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BECOMING A PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENTIST: A SERIES TO SUCCESSFULLY APPLY TO GRAD SCHOOL AND HELP DIVERSIFY THE FIELD:

SESSION 9: GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

TRANSCRIPT

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Dr. Derek Snyder: Hello, everyone and welcome. I'm Derek Snyder, Senior Director for Science Partnerships and Outreach at the American Psychological Association. Thank you so much for joining us today. Today's program is the ninth episode of Becoming a Psychological Scientist, an APA webinar series on navigating careers in psychological science across different subfields and work settings. Our session today is entitled Applying to Graduate Programs, Guidance for Students with Disabilities.

It is meant to explore specific concerns of individuals with disabilities applying to and navigating graduate school. At the same time, there are issues here for anyone considering psychological science as a career, and we hope this session will be useful to faculty, administrators, and allies as they work to support students with disabilities. Now, I'm pleased to introduce today's panelists, all of whom have lived experience with disability in various forms. Renée, would you start?

Renée Beach: Hi. My name is Renée Beach. My pronouns are she/her, and I'm a first-year clinical psychology student in the psychology and law concentration at the University of Alabama. I currently work as a member of Dr. Jennifer Cox's Legal Psychology and Decision-making Lab, which is a wonderful experience for anyone interested in Psych law. I've been working with DARN for a while, as you'll hear more about I'm sure. DARN is a really great resource for students with disabilities.

I'm very passionate about outreach and supporting students who want to get into grad school as the application process can be quite confusing and have a lot of hidden curriculum. I'm especially passionate about helping marginalized populations navigate that process.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Thank you, Renée. Em?

Emily Doffing: Hi. I'm so excited and grateful to be here. I am a third-year master's student in psychological research at California State University in Long Beach, CSULB under Dr. Danielle Kohfeldt. I have earned my Bachelors of Arts in psychological and minors of sociology and political science in New York City, Kansas for departmental and university honors. I'm also the co-communications manager for DARN which, again, to

resonate with Renée, is a wonderful resource that we'll talk more about. I manage the Disability Justice Research Lab.

My disabilities are bipolar with psychosis, ADHD, generalized anxiety disorder, and thanks to COVID, asthma. That's me.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Thanks, Em. Bridget?

Dr. Bridget Klest: Hi. My name is Bridget Klest. I am a clinical associate professor at Oregon State University. I just moved here after 11 years at the University of Regina, Saskatchewan. I have served on admissions committees, and then served on and chaired admissions committees. I have an acquired disability that happened after I completed graduate school. I have neurological disabilities, multiple disabilities. I bring the perspective of someone who has been involved in evaluating people for graduate school, as well as bringing that perspective of disability to the admissions and graduate process.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Excellent. Jennifer?

Dr. Jennifer Pearlstein: Hi, everyone. My name is Jen Pearlstein. My pronouns are she/her. I am an incoming clinical assistant professor at Washington University in St. Louis, and I recently completed my postdoctoral fellowship from University of Washington, and I got my graduate degree at University of California Berkeley. I also bring the perspective of somebody with lived experience. I identify as blind, with low vision. I went through the graduate admissions process with that disability, and I, like Bridget, have served on admissions committees.

I know all too well the process of reviewing applications as well as being an applicant myself. Really excited to be here with you all and offer this resource.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Thank you, Jennifer. Jordan?

Jordan Rubin McGregor: Hi, everyone. My name is Jordan Rubin-McGregor. I use she/their pronouns. I'm a third-year doctoral student at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, where I'm studying the social psychology of disability and ableism with Dr. Jeffery Hunger in the stigma and health lab. My experience is both of being a grad student with a disability and applying to grad school as someone both with a disability and who's interested in studying disability. I have congenital, physical, and neurological disabilities that I became aware of in the teenage years.

I was working through the grad school application process as someone who identifies with disability, and yes, I'm really excited to be here with you all.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Thanks so much to all of you for joining us today. Before we start our questions, I want to add that this program has been co-sponsored by DARN, the Disability Advocacy and Research Network, which is a community for disabled psychology scholars and their allies. You can find more information about them at darndisability.org. My first question is for Renée. I want to ask that oftentimes, advisors and professors aren't aware of how to approach accommodations for students with disabilities.

Do you have any advice for approaching conversations about accommodations and accessibility in the classroom or in the laboratory?

