

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

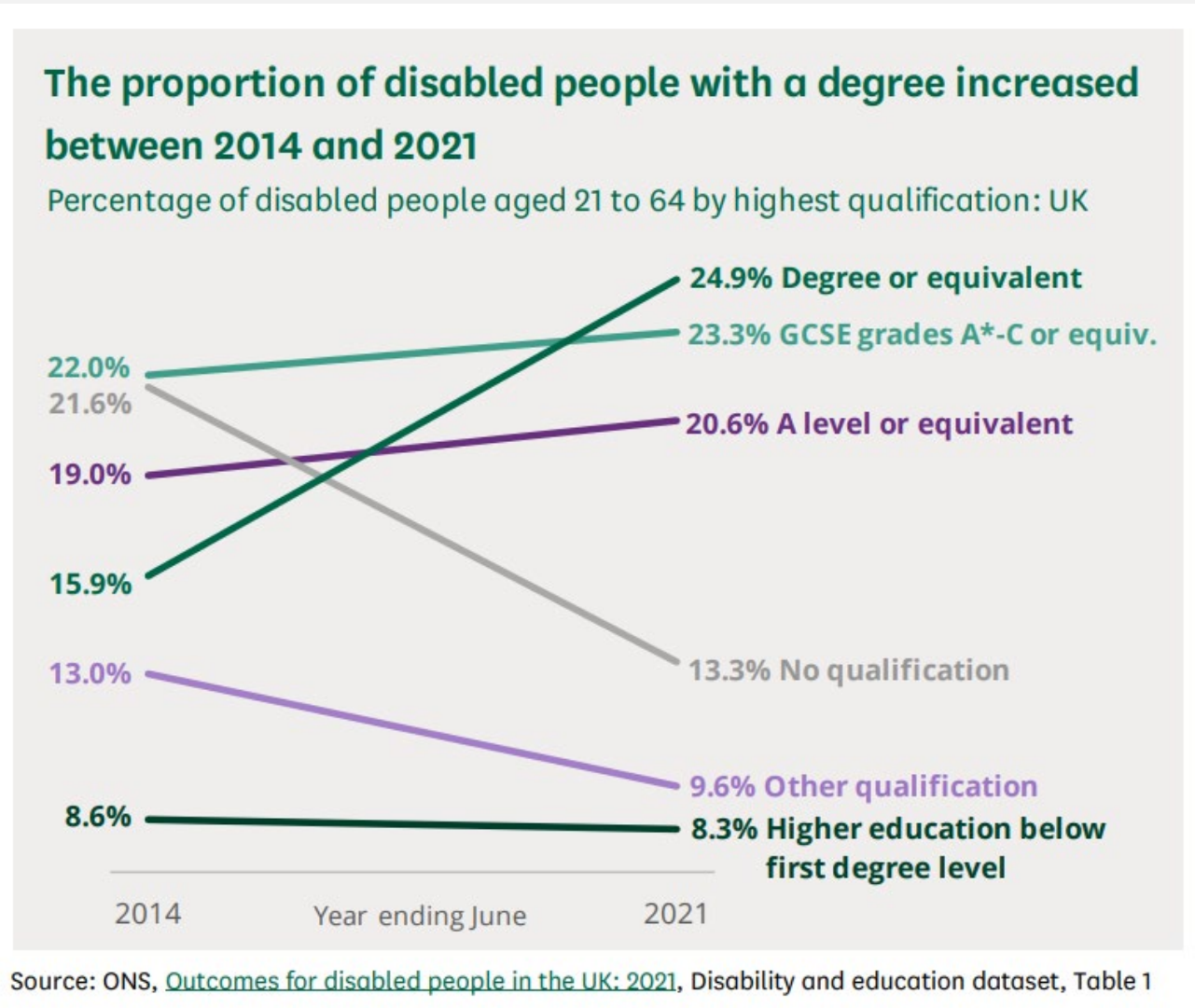
Acknowledging diversity within the supervisory relationship

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Equality... Diversity... Inclusion...

