How to fail?

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Bad research ideas: How to recognize them, avoid them, and abandon them.

- Read more papers.
- A research idea is excellent if you enjoy working on it and it has impact.
- A research idea is terrible if you don’t enjoy working on it or it has little or no impact.

Reality of life:
- Pressure of tenure, pressure of funding, pressure of proving yourself: chose among all the excellent ideas, the ones that are most promising.
Bad research ideas: Can you transform a bad research direction into a good one?
Whom should you ask for advice and should you always follow it?

- Anyone you feel comfortable asking.
- Don’t be afraid to ask for advice or help. Worry less.
- Should you always follow it?
  - NO!
How should you balance your time across different responsibilities? Which responsibilities should you say “no” to? Is it OK to drop tasks that you committed to?

- Life in the academia:
  - Research, Teaching, Service, ... Family
  - Family duties take priority.
  - University and professional service. Do your share and more if you enjoy it but do not overcommit yourself.
  - OK to drop tasks provided you have a really good reason.
What is the proper level of multitasking? How many research directions should you pursue at a time?

- In terms of research, 1-3. 1-2 is optimal for me.

  - “For tenure candidates, decisions should be based on the quality and impact of their top three-to-five publications.”
When should you give up on a student, an advisor, or a topic?

- When should you give up on a student?
  - When research interests do not match well. (co-advising)
  - Inadequate academic progress.

- When should you give up on an advisor?

- When should you give up on a topic?
  - ???
How to fail?

- Work **only** on things you enjoy doing. The less the better.

- Talk to people. Worry less.

- Don’t be afraid to have children before tenure.
  - Personal: two is enough.

- OK to say no.