

Writing doctoral research: managing your writing

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Topics

Planning...

- What to do
- and when to do it

Getting Things Done!

- Writing-time management strategies

What if I'm not getting things done?

- The “dimensions” of writing
- Diagnosing the issues



PLANNING



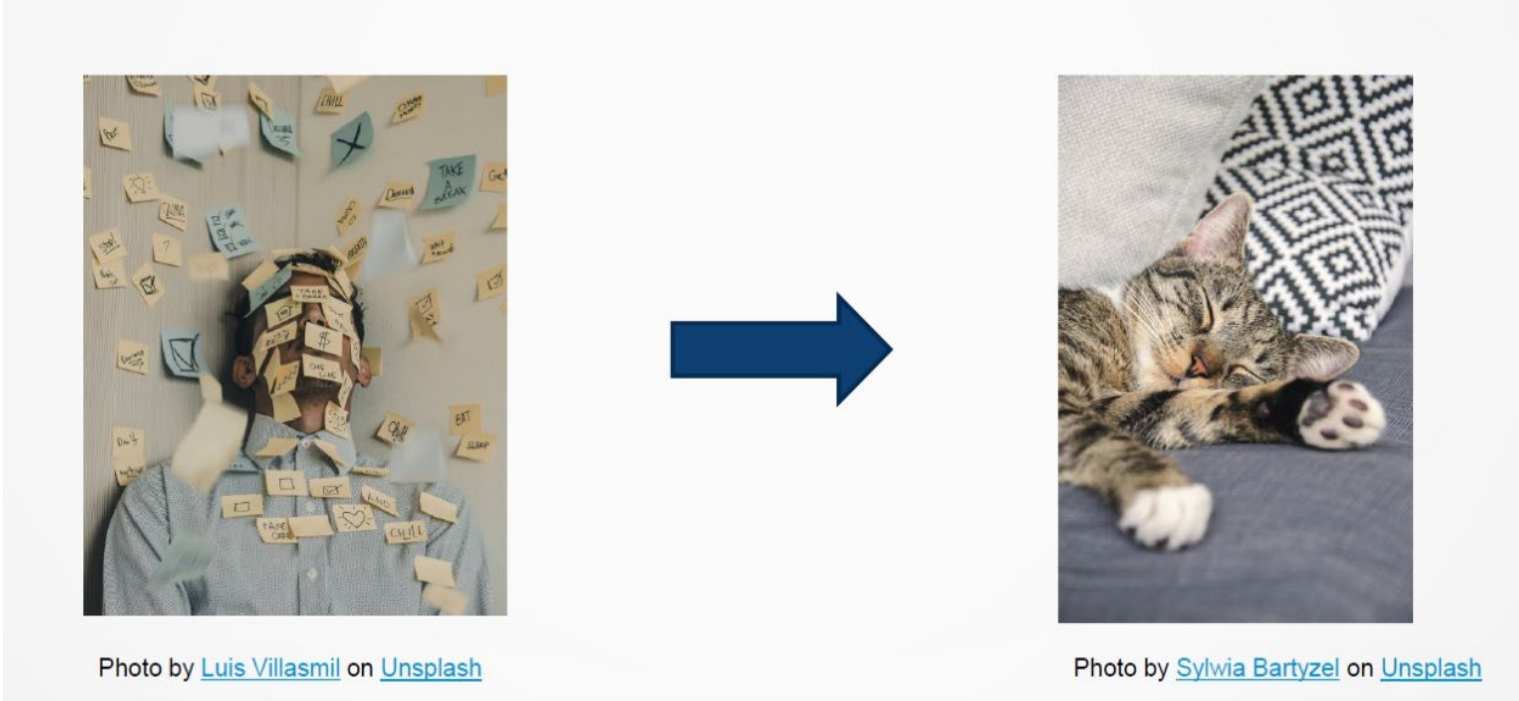


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IN OTHER WORDS

- A more realistic thesis project
- More met targets
- More free time
- Less procrastination
- A more even workload
- More determination; less rambling
- Less stress



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Planning: what to do

- Planning backward / forward
- Swiss cheese vs. salami technique
- Yearly/weekly/daily plans
- From bigger goals to small
 - e.g. -> what stages does writing an article consist of?
 - What do those stages consist of, etc.
- Make your goals and to-dos small and “actionable”





Big rock and MIT

“Definition of a to-do list: A long list of tasks whose primary purpose is to overwhelm you into numbing inaction” (nerdcreativity.com)

- Take control of your to do list by choosing your
 - Big Rocks and
 - MITs (Most Important Task)



Jamie Street on Unsplash

The Four-Criteria Model

(by David Allen, *Getting Things Done*)

-
- Context – what CAN you do at that moment?
 - Time available – what do you have time for?
 - Energy available – do you have the energy and brain power for the task now?
 - Priority – what is the most important / urgent task to do (MIT)?