- 16.1 million people (24% of popⁿ) have a disability.
 - Less likely to have a degree (25% with, 43% without).
 - More likely to be anxious (4.6 with, 3.0/ 10 without).
 - Less likely to be happy (6.4 with, 7.6/ 10 without).

Further studies should be accessible to all.



The Iceberg Illusion

Success is an iceberg

SUCCESS!

WHAT PEOPLE SEE

WHAT PEOPLE DON'T SEE

Persistence



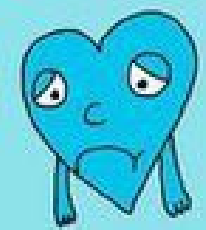
Failure



Sacrifice



Disappointment



Dedication



Hard work



Good habits



@sylviaaduckworth

The plan vs. the reality...
...which perspective?

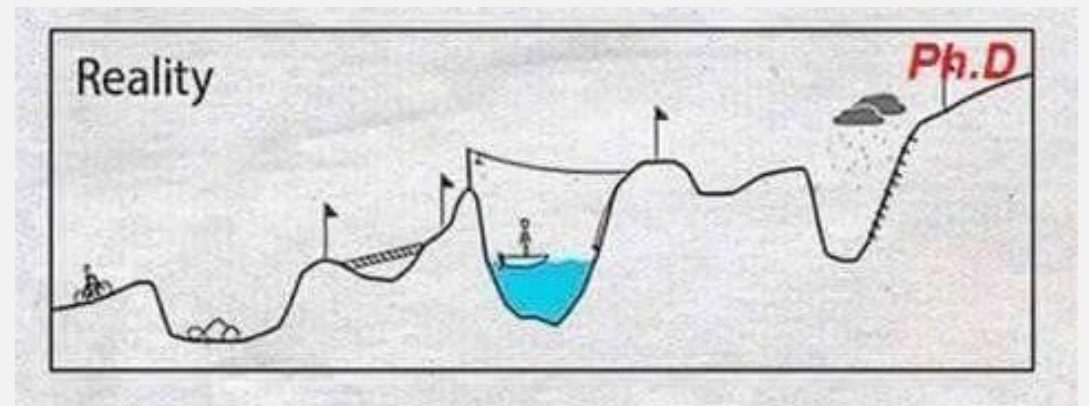
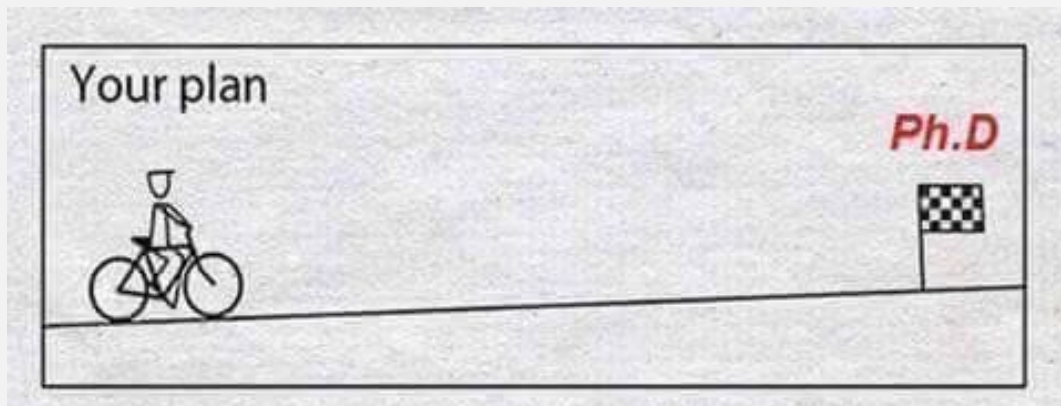
Two sides to the PhD journey

Candidate

- Academically capable.
- Clear plan (on admission).
- Commitment to task/ goal.
- Support (academic/ personal).

