Let's start with the basics:

- A Ph.D. is short for “Doctor of Philosophy.” It is a research-based graduate degree and is sometimes referred to as a doctorate.

- A Ph.D. is a terminal degree which means it is the highest degree that a person can obtain in their field of study.

- A Ph.D. program requires that a student complete coursework AND produce original research that contributes new knowledge to their field of study.

- Ph.D.s are long! They typically take four to seven years to complete.

- At the end of their Ph.D. program, the student becomes a doctor. No matter what field of study their program is in, they are a real doctor! Their hard work has paid off!

Ways to show love to a Terp in a Ph.D. program!

Ask them about their research.
It does not matter if you understand it completely. Just listen and be proud of their work.

Take cues from your loved one.
Be excited when they are excited. Be supportive when they are stressed. Be comforting when they are sad. A Ph.D. is an emotional experience that is meant to test the student. It is okay if you do not understand every detail of their program or how they are feeling. Just be there.

Use that important new title!
Maybe your new doctor would appreciate a lab coat, coffee mug, or desk plate with their Dr. Name printed on it. Maybe a handwritten card or a congratulations email is more their style. It does not matter how many of these they receive - they will appreciate each one!
A Phi D. program includes two stages.

1. In the "pre-candidacy" stage, students build their background knowledge in the discipline, either by taking courses or by doing more independent research. This stage may take 2 to 3 years to complete, depending on the student's progress. The student must be approved for candidacy during this stage to continue to the next stage.

2. The second stage, or "candidacy," often requires that a student pass the written or oral examination, which may be referred to as the "comps" or "quals." Qualifying exams are often an intense and stressful experience for the student. When they pass their qualifying exam, they become a Ph.D. candidate.