

# Changing Working Environments with Victoria Gray

Grad Chat by PhD Balance - April 30, 2022

## **Linda Corcoran**

Hello, hello and welcome to Grad Chat by PhD Balance where we talk about topics of grad school beyond academic research, and then maybe a bit more difficult to talk about in our day to day. I'm your host, Linda and I've just finished my master's in food science in Ireland, and for PhD Balance. I'm the Grad Chat lead and Twitter coordinator. Don't forget to subscribe to grad chat on your chosen platform to get notifications about new episodes. And if you feel like it, maybe leave us a rating or review. Our topic today is changing work environments, and I'm very excited to welcome our guest Victoria gray. Victoria just finished her PhD in Statistical Cancer Genetics at Cardiff University and is getting ready to start her research position at the University of Bristol. Her research focuses on genetic variation and patients with various types of cancers. Outside of this outside of work, Victoria is a keen singer, performer and F1 fanatic. She's active in science communication, is passionate about reducing educational inequality, and changing the perceptions of scientists through her new project. I'm a scientist at. So welcome, Victoria, we're so pleased to have you on grad chat to discuss your experiences.

## **Victoria Gray**

Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here.

## **Linda Corcoran**

So I guess to start, how are you?

## **Victoria Gray**

I'm okay. I'm very, very okay. Actually, I've literally only just finished my corrections in the last couple of weeks. So I am finally at the end of the graduate experience and ready to go out into the terrifying new working world as a doctor, which feels very strange, to be honest.

## **Linda Corcoran**

Congratulations. That's an amazing achievement. And he's done it all.

## **Victoria Gray**

Finally, much to, I think the joy of everyone around me, especially with what's been going on at the moment. So I'm very grateful that it's all done despite everything that's going on in the world at the moment.

## **Linda Corcoran**

Definitely. So yes, as we were talking about before we started, there's definitely been a lot of changes that happened in your life during COVID. And I guess even though we're going to talk about COVID, it could really be applicable to a lot of different situations, because some people do, obviously depends on your research, but some people do change research working environments during their PhD. And things can happen as well. And changes happen. And yes, you never know what's gonna happen.

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## **Victoria Gray**

Most definitely like this, my experience has stemmed from from COVID, as unfortunately a lot of our experiences do at the moment. But it would have been something that I may have been able to do even if COVID hadn't happened. So although I'm a scientist, I'm not from a traditional lab lab environment, you no longer see me in a lab coat with a pet anymore, much to the joy of everyone who knows me cuz I'm the clumsiest person you'll ever met. But I am an implementation. So what that essentially means is I answer all my questions using a computer anyway. And even before the pandemic hit, there was talk about changing working environments for me, because of the financial pressures of doing a PhD. And here in the UK, at least we have a year and funded at the end of our degree where we are without any sort of financial support. So there were already discussions about how my working environment and my life might have changed. But as with the rest of the world, 2020 it and my life changed very dramatically, very quickly. So I was lucky enough to be in a active research group before COVID hit I was one of at the time, three PhD students of which I was the most senior. But we were in the office all the time. Like we didn't have a traditional lab, sort of base, but we were in the office and we would have those cool water cooler moments, we'd have a meeting once a week with my supervisor in person. And then COVID hit and my life probably changed most rapidly it has at all I went from being in the office four days a week three, if it was raining a bit hungover. You know, as we all do, I was lucky enough to be able to be doing hybrid working slightly before COVID hit. But I made a very difficult decision when we were told we can keep our office because we work in a medical environment to go home. Back from Cardiff in Wales to Leicestershire where my family are based for a few weeks, I will just you know, we'll ride COVID out I've got some teaching to do once that's done, I'll only be with you for four to six weeks. I've got my suitcase full of my wooly jumpers and my boots and my laptop and it will all be fine. Like I can do work on a kitchen table or a dining room table for a few weeks. And I am still you know two years later we're having this meeting at my dining room table. So nothing went to plan. It was a short term solution that didn't go very well. The funniest thing to start with was like I said, we March 2020 in the UK at least was very very cold. I was living in Wales the rainiest place in the UK so I came home with full on winter boots and jeans and jumpers and then April was the warmest April on record. I was totally unprepared for the weather. So right down to those stupid things of like thinking about how to live everyday life. I was very much on a day by day basis, I had to order T shirts online, because I had nothing to wear at home because there was no need to be home for two weeks. So when people say life change very quickly for them, my life changed very dramatically. In the case of like, I had nothing to wear. I didn't know when I can get back into my old house, for example, because Wales had very different restrictions to here in England. So when people say like COVID, was very, very difficult, and the way that we thought about work changed very quickly, I am a prime example of that. I didn't know what my Monday was going to look like on a Saturday because of the way that we worked. And I do realize that I come from a place of privilege, because I was able to say, right, I'm going to leave where I am, and go and live with my parents, and my parents were financially stable enough to say, yeah, come home, we'll support you. Whilst we ride out what this is. So I realized that despite the fact I have my challenges, I do have a lot more privileged than a lot more people in higher education will have because I have the financial and the emotional support for my family.

