

Well being and Mental Health during Research Studies

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Aims of this Session:

- Promote open communication about Research Student mental health, and share my own experiences.
- As a group, consider and discuss the types of challenges and obstacles that Research Students may face during their studies.
- Consider how to proactively deal with some of these issues.
- How to identify when wellbeing and mental ill health becomes more serious:
 - Where do you go for help?
 - What options do you have?



The Iceberg Illusion

Success
is an
iceberg

SUCCESS!

WHAT PEOPLE
SEE

Persistence



Failure



Sacrifice



Disappointment



WHAT PEOPLE
DON'T SEE

Dedication



Hard work



Discipline





My challenges/obstacles:



PhD Specific:

- Solely responsible for researching and writing 80,000 word thesis, worthy of a PhD
- Writing the thesis
- Structure of the PhD

My Personality

- Competitive
- Perfectionist
- People person/extravert
- Motivated by praise/good marks etc.

Have I already mentioned writing the thesis?

My thesis is written in



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What types of challenges or obstacles do Research Students face that could have a negative impact on mental health?

Challenges of Research Degree



- Work and life balance – I'm not just a research student
- Family
- Friends
- Health
- Structure of a PhD/EngD – not having clear goals
- What do you have to do to guarantee a PhD/EngD?
- Projects – which direction to take?
- Uncertainty of use of my research
- Isolation
- Working on a project that no one else does
- Expectations – from lots of people
- Other commitments
- Vague feedback
- Would it matter if I completed my research?

