Building a healthy research culture

Leanne Hodson and Siôn Parry
The building of the Hodson group
Assumption vs reality
Research and rowing: the similarities

Process → Outcomes

Fellowships
Senior Basic Science Research Fellowships
To provide a career opportunity in an established research institution in the UK for outstanding individuals who are expected to reach Readership or Chair level within five years.

Awards

Funding
High quality PhD thesis in on time

Publications
Fasting hepatic de novo lipogenesis is not reliably assessed using circulating fatty acid markers
Fredrik Rosqvist,1,2 Catriona A McNeil,2 Camilla Pramfalk,1,3 Sion A Parry,1 Wee Soon Low,2 Thomas Cornfield,1 Barbara A Fielding,1 and Leanne Hochow1,2
WE’RE IN IT TOGETHER

- Group & individual focus
- Clear communication
- Mutual respect
EVERYONE’S DIFFERENT

- Appreciation of diversity
- Adaptability & resilience
- Recognition of expertise

The outing
IT'S A TEAM EFFORT

- Leading by example
- Shared responsibility
- Celebration & support of others
What has rowing taught me

➢ To be part of a crew / team you need a basic set of skills and equal recognition
➢ Focus on the process and let outcomes take care of themselves
➢ Don’t dwell on disappointments → build persistence and resilience
➢ Respect is earnt and not expected (you don’t have to be friends with everyone but you must respect what they bring to the boat!)
➢ Trust is important
➢ Sharing the load to work toward a common purpose/ vision is more productive (& fun)
➢ Clear and constructive communication vital
➢ To row my own race – even when competing against other crews
➢ People can go beyond what they thought they could do with the right encouragement / support
➢ Small changes (and use of words) can have a large impact
What do they think?
INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP FOCUS

→ all the individuals have their own objectives dependent upon career stages and future goals

→ all group members willing to help others achieve their goals, even if it does not directly benefit them

“the goals of individuals are treated with equal importance to those of the overall group”

“the knowledge and skills of individuals are shared freely in order that the group's knowledge can be greater than the sum of its parts”
COMMUNICATION

→ all opinions valued
→ we are all human, we have bad days, we make mistakes

“Listens/considers all ideas/suggestions with openness/interest”

“Be honest about experiences.....everything can’t be great 100% of the time”

“no boundaries among the hierarchy”

Fredrik
Visiting Research Fellow

Tom
Research Assistant

Leanne
Group Leader
MUTUAL RESPECT

“Being thanked for what you do no matter how small”

“Being given responsibility/trust by the boss.....I always trusted you as my boss...a team who have each others backs”

“proud and enthusiastic of each others achievements and work, it’s infectious, inspiring and motivational”

Charlotte
Postdoctoral Researcher

Carlo
DPhil Student
EVERYONE’S UNIQUE

Sion (me)
BSc Sports Science (2010)
↓
MSc Sport Physiology (2011)
↓
Supply teacher (2011-2013)
↓
PhD (2013-2016)
↓
Post doc Hodson group (2016 - )

Tom
BSc Human Biology (2013)
↓
Data analyst in industry (2013-2016)
↓
Research Assistant Hodson group (2016 - )

Jo
MEng Electrical and Mechanical Engineering (2002)
↓
Consultant building services engineer (2002-2014)
↓
BSc Physiology and Sports Science (2014-2018)
↓
DPhil Student Hodson group (2018 - )
EVERYONE’S UNIQUE…. IS LEANNE?
Leanne’s Career Path

1. Left high school
2. Worked multiple jobs
3. Did a night school course
   - BSc (Hons)
   - PhD
4. Teaching fellow/Lecturer
5. Career development fellowship (Postdoc)
6. Intermediate fellowship
7. Senior fellowship

**URL**

**Did not have a ‘career plan’ (until 2015)**
“Science is hard….its easy to become anxious or stressed about trivial problems….there is always someone you can go to for help”

“no such thing as failure”

“disappointments happen….24 h rule”

→ build resilience, learn adaptability
→ learn to navigate disappointments, challenges, and set-backs
→ try and keep it in perspective
→ celebrate points in the process and the small stuff

“When things go wrong, try and keep it in perspective and don’t take it too seriously”

Have fun!

Fredrik
Visiting Research Fellow
"I was not left alone when things were going bad"

"plans were in place to support my ongoing research projects during my compassionate leave so that when I returned I remained on track for timely completion"
LEADING BY EXAMPLE

“I don’t know any other Prof who is happy to take the time to talk to staff/students or visiting researchers, about their current and future work plans and their life outside work”

“having open door policy for discussions/stepping in with increased active support when things go less well is really helpful!”

“letting students make own path/pushing them especially when things are going well is good for development”

RDM Award for Excellent Supervision
FINAL THOUGHTS FOR BUILDING A HEALTHY RESEARCH CULTURE

➢ Encourage people to talk (not whinge) to others
➢ Practice clear and constructive communication
➢ Have difficult conversations and actively pursue solutions
➢ Small changes (and use of words) can have a large impact
➢ Adapting support to individual needs
➢ Work and personal life overlap (Life Happens) → make sure you give people enough time to the things that matter
➢ Learn from challenges, disappointments and successes
➢ Remember it is not all about you → consider, support and respect others
➢ Be honest about how things are going............

And please stop using the word failure! (only organs fail)
THANK YOU!