

# ***Challenges in Writing Your Dissertation: Coping With the Emotional, Interpersonal, and Spiritual Struggles***

By

Noelle Sterne, Ph.D.

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***A Little Teaser . . .***



# ***From the Introduction:*** **Why This Book**

- You may be one of the many candidates, campus and online, who juggles family, work, and school.
- Your academic struggles are intensified by the intellectual, psychological, and personal stresses of such multiple responsibilities and social and emotional isolation.
- My mission here is to share with you what I've learned and observed as a longtime coach of graduate students :




## ***From the Introduction (Continued):*** **Why This Book**

- **to bolster, hearten, and inspire** you as you struggle with your dissertation, especially in many other-than-academic areas,
- **to help you give it your best and succeed** in less time and with less stress,
- **to develop your gifts and self-confidence**, and
- **to help you gain greater pleasure in the entire process** so you can be truly proud of your accomplishment and use it to achieve your life's dream.



## ***From Chapter 1:*** **How Is the Degree Part of Your Life's Dream?**

- Answer this question in writing. Add and change until you're satisfied that it represents how you really feel.
- Read your statement over once a day, preferably at the same time.  

- The more you refine the connection between your life dream and your doctorate, the more fuel you'll have for the tough journey
- and the more strength you'll have to keep going.

## ***From Chapter 3:*** **Priorities and Promises to Yourself**


### **A word (or more) about the spiritual:**

- ✱ Your Inner Mentor (IM), also called your Inner Guide, Self, Voice, Spirit, Higher Power, Soul, Guidance System, intuition, even your heart or gut, has more power than your chair, the dean of your school, and even the guy who issues your annual parking sticker.
- ✱ As you learn to use your IM more consciously, like in meditation, you'll see that it guides you to right decisions and actions.
- ✱ With more practice for your dissertation else in your life.



and results, you'll use your IM quandaries **and** for everything

## *From Chapter 5:* **Muster Your Courage for the Proposal**

- Once you've determined (with your IM) your all-important topic, start with your **Problem Statement (PS)**.
- The PS tells readers the difference between the current knowledge that's out there in all those studies and the new knowledge you will gallop in with.
- You'll be answering the **"So what?"** question  relating the need for your study and the gap in existing knowledge that you will fill.
- Your excellent PS (after several rewrites) will guide your whole dissertation.

## ***From Chapter 6:*** **Sticking With It: Temptations and Tonics**

In the midst of wrestling with your PS and other things, you may be tempted to suspend your dissertation. *Don't*. No matter how good you think your reasons are:

- My family needs my attention.
  - A break of a few months will clear my head.
  - I'll get the absolutely most current materials.
- I'm going on that 6-week dissertation seminar on the cruise ship "Nowhere." Then I'll really know how to continue.
- I'll just clean out my study, the spare room, the garage, attic, and storage shed. Then I'll find anything I need right away.
  - Listen, you've got to live too . . . .

**I repeat: DON'T STOP!**

## *From Chapter 7:* **Orient the Important Others in Your Life**

- You may have noticed that with the dissertation, your life changes mightily.
- You hole up in the library after work, eat on the run, retreat to your study all day Sunday, always look distracted, and never really listen when a family member talks.
- Your family and friends are most affected, and they most affect your progress.



The best strategy, and preferably in person: **early intervention.** 8



# ***From Chapter 7 (Continued):*** **Orient the Important Others in Your Life**

## **Strategy One: Educate Them**

- Tell them (nicely) they're not the only ones who will be sacrificing visiting time, money, moments of satisfaction, and the luxury of trivial arguments. If they have academic degrees, rouse their memories of their own travails . Then pounce: tell them that the dissertation is at least five times worse.
- Sketch out, vividly, and with specifics, the kind of time (alone) and attention (undisturbed) you need, especially with your many other duties.

## **Strategy Two: Bribe Them**

- Tell them that *something good* awaits after all the sacrifices: your better job, promotions, prestige, more business, new business, their resumed degree program, more family time, and mo' money.
- Make promises for the future, AD (After Degree): special dates, extended visits, vacations together, your help with their special projects.

***From Chapter 7 (Continued):***  
**Orient the Important Others in Your Life**

**Watch them smile.**



# ***From Chapter 10:*** **Make Peace and Time With Your Employer and Work Colleagues**

Apply the same principles: Orient early, educate, bribe (in a good way).

## **With Your Boss** **(see the book for colleagues)**

- Express gratitude for the meeting.
- Describe your program.
- Describe how your degree will benefit the company.
- Share your progress.
- Explain what you need and ask (released time, compact schedule).
- Assure your boss you will not neglect your job.
- Negotiate and compromise.
- Thank thank thank .