2 Research Fellowships

Presented at 8 conferences,
3 international

Set up an
interdisciplinary
reading group

Published a journal
article

Published a book
chapter

Organised research
seminars



Organised a national
conference

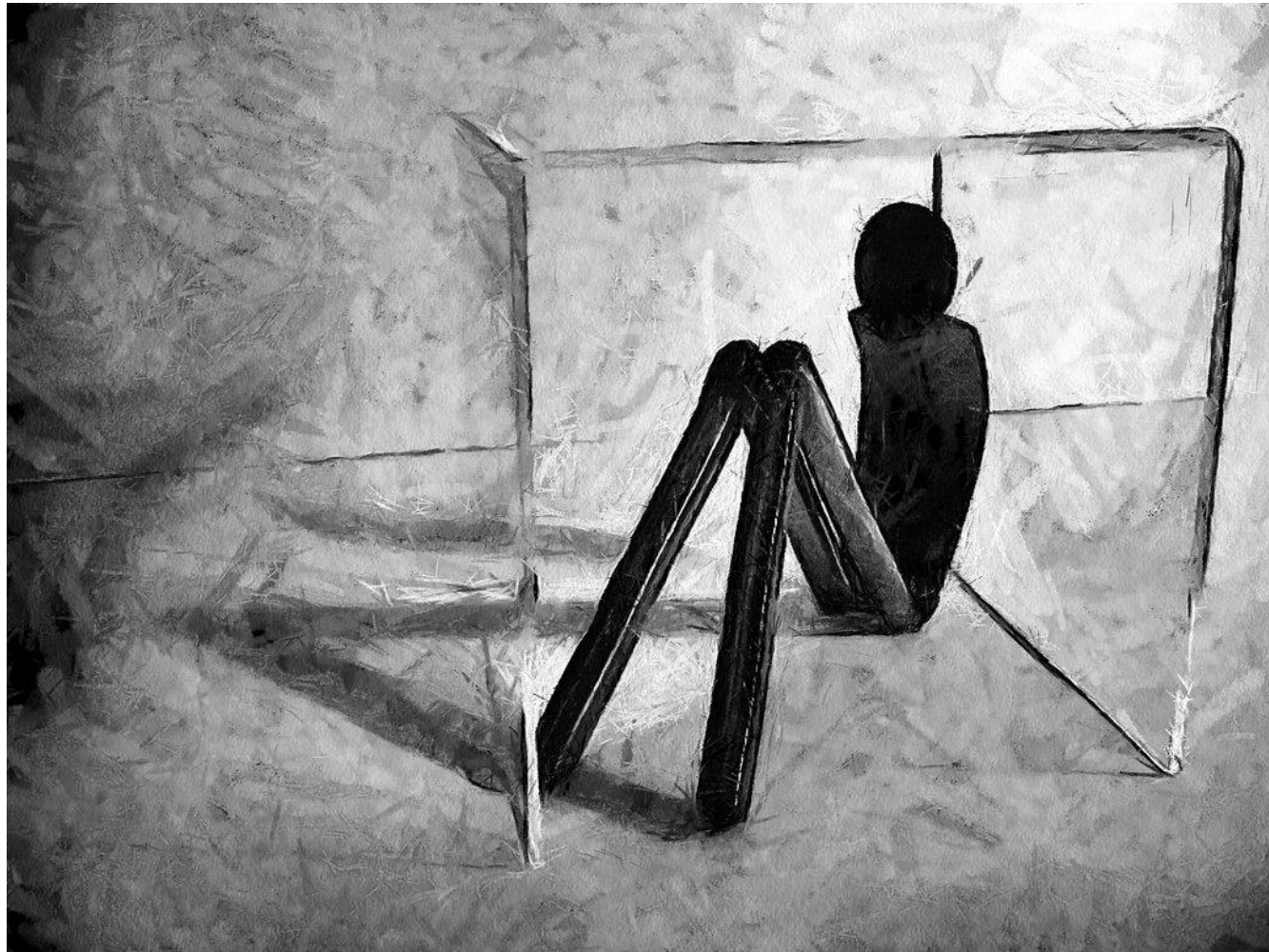
PTA Student Rep

PhD Student Rep

Designed and
taught 7 courses,
including ones for
Centre for
Lifelong Learning

Volunteered at
York Art Gallery

Travelled to USA, Belgium, France
and Ireland for my research



**How can you tackle these
proactively, and in a healthy
way?**

Proactive, Healthy Solutions

- Sports
- Social activities
- Board games
- Gym
- Computer Games



Healthy release of
competitive nature.
Must be **scheduled!**

- Plan your work – monthly, weekly, daily
- Analyse peak and low points of productivity – schedule tasks accordingly
- Tasks app – for a sense of accomplishment
- [Pomodoro technique](#) for time management – helps you to keep focused
- Internet blockers
- Put things into perspective
 - What is the worst that could happen?
 - Will I worry about this in 6 months/a month/ a week's time?
- Solution orientated approach
- Make connections with people – talk to each other

A few proactive/positive solutions:

- **Feeling overwhelmed? Starting to feel burnt out?**
 - Take some time off
 - Research Students are entitled to 30 annual leave every academic year, so use it!
 - Discuss with your supervisor first.
 - **Tier 4 students**, complete the Annual Leave Form **before** you go on holiday.
- **Have issues managing multiple deadlines and commitments?**
 - Time Management course run by RETT
 - Structure your day
 - Assess your commitments, do you *really* need to do them all?
- **Feeling isolated or lonely? Missing friends and family?**
 - Use your office space
 - Talk to fellow students, friends, family – in person, phone, Skype.
 - Arrange to meet up with friends and family



I like cross-stitching

I like Star Trek



I love them when
combined!



What if it's more serious?



**POSITIVE
WELLBEING**

Life is good,
satisfied, happy,
resilient, active,
communicative, low
levels of anxiety

**MILD
DISTRESS**

Occasionally
anxious or stressed
by life events
such as exams
or relationships

**MEDIUM
DISTRESS**

Ongoing symptoms
of emotional
stress beginning
to impact on
your daily life

**SEVERE
DISTRESS**

Symptoms are
intense and
ongoing, disrupting
daily life and
ability to function

**IN CRISIS
EMERGENCY**

Suicidal thoughts,
psychosis, at risk
of harming yourself
or other people.
Get help!

Who to talk to:



- **Supervisor:** can be contacted to discuss any concerns you have about your progress, or your health and well being.
- **Assessor/TAP Member:** can also be contacted to discuss these issues. You do not have to wait for a TAP meeting to raise issues.
- **Research Studies Administrator:** you can contact me to talk about any queries or concerns. Email: cs-rsadmin@york.ac.uk Phone: 01904 325416
- **Chair of Research Studies Committee:** Dimitris Kolovos dimitris.kolovos@york.ac.uk

Conversations with myself or Dimitris are treated **confidentially**.

General Student Support:



- **University Support and Networks:**
<https://www.york.ac.uk/students/support/>
- **Student Hub:** first point of contact for student support, based in market Square, West Campus
<https://www.york.ac.uk/students/support/student-hub/> or email student-hub@york.ac.uk
- **Graduate Students Associations (GSA):** have dedicated welfare officers for postgraduate students <http://www.yorkgsa.org/students/welfare/>
- **Have a diagnosis for longer than 12 months?** Additional support through **Disability Services:**
<https://www.york.ac.uk/students/support/disability/>

Mental Health and Wellbeing Support:

- **Your own GP or Unity Health:** <https://www.york.ac.uk/students/health/>
 - Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (**IAPT**) scheme.
- **Health Support:** <https://www.york.ac.uk/students/health/help/>
- **Mental Health Support:** information and advice
<https://www.york.ac.uk/students/health/mental-illness/>
- **Open Door Team (ODT):** information on
<https://www.york.ac.uk/students/health/help/> they also have a [self referral form](#)
- **Mind your Head York:** organisation run for York students by York students
<http://www.mindyourheadyork.org/>
- **York Nightline:** <http://www.yorknightline.org.uk/> or call 01904 323735
- **Samaritans Drop-In Sessions:** confidential, anonymous service.
 - **Mondays 6-8pm,** Harry Fairhurst LFA/130 and
 - **Wednesdays 6-8pm,** Goodricke College GNU/001

Options:



- **Leave of Absence (LOA)*:** allows time away from your studies for medical or personal reasons. <https://www.york.ac.uk/research/graduate-school/academic/change/loa/>
- **Extension:** if you are 3 months away from your submission deadline,
- **Change to part-time study*:** <https://www.york.ac.uk/research/graduate-school/academic/change/full-time-part-time/>
- **Change to Distance Learning*:** enables students on Tier 4 to study part time.
- **Transfer to a different degree*:** you could transfer to a MSc by Research or an MPhil <https://www.york.ac.uk/research/graduate-school/academic/change/transfer/>

* Discuss with your supervisor first. Tier 4 visa holders: this will have implications for your visa. If you receive funding, there may be restrictions, so...

Seek advice