Stuck? Stages of doing a PhD

I've learnt so much since I started.

I'm not giving up!



Seasoned academic

> You don't know what you know.

Everyone expects me to complete a PhD. But I don't have what it takes.

I can't do this!

The truth is I'm struggling.

You too? Let's support each other.

Advanced PhD student

> You know what you know.

Yay! I love

research!



Everyone else is

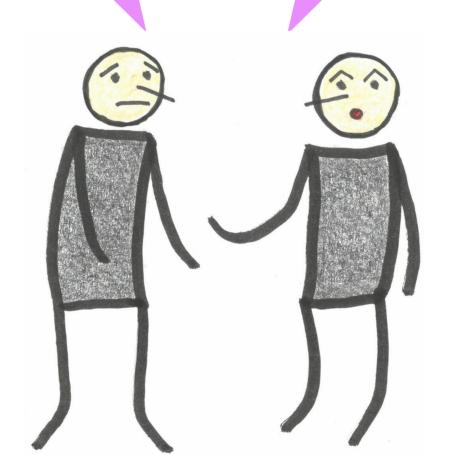
doing well. I don't

belong here.









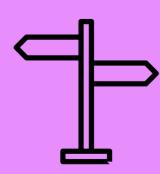


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Stuck PhD student

You know what you don't know.



See Getting unstuck infographic for strategies for overcoming liminality.

Liminality, or the feeling of being stuck, is a common stage during PhD study (Keefer 2015, McKenna 2017, Elliot et al. 2020). It can be experienced as

- uncertainty
- confusion
- loneliness
- anxiety
- a lack of confidence
- dissatisfaction
- imposter feelings
- burnout

Although talking about experiencing liminality can be catharctic, doctoral students rarely open up about going through liminality (Keefer 2015), thus perpetuating the feelings of loneliness and incompetence.

| References

- Elliot, D.L. et al. 2020. The Hidden Curriculum in Doctoral Education. Cham: Palgrave.
- Keefer, J.M. 2015. Experiencing doctoral liminality as a conceptual threshold and how supervisors can use it. Innovations in Education and Teaching International 52(1): 17–28.
- McKenna, S. 2017. Crossing conceptual thresholds in doctoral communities. Innovations in Education and Teaching International 54(5): 458-466.



You don't know what you don't know.