Renée Beach: I think this is a particularly great question, and I approached it from the perspective of a student because typically, in these situations, the responsibility of requesting accommodations and initiating those conversations with professors lies with the student. I think for students, it's especially important to be mindful that you need to take time beforehand, before even initiating those conversations, and make sure that you know your needs, so that you're able to identify and articulate what measures need to be taken to ensure that you have equal access to your classes and labs.

Don't assume that disclosing your disability is enough for others to intuit your needs. Of course, I do want to acknowledge that students who suddenly acquire a disability may have much more difficulty with this. This was certainly my case, with the sudden onset of a chronic illness. For students navigating situations like those, I highly recommend reaching out to more advanced students in your department. That way, you can get a better idea of how to navigate these conversations and what type of accommodations they have requested.

I also recommend discussing this with your advisor before you do with any of your other professors, that way, because your advisor may be able to provide more insight into which accommodations are feasible within your department. Because unfortunately, it varies a lot depending on department and institution, and there can be different things that are offered. You just definitely want to make sure that you have all the information you need to request the accommodations that are appropriate for you.

Dr. Derek Snyder: That's a great answer. Does anyone else from the panel want to comment?

Dr. Jennifer Pearlstein: I would love to echo what Renée has shared and offer an extension of this idea of, "Doing your homework," before talking to professors about potential accommodations. I think sometimes there aren't a lot of allies or resources within one's home institution to assess how one's disability can be accommodated. I want to suggest reaching out to others, whether it's through DARN or through other networks so that you can find out what's even possible. I think one thing that's challenging about graduate training is that accommodations look very different than an undergraduate coursework.

You're looking for accommodations, potentially, with clinical training or with research training, and the accommodations can take very different shapes and forms. Getting a sense as to what is even possible is really helpful. I would suggest trying to figure out what your needs are, but also, how those needs could even be addressed in this type of context, which often requires some conversation with others.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Thanks. My next question is for Em. Em, what are some strategies for disclosing one's disability in the application process? In one's personal statements or maybe in the interview, what do you have in mind?

Emily Doffing: Yes. I'm just going to reflect on my experience. I disclosed my prominent disabilities in my personal statement, diversity statements. Often, disabilities are left out of conversation surrounding diversity, and that's actually documented by research as well. What I framed it as it's definitely a strength and an asset rather than, even though it's commonly viewed as a deficit or a liability. Your lived experiences is valuable expertise. I also have reflected on my personal statement and diversity statements on how I've given back to my community through research, clinical work, and activism.

I listed disability justice as one of my research interests, and I also used to be a suicide prevention lifeline counselor. I've counseled people of all identities, including disability, and I want to say that it is valuable expertise. Every disabled student has what disabled activists, Mia Mingus, describes as access intimacy. Your lived understanding is simply those who "get it".

Dr. Derek Snyder: That's a really excellent point. Would anyone else like to comment?

Jordan Rubin McGregor: I'd like to add, I'd like to echo that. I've talked to different folks who have and have not disclosed their disability at various points throughout the admissions process. I know some folks for whom it really is a very relevant part of the work they do and how they see themselves and something that they want their potential future institutions to know. I know some folks who didn't disclose lesser until they did a visiting campus interview, or until they were having one-on-one talks with someone who'd extended them an offer.

I guess it maybe isn't the most helpful advice for people asking what they should do but I just want to validate that whatever works for you in your situation is a fully valid and real thing for you to choose.

Dr. Bridget Klest: I also want to note that ableism does exist in graduate admissions. It's not all full of people who do get it. The question I think sometimes is, do you want to disclose so that you're only going places where people actually value that experience or are you willing to wait to disclose and test the waters a bit and see whether that program is supportive or not? I can tell you that particularly with psychiatric types of disorders, psychological diagnoses, that within psychology, a lot of misconceptions and ableism do exist. That extends to some of the graduate admissions committees.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Thank you for that perspective. Bridget, my next question is for you, what are some ways you think graduate programs could be more inclusive for students with disabilities? For example, what are the top two or three things programs could do right now?

Dr. Bridget Klest: Yes, so first I guess it is worth reiterating something that Renée said that in many graduate programs, the work of requesting accommodations and making the program more inclusive is put on those students with disabilities. That means that a brand new first-year graduate student who has very little access to resources like knowledge about the program or the university who's maybe the lowest ranking in terms of the power

they have about things like decision making, who's the most vulnerable, for example, in relation to possible judgment from professors and peers.

