

# FAILING TO PREPARE IS PREPARING TO FAIL:

What to expect from your supervisor?

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# PLANNING OF THE SESSION

- ✓ Why is the supervisory relationship important?
- ✓ How to get started?
  - ✓ Discussing expectations & tool to take action
- ✓ The PhD trajectory:
  - ✓ Ups & downs (what if...?)

# THE SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP

# WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

- Successful collaboration is key to successful PhD (\*)
  - Timing and quality PhD
  - Turnover intentions / early drop-out
  - Satisfaction & mental wellbeing

# SO IF IT IS THAT IMPORTANT...?

- **Not 1 formula for success (\*)**
- Differences
  - Supervisor
  - PhD candidate



# SO IF IT IS THAT IMPORTANT...?

“The relationship between student and supervisor is about **as close as many marriages**, and lasts as long as many marriages. It’s a fairly good analogue in several ways. One important issue is compatibility.”

*Shared responsibility*



# HOW TO GET STARTED?

# 1. FIRST MEETING WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR

- How was your ‘first’ meeting with your supervisor?
- Did you discuss shared expectations?
- Did your supervisor inform you on specific aspects (e.g., supervisory style, your needs, PhD process...)?





## 2. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT?

- What would you like/have liked to discuss with your supervisor at the start of your PhD project?

Technical support

Guidance and structure

Emotional support

Research topic

Ability to deliver in time

Feedback,  
Regular meetings

Publications

Practicalities

Co-supervisor

Career aspirations

Standards of work

## 2. WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM YOUR SUPERVISOR?



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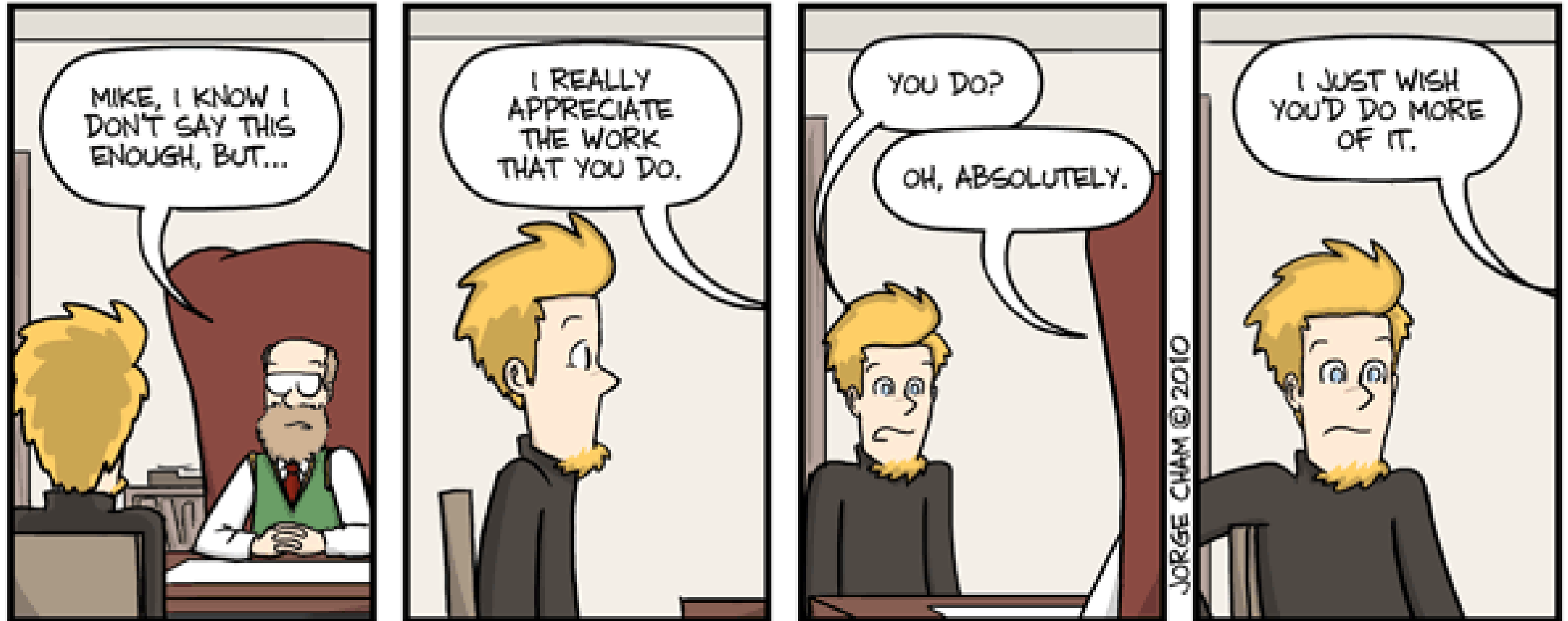
## 2. WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM YOUR SUPERVISOR?