Supervisor

- Expertise/ interest in subject.
- Collaborative support.
- Time to supervise/ review.
- Ability/ capacity to advise.



PhD Candidates

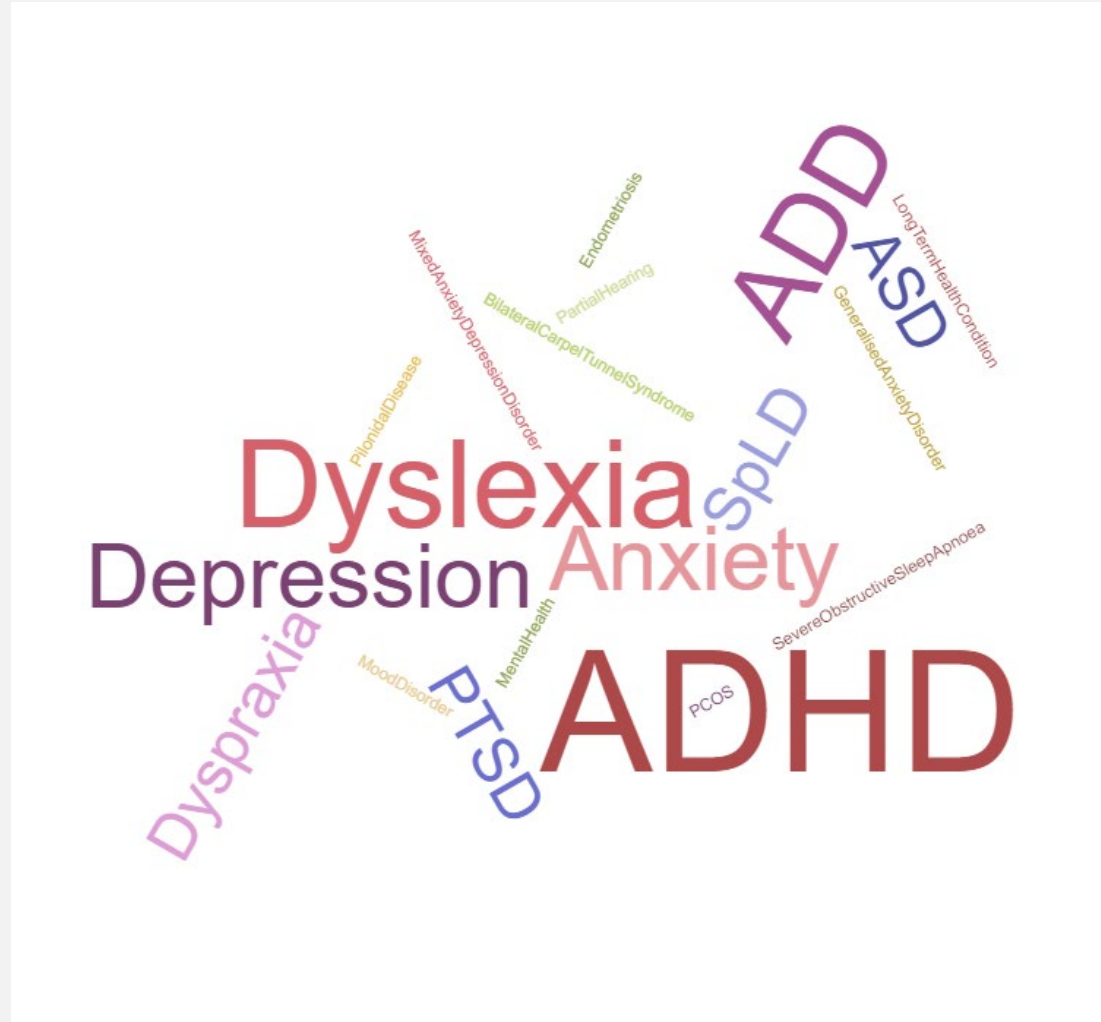
Liberal Arts & Sciences (n=174)

- Humanities (n=39)
- Law (n=20)
- Life Sciences (n=52)
- Social Sciences (n=63)

n=26 (14.9%) with disclosed disabilities

Student interviews

Supervisor feedback/ questions



Case 1:

“My supervisors don’t know what to do with me. I think they try to hide when they know I’m not in the lab.”