Planning: when to do it

“Deep Work
Philosophies”
(by Cal
Newport)

The Monastic Philosophy of Deep Work Scheduling

- Ignore everything else

The Bimodal Philosophy

- Long writing periods, retreats

The Rhythmic Philosophy

- Integrating “depth” into your every day
- The chain method
- Ritualistic

The Journalistic Method

- Write whenever you have a moment
- Often happens naturally before a deadline

How to *Allot* Time for Writing?

- Integrating writing into your every day
 - Binge writing vs. schedule writing
 - Writing in the morning? In the evening?
 - Is there something you could do less of in order to find time for writing?
 - Routines: making a habit of writing (see e.g. “How to Write a Lot” by Paul Silvia)
 - The chain method – collect writing days or pomodoros
 - You have the right to DEFEND YOUR WRITING TIME!



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Regular writing= prolific writing

Boice (1990)

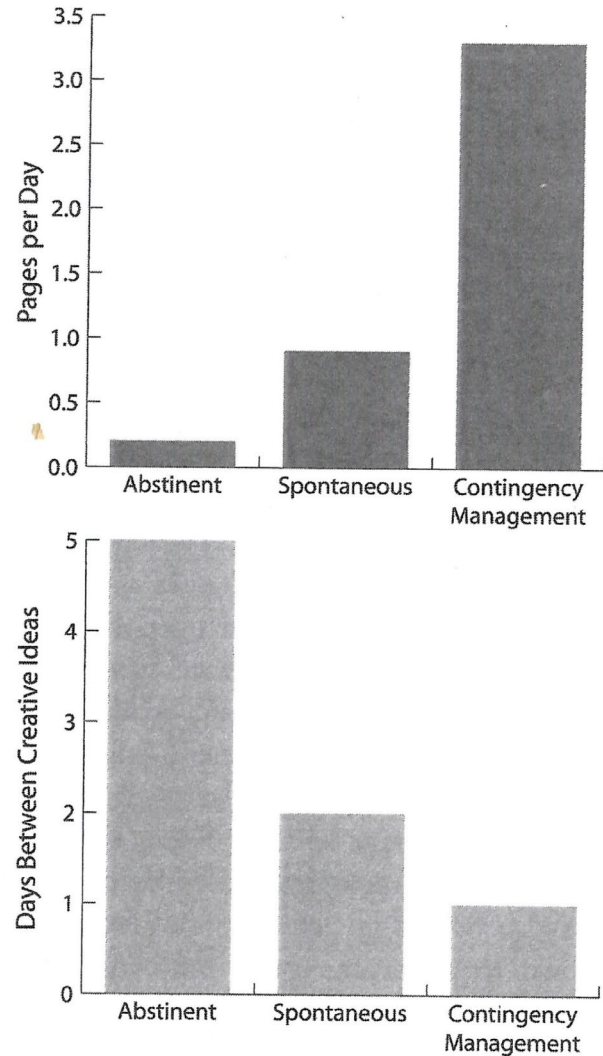


FIGURE 2.2. Effects of different writing strategies on (a) the number of pages written per day and (b) the modal number of days between creative writing ideas. Data are from Boice (1990, p. 80).

- Three test groups:
 - Abstinent: told not to write unless it is an emergency
 - Spontaneous: told to dedicate time for writing but write only if they feel like it
 - Contingency management: told to dedicate time for writing and stick to it

Pomodoro Technique

- 25 minutes of work and 5-minute break
- Can be used as the basic unit of planning
- Time blocking and time boxing
- Ensures sufficient breaks
- Lessens procrastination
- Helps keep track of how long things take
- Collectable
- Tools: e.g. mytomatoes.com, pomofocus.io





Easier said than done

Remember: No-one is efficient, motivated, and successful all the time (or even most of the time): you don't have to be, either.



