# Being prepared for when things go wrong

Finishing a degree at University takes time,

and it's not always plain sailing.

As Murphy so famously said,

anything that can go wrong will go wrong.

I guess all of us have been in this

situation where things just went wrong.

How are there ways of dealing

with situations like that?

One of them is designing a Plan

B or preparing alternatives.

How is it done? First you define

the situation of the problem.

Second, you think about and write

down everything that can go wrong.

You then detail possible alternatives.

Following that, you evaluate

each one of the alternatives.

You think about advantages,

disadvantages, practicality,

time commitment, and so on.

You then choose the best plan of action,

but let me give you an example.

This is a very typical task at

University. I have to give an oral

presentation about the project.

Now let's think about the things

that can go wrong. For example,

I'm not sure about the structure of

the presentation, or someone asks

a difficult question that I haven't

prepared for and I can't answer.

I lose my memory stick with

my PowerPoint presentation.

I have technical stuff that isn't working,

for example, at the projection.

What about I go blank there

and then and I start to panic.

Let's look at one

of the things that can go wrong

and go through the steps.

This is something that a

a lot of people that have to

speak in public are concerned about.

I go blank there and then and

I start to panic. So what

what are the possible alternatives?

What could you do in this case?

For example, you can think

about the scenario beforehand

and you can acknowledge the

possibility that this can happen.

You can practice the presentation

two to three times before,

so going blank doesn't happen that easily.

Should it happen

you can take a few deep breaths

and tell the audience that you've

gone blank and you need to check your notes.

You can also look for a familiar and

friendly face and concentrate on that.

So now that we've come up with a

number of possible alternatives.

Let's evaluate them.

So thinking about the possibility

of going blank beforehand,

what are the positives and the

negatives here? Thinking about it beforehand

can mean you get mentally prepared

for the situation. On

the negative side,

thinking about it too much could

make this possibility even scarier.

What about practicing the presentation?

On the plus side, practicing is a

good preparation and it will make you

feel confident and you can figure out

whether everything works as intended.

On the other hand,

practicing needs time and being

a busy student means that you

are probably short on time.

So do you have enough time

to actually do this?

Should you go blank and panic,

you can tell the audience what is

happening and ask to check your notes.

The benefits of that is it gives you

time to think and hopefully to calm down

On the other hand, you might think

you look a bit stupid doing that.

The other alternative that you

have is to look for a friendly

face and concentrate on them.

Of course finding a friendly face

will calm you down and will help you

feel reassured, on the other hand.

there might not be a friendly face

and you might panic even more.

So now, that you've looked.

at all the alternatives you weigh them

up and according to your preferences

you come up with an action plan.

If it was me having to give a presentation,

thinking about what to do in case I go blank.

I would do this, if I go blank

and I start to panic.

I would

first of all prevent trying to prevent

this from happening by practicing

and I would then tell the audience.

However, that is my preference. For you.

an action plan could look very different.

Now that we've looked at how important

it is to prepare alternatives

to persevere at University,

how about you give it a go?