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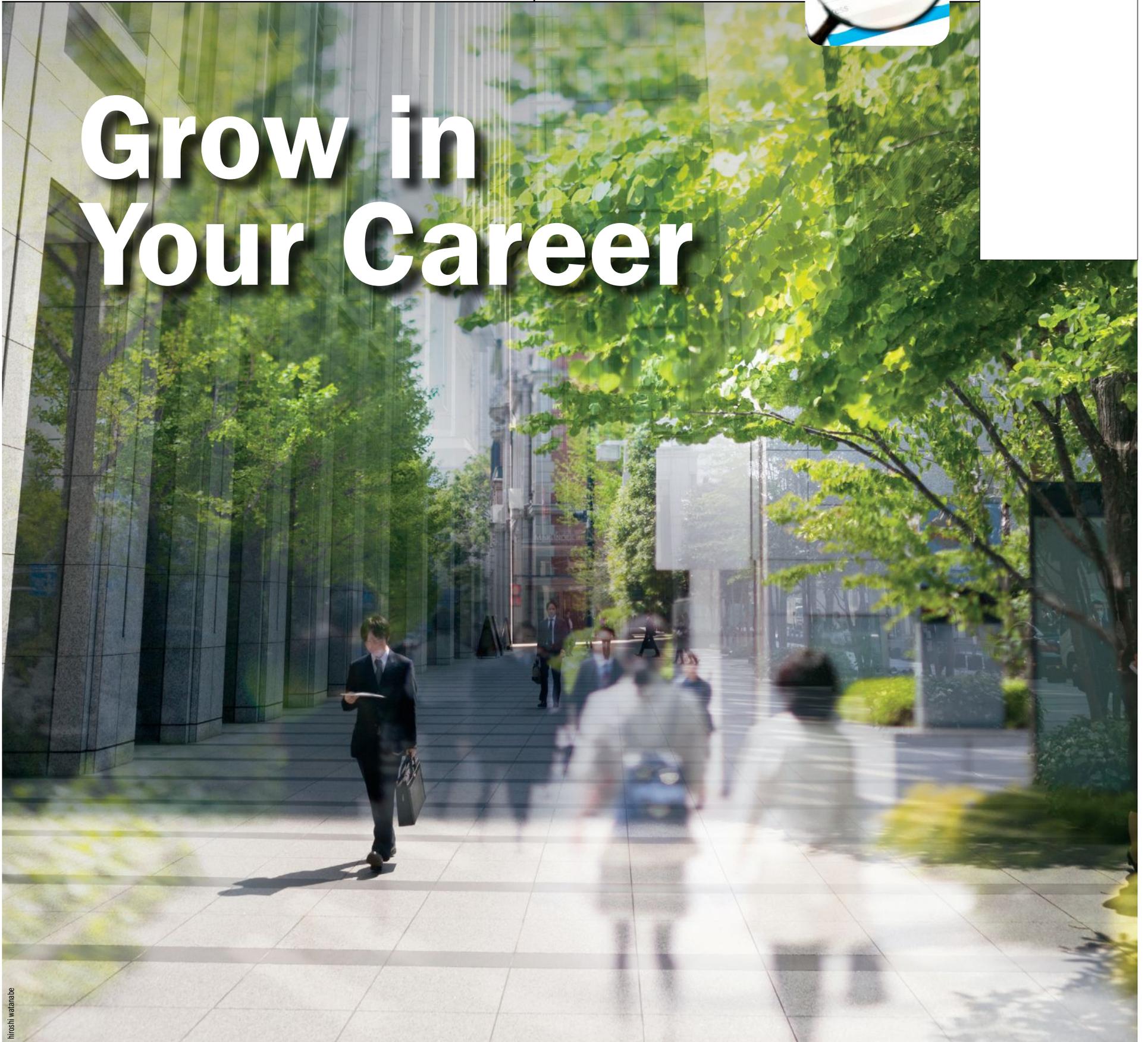
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# Grow in Your Career



hiroshi watanabe

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# 4 Ways to Continue Growing in Your Career

By Hanna Porterfield

New PR professionals are often fairly up-to-speed on networking tactics and industry trends early in their career. From graduating from college to starting a first job, it's only natural that career development is in full swing during this unique transition period.

But once they've started a new job, many new professionals can be at a standstill for their next step of career development. If you're fresh out of college and don't have access to disposable funds for continuing education, then it's crucial to find sustainable ways to stay on top of your PR game.

With career advice targeted to those on the job hunt or mid-career to executive level, new professionals who have been working 3–5 years need to be selective and strategic. Anyone can ensure beneficial career development during the early part of your work life with these four tips:

**1. Start a personal blog.** Did you create a simple blog in college to impress potential employers? Was it part of a class project? Maybe you didn't have a passion or topic or time to keep it up. Now is the time.

A great way to improve your writing on the evenings and weekends is to write

about a topic you enjoy that is or is not related to the area you practice public relations for during the day. Owning a personal blog also allows you to stay on top of digital trends in SEO and copywriting.