# *From Chapter 11*

## **Your Dissertation Committee: The Best/Worst Friends You'll Ever Have**

### **Who Can You Work With, and How Do You Know?**

#### **Gather Plenty of Information**

- From cohort members, new doctors, faculty bios, the sly student grapevine.

#### **Ask Questions**

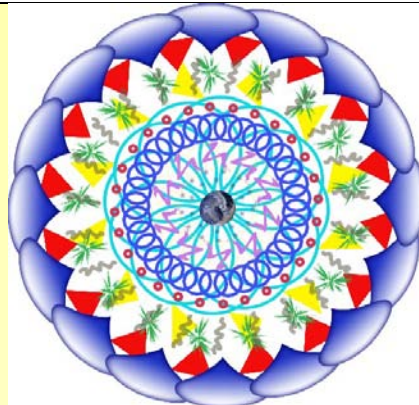
- Does the professor have the time for you? Similar research interests? Respond to your emails and calls? Available for meetings? Critique and return your drafts relatively quickly? Reasonably “hard” in critiques (too easy is no favor). Encourage and support you? Act professionally? Fight for you with other committee members?



# *From Chapter 11 (Continued)*

## **Your Dissertation Committee: The Best/Worst Friends You'll Ever Have**

Ask Yourself  
and



Questions--  
Listen

- \* How do I *feel* about this faculty member?
- \* Suspend your intellect (the only time I'll advise this).
- \* Listen to your IM (remember your Inner Mentor?) and your emotions.
- \* They will guide you to your best chair and committee members.



# *From Chapter 12*

## **Dancing With the Committee**

### **Both You and the Committee Are**

- friendly and professional,
- open yet discriminating of what not to share,
- primarily interested in your topic,
- focused on making your work the best it can be.



### **You**

- maintain your self-respect without arrogance,
- acknowledge their greater expertise without groveling,
- are as considerate of your chair and committee as you wish them to be to you (the Golden Rule of Committee Gamesmanship).

## *From Chapter 13*

# University Support: You've Got More Friends Than You Think

### A Short List . . .



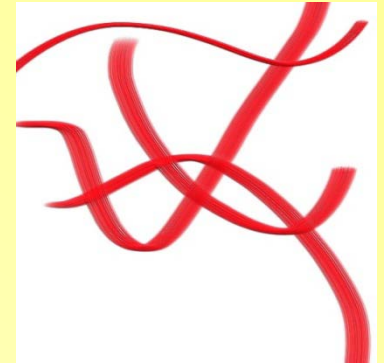
- Fellow sufferers, er, students
  - Learning center tutors
  - Computer techs
- Statisticians and researchers
  - Librarians
- Coaches and editors (pardon the commercial)
  - Old, er again, former course professors



Picture and Affirm the Perfect University Friends You Need

## ***From Chapter 14*** **Am I Really Almost Done?**

- Master the red tape. File all forms—on time. Follow your university dissertation formats—precisely.
- The dissertation is finished! Almost. You still have *the Defense*.
- Don't take it for granted.
- Prepare: read the dissertation, read your university manual for protocols.
- Do your fancy PowerPoint. Rehearse.
- Take a shower the day of.



**Keep affirming: ♦ My defense goes perfectly. ♦**



## ***From Chapter 14 (Continued)*** **Am I Really Almost Done?**

**GO to your graduation.**  
**You will not be sorry.**

- Make sure friends and relatives have tickets, directions, hotel rooms.
- Prepare for their well-meaning questions: “So what *are* you going to do with your degree in animal art?”
- Celebrate!



# ***From Chapter 15*** **Waking to Your Dream**

**In the hard rocks (and knocks) of academia, you've gone from scrawny branches to full flower!**



## ***From Chapter 15*** **Waking to Your Dream**



After your well-earned break (not too long), and to combat PDD (Post-Dissertation Depression),

Ask Yourself Again:

**How is this degree part of my Life Dream?**

- \* Envision your future. Enunciate your goals.
- \* Plan your payoffs: teaching, scholarly publication, quilting
  - \* Reenter your family's atmosphere (gently).
- \* Reflect gratefully on all you have learned in many areas . . . .

***For More About  
Challenges in Writing Your Dissertation: Coping  
With the Emotional, Interpersonal,  
and Spiritual Struggles***

Visit my website:

[www.trustyourlifenow.com](http://www.trustyourlifenow.com)

Challenges is available in September 2015 from  
Rowman & Littlefield Education and Amazon



*I see you writing your dissertation  
easily, effortlessly, intelligently, speedily, joyfully, and lovingly  
to perfect completion.*