiencing?**

**What ONE THING
are you willing to try?**

External Realities

You can't write because you're in the midst of a life transition, personal loss, and/or something outside of your control.

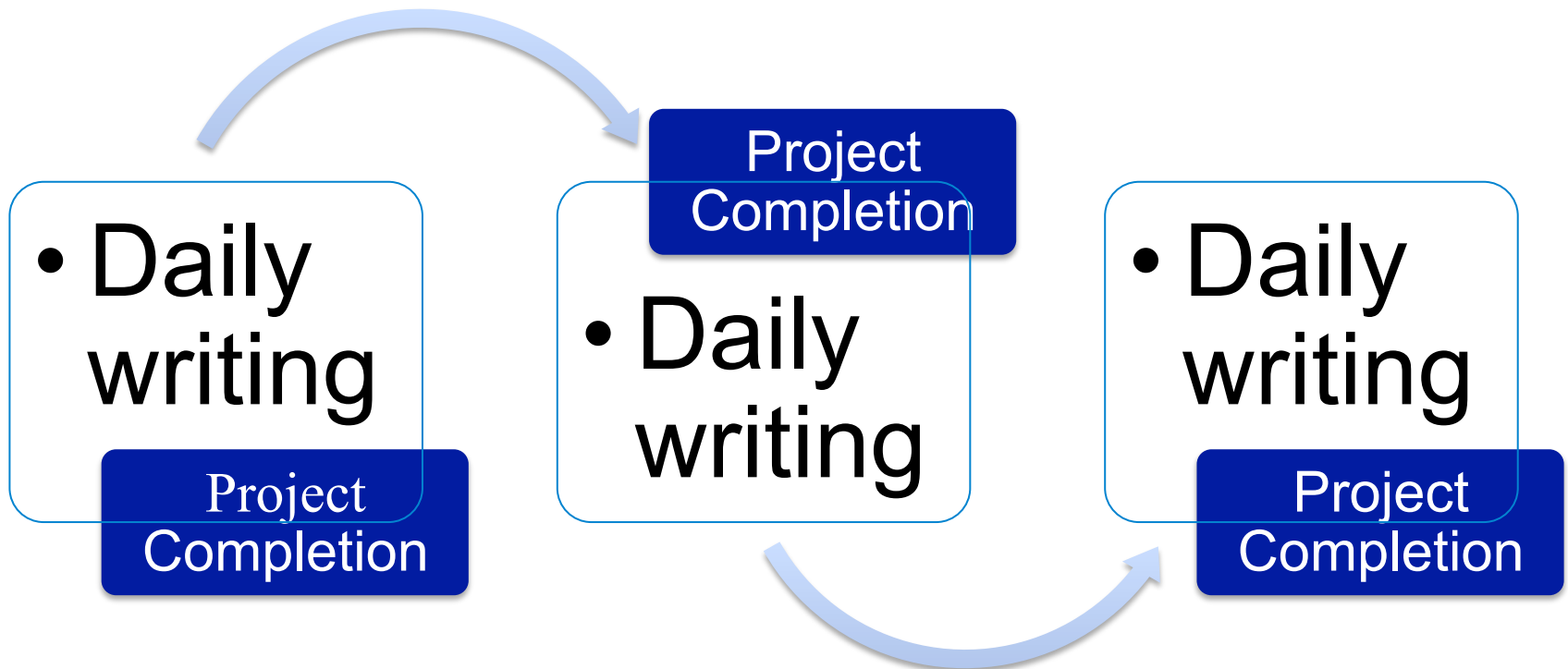
This happens to everyone because we're human beings. People die, babies are born, family members get sick, etc..

WHEN YOU'RE IN TRANSITION:

- ✓ Adjust your expectations about what's possible in that term.
- ✓ Let people know what's happened and allow them to support you.
- ✓ Ask for help that's specific and/or seek professional assistance.
- ✓ Allow yourself time, knowing that you're reaping the benefits of long-term daily writing.

External Realities

Daily writing (particularly on the tenure-track) accommodates the ups and downs of life.



POST-WORKSHOP RESOURCES

NCFDD Core Curriculum



NCFDD Core Curriculum



If today was helpful....

Your NCFDD Membership includes:

- ❑ Monthly core webinars
- ❑ Monthly guest expert webinars
- ❑ Weekly productivity tips (*Monday Motivator*)
- ❑ Private peer-mentoring forum & monthly writing challenges
- ❑ Multi-week Facilitated Learning Communities

1. How to Write A Journal Article
2. How to Write a Book Proposal
3. How to Write a Grant Proposal
4. Teaching in No Time



National Center for Faculty
Development & Diversity



BECOME A MEMBER



MEMBER RESOURCES



FACULTY SUCCESS PROGRAM



CAMPUS WORKSHOPS



STORE



Faculty Success Program

NCFDD's signature program, the Faculty Success Program is specifically designed to transform your personal and professional life. It's all about learning the secrets to increasing your research productivity, getting control of your time, and living a full and healthy life beyond your campus.

[Read more >](#)

GRADUATE STUDENTS



POST-DOCS



TENURE-TRACK



MID-CAREER



ADMINISTRATORS