**2. Rethink job shadowing.** I hope as new professionals in your first few companies you love your agency or in-house communications team. You might see yourself staying there awhile — if so, great! But how can you stay abreast of new trends if you aren't collaborating with other teams or seeing alternate meeting structures? Even for those of us who have friends in the profession from our PRSSA days or college classes, it's not a given that you'll be comparing campaign reporting metrics or pitch structures.

One tactic that my agency has implemented is exchange programs. If you work for a company that has multiple offices, then ask to work out of another



location for a few days — whether it's across town or the country. If your workplace is smaller and you work on an internal communications team, then ask to spend a day with another department or even move desks for a full week to immerse yourself in their daily

activities. If those options aren't as feasible, then consider shadowing another agency for a few days.

**3. Take time to recharge.** The only way to advance fully in your career is to not get burned out. It isn't a secret that the public relations profession can be just as stressful as it is rewarding.

Make time to see friends and practice hobbies that keep you sane — try workouts from your favorite Instagram influencers, take a set amount of time to binge watch Netflix or maybe even channel your inner Chrissy Teigen in the kitchen.

**4. Volunteer with your local PRSA Chapter.** Getting involved with your local PRSA Chapter will allow you to meet oth-

er professionals in the area. Having these connections can eventually lead to finding a mentor, an introduction to a new client, a reference for hiring someone on your team or even your next job.

Helping plan professional development events and panels for your Chapter can also lead to introductions to subject-matter experts within media relations, social media, crisis management and more. While structures vary by Chapter, volunteering at events can often also allow you free or reduced-price entry to programming in exchange for working a check-in table or live-tweeting a panel.

Pick and choose from the above strategies and start planning for where you want to be in the next five years. No matter what, remember that as a new professional, you're at the beginning of climbing the career ladder, with a whole jungle gym ahead. **T**



**Hanna Porterfield** is chair-elect of the PRSA New Pros Section and a senior account executive at Development Counsellors International in New York. She is a graduate of Michigan State University. Connect with her on Twitter @citygirlhanna.

# When Life Happens: Pushing Through It



**Tim O'Brien, APR**

depends on your mindset, the stakes can be much higher.

Every day, an independent learns of the loss of a friend or a family member. Doctors tell independents of diagnoses they'd rather not hear. PR pros have to manage major setbacks involving kids, spouses and parents, all the while being expected to perform in their work.

What makes these challenges tougher for independents is that if they shut down, the entire business stops. Even with back-up, at some point, it's up to each independent to decide to dig deep and get on with the business of business. This requires mental toughness that is not unlike that of an elite athlete who must block

It can be hard enough to focus on work when you get bad news, but if you're independent and your entire business oftentimes

out the distractions of life, even for a little while, to train and compete.

## Finding perspective

Dr. Caroline Silby, a leading sports psychologist and the author of the book "Games Girls Play: Understanding and Guiding Young Female Athletes," has worked with Olympic Gold medalists and other champion athletes. The first thing she advises is to find perspective.

"You cannot map out with any certainty what an athlete is going to see, feel and think during every performance," she says. "Isolate the event as a one-time event to minimize the emotional impact of some challenging days."

Silby advises individuals to adjust expectations, viewing each day separately, working to turn an obstacle into a challenge by testing how much can be accomplished when "feeling out of their groove and rhythm."

"Athletes choose actions and focal points that allow them



to put appropriate filters on the 'noise' in their heads," she says. "For instance, some athletes count their steps to a mile. Others will use strategies to distract from pain, like focusing on what is going on around them, listening to music or imagining a moment in time that was uplifting."

PR professionals can imitate this by focusing only on the task at hand, tuning into the sounds they hear, the things they see right in front of them. Still, Silby says we often can be distracted by information that elicits an emotional response as important

and urgent when it may not be.

"Most often, you can feel tired or frustrated and have everything you need to be successful. So, carry on. You can feel sad and disappointed in one area of your life and feel the freedom and pleasure that another aspect of

your life brings," she says.

Yet, when fatigue and frustration become a pattern as opposed to an event, then it is time to respond and make some changes.

"When an athlete is dealing with personal loss, the daily objectives for training and outcomes are adjusted accordingly," Silby says. "This way the athlete can align the demands placed upon her with available resources to fulfill those demands."

Another important factor is mindfulness.

"Athletes incorporate

mindfulness into their training as a way to train themselves to be open to the moment and see what is in front of them with clarity," says Silby. "Simple breathing exercises and meditation can be as important to your work productivity."

Of course, none of this can alter the underlying contributors to stress. A sick parent will still be sick tomorrow. Terms like "compartmentalization" may enter the picture.

"We work with athletes on the concept of being able to hold two opposing emotions at the same time," Silby says.

This work involves following a process for acknowledging stress and feelings about that stress in one area of life, while allowing for an opportunity to focus on something else that allows the chance for success and pleasure. **T**

**Tim O'Brien, APR**, owns O'Brien Communications, an independent corporate communications practice in Pittsburgh. Email: timobrien@timobrienpr.com. Twitter: @OBrienPR.