## **Linda Corcoran**

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Definitely, and I guess my story is pretty similar to yours, not not doing a PhD. But I did move back in with my parents, the middle of COVID. And that has been definitely challenging. Your parents kind of still think of you as the teenager, you were when you moved out?

## **Victoria Gray**

Yeah, yes, most definitely. So I was able to set up a little working environment. So I had my own little office, and I have my own bedroom. But I when I moved back home, I was 26, turning 27, no 25 turning 26. I'm nearly 28 now, and I had moved away from home at 18. And lived a life away from home, I lived in Wales for five years, I went live in Aberdeen for a year. And you're so used to having your own routine, and especially doing a PhD. And you'll probably find the same with a masters. Nine to five doesn't exist, you don't get up at nine, you don't go to sleep, you don't leave at five, sometimes you'll have days where you do nothing, because it's not flowing or you've got something running in the background. And other days you'll be in your office, whether that be the spare room that I was lucky enough to have converted or an actual office, you'll be in there from six in the morning until midnight. And then understanding the work life balance of a graduate student, whether that be masters or PhD, it's very, very difficult. Because they both work in environments where they can leave their work when they come home. I think especially working in the same place that you're sleeping, you know, COVID was so bad. And I was so bored that I worked out it was like 12 steps from my bed to my office. Not having that distance made it even more difficult for them to understand that, you know, a graduate degree is it takes up your life, whether that be in a traditional sense that you're constantly in a lab, or when you're at home, especially in the beginning of COVID we had nothing else to do so them understanding and also me understanding how to live and work in the same place. When you know here, at least in the UK, you're only allowed to go out for an hour a day to exercise was very difficult to establish that balance both in terms of them treating me as a grownup, but me treating myself well as well. So there were a lot of difficult discussions about under work and overworking. And the way that I worked as well, because for the first time in seven, eight years, they were seeing what I was doing every day I was living at home, both in terms of work life, but also how I cooked and the way I kept my bedroom tidy, which you don't imagine discussion we're having at 27 is that you've got you know, shoes in the in the living room that shouldn't be there. So you regressed slightly in terms of the way that you think about your relationship with your parents. But also you progress because you you realize, or at least I did, how lucky I was to be able to say, I can drop my entire life, I can move home, I can save that money and talk to my parents like an adult about the work that I'm doing as well.

## **Linda Corcoran**

Absolutely. And I think you hit on a really important point there in that a lot of people did find that any semblance of boundaries that they had were just gone.