- Expertise in your subject area
  - Regular supervisory meetings
  - Feedback on work in progress
  - Advice and support
  - Mediation and representation
  - Clarity on authorship, publication and conference presentations
- See [Charter](#) for doctoral students and supervisors

## 2. WHAT CAN YOU NOT EXPECT FROM YOUR SUPERVISOR?

- Being taught
- Will inspire you on your research topic
- Taking responsibility for your thesis
- Special treatment
- Being your editor

## 2. WHAT YOUR SUPERVISOR WILL EXPECT FROM YOU



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## 2. WHAT YOUR SUPERVISOR WILL EXPECT FROM YOU

- You manage the project
- Being proactive & autonomous
- Staying in touch
- Appropriate communication
- Sticking to deadlines
- Follow up their feedback (or tell him/her why not)
- If nothing else, be professional

# TAKE ACTION

- Charter: “A good start of the doctoral project involves clear (written) agreements concluded between the doctoral student and the supervisor(s)”
- Communication/discussion
- Preparation is everything: tool to help you make expectations explicit and start a conversation

# KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE


1. The **supervisor** is the specialist and expert in the research field of the PhD project
2. ...
3. ... equally
4. ...
5. The **PhD researcher** is or will become the specialist and expert in the research field of the PhD project



# REGULATIONS AND TIMING

1. The **supervisor** sets deadlines for the PhD researcher
2. ...
3. ... equally
4. ...
5. The **PhD researcher** works autonomously and sets his/her own deadlines

# GUIDANCE, FEEDBACK AND AUTONOMY

1. The **supervisor** insists on regular meetings with the researcher
2. ...
3. ... equally
4. ...
5. The **PhD researcher** decides when she/he wants to meet with  
 the supervisor

# GUIDANCE, FEEDBACK AND AUTONOMY

1. **Supervisor** takes initiative to talk about personal wellbeing, professional development and career aspirations of PhD researcher
2. ...
3. ... equally
4. ...
5. **PhD researcher** takes initiative to talk about personal wellbeing, professional development and career aspirations



# WORKING RELATIONSHIP

1. The **supervisor** is an authority figure and evaluates the PhD researcher
2. ...
3. ... equally
4. ...
5. The **supervisor** is a colleague/friend, acting as a sounding board



# CHECKLIST: TOOL TO USE

- Fill in the document
- Ask your supervisor to fill it in
- Discuss with your supervisor (and repeat)

