

Charles worked in a professional role in North America before starting a PhD in a local university to ensure proximity to his elderly parents and partner. He aimed to secure a research-teaching position after completing his PhD. He liked the idea of being hired for his research interests and potential contribution to the field. He began participating in the Canadian research in his fourth year of the degree and graduated in 2008 in his mid-30s. What struck us about Charles' story was

Influence of his parents' health (personal) Challenges of publishing during degree and dramatic difference in institutional climate and expectations in researcher post (work experience)

Starting job-seeking late and re-thinking career intentions after disappointing research contract (career thinking)

Year _	Personal	Work experience	Career Thinking
PhD Year 4	Managed health issues for parents; family responsibilities a priority, so work fell by the wayside	Had proposal defence; changes needed; supervisor very supportive; approval a psychological milestone, but critical feedback a shock; depressed by need to revise. Struggled with self-discipline and prioritising academic activities and commitments.	Attended presentation by a non- profit organization; empowered by the variety of positions open to a PhD graduate.
PhD Year 5	Believed his PhD was 'important enough' to devote 6 years, despite sacrificing time with family, friends and partner.	Enjoyed intellectual team environment created by supervisor. Tried to publish; feedback was horrendous; 'such a blow to the ego; I was really injured by it'.	Believed a singular focus on one idea was necessary to carry anyone through a research-teaching career.
PhD Year 6	Drew on family and friends (non- academic) for support. Limited job search due to family.	Pressured to finalise dissertation by university deadline. Completed degree; felt gained self-confidence from positive interaction with supervisor.	Very few research-teaching positions; applied for 3 local ones; devastated when no response; stressed - 'what am I going to do next?'
Post PhD Year 1	Since family members ill, decided to apply since he wouldn't need to move. Closed the office door at 5 pm; enjoyed having a more balanced life.	Researcher position became available in same university in a different field. Little independence and relationship with supervisors not positive; decided to treat job as 9-5 responsibility.	Increasingly disenchanted with academia.
Post PhD Year 2	Disliked limited time to spend with friends, family; questioned the cost of academe on personal life. Overwhelming desire to do more in life.	Got two papers published, including one abandoned during his PhD - 'It was like WOW' Spent a few months volunteering with several community organizations.	Near contract end, epiphany as to why did PhD; reconnected with his professional interests. Foresaw being a professional, either self-employed or in a public/private agency.
Post PhD Year 3		Started position in private foundation; enjoyed his work; 'great to work with dedicated people who deeply believe in importance of helping others'	Noted satisfaction of bringing together academic training, professional experience, and social justice.
What struck us	Parental health	The challenges of publishing Dramatic difference in institutional climate and expectations.	Starting job-seeking late. Re-thought career intentions after disappointing research contract.