## **Victoria Gray**

Oh, definitely. I as well, I was finishing really the kind of the research portion of my degree right around the time that that COVID hit, which is the kind of most intellectually challenging time in my opinion, at least of like, this is a deadline I want to hit and then I'll just do writing. So my experience watching other graduate students in our office go through it was that time was very challenging for boundaries anyway. But my memories at the beginning of COVID and on working from home were very much a lot of work and less balance. So I think that was something that I had to learn I'm still learning. And I really need to

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learn that before I properly start my new job of how having a home, having a home based workspace doesn't mean that you are working all the time, which I've never been over worker even before working from home it. So it's a challenge that I was already thinking about. But changing that work environment made that even more of a challenge, when you're putting pressure on yourself with a PhD deadline as well.

## **Linda Corcoran**

Absolutely. I think I very much fell into the same trap. I was very much overworking, I was doing a lit review when COVID hit. So I very much like dove into that. And it happens.

## **Victoria Gray**

Yeah, I think a lot of us used it as distraction as well. For me, if I was if I was knee deep in, in doing some analysis, I wasn't watching the entire world. But so that was in a way having that positive. And I think some of us were very lucky to have what we could see as a positive sort of outlook in that we could continue to progress with our lives in a way that people in other industries couldn't like a lot of a service industry and a lot of retail workers, especially in in non essential shops in the UK, their entire life stopped, my life changed, because the way that I was working was changing, the people I was around was changing. You know, it wasn't getting to talk science very often. And if that's really my only complaint from COVID, is that my experience of the end of my PhD wasn't very normal, I realize how lucky I am. So having that kind of focus. And that thought of what whilst the way I work has changed, I haven't had to be able to celebrate or do the kind of rite of passage is in the same way that people who finish their degree two years before we did, I am lucky that COVID for me has meant becoming a doctor like I became Dr. Grey in the middle of in the middle of COVID. Because I still see now it's kind of COVID is still happening. Whereas some people's lives stopped. Totally. So it's very, very rarely that I think many PhD students will say I'm very lucky that I was able to work. But I was very lucky that I was able to work and that kept some semblance of normality in a very abnormal time of everyone's lives, not just just my own.

## **Linda Corcoran**

Absolutely. I think that is very well, again, congratulations on becoming Dr. Gray, very well done. You're done your corrections, you're done everything. But I guess I guess to talk about the boundaries that you did put in, how did they come about? How, what did you find worked? Or what did you try at least?

## **Victoria Gray**

So setting boundaries for me again, I was very lucky that I did have some external encouragement, I would have my mom coming and going, 'it's 10 o'clock, why are you still in here?' You know, which did help. But for me the boundaries that I started setting, the ones that worked weren't giving myself things to do at set time. So I became like everybody in the UK, I was like a character out of a Jane Austen novel and I'd go for a walk. So it makes sure that in the middle of my day, normally between half one and half, two, I will be going for a walk. Not promenading, I wasn't looking for my Mr. Darcy, but come rain or shine, chucking it down with rain boiling hot. If I didn't have a meeting set, I would go for a walk between that time, which helped with my mental health as well being able to get out the house. But also that was like everyone knew then well, Victoria is not available between this time and that time, so we just won't message her. Or if we will, we won't get a response because she'll be out. Weirdly, in an