# THE PHD TRAJECTORY

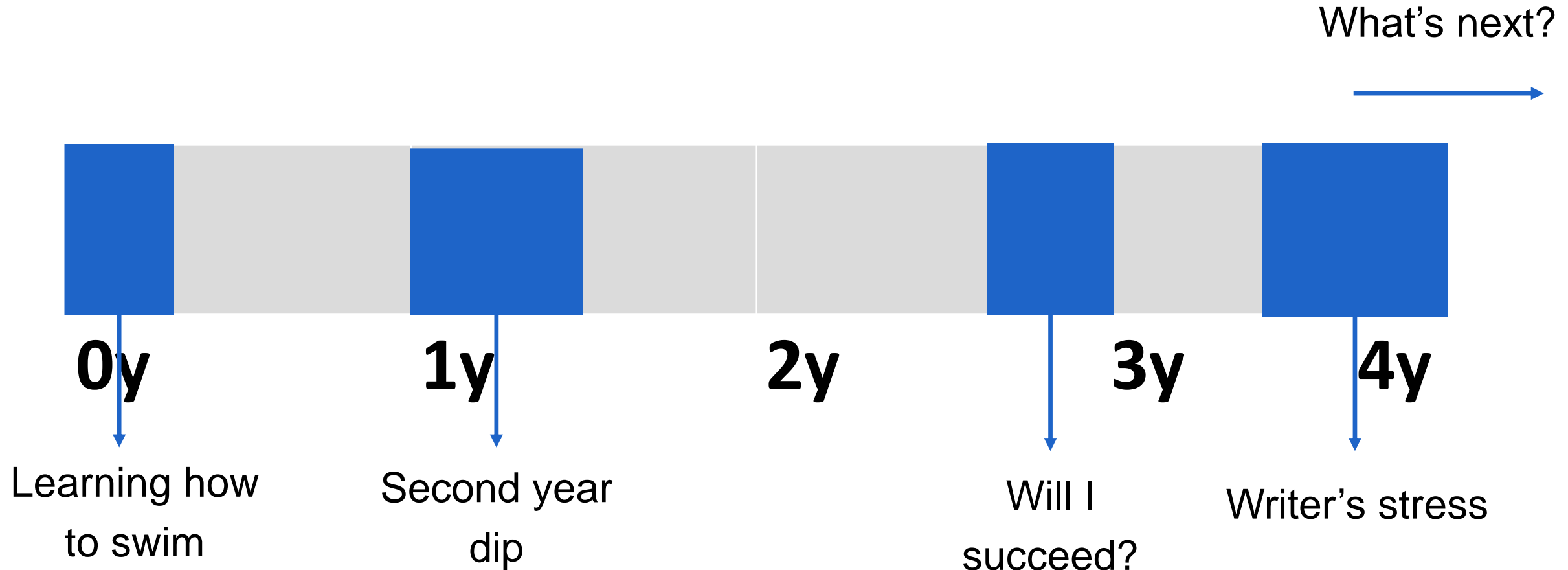
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# UPS & DOWNS



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# PHD TRAJECTORY





# UP: WHAT GIVES YOU ENERGY?

- Why did you choose to do a PhD?
- What is most appealing to you in the PhD trajectory?
- What are you looking forward to?
- What gives you the most energy?
- What do you enjoy doing the most?



# DOWN: WHAT DRAINS YOUR ENERGY?

- Which kind of tasks don't you like? Are you less good at?
- Which things ask a lot of energy from you?
- What are you more dreading than looking forward to?
- How did/will you deal with this?
- Which sources of support can help you out at that time?



# WHAT IF....?

## HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR?

# CONTACT

# WHAT IF THE RELATIONSHIP IS PROBLEMATIC?

- Try to **talk** with your supervisor, co-supervisor, colleagues
- Go to the **confidential** contact at your faculty (psychosocial support);
- Go to the **ombudsperson** of your faculty (conflict, difficulties with SV):
- In case of **serious conflicts** (harassment, bullying, psychosocial issues): contact **trustpunt**: trustpunt@ugent.be
- If you have HR-related questions regarding your **contract** or your **career**, contact DPO: loopbaanbegeleiding@ugent.be

# CONCLUSION

- Supervisor-PhD-student relationship is key & shared responsibility
- Think about what is crucial to you, what do you need?
- Talk about this with your supervisor & keep on talking
- Keep monitoring and discussing the (changing) relationship throughout your PhD-process

**Enjoy your PhD period!!!**

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