This first-year student might be tasked with identifying accessibility concerns and self-advocating. From my perspective, that's really not acceptable because we know from personal experience and research that beginning a graduate program, which might also have involved a big move on top of it is really stressful for everyone. Putting extra stress on new graduate students with disabilities, it's a pretty awful thing for a program to do. Graduate programs do not want to be awful. As awful as it might feel sometimes to graduate students, programs, and professors do not want to be awful.

It is important for graduate programs to think about the extra burden that they might be placing on their new students and then take steps to remedy that. Easy steps to start with, include asking an individual or a committee to identify accessibility concerns within the program. Things like physical barriers, barriers in coursework and curriculum barriers related to research work. Doing this ahead of anyone, thinking, not because you have a disabled student in your program, but hopefully before or just at any time you can start this process.

That's number one. A second thing would be to identify an advocate, say a professor in the program who can learn about the resources available and the policies of the university. Then when new students arrive in the graduate program regardless of whether they've disclosed a disability or not, that person can be identified as a contact for students who might require accommodations or need information. Then if you acquire a disability during graduate school, you know who to contact. Also, those potential accessibility concerns would've already been identified as per my first recommendation.

Those can be brought to the students' attention so that they aren't caught by so many surprises as they're seeking accommodations. Then, already armed with knowledge of university policies and practices, that person can help guide new students through the accommodation process. Third, working to remediate those concerns that are identified in recommendation one. That can be the longer process. It can be a collaborative process working with department heads, training directors, individual professors, students, working together to come up with solutions that fit the program.

Because obviously the more inclusive and accessible a program is already, the less accommodations need to be made. Basically, just the easier it is on everyone. Those are my recommendations for programs.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Thank you. Would anyone else like to comment?

Emily Doffing: Yes, so I just want to say I love all of these recommendations. For example, the disability advocacy, advocate is easier to be offered help than to ask for help. I recommend that a way to go about doing this research and inquiry within your departments and university is to use participatory action research. Basically, the participants in the research act as co-researchers and develop a research project from the

start with the goal of conducting and carrying out local social change. That's what I've been doing for disabled graduate students.

I just have some recommendations based on what I've been finding in my research. One is that syllabi is very important and signal a lot of information to disabled students. We encourage that professors customize their syllabi. Explicitly state that all students are welcome in the course, don't have your syllabi state disability accommodation section next to the plagiarism section or near the end of the document like it's an afterthought. Then please accommodate students if they're in the process of becoming registered, the university's disability services, since it's a very lengthy process.

In the research, we found that it on average takes four months, which is a long time given the pace of the semester. Also, I would say that using an anti-individualist critical pedagogy is very important in your coursework. In other words, graduate school is very isolating, but it doesn't have to be, it can be very collaborative and that's a strength for a lot of programs. For example, my mentor, she created writing accountability groups and gave us writing resources. We were able to create a community with one another as well as incorporate accommodations and provide access needs to one another in our groups to create community.

Lastly, I would say that there needs to be financial and advising support for students who need more time to complete their degree and medical assistance is a basic needs and should be referred that way. My very last note is saying that accommodations and providing for access needs is more than logistics, it's what disabled activists is proclaimed as access is love.

Dr. Derek Snyder: That is a really great closing note. Thank you so much, and those are some great pieces of advice. Jennifer, my next question is for you, what advice can you offer for finding and building a sense of community among students and faculty with lived experience with disability?

Dr. Jennifer Pearlstein: I think this is such an important question because I think for many of us, we can feel pretty isolated in our disabled experience within our graduate institutions. Unfortunately, the rates of representation around disability are still pretty low and so many of us may be the only disabled scholar within our program or within our institution that we're aware of. My suggestion would be to try to network both within institutions and outside of institutions. I think one way to do this would be to get the word out there that this is something that you're interested in connecting around.

For me, one thing that was tremendously helpful was to cold e-mail people that I knew had disabilities within my institution and those people then connected me with others within my institution, with others outside of my institution. We have all elevated the idea of DARN already and so I will amplify that the Disability Advocacy Research Network is an exceptional resource for connecting with others with lived experience. I also want to emphasize that we can learn a lot from each other whether we have the same disabled experience or not.