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overworking sense, I actually got a part time job. So I was very lucky to do two Christmases in the retail sector. I worked for a really wonderful company in the UK called Lakeland who are a home workshop. But that was outside of work outside of my little home office. And I was only doing while I was contracted to do 12 hours a week for two Christmases. But that meant that I was like well I've only got these days that I'm at home to do stuff that needs to be done at home. So that allowed me to build in a routine. Stupid things like I had to get up at the same time every morning because I'd have to be at work for 8:45 So you'd get used to the idea of okay this is when I get up in the morning and this is when I go to bed at night. Which I think is the first thing is that tend to go out of our graduates routine. We tend to extend when we sleep or we extend you know your stay up till the middle of the night to get something done and then knock out for midday the next day. Which is totally fine if it works for you. But having an idea of like I get up at this time in the morning and I go to bed at this time at night. All of a sudden kind of pull together a structure in my day that early COVID didn't have because Days turned into weeks, and they all kind of mesh together. So weirdly, for me actually getting another job was a very good way of finding structure in my life. I think that could have been anything, anything that provided some form of set structure and step timings, whether that be a walk, whether that be a part time job that made that I took on a lot more of the cooking in our house, which meant I would stop at two o'clock and be like, write what we're having for dinner, because I need to get out the freezer or anything about a recipe. So finding kind of milestones in your day to put in, which for me was going to work and sell pans to the general public and figuring out what was for dinner. And I have a friend who lives in the US. So I know that I would ring her at night. So it's finding many milestones. And I think those can be anything from your favorite show on TV, making sure you watch that live and you don't catch up on it. So hopefully, at the moment, the apprentice, I always watch it on a Thursday night. So I have to be done by that time. So I can watch the cringy FTV show in the world. But it's that sense of this is my time that I do think so me and you fit in everything around that. And sometimes that can go the other way, you can sometimes find that you will have filled your day so much with all the other things that you need to do that you think maybe I've not quite enough of my lit review done. Or maybe I'm actually avoiding the corrections that I should have been doing. But it's about learning that balance and some days will be very graduate school work heavy and some days won't. And making peace with that I think it's very important and thinking, Okay, I got loads done yesterday, but I've got to do all these self care things today or yesterday had too much structure, and I only sat down for an hour and a half at a time, let's sort of take that back a step and think I need four hours of solid writing, or I know of an a meeting for four hours. So all that structure needs to rearrange. So it's its structure, but also flexibility with that structure as well. And I think for a lot of us, that's quite difficult, you know, the sort of personalities we have with graduate students. We thrive on planning and structure and immovable plans. Whereas COVID, for me was a lesson in flexibility and changing work environments, especially because the way that you think about your relationship with work changes when you don't have that physical separation from your from your office. And sometimes that means you don't have an emotion of separation either. Because you take those frustrations down to to the dinner table because it's only 12 steps away from from your office. So it's a big challenge. And it's one that I think we will all continue to learn because I don't think hybrid working is going away anytime soon. But it's been an enjoyable one, it's well, because I've learned a lot about my relationship with work and my relationship with academia in particular, which is important for me as I move forward into whatever my next job might look like.

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## **Linda Corcoran**

Absolutely, I think that's really great advice. And I think that's really great experience to have gotten we do in academia tend to not focus on the boundaries, there tends to be a sort of a culture of overwork terrible, but it's kind of there. And it's nearly like why are you?

## **Victoria Gray**

I think it's it's an unwritten rule as well. And you don't realize when you're very when you were when I used to call myself a baby academic, when you're a baby academic, you don't realize that you sending the odd email at midnight, because you've had an idea will become you being actively available on Teams at two in the morning, that will be you checking your emails and you're out for lunch or on the weekend because your your friends are doing it your PI might be a night worker. And especially I think we're in the very early stages of your career, you feel like you have to match the energy that you're being given, which is I was a day worker I always was. But my I had a postdoc who worked in our group for a little while he was a night worker. But I still felt that despite the fact I had been online all day and all times during the day, if he'd email me at night, I would feel a pressure. To reply to that immediately. I think there's some of the negatives of changing to a home working environment is that we are now more reachable than we ever were before. We've got Zoom, we've got Teams, we've got Slack, you've got constant emails, you've got oh, let's just have a quick, quick meeting and that that immediacy of communication has made setting boundaries quite difficult. But by just saying and it's really things it's I set a very important boundaries. I wrote a a new email signature in the beginning of COVID, which essentially essentially said my working hours may not be your working hours, do not feel the need to reply to this email immediately. And by setting that boundaries to other people, they will then begin to understand that you might be setting the same boundaries to them. And especially for me when I was working part time, I wasn't going to be able to answer my emails immediately because I wasn't physically attached to my laptop. So that's been a lesson to learn and unlearn in COVID is that boundary setting is important, not only for your sort of mental health and your benefit, but it will help kind of not change the culture that it might at least give people the belief that they can kind of breathe out a little bit. And you might send them a very complicated question. Or you might say, or I'm thinking about doing this, and I'd love your opinion. But if by just by putting that little message at the bottom, there's kind of an unwritten rule of like, but if you're busy, this can wait. And I will actually now say, especially if this isn't urgent, give, you know, just reply when you can. And that kind of kindness to yourself, and that kindness to others, I think, is the most important thing that COVID could bring is an understanding that, you know, life is short work is really important. I love my job, I don't do a PhD. If you don't love what you do, and you don't continue in, in research, if you don't love your job, and I, you know, I'm the proudest I've ever been at the moment because my whole life has been centered around my work and you know, my PhD, but learning that also, you have value away from that, and we're taking a step back from that doesn't make you any worse of an academic or doesn't make you any worse of a graduate student, or any worse of whatever you do, I think will actually make a lot of a lot more productive as well.

