



SOCIETY OF  
RESEARCH  
ADMINISTRATORS  
INTERNATIONAL

# Bend, Don't Break: Keeping Yourself Intact During Tough Time

SRAI 2026 Collaborative Section Meeting: Post-Award in Action  
Wednesday, May 6, 1:45PM

Gina Hedberg, The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB),  
Email: [ghedberg@uab.edu](mailto:ghedberg@uab.edu)

Gloria Greene, The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH),  
Email: [greeneg@uah.edu](mailto:greeneg@uah.edu)

# Welcome



# Poll #1: Stress Check



# What Creates the Pressure?



- Last-minute proposals
- Faculty expectations
- Compliance risk
- Staffing shortages
- Regulatory changes

# Bend vs. Break Concept

## Breaking Indicators

- Burnout
- Cynicism
- Withdrawal
- Loss of motivation



# Bend vs. Break Concept

## Bending Indicators

- Adaptability
- Perspective
- Strategic communication
- Recovery



# Bend vs. Break Concept



“A rigid tree snaps in a raging storm. The pliant tree bends in the rain and survives.” - Emery Lord

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Scenario: A PI sends an email at 4:45 PM: “The proposal is due tomorrow morning, not later than 11:00 AM EST. The budget isn’t final, but we can fix it after submission. ***Can you submit it tonight?***”

What is your first reaction?

What risks exist?

How would you respond professionally?

# The Four Resilience Anchors

## (A practical framework)

### Anchor 1: Perspective

#### Control

Processes: Proposal routing – Internal timelines – Documentation standards

#### Influence

Communication: Faculty behavior – Dept planning – Communication tone

#### Accept

Sponsor Deadlines – Regulatory requirements – last-minute changes



# The Four Resilience Anchors

## (A practical framework)

### Anchor 1: Perspective (Reframing Stress)

**Instead of:** “This is impossible”

→ Ask: “What part of this is within my control?”

You can't change a late PI submission

But you can control:

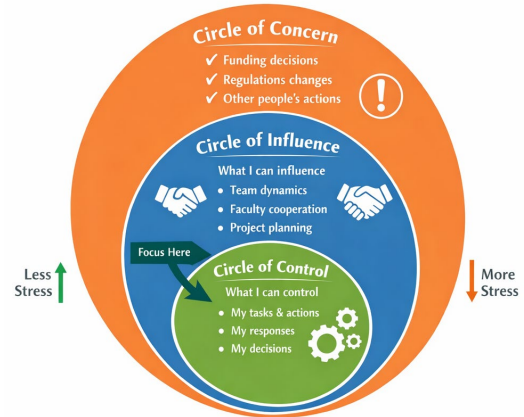
- How you communicate risk
- What you document
- What you escalate

When pressure hits, pause and ask:

- What am I responsible for?
- What is outside my controls?
- What is the next best action?

### The Circle of Influence

*Based on Stephen Covey's Model*



# The Four Resilience Anchors

## (A practical framework)

### Anchor 2: Boundaries

- **Protect your time, your role, and your institution**

→ Lack of Boundaries lead to: Burnout, compliance exposure, unrealistic expectations

Remember: In this field, the pressure isn't just to do your job—it's to fix everyone else's problems too.

- **What you tolerate once becomes the expectation next time.**

→ Without boundaries? Last minute submissions, cutting corners, increased workloads



# The Four Resilience Anchors

## (A practical framework)

### Anchor 2: Reframing Boundaries

#### **Boundaries are:**

- Clarity
- Risk management
- Professional responsibilities

#### **Boundaries are not:**

- Resistance
- Lack of support
- Inflexibility



**Boundaries and Authority:** Your role is not just service—it is stewardship of the institution.

#### **When boundaries are ignored:**

- Escalate appropriately
- Involve Leadership
- Document concerns

# The Four Resilience Anchors

## (A practical framework)

### Anchor 3: Support Systems



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# The Four Resilience Anchors

## (A practical framework)

### Anchor 4: Recovery



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# The Four Resilience Anchors

## Summary



**Anchor 1: Perspective:** Focus on what you can control

**Core idea:** Resilience begins with clarity—understanding what is within your control versus what is not.

**Anchor 2: Boundaries:** Protect your role, your time, and your institution.

**Core idea:** Boundaries are not barriers—they are professional guardrails that manage risk and expectations.

**Anchor 3: Support Systems:** Resilience is not a solo effort.

**Core idea:** Sustainable performance in research administration depends on trusted networks and shared knowledge.

**Anchor 4: Recovery:** You cannot operate in emergency mode forever.

**Core idea:** Resilience requires intentional recovery and reset, not just endurance.

# Coping Strategies

## EFFECTIVE COPING STRATEGIES

BUILDING RESILIENCE & WELL-BEING



### TALKING WITH COLLEAGUES

- Share Challenges
- Seek Support
- Build Relationships
- Lessen Burden



A PROBLEM SHARED  
IS A PROBLEM HALVED



### TAKING BREAKS

- Disconnect Completely
- Recharge Energy
- Clear Your Mind
- Improve Focus



SCHEDULE REGULAR  
REST PERIODS



### HUMOR

- Reduce Stress
- Improve Mood
- Foster Creativity
- Defuse Tension



FIND THE LIGHTER SIDE  
OF SITUATIONS



### IMPROVING PROCESSES

MAKE WORKFLOWS  
MORE EFFICIENT



- Identify Bottlenecks
- Streamline Tasks
- Adopt Better Tools
- Reduce Future Stress



EMPOWER YOURSELF & ENHANCE YOUR WORK LIFE

# Reflection

## What is . . .

- **Your Bend Plan?**
- **One stressor you cannot eliminate?**
- **One strategy you will try?**
- **One person you will lean on?**



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# Finally . . .

*Research administration  
will always have storms.  
The goal is not to  
eliminate them, it's to  
develop the resilience to  
remain standing.*



GH/GG