I think sometimes we can get in disability echo chambers where like, as a blind scholar, I'm only connecting with other blind researchers. I have learned so much from those with other forms of disability and chronic illness because there is a really shared reality around what it means to navigate academia regardless of the cause of disability or the source of disability. I would also suggest some open-mindedness around connecting with others. I think we can learn a lot from each other about what are some of the barriers, what are some of the ways of increasing accessibility by having more of these conversations.

My suggestion would be to go ahead and reach out to that person, reach out to that network. I'll also add there are some specific listservs that can be really helpful. For me, there's a blind academics listserv that's been tremendously useful and I know that there are some other resources like that for specific types of disabilities. I think connecting can be really, really valuable at reducing that sense of isolation and loneliness but also providing that instrumental support for figuring out how to navigate some of these access barriers.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Thank you for that input. Would anyone else like to comment? All right, Jordan, my next question is for you. Oftentimes, students assume that accessibility offices on college campuses offer support mainly to the undergraduate community. What kinds of resources have you found that accessibility offices can offer to graduate students as they go through their unique journey?

Jordan Rubin McGregor: Yes, absolutely. I think that's a really important question because we know that graduate students tend to request accommodations at a lower rate than undergraduates even among disabled populations. I think off the bat, it's really important to know that accessibility offices are not just for undergrads. They're for graduate students too. You can get the same accommodations, you can go through the same process. I'm not sure if at some institutions it might be a little different but at least at mine, it's an identical process.

I know that graduate forces can be a little different and can be more flexible, so you might have the feeling that you don't necessarily need accommodations that you might in other contexts or as an undergrad. I would generally recommend that it's always worth having accommodations in place before you need them because ideally, or hopefully it would never be an issue for you to need accommodations or for faculty to incorporate access into courses from the beginning, but you don't know every faculty member.

I think just starting off at the start of grad school, contacting the accessibility office, I think there's a wide array of things that you can request as accommodations and some of them can be specific to the grad school format. For example, I know that I and several other students in my program have an accommodation of being able to attend classes virtually if necessary. That's something that people can get very strict about with undergrad courses but because of the community that we have among grad students, we have everyone in our cohort takes turns donating their computer to be the Zoom computer.

We can attend by Zoom if someone's having a really bad chronic pain day, for example, and can't come into campus. I guess a couple of other things to note is that depending on the university, you may or may not get reached out to. I think it's less common to be

reached out to about accommodation, so unfortunately that does tend to fall on you as a student to be proactive in reaching out to accessibility offices. I think that once you've accepted a place at a graduate program, it can be good to get started early on making sure you have letters or even talking to someone at that accessibility office to find out what you'll need.

I think it was Em mentioned the process can take a long time and if you know by March that you're going to be attending an institution and you're going to need accommodations starting in August, it doesn't hurt to start figuring out what letters are you going to need from which doctors for that process. The last thing I just want to note is that grad students are in an unusual position in that a lot of the times we're a mix of students and employees. If you are a TA for funding or if you are I guess a teaching assistant or doing things for the university, you can also get accommodations in that context.

In that context, generally, you don't go through the accessibility office, you go through HR. I don't know if that's true at every school but that's true at my institution. I think it's true at a lot of them is that you can get your accommodations for being a student and you can also get accommodations or reasonable allowances for teaching and for what you'll need to be doing as a teacher or in clinical training or field placements. You just might have to go through different places and sometimes knowing where to go for that can be a little bit difficult.

I think we talk a lot about accessibility as a student and it's important to remember and acknowledge that you can get accommodations as an employee.

Dr. Derek Snyder: That's a really great point. The distinction between HR and the accommodations office and how both may be able to offer accommodations and resources for students with disabilities. Does anyone else have anything they'd like to add? My next question I'm going to throw out to the group, are there specific questions that students should be asking prospective programs and advisors to ensure that they're applying to programs that promote and embrace accessibility from the get-go?

Renée Beach: I can answer first. I think a really good question or group of topics that you should be asking your potential advisors is about their lab culture and how they view it. For example, students should ask about their mentorship style, about their productivity, and progress expectations for their students. Like, at the end of the semester, where does that advisor want their students to be? Do they have publication requirements yearly or presentation requirements? Ask about non-negotiable time commitments and work commitments and how they've handled situations where they've noticed that previous students were struggling.