## **Linda Corcoran**

Absolutely. And is this where I know this is not related to working environments? But is this where your movement of I'm a scientist and has come from?

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## Victoria Gray

Yes, so I was very lucky. In COVID, I was looking for a lot of things to do to give my life meaning, which sounds very lofty, but you know, we were all kind of stuck inside, not really knowing what our life was about. And I was very lucky to be invited to do a role in creation work on another platform, at Real Scientists on Twitter. And I was kind of spending a lot of my time thinking about how I was going to talk about who I was my journey, you know, what was interesting. And I realized that I was going to be spending, you get seven days to do this thing, I was gonna be spending six of those days talking really technically about cancer research and encoding and all the things that I thought were exciting, but to an outsider, 'is that all she does is that, you know, she talks about statistics all the time, she talks about cancer, it's really dull, it's really dreary', you know, and I was speaking to my mum, actually. And she's like that, that's like, your job is amazing. And we're very proud of you for your job. But you are so much more interesting outside of work. And I. And a lot of times when I was most stressed, I would put value on work and not on everything else I would do. And she's like, Well, what about you talk about, you know, used to saying I was a competitive dancer, I'm a feminist and this and that and the other sec, you. If you kind of focus your life too much on your value of a scientist or as a PhD student, or a cancer researcher, whatever you want to call yourself. The minute that something goes wrong in work, you fall apart, because you think that that's the entire culmination of your life. And understanding the way that actually everything else about you is also equally interesting. Helps to reframe, I think the way that as academics, we think about ourselves, but also how the public thinks of us because a lot of times at work, especially in my part time job. People will be very intimidated by me, because they hear the word scientist and it still conjures up images of old white man in lab coat, very intimidating, serious, frowny face. And I get a lot as well, especially out in the real world. You don't look like a scientist, or you don't sound like a scientist and you don't talk like a scientist or. And I think understanding that scientists are people too, especially in the way that we watched certain scientists be dealt by the public as a result of that their publications in COVID might change the way that we think about science as an industry as well. But really, it came from the idea that I sound very boring on paper, if I just talk about the things I do at work, and I am, you know, I'm so much more than that. I am still a massive nerd, but I'm a nerd about different things as well. So the movement really came from the idea that scientists are people too, and what cool things that we care about outside of science because the fact that I love music impacts the way that I work as a scientist because I use music and the way that I write up I think about things in a very rhythmical manner. I find patterns in my coding, but the fact that I love music also makes me an interesting person, be good scientist or not. So kind of thinking about as as as as people, and I like the word and I'm a scientist. And so I'm a scientist and I'm this and that because it takes our focus away from finding value in just what we do in academic output and think more about the interesting things that make us I'm Victoria first I am Dr. Grey second, that's always the way I've seen myself I was Victoria, you know, the rugby fan, the F1 fan, the dancer before I was Victoria, the very stressed PhD student. And keeping that, in my mind was very important, especially when when life got very, very tough in the middle of a pandemic. And identifying myself as a scientist and reminds me, of all the amazing things that I do outside of work. And also, I've learned so much about so many people that I admire what they are passionate about outside of work, which makes their work even more interesting, which is like how do you do all this along alongside this incredible academic career you have, and I actually have more respect for very, very, who I believe were serious people, because of this movement that I started, you know, I found out because I'm a nerd, there are current one, two Olympians, your whole science degrees who are out, you know, in China right now competing at the highest level. And

