PhD Students’ Perspective of Research at MQ Comp

Oldooz Dianat
What I am doing?

I need your help, Cecilia.

I'm writing a grant proposal and I want to include a section on the work that you do.

Sure, Dr. Jones. Do you need a figure or reference from me?

I need to know what it is you do.

Seriously, I have no idea.

And you think I do?

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Publishing
.. (PING) the captain has turned off the seat belt sign...

So... are you travelling for business or for fun?

Me? Well...

I'm going to a research conference so... it's... uh... sort of... um...

None of the above?

It's not for fun, that's for sure.
Supervisor relations
Flexibility

OOF, END OF THE DAY.

I'M GOING TO TAKE ALL OF THIS AND WORK ON IT FROM HOME TONIGHT.

THE NEXT DAY...

DID YOU EVEN TAKE THOSE OUT OF THE BAG?

SHUT UP.
Procrastination
All I want for Christmas is a guilt-free holiday break in which I don’t worry about all the work I have to do or what I’m doing with my life starting next year.

Proof Santa doesn’t exist: nobody ever gets this wish.
Perfectionism

Well, I finished the computer program I needed for my research.

It's not pretty but it works.

It's inelegant, messy, inefficient, and if you try to change anything about it, it will probably explode.

Sounds like every academic I've ever met.

Great! Can I get my Ph.D. now?

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Admin stuff

Hi, I need to get reimbursed for a travel expense.

No problem!

Just fill out this short 5-page form and expense report and get it signed by your advisor, your program director, your funding manager and your mother as a character reference.

You must have the original, still-warm receipts, otherwise we'll need signed affidavits from the vendor, three witnesses who saw you pay for the expense and your sworn testimony.

How much is it for?

Oh, we'll need a longer form.

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Real world skills

Uh, I'm not a very good programmer, Prof. Smith.

That's OK.

Part of getting your Ph.D. is learning to learn whatever you need to learn to make your research work.

It's about stepping out of your comfort zone and learning new skills!

Also, you're cheaper than hiring a real programmer.

So I've learned.
Companionship
(Self) Doubt

Mike: Do you ever feel like your research is pointless or insignificant?

All the time.

But then I'm reminded of the "butterfly effect"...

You mean, though it may appear insignificant, my research might eventually have important repercussions?

I mean nobody remembers who came up with it, so it doesn't really matter anyway.
Life Choices

ACTUALLY, BEING A POSTDOC ISN'T SO BAD.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WRITE GRANTS.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT GRADUATING.
YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE TO TEACH!

YOU FINALLY GET TO SPEND ALL YOUR TIME DOING THE THING ALL YOUR TRAINING HAS PREPARED YOU TO DO.

RESEARCH?
APPLYING FOR FACULTY JOBS.