That's a really important one to ask because some advisors may be more hands-off than others and even if they might notice that you're struggling, they might not necessarily intercede there or provide any guidance in that area. You want to make sure that your needs and your working style match the idea that your advisor has and how they operate their lab. Otherwise, you might end up in a situation where you're having to turn up to a lot of in-person meetings and they're not flexible enough to accommodate you zooming in.

Or you might end up in a situation where you're having to go to multiple conferences or have a lot of really difficult expectations to meet. Which is difficult, especially for disabled students who are already having to manage so much and already have an additional time burden because of their disabilities. The other group of questions I recommend that applicants ask is questions that they should pose to current students. Current students are a great resource because they can provide you with the student side of things, which a lot of faculty miss out on because they're not in their shoes.

Students have a very personal perspective that will be more relatable to you. Some of those questions include how they personally view their advisor's lab and work culture and their work ethic. Especially if you're able to get in contact with students who currently work in the lab of an advisor that you're interested in, that's a very good question to ask. You also want to be asking about whether their advisor is flexible, if they're willing to accommodate students.

Some general questions that you might ask to other current students that aren't necessarily working in the lab with the advisor that you're interested in, include general work-life balance questions. Do students in the department feel they have a good work-life balance? Do they feel they're always running on a treadmill? You also want to ask about if there are any other disabled students in the department. Of course, there may be, but they may not be open about it, which is also something that you want to look at. Because it's like people have reasons about not disclosing.

Another important thing to ask is whether the department is taking any concrete steps to ensure and increase accessibility and inclusion because some departments will do a few things and then there's a halt in progress. Where we're at right now, there just really hasn't been enough progress at all. You want to ask and make sure that things are still happening, these discussions are happening. You also want to ask about how students communicate concerns within the department if they're able to do that anonymously.

That way, if you're having a problem, you know that there's somewhere you can turn to without necessarily putting the spotlight on yourself. One of the things my department has is a climate survey and climate reporting that students can fill out at any time of year saying if they've experienced any issues within the department, if they've had negative interactions with faculty, or significant other issues that they're experiencing within their classes. Then that generally gets discussed and addressed during town halls, where our department comes up with some actionable steps that we want to take.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Thank you for those incisive comments. Does anyone else have anything they'd like to add?

Jordan Rubin McGregor: I think those were all fantastic questions to be asking. I wish I had that list when I was applying, just because that can give you so much great insight. I think building off of that last point, asking an advisor or folks who you can be working with about what they and their department's commitment to equity and accessibility is in general, can be really insightful. Both because if there's an answer that directly reflects the department's mission, then that tells you something about the level of deep thinking and

engagement your advisor may have done or the concrete actions that they might have been able to share.

Also, just because we know that disability doesn't exist in a vacuum and ableism intersects with so many other axes of oppression that the degree to which folks are able to talk about their commitment to equity overall can be really telling about what your experience as a disabled person is going to be in that program and in that lab. I also think asking potential advisors about what accommodation processes look like there and what accommodations they've made for undergrad students can also be telling.

I think every professor who teaches undergraduates works with accommodations and works with the disability service offices. I think from our experiences as undergrads, many of us know that sometimes that can be done very willingly and supportably, and sometimes a little bit less so. The degree to which faculty are able to tell you about the experience that undergraduate disabilities have in the courses there can also be telling of both the culture and what your experiences as a grad student might be, both in terms of taking classes and in terms of what your potential advisor's values and goals are.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Thank you. Would anyone else like to add? All right. My next question is about disclosure, particularly for students with hidden disabilities or with acquired disabilities, who are beginning to experience difficulty during their graduate training. What are some good strategies for approaching that in ways that ensure that a student's disability accommodations are met, even if they don't quite realize what they are yet?

Dr. Jennifer Pearlstein: I think this is such an important question. I want to elevate something that Jordan mentioned earlier around how disclosure and requesting accommodations is a really individual process, and it's one that will probably differ for each of us with a disability over the course of our disabled experience, but also depending on who it is that we're interacting with and how safe those people are. I think my first suggestion around this would be to try to find a safe person within your program.

Whether that is a student, a mentor, an advocate, like Bridget mentioned, if there is a disability advocate within your program that would be a great person to turn to, so that you can kind of get a feel for how this disclosure is being received. I also think that knowing what your ask is really important. Sometimes we don't know what the ask is because we don't know what our needs are in a given context. In which case the ask is, "Hey, I'm hoping you can help me with collaboratively discovering what maybe my access needs in this given situation."

