

Cathy had a professional practice before beginning her PhD in a local North America university, given she did not want to move her young family. She imagined seeking a local research-teaching position afterwards. She began participating in the Canadian study in 2007 in the third year of her degree. She completed the degree in 2009 when she was in her early-to-mid-40s. What struck us about Cathy's story was

No work-life balance (personal)

Financial issues during degree meant seeking more work and taking on governance issues in post (work experience) Changing career intention and career management (career thinking)

		(work experience)	
Year	Personal	Work experience	Career Thinking
PhD Year 2	Academic 'work/life balance not appealing; want to go home, spend time with my family, not have homework'	Passed comprehensive exams(1); weekly goal and email check-in with supervisor to ensure progress. Worked as research assistant and sessional teacher (continued through degree).	Began considering teaching-only position; also community work begun during PhD; perhaps continue previous practice part-time.
PhD Year 3	Overly swamped: no time with friends; work-life balance hard during PhD. Family transition: partner left job to do PhD; finances an issue; spent time applying for more courses to teach. Did not want to give whole life over to a university.	Got ethics approval; collected data; started analysis; wished supervisor more helpful in the process. Received fellowship; helped to finish sooner. Thesis group created by peers; provided feedback and support.	Hoped to become a researcher, but not a lecturer. Wanted a career with no teaching; hoped to move to a research role with a friend at a different university.
PhD Year 4	Partner decided against doing PhD; got other job; finances eased. A huge relief for her family; celebrated several times since it really felt like a family effort. Wanted to spend evenings and weekends doing things wanted to do, not had to do.	Need to be passionate about research given time and energy it takes; not convinced she had the passion. Graduated	Put out feelers to teach locally in graduate professional programme with some supervision. Landed exactly what hoped for: 0.75 clinical teacher, no research expectation.
Post PhD Year 1	Focused on regular exercise, time with family and friends (both suffered during PhD)	A dream job, collaborative climate. Supervising six students, giving feedback very time consuming. Helped others with their research, so doing research on the side.	Needed to learn how to become more efficient. Worked with others to ensure limited research activities recognized in career advancement decisions.
Post PhD Year 2	Work-life balance better, but still working more hours than desired; also chauffeuring teenage children.	Supervising 12 students; presented at conference. Tried to write paper from PhD but not successful mostly due to lack of time.	Learning curve easier at work; realized how much learned, no longer a novice. Became full-time
Post PhD Year 3	Children going to university; very significant shift in life of family; more time for personal and social investment	Less overworked, teaching courses already taught; more able to enjoy supervising students. Finally finished and submitted PhD article	Become academic advisor since full-time
Post PhD Year 4	Children more independent; no longer feeling abandoning them; doing things just for herself		Very grateful to have position; happy to stay there
What struck us	No work-life balance	Financial issues meant seeking more work. Taking on governance issues	Changing career intention. Career management.

(1). Comprehensive exams (demonstrating depth and breadth of knowledge) are a required element of most North American PhDs. They must be completed successfully before doing a thesis proposal defence (which is similar to a transfer of status).





