



Resilience and Well-being in Academia

Two-day In person Workshop
IMPRS-IDI

Course Outline

A PhD is an ultramarathon that we try to run as a sprint. This approach tends to leave us with little time or energy for life outside of work and very few resources to cope when we face challenges. But a healthier approach to research is possible and is essential if you want to build a sustainable career in academia (or anywhere else in this fast-paced, competitive world we live in).

Despite our increasing diversity, PhD students tend to harbour a common chorus of voices in our heads. Voices that demand perfection, or that tell us we aren't good enough and we don't belong here; voices that have driven us to excel, but that also charge a pretty high tax. A tax on our emotional, mental and physical health.

Yes, the environment is a heavy contributor to the unhealthy, counterproductive lifestyle many of us live. However, we as individuals can address the way we approach academia to buffer us against stress and burnout, worry and fear, and the toxic competition we are often surrounded by.

This workshop provides you with tools to increase your resilience to stress, anxiety and burnout, and to enhance your overall well-being. We explore those self-critical inner voices that sabotage your motivation and enjoyment for your work, we explore how your mindset can help or hinder your day-to-day life and your future career prospects; and how to incorporate the latest research on habit formation and well-being practices to enhance your attention, focus, creativity, and motivation and in turn your productivity.

Course Objectives

- Identify the common challenges faced within the doctoral studies process and normalise the experience for what it often is – a rollercoaster of highs and lows, wins and losses and hard work.
- Begin to explore the how your mindset and mental models shape your experience and your mood.
- Begin to identify ineffective coping strategies (e.g. procrastination) and learn how to approach challenging or unenjoyable tasks through a different lens.
- Learn how shifting your mindset can help you to reframe thoughts, feelings, and outcomes using a range of psychological tools from CBT, ACT and mindfulness practices.
- Begin to understand the concept of self-compassion and how they can benefit from a kinder voice in their head.

Dickerson et al.

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Content: Two full-day session
Tools: Workbook
Capacity: 20 attendees
Who is it for: PhD Students, ECRs, The workshop is driven by the needs of the specific group in session and tools and strategies are examined through working examples brought forward by the group.

Facilitator

Desiree Dickerson, PhD is a neuroscientist and clinical psychologist who specialises in academic mental health and well-being. Based in Europe, she works with leading academic institutions, lab groups, and academics themselves to curate a healthier approach to research.

Desiree graduated with her PhD and a Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Psychology from the University of Otago, New Zealand. Her PhD research in systems neuroscience used in vivo electrophysiology to explore impaired neural communication in model systems of schizophrenia. She then moved to the Institute of Science and Technology Austria (ISTA) for a postdoc in systems neuroscience. After witnessing (and experiencing) the unhealthy and counterproductive lifestyles demanded by the academic system and exacerbated by perfection, self-doubt, and uncertainty; she now employs her clinical training to help academics and institutions to navigate the challenges of academia with the goal of creating a research culture where individuals thrive alongside their research.

For more information or CV see my website.

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