I think doing that work ahead of time to figure out what it is that you need from the person that you're disclosing to can be really helpful. I also think knowing who to go to if that disclosure doesn't go well is really important. Every department has either a climate representative or an ombudsperson or an HR representative or someone that you can turn to. I think knowing ahead of time where you can get some additional support and advocacy can be really helpful, whether that's formally or informally.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Thank you for that answer. Would anyone else like to add? Great. I want to give everyone on the panel before we close an opportunity to give a few closing statements, perhaps addressing anything that we have failed to mention or any particular point of advice you might have for students with disabilities who are embarking on their graduate school experience. Renée, I'll start with you.

Renée Beach: Some really important suggestions, whether it's for students who suddenly acquire a disability or are coming in knowing that they already have a disability and will need accommodations. Get in contact with your Office of Disability Services as soon as possible, especially if you're experiencing ableism within your department. This is a good place to turn, because typically, you will be assigned an accommodation specialist, who you can then reach out to if you're having any issues being granted the accommodations that you need.

Another really important thing is, like some of the others have mentioned, finding sources of community support. That's not always going to be within your program, your department, or necessarily even your university, but a lot of universities also have mentorship programs outside of the department. Some departments have them within their department as well, but applying to university-wide mentorship programs is a really straightforward way to get connected with someone else that you might be able to share experiences with.

A lot of mentorship programs do actually allow applicants to specify what they're looking for in a mentor, and oftentimes they will assign you both a peer mentor, so kind of a more advanced student who's not necessarily in your field, and then also a faculty mentor. Students with disabilities, if this is something that they're looking for, like guidance from someone who's already been through those things, they can potentially request having mentors that identify as disabled themselves.

Or in the case of just any other marginalized identity, you can request based on sexual identity, gender identity, and also of course race and ethnicity-based. Those are just really good resources to keep in mind. There are also ways to connect with others outside of mentorship programs, like a lot of the other panelists have mentioned, DARN, it's a great community to join. There are several interest subgroups that meet, and it's a good way to connect with others, network, and also learn resources that you need to navigate your programs.

As we were talking about earlier, especially for students with acquired disabilities, it's hard to know what you need, especially if you're dealing with something like chronic illness, where your day-to-day needs may not be consistent. Sometimes it's good to just have someone who can relate to that, even if it's not the exact same thing that you're dealing with, because they can give you some ideas and some guidance on how to navigate that.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Thank you so much, Renée. Jordan?

Jordan Rubin McGregor: Yes, so many thoughts. I think two main ones that I think could be good for folks to keep in mind, one is when you're choosing a program, if you're

in the process of applying and deciding where you want to apply or once you apply and if you have multiple offers where you want to go, consider features of each option beyond the program itself. That can be things like, if relevant, the physical accessibility of the campus or the city. It could be what student health care looks like and student health insurance, especially if you're going to be using it, sooner or later.

The existence of an access to health care that you might need in the city itself. Even things like, what are the hobbies that students do in the area? Does everyone go hiking on the weekends and you can't hike? Then in terms of community, are there disability services or support organizations or community organizations, if those are things that are going to be important to you? Just making sure to keep a holistic perspective on what your life there is going to be like or could be like.

Then I think the main thing that I've been so pleasantly surprised with in grad school, once you're in a program, is that grad school gives you a lot of flexibility and you can use it to reimagine access. We talk about grad school sometimes being like a non-traditional, it's not the 9:00 to 5:00. That's true and you can take that to look however gives you the most access in whatever is the best for you. If that looks like working four or five hours, seven days a week, that's great. If it looks like using your office to hyper-focus for nine hours, three days a week, that's great.

If it looks like focusing on coursework during a part of the year and focusing really intensely on research and another part of the year within the somewhat very broad requirements within grad school, I think it can be a very unique and lovely way to really just take what we know about school and about work. Just pull it back and say, "What do I need and what would access in a career and in doing research look like for me?" See how much you can start from there and build up from there. I think it's a really wonderful feature of grad school that we might not necessarily talk about or think a lot about.

I guess just to give that sense of optimism for students who are applying or maybe coming into grad school, You can choose to do it in a million ways and that can be really wonderful.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Thank you, Jordan for ending on a positive note. Em?

