The Postgraduate Abyss: 10 ways in and 10 ways out

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Most postgrads find themselves to be in the highs and lows of study patterns at various times during their academic lifetime. This paper is not an academic consideration of the facts but rather a lighter look at the situation based on anecdotal evidence. Mostly it developed from my own experiences, other postgrads I have talked to, and from group meetings on postgrad survival. The issues discussed do not cover all avenues in or out of the abyss, and I am sure many postgrads could come up with several other or different issues, but these seem to cover the general consensus. It should be noted that the points mentioned are not in any particular order of importance nor are they in any chronological order. This paper was designed only to be presented and the headings correspond with the visuals, overheads, that were shown.

IN

How's the thesis going?
People asking.

Money
No grant or not enough.

No work.

Cost of research.

Family & Friends
Don't understand what you are doing or why.

Superficial conversations.

The Thesis
(The ins and outs in this like many of the issues tend to oscillate in and out day to day month to month year to year)

You hate it.

OUT

Change subject - wear a badge

Keep applying.  
Ask what is available.

Casual work - tutoring - try other departments or even other Uni's.  Student employment service.

Make sure to apply for RSM.

Get Stock phrase and use it.  
"Answering an Arch/Politic question" or
"Because I love doing it".

Supplement or replace with new people.

You love it.
Researching over and you have to write. Try to find a comfortable pattern ie: a writing schedule and breaks.

**Social Life**
No social life. Use Clubs or other postgrads in your department to provide social contact.

Too much social life. Cut back.

**Technology**
(Don't forget to get your Citrix talk done) Audit a course of check Staff Development. Grant to put text/pics together or for proof reading.

Computers/printers etc.

**Tangents**
(Like many of the other issues this one overlaps with several others)

Lost the plots. Write or review: Chapters and their outlines and/or the research design.

You find you are off on a research tangent. Stop, put aside, and save for another book, article or degree.

**Isolation**
(Socially mentioned earlier)

No one knows your topic. Use supervisors and colleagues to discuss and debate the topic and you will find that the part of it that is yours alone is not huge but worth rejoicing in

Your in the abyss. Hopefully this paper, conferences like this and other seminars will show you are not alone in these problems and there are ways out.

**Health**

**Ill Health** Postgrad work is like employment - take your sick leave. Try not to bring the virus to the office.

Take your Rec. leave.

Review physical and mental health when reviewing your work timetable.

Talk to Access and Equity.

Consider intermitting.

**Time**
Not enough hours in the day.  Time management.

Family & Friends imposing.  Often need it made clear that you are doing a job.
**IT IS IMPORTANT!**

Running out of time.  Intermitting is an option Not a failure.

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Overall taking time out to review your progress, health, finances, social condition etc. is worth the small amount of time taken to get you out or stop you falling into the abyss.