Student on campus, looking lost. Checked in to see if I could help.

“No, I’m fine thanks. I think I might just go to the lab.”

Supervisor concerns:

- Not appearing to follow discussions within meetings.
- Meetings not scheduled, turns up ad hoc for direction.
- Lab work excellent.
- Written work really challenging.

“He seems to have significant problems following our meetings. He doesn’t seem to understand what to do next. We don’t know how best to help him.”

Case 2:

“She is a fantastic example of a PhD student. Excellent number of publications, large amount of teaching experience and supports other students. We need more candidates like ***”

Student asked increasingly to take on teaching roles. Transition to write up phase problematic. No space to work on site, interruptions to fill gaps in teaching/ provide student support.

Student concerns:

- Capacity to focus on ‘PhD time’ limited.
- Supervisory push to focus on outputs (not thesis drafts).
- Adjustment for SpLD requirements misunderstood.

“I've had some quite... worrying comments from some of my supervisory team, so I think there's a lot of ignorance about what it's like to have a disability/ SpLD, but it's also exhausting for PhDs to try to advocate for themselves when they don't want to rock the boat with their supervisors.”

Case 3:

“I'm extremely anxious to the point of panic attacks. The GS is pushing me to submit the MC and now the PhD coordinator is asking me to urgently submit another MC. I am lost and confused and very worried.”

Project methods had to change due to COVID-19 then the war in Afghanistan. Ethics delays. Deadlines timetabled to ensure progress not modified to adjust for delays.

Student concerns:

- Focus on processes, not on work outstanding.
- Questioning support gaps/ why their situation has been so challenging.

Supervisor concerns:

- Is reactivity to processes creating stress/ preventing progress with thesis?
- Is student withdrawing from opportunities for interaction?
- Will anxiety impact reactivity to feedback/ capacity to complete?

Supervision of PhD students (with EDI needs)

