



**THE ALL-BUT-DISSERTATION SURVIVAL GUIDE™**

The All-But-Dissertation Survival Guide™ focuses on ways to help its readers more readily overcome the roadblocks that often seem to stand in the way of completing the dissertation. It is read throughout the world.

**A FAVOR**

We now have subscribers in over 70 countries! But with more than a million graduate students in the US alone, we have barely scratched the surface. If you found this newsletter helpful, please forward it with your endorsement to your favorite blogs, your friends, your favorite email lists, faculty and administration, and editors of print publications (who have our full permission to reprint these newsletters—for free!)

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Devoted to practical steps for completing your doctoral dissertation

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For many people, there is an inevitable increase in weight (aka fat) over the holidays. For virtually all ABDs, there is a loss of momentum during this same period. Don't let momentum loss happen to you. (You are on your own with holiday calories!) **In this issue, Cathy Rodrigues provides some useful tips for continuing to make progress on the dissertation during the holiday season.**

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December 8, 2005

A Word from the Editor  
Tracy Steen, Ph.D.

It's so easy to get sidetracked on your dissertation during the holiday season. Travel, parties, grading, and the winter blahs can all undermine your progress. Cathy Rodrigues offers some useful suggestions for keeping you on track this year. Just think...This time next year you can be sipping eggnog and savoring your Ph.D. status!

## Secrets of Building Momentum During the Holidays

By Cathy Rodrigues , ACSW, LCSW

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Another set of holidays is coming around and your degree is not finished. You know you will be getting questions. "When will you be finishing your dissertation? How is your writing coming along? How can you work and get that paper done?" All these questions and more are the same ones that are floating around in your head.

So many things get in the way of getting your dissertation done. You want to spend more time with your family, pay attention to your personal relationships, devote more time to developing your work interests or furthering your research, but you just can't find the time in your day to add one more thing!

There are hundreds of reasons why you know you "should" get moving, but something always gets in the way or you feel stuck. You ask, "How can I possibly start again?" You *really* want to be done and get on with your life but are not sure where to start.

I once asked a dissertation coaching client what they felt they were good at; their reply was, "I am good at starting over." There are so many life circumstances in which we all have to get good at starting over. What would it take for you to get started working on your dissertation again?

Here are a few tips that are tried and proven which will help you make the necessary adjustments in your life to move forward with your dissertation. Think what it would be like to be able to say next holiday season when asked about your degree, "Oh I'm done with that!"

### **Organization**

1. Make sure you have a dedicated space/place set up where you have all your dissertation materials available.
2. Get organized -- use notebooks or file folders for each topic and subtopic.
3. Have a bag of materials designated that you can pick up at "a moments notice" so that you are ready to take something to do with you to the library or wherever you best study or write.
4. Have a list of small tasks that you can do that take between 5-15 minutes to complete--those have to get done too! Keep updating this list.
5. Create a summary sheet for each article that you read with citation info and summary facts that relate to your ideas that you can clip to the front of each article so you don't have to remember what each article is about and why it is important.

### **Support**

1. Let everyone know when you are targeting completion of your dissertation.
2. Have friends and family help with making sure you are getting enough to eat.
3. Establish a buddy system with someone and agree that you will pay each other a fine if you are not at the study site by a certain time each day.
4. Identify someone in the school/department/dissertation group with whom you can share ideas.

### **Gremlin activity**

1. Identify the self-talk that you are repeating in your head that is discouraging and defeating. Then eliminate it!
2. Do a time study on your habits leading up to getting started working. Eliminate those that are unproductive.
3. Create a beginning ritual

## Time management

1. Make getting the dissertation done THE priority and schedule that time each week first and then fit all else around it.
2. Set a timeline working backwards from the finish date or defense date that you want to shoot for.
3. Set deadlines for yourself and tell your chair when you expect to be done with a certain task.
4. Establish a personal schedule that is realistic.

## Writing

1. Each draft can be printed in different colors so that you can discern at a glance which draft you are looking for.
2. Send your advisor something each week. Tell him/her ahead of time that you are going to do this.
3. Don't wait for feedback to move ahead.
4. Create a new document for each chapter.
5. When it is time to write, start writing, anything.

Get started again by making the necessary changes to get your work done and move on with your life!

About Cathy Rodrigues , ACSW, LCSW

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Cathy Rodrigues is a coach who loves helping doctoral and master's thesis candidates all over the world complete their degrees by providing support, accountability and resources that promote getting your degree finished! Her number one signature strength is love of learning. Cathy's clinical background includes twenty-five years as a social worker assisting clients with issues including stress management, chronic pain, and family issues related to chronic illness. Her passion as a coach is to help people through all types of transition, truly focusing on identifying a direction and purpose, and tackling the obstacles that threaten to get in the way of forward progress Contact Cathy by calling her at 847-276-262 or email her at [cathy@letstalkcoach.com](mailto:cathy@letstalkcoach.com) to schedule a complimentary coaching session. You can visit Cathy's website at [www.sdrglobal.com](http://www.sdrglobal.com).

Cathy will be holding a free 4 part coaching networking group on "Making Space in Your Life for Your Dissertation." Send an email to her at [cathy@letstalkcoach.com](mailto:cathy@letstalkcoach.com) with the words "Making Space" in the subject line.

## Inspirational Quote

*The way to succeed is to double your error rate.*  
--Thomas J. Watson

*Experiment with writing fearlessly this month. Don't be afraid to make some mistakes—You can always revise later!*

**For more information call or email us:**

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