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there's one or speedskater in the US who is currently working on our third science degree at the same time. It just totally reframes the way that my relationship with science worked as they're more connected now. And I feel myself being more rounded because of that. But also, in typical overworking style, it's given me something else to work on at the same time.

## **Linda Corcoran**

Absolutely, I'm also guilty of doing loading my plate with non work work. Then being like I had a break, I didn't do my work, but I'm changing that. It's it's a slow process. But that is a fantastic movement. And I absolutely love it. Because it's just so academia and the education system, the way it sort of set up, it puts all validation into your academic achievements, and productivity. Yeah, and it's not healthy, it will really mess with your mental health. If you keep that perspective up. And also just in general, it's okay to have hobbies, it's okay to have interests, it's okay to have things outside of science.

## **Victoria Gray**

And they don't make you any less professional. And I think a lot of the times they focus on like this is your professional persona. And this is your your away from academia persona, that that doesn't work. For me, I am the same person, I run one Twitter account, which could be talking one minute about a paper published, it could be complaining about the results of a rugby match the second because that's who I am. And, and I think that makes me more interesting. But also, I think, in terms of changing work environments, as has helped me focus on I am still Victoria, whether I am in my office, whether I am in the dining room, whether I you know, I am sitting, watching a quiz show and doing very terribly. So I am no worse of a scientist because of that. So that was a project that came out of working from home, I don't think it would have happened without it. Because I don't think I'd have sat back and assessed my relationship with work quite so much if I had still been in, in a traditional office environment, because I think this sort of COVID working from home has forced a lot of us to step back and assess our relationships with work and our relationship with ourselves as workers as well. So it has been a really productive thing to come out of COVID and come out of working from home. When also, like we said, it's another thing to add to my plate, which is I think another thing we have to address is being at home means that we take on other side projects, and don't realize actually, in a regular schedule, you would be doing those in the office. And you might realize that, oh, you know, I sat in my office and spent two hours doing a bit of teaching that I enjoy. That's two hours extra work on my day, because you're doing it at home, those extra hours and those extra 15 minutes. And I'll just sure I will I'll schedule a meeting with you to talk about a side project or, or let's talk about collaboration or we'll catch up to bounce ideas over coffee, well, those are all still working obligations. But because you're not at work, you don't perhaps see that in the same way that you would in a traditional office environment. So it's understanding that yes, you can take a break from work, but also some of the other things you were doing are after work and academia sometimes does thrive on unpaid labor. Not always I am very lucky to be to work in people who are willing to and able to pay for that relationship with side projects and working as well is something that I think we all have to consider whether we are working from home or if we do back go back into a more traditional lab based or you know, institution based but working system in the future?

## **Linda Corcoran**



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Absolutely. I think that's a very, very important point. And something we need to emphasize. So write that down.

## **Victoria Gray**

I need to write it down as well, this is very much do, as I say, not as I do, you know, these are all wonderful, wonderful ideas. And you know, you can sit and think about them, but actually doing something about them, I think is sometimes more challenging, especially early on in your career. But also, sometimes I enjoy what I do, and I want to keep doing it, you then can't, can't be surprised that you're tired if you're doing all these extra things as well. So it's, I think, balance and working from home particularly. It changes the perception of balance. But it also, I think, a lot of the time forces you to address it, whether that be personally or whether it be because your mom is saying, you know, you've been in this office for 12 hours now. Or you have not sat in your office at all today, why not? So it's a blessing and a curse. And like I said, I am very lucky that the main challenges of COVID for me have been reassessing the way I think about working and being a little bit sad for my milestones, the big achievements didn't happen in the same way that some of my friends did, who are a bit further on in their academic careers than I did. So I can sit here and I can be very reflective of my experience. But I'm also very aware that it was a very positive experience compared to a lot of other people. And I do come from a place of privilege a lot of time as well. So reflective Loni, but also very grateful that my family situation, my financial situation, number of other demographic things they do put me at an advantage over and a lot of other people going through similar experiences to me.

