

Surviving the PhD Journey with Dr Sarah Atayero

Summary

- **How do you deal with the emotional impact of research?** [5:47](#)
 - The onus is on the researcher to carry all of the pain on the retraumatization that they experience when delivering the research or conducting the research.
 - Working on an anti-racism thesis in the NHS while doing a thesis on anti-racism within the NHS.
 - Taking time out and doing additional work was not just a way for her to keep going, but also a way to support and disengage her own work.
 - The loaded question of not feeling safe to say no in a PhD program, and how to deal with burnout.
 - The importance of having support in all aspects of the PhD programme, from colleagues and peers, to a personal tutor, clinical tutors and other support.
- **Flipping the script of success.** [13:20](#)
 - As a black person, black people are raised to work twice as hard to get half as much.
 - Taking six months off before starting his PhD was supposed to be a celebration.
 - Taking a couple of months to rest, recuperate and celebrate what is a massive achievement that still hasn't sunk in.
- **Advice for people who are going through difficult times.** [18:03](#)
 - The importance of networking and connecting with people who are in a similar position or on a similar course to you.
- **Mentorship and mentorship.** [23:50](#)
 - She works closely with two of her four mentors, and it is empowering to see what the workplace can be like for black women when they are allowed to be their authentic self.
 - Having a mentor has been helpful throughout her journey, because she didn't have that as an undergraduate.
 - Mentorship is transactional and takes up someone else's time. Be specific in your request. Be aware of the fact that you are taking someone's time, and be respectful of their time.
 - Be grateful when you have done extended pieces of work with someone.
- **The professional lens of mentorship.** [30:02](#)
 - Mentorship can be a professional way of approaching someone by being direct and saying what it is you want from a mentor.
 - It is important to respect people's time and protect yourself when working with peers and collaborating with peers in clinical or academic life.
 - Keeping the professional hat on and having a professional lens means that it's okay in terms of setting boundaries and being direct and clear in the work that you're doing together.
 - Celebrating being the first black person in a conference is not a good thing.
- **The importance of setting boundaries.** [34:42](#)
 - Sarah has a similar approach to how she was socialised in her childhood, socialised to have a game face and tunnel vision.

- White supremacy culture is where only a few people get named and recognised for things in workplace settings, and where competition comes from.
- The importance of having boundaries in place when it comes to friends, especially with friends who take a lot of time and become their work.
- **How has your perspective on anti-racism changed over time? [38:54](#)**
 - The importance of diversity in the profession of psychology and the need to connect with others in order to do the work properly and authentically.
 - The last 10 years have been spent on this journey with this lens of increasing diversity and decolonization in psychology.
 - The importance of being an early bird and early morning riser with a thesis, and how long it takes to complete an assignment.
 - Taking care of yourself and celebrating life.
- **A good thesis is a completed thesis. [43:15](#)**
 - A good thesis is a completed thesis that is all they are striving for at this stage of the process. It doesn't take away from all the learning of the three years.
 - A mentor of mine said, there are no original thoughts.
 - PhD is all about novelty and what you've added to the field and the literature base. It's not about the original thoughts, it's about the execution and the interpretation of what it is that you find.
 - When talking about results or discussing results, don't just say things that have been said in other papers.
- **Navigating not knowing as much as you thought you knew. [48:06](#)**
 - Everyone who works in anti-racism is working to put themselves out of a job, so if they are truly working on anti-racism or decolonization, their job is redundant.
 - In the first year of her PhD, she realised that she did not want to practice clinical work. She wanted to be a systems and organisational-level therapist.
 - The most powerful feedback she got on her course was when she delivered diversity and inclusion training for those working with psychosis.
- **Tackling racism at the systemic level. [56:15](#)**
 - Racism is a systemic issue, and it needs to be tackled at the source rather than the source.
 - Clinical work and research need to be integrated into the same system.