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Me and my colleagues in the afternoon, after one too many meetings

Common thesis- writers' problems



Not finding time to write



Procrastination



Lack of motivation / inspiration



Lack of confidence / impostor syndrome

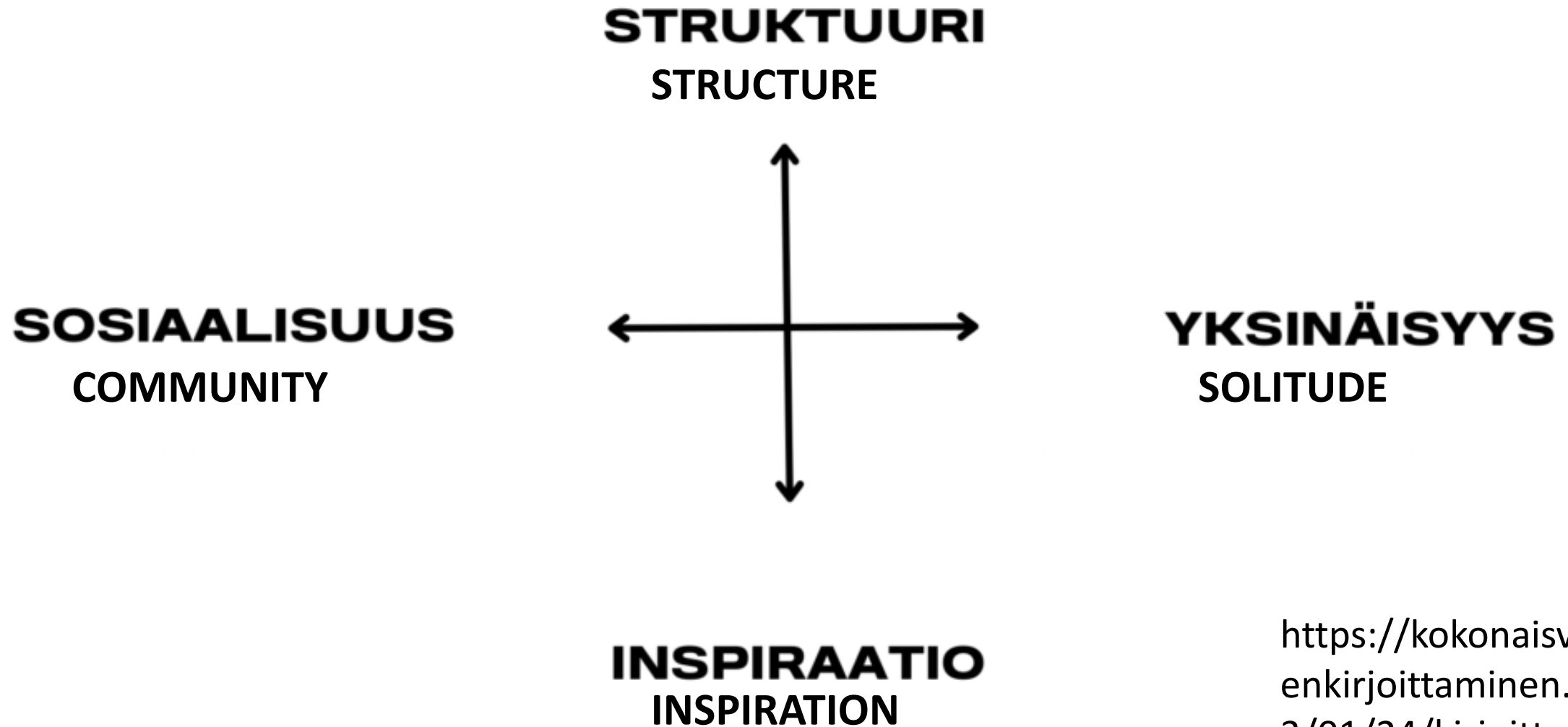


Being stuck ("writer's block")