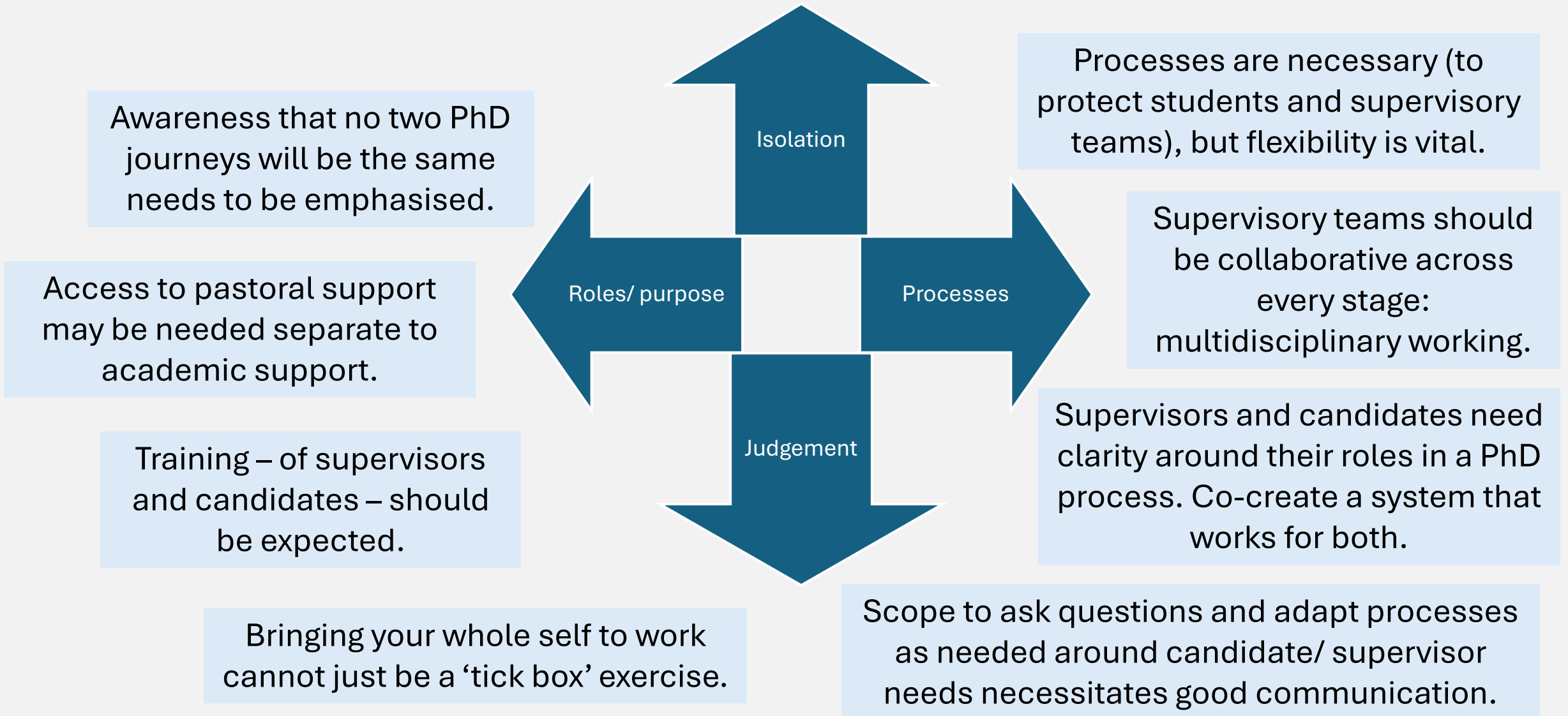
Traditional model

- Didactic roles (expert & pupil).
- This was my experience...
- Highlight problems: what needs to change.
- (Doesn't tend to work)

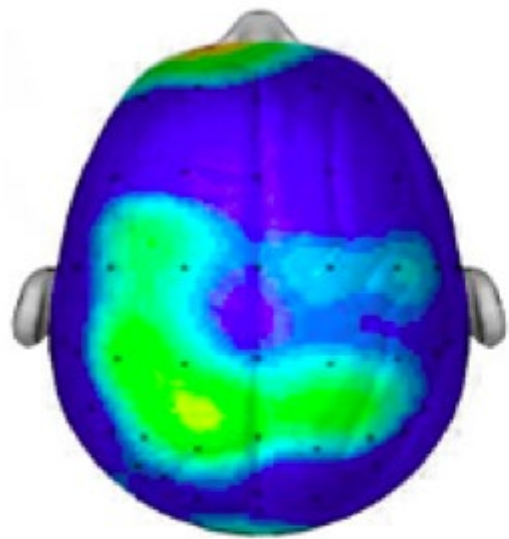
Social, more inclusive models are vital →