## **Linda Corcoran**

That's great. That's really awesome. And I guess, we are nearly running out of time. So is there anything that you want to bring in before we finish?

## **Victoria Gray**

No, I think that that's, I've kind really gone over everything I was I was thinking about talking about today, that the big thing for me has always been self reflection. And a lot of what I have done has been as a result of COVID. And I've been forced into those moments of self reflection, because, you know, you could literally couldn't do anything else or a changed hopefully in the way that we think about work happened because it was in a very different place. But I think taking those moments to pause for self reflection needs to be something I integrate into my life a bit more. And I'm about to give you the most rapid changing work environment ever. I literally start my postdoc tomorrow. So it's very much at the moment of adapting, understanding that change is a massive part of life. But also, it's one that is going to happen, whether you're on board with it or not. So you need to be able to get on board with it and go with it. Because you know, these six weeks at COVID, were going to happen, they happen for two years. And if I hadn't been on board start, I'm not sure I'd have succeeded in the way that I did. Whether that be because I made the right decision in the beginning, or I made the wrong decisions in the beginning, you know, only coming home with with with jumpers and boots or, or thinking that we're only gonna be working at home for six weeks, I didn't bring my you know, didn't bring off my notes with me, all those decisions are going to happen and being flexible enough to kind of go with the flow is so important. Because I think these changes are going to continue to happen because we're going to go in and out of hybrid working. Our attitudes of working environments are going to change thinking, There's research that says a lot of people don't want to get back into the office full time. So I think our

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relationship with work and the way that we think about work, both in terms of in academia and also in other more industry focused sort of areas is going to continue to change. So it's happening, we just need to be there therefore it but aware of the impact it's having on us as well. Because a lot of this stuff I didn't realize until massively after the fact. Oh, so that's why I felt Oh, yeah, that might explain that. So change is gonna happen. Do as much as you can to be involved in the process, but if not enjoy the ride because despite my my journey being a bit less conventional and my home office being a little bit less conventional than most people who have gone through a PhD experience, which is not conventional itself. I still got to the end, I still made it. I you know, have regrets about choices I made I'm sad about certain things that I couldn't do because of the massive changes that the entire world was going through but life continues and you just have to keep living it and you will get there. Whether that be that you you realize that a PhD isn't isn't for you or academia or a graduate degree isn't for you because of a rapid change. Are you realize actually, I can push through this and I can get to the end and I might be exhausted and I might have finished my PhD on my, you know, in the spare bedroom of my parents house, but I still did it. And just because I didn't get to do the same things as everyone else, I didn't get to have the formal viver in the building or the party afterwards or to hold up my, my certificate or my submission in person doesn't make what I did any less valid and doesn't make my journey any different. In terms of what I achieved it just the way that I experienced it, it was different

## **Linda Corcoran**

Absolutely. I think that is a fantastic note to end on. So thank you so much, Victoria for being a guest amazing guest. This has been great chat by PhD Balance. Our episodes are now posted simultaneously on our podcast and YouTube channel Saturdays at 3pm. Eastern. To find our podcast episodes just search Gracia on Spotify, Apple podcasts or wherever you listen to your podcasts. You can connect with PhD Balance on our website at [phdbalance.com](http://phdbalance.com) or on our social media, Twitter and Instagram @phd\_balance. Until next time, goodbye and take care of yourself