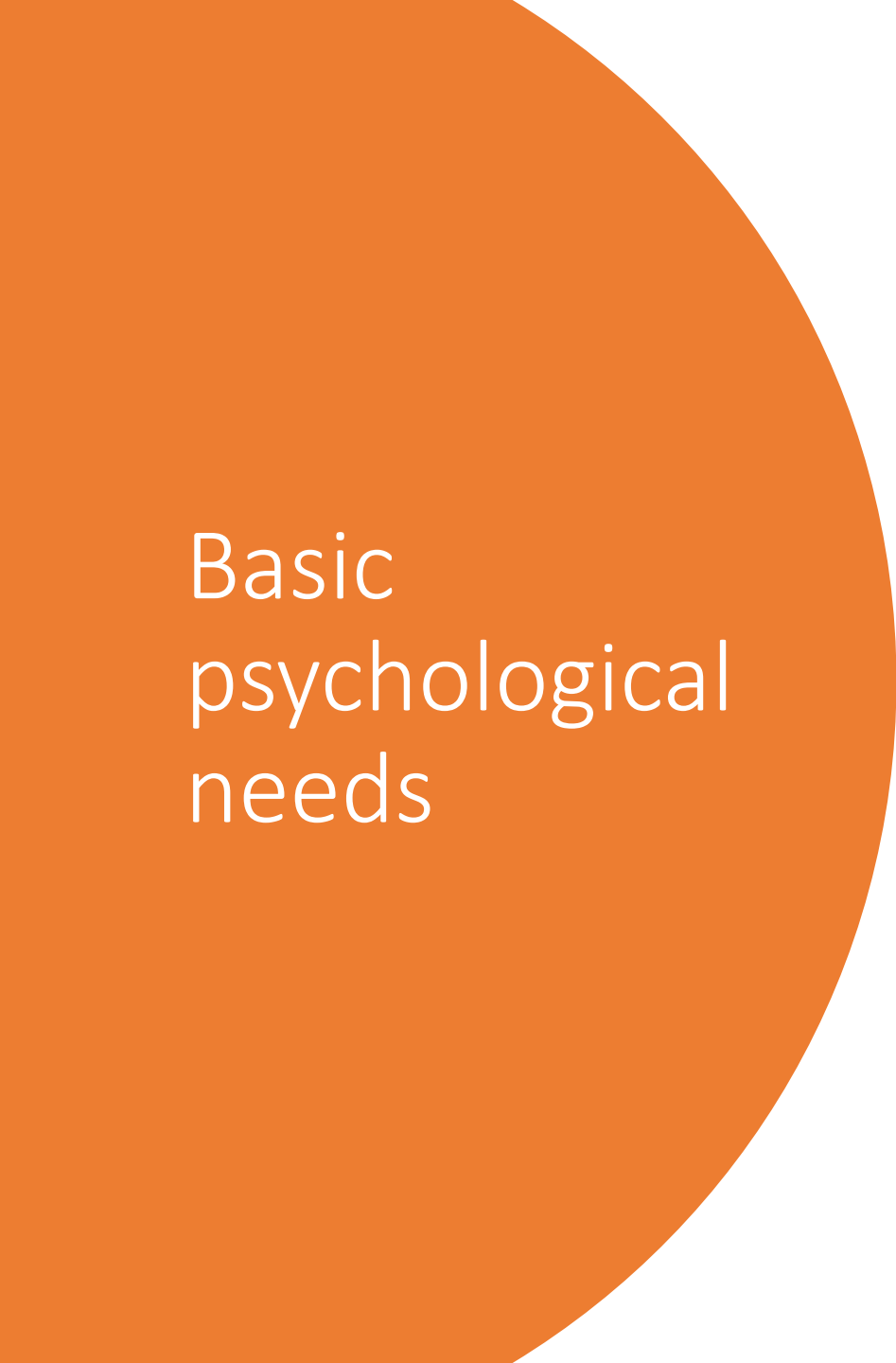


Feeling alone

Kimmo Svinhufvud: Writing as Opposing Forces



<https://kokonaisvaltainenkirjoittaminen.fi/2023/01/24/kirjoittaminen-jannitteina/>



Basic
psychological
needs

autonomy

competence

relatedness

Don't be alone

- Use all the help you can find
- Write together with others
- Allow yourself to be less productive when you need it – spend time with friends and/or family
- If needed, talk to professionals
- Remember: you are not alone!



Thank you!

If you have questions, comments,
email me at:
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References

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Silvia, Paul J. *How to Write a Lot. A Practical Guide to Academic Writing*. American Psychological Association, 2007.

Newport, Cal. *Deep Work. Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*. Piatkus: 2016.