



Steve Kohut

What are your publishing goals and how do you achieve them?

My goal for publishing over the past few years has been to always have a different manuscript at each stage of the publishing process – one that is being written, one under review, and one in revision. I've been able to do this by blocking out regular protected time in my schedule that is dedicated to writing/editing manuscripts. Overall, this has worked well, and I think it has kept us thinking about what's next and how the various projects in the lab fit together.

In the short-term, we all want to get grants and publish papers, but what do you/did you consider as your long-term career goals? (e.g. tenure, editor positions, directorship positions?)

My long-term career goals have always been more focused on research and not toward any specific position or career status. Doing research is what got me interested in a career in academia and I've primarily been motivated by pursuing research questions that I find interesting and, hopefully, important for understanding the biological basis of substance use disorder. Of course, writing grants and publishing papers is important for career development and both provide opportunities to learn important career skills needed for promotions and when being considered for leadership positions.

The work never ends, so what boundaries do you have in place to protect your personal time and your sanity? Any Tips?

It's always difficult to find the right work/life balance but I think it's important that you find what is right for you – everyone will be different. I probably was not very good at finding balance early in my career. More recently, spending time with my kids has been the major driver for me to set boundaries to protect personal time. I've only been able to do this by blocking out time on my calendar and being strict with not giving into requests for scheduling other events – same with setting aside time for writing, etc.

Was there a time in your career that you found particularly difficult, and how did you get through it?

The transition to independent investigator was probably the most difficult because there were a lot of new things happening all at the same time. From hiring and managing several staff members, figuring out how to maintain a budget, and other administrative tasks, all while making sure research progress stayed on track. I was able to get through it with support from great mentors and friends in the field. It was very helpful to talk with more senior mentors that had valuable advice and suggestions but equally so to talk with friends at a similar career stage that were also going through these things at the same time.

What is your favorite session/workshop/event to attend at CPDD?

As the current chair of the Travel Awards committee, I would recommend that young investigators take advantage of the many events at the CPDD meeting that are geared toward networking, especially the Brunch with Champions. This is a really great event that provides an opportunity for early career investigators to chat informally with well-established leaders in the field. I've had the opportunity to sit on both sides of the table – as a trainee and as a “Champ” – and it's a really neat experience to see it from both sides.