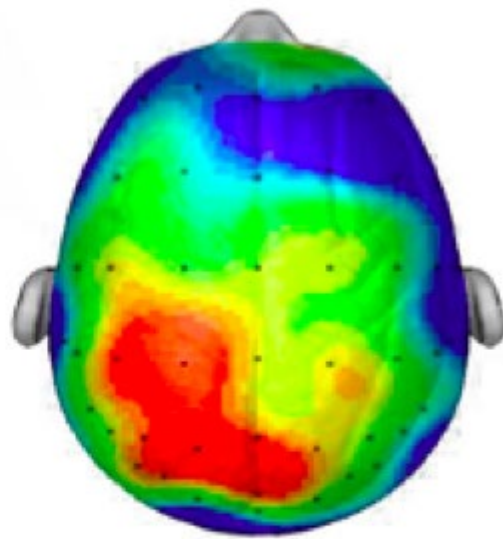
Co-create, tailor & evolve



We all have those days... Share experiences/ strategies

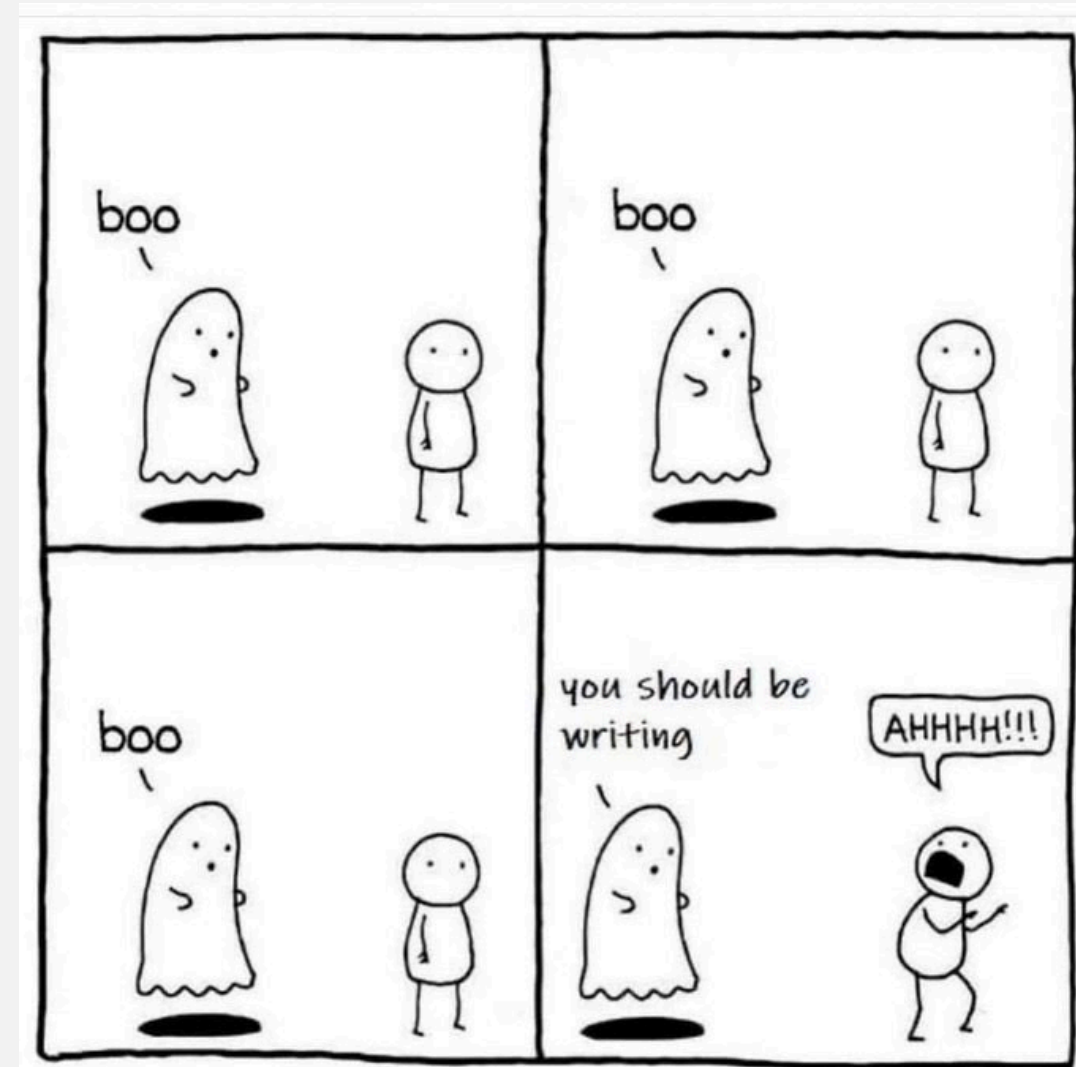


After sitting quietly



After 20 minute walk

Research/Scan compliments of Dr. Chuck Hillman University of Illinois



Good practice requires shared perspectives



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