Emily Doffing: In addition to DARN, I recommend DREAM, which is Disability Rights, Education, Activism, and Mentoring. It's a national group and they have events for both disabled students and their allies. We've had virtual game nights, disabled author book talks. There's also bi-monthly groups for both graduate students and undergraduates students. They also have a listserv on social media. If you're looking for leadership opportunities, you can apply to their board. I also recommend DISCO. They also have disability events and social media.

Then lastly, I want to pass along advice that my near scholar advisor gave to me when I was interviewing. She said something along the lines of, "You've asked to interview because you've impressed the committee. This is an important part, you are needed in this space you belong in this space. Just because that space wasn't necessarily made for you or

your community, that doesn't mean that you can make this space your own. You've worked hard in this place to get to this place and your work will speak for you."

Words of affirmation like that to yourself, practicing it out loud. Also share them with your loved ones and your caring ones to repeat back to you, to fill your cup when it's emptying.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Thanks, Em. Thank you for being brave in this space. Bridget?

Dr. Bridget Klest: I think quickly to echo what Em was saying that as someone been involved in graduate admissions for many years, I can tell you that no student is invited for an interview who is not qualified. Remembering that regardless of how you feel, you actually do belong there. That is one important thing to remember. The other thing, just that we didn't really touch on is that as a field psychology, maybe it's not so great in terms of accessibility. Right now people with disabilities are just at a disadvantage in this field. Period.

There are advances that have been made and are being made, but ableism does exist. Sometimes programs or professors are wary of providing accommodations because they think like, "Yes, but in the real world, that's not how things work. We need to prepare students for the real world," meaning to work in the field of psychology. As if students with disabilities have never faced ableism elsewhere and have no idea what it looks like. We somehow have to show them that this exists. That's just a cop out.

People who think that way, programs who are worried that way, are not thinking about their own agency within all of this. The real world should be accessible. The only way for the discipline of psychology to become more accessible is for individual programs to become more accessible. By sticking with the status quo, no one changes anything, but by providing accommodations, working toward accessibility, a program might move the needle, just a little tiny bit. Those changes build and build and build and eventually become something bigger.

You get to this tipping point where accessibility is the norm. I want to encourage programs to think about their role in all of this and that they do have agency.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Thank you so much, Bridget. Jennifer?

Dr. Jennifer Pearlstein: Wow, the panelists so far have given such incredible advice. I want to pull a of couple threads through here that I think we've touched on, but haven't talked about explicitly and that's it. Graduate applications are really hard and grad school itself is really hard. I think for many of us going through the graduate school experience, we can feel a lot of imposter syndrome, like, "I don't deserve to be here, there's something wrong with me, I can't keep up." It's really common to have those experiences regardless of whether or not you are someone with a disability.

I think coming in with a disability can exacerbate some of those experiences. To mention what Em was saying, you do belong where you are. Along those same lines, I think we can make graduate school our own unique experience. To take what Jordan was saying, I think it's really important to emphasize that graduate school is a pretty flexible time and it is on

us to figure out what works best for us. It may be that what works best for us is to take a longer time in graduate school to do our work at different hours, to do our work in different places.

I think to have the lens that we can approach this in a little bit of a novel way. It doesn't have to be the traditional way that academia has looked for everyone, because for many of us, we are square pegs coming into round holes when it comes to the experience of graduate school. To really honor that you belong and you are enough and that there is a way to make the graduate school experience one that hopefully will work for you by being a little bit more flexible with what that grad school experience can look like.

I'll also add in the plug that relying on these sources of support, that many of us have mentioned, can be a way at combating some of the challenges that can come up and teaching us how we can be a little more creative with the graduate school process.

Dr. Derek Snyder: Thank you so much to all of you for sharing your experience and your exceptional advice today. We really appreciate it. We'd also like to thank our partners at the Disability Advocacy and Research Network or DARN, for suggesting such incredible speakers. We encourage you to check out their work at darndisability.org. We also hope you'll check out other episodes in our series, *Becoming a Graduate Student*, which offer important advice for those considering careers in Psychological Science and graduate training in general.

Also, stay tuned for future programming from us, for students with disabilities and for aspiring and current graduate students in general. Thanks so much for joining us today. I also want to point out our incredible production team Angela Shuback and Shandol Hoover. They make all of this happen. We hope you enjoyed this conversation. I'm Derek Snyder with APA Science and I wish you a good day.

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