

PHD PSYCHOLOGISTS NEWS

SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER
2025

PhD Psychologists team

Because Well-Being Builds
Empowered Professionals and
a Thriving University.



Universiteit
Leiden



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1.1. IN THE SPOTLIGHT

NEW PEER SUPPORT GROUP FOR GIFTED PHD CANDIDATES: CONNECT, REFLECT, AND GROW

Are you a PhD candidate who identifies with giftedness or high ability, and would like to connect with others who share similar experiences?

We are happy to introduce a new Giftedness PhD Peer Support Group. **This group provides a safe, informal space to meet fellow PhDs, share challenges and successes, and receive support from peers who understand the unique experiences of gifted individuals in academia.**

In a PhD trajectory, being gifted can come with both strengths and struggles: perfectionism, overthinking, boredom with routine and easy tasks, high sensitivity, difficulty with authority, or feeling "out of sync" with others. This group offers a space to talk about such topics, find recognition, and strengthen each other.



1.2. IN THE SPOTLIGHT

What to expect?

Possible discussion topics include:

- *How to cope with stress caused by perfectionism or fear of failure*
 - *Navigating relationships with supervisors and colleagues*
 - *Dealing with boredom or under-stimulation*
 - *Managing sensitivity and energy*
 - *Procrastination and motivation struggles*
- Topics will be defined by participants.-*

The group is facilitated by Agnes van Rossum and Simone Keijsers and is open to all PhD candidates at Leiden University, regardless of your contract type.

Meeting Dates (2025):

Thursday, September 18

Thursday, October 16

Thursday, November 13

Thursday, December 11

Time: 15:30–17:00

Location: Plexus Student Center

Language: Dutch or English, depending on participants

Price: Free of charge

How to register:

Send an email to

phdpsychologist@SEA.leidenuniv.nl

with the *subject line* HB/Gifted PhD Peer Support Group. Briefly explain why this group would be helpful for you. After registration, a short individual intake will be scheduled to make sure the group fits your needs.

2. UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



ACT TRAINING

Status:
Registration is open
Starting 25 Sept 2025

For Dutch speakers

In deze ACT-training leer je anders met moeilijke situaties om te gaan, vanuit acceptatie en aanvaarding.

[Link ACT TRAINING](#)

AD(H)D PHD PEER SUPPORT GROUP

Status:
Registration
permanently open

A safe space for PhD candidates with signs of AD(H)D to share, connect, and grow together.

Via email ask for more information and how to register

GET MORE SUCCESS WITH LESS STRESS COURSE

Status:
Registration is open
Starting 20 Jan 2026

In this course, you will gain insight into how to take more care of your mental well-being.

[Link GET MORE SUCCESS WITH LESS STRESS COURSE](#)

NAVIGATING A NEW CULTURE WORKSHOP SERIES

Status:
Registration is open
Starting 7 Oct 2025

International PhD candidates face many challenges living abroad. Overcoming cultural barriers boosts their success.

[Link NAVIGATING A NEW CULTