ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT

Anyone can be unrealistically optimistic about how much can be accomplished in a given amount of time. Now that you know the planning fallacy is a common cognitive bias, you can try to overcome it in the future. Try some of these tips:

- Take a moment to consider how long similar tasks have taken you in the past. Don't ignore this important source of information.
- Don't plan just for best-case scenarios. What might not go according to plan? How would this change your plan and time investment?
- Think about all of the steps or sub-tasks involved in the project. This will give you a clearer picture as to what is actually involved in completing the project. Look back at the essay-writing example above.

STAY CONNECTED

Parts of this pamphlet were informed by the helpful post by Dr. Heidi Grant Halvorson at: https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-science-success/201003/will-take-no-time-all

To access other ***Psychtools for School*** resources please visit: http://tinyurl.com/hbw7zff

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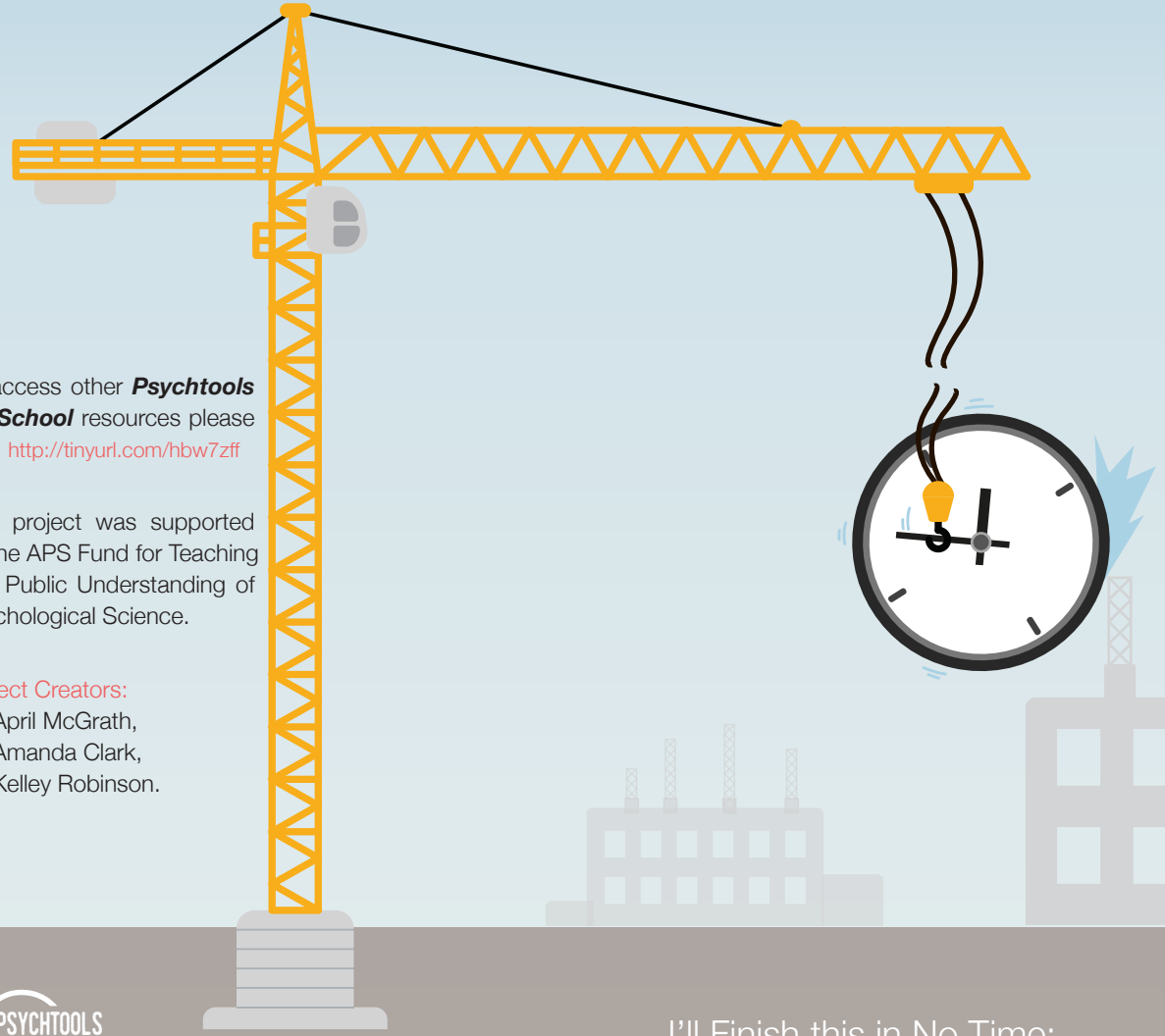

PSYCHTOOLS FOR SCHOOL

I'll Finish this in No Time:
Understanding the Planning Fallacy

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SITUATION

Despite starting work on his essays early in the term, Jerome typically completes them only the day before they are due. Each time a new assignment is begun, Jerome anticipates that he will have time left over to reread and edit his work. Unfortunately, this never happens. While defending his actions to his mom, Jerome hypothesized that his body travels through time at a faster rate than a normal person. His mom politely suggested that he quit this nonsense and research 'the planning fallacy'.

PSYCHOLOGY CAN EXPLAIN THAT

Jerome is falling victim to the planning fallacy. This cognitive bias makes people overly optimistic in their estimates of how long it will take to complete a task. Historians report that Pheidippides, the legendary Greek messenger of Marathon, was a notorious under-estimator. ⟶

⟶ Once tasked with announcing the end of the war, he claimed that running forty-two kilometres probably wouldn't take him more than twenty minutes. When he arrived, his dying wish was that no one ever again inflict upon themselves the pain of running a marathon.

Why do these overly optimistic predictions occur? One reason is that we tend to ignore how long similar tasks have taken us in the past, and instead we get caught up in thinking about the current task. And when we think about the current task, we tend to imagine optimistic best-case scenarios where all things go according to plan. We also might not consider how much time each step of the task will take. For example, when thinking about an upcoming essay you may picture yourself typing away in front of your computer screen and you may ignore other steps that are important and also take time (e.g., reading, narrowing down a topic, reading more, taking notes, connecting ideas, generating an argument, reading and editing your writing, changing or removing a section, checking citations, following proper format, etc.). Throw in a few hard drive crashes and several trips to the kitchen and you're already behind. (Note: you will be reading this pamphlet for another sixty seconds so factor that into your schedule)

CONSEQUENCES

Understanding the planning fallacy is important because:

- Accurately thinking about how much time your academic projects take will lead to better planning and execution of projects.
- Your best work will result from having enough time to devote to each step of the process.
- You can avoid the stress associated with completing tasks under a time crunch.

"WE OFTEN UNDERESTIMATE HOW MUCH TIME IS REQUIRED TO COMPLETE IMPORTANT ACADEMIC TASKS. CONSIDER HOW LONG SIMILAR TASKS TOOK IN THE PAST AND THINK ABOUT EACH STEP NEEDED TO COMPLETE THE TASK TO ARRIVE AT A MORE ACCURATE JUDGEMENT OF THE WORK AND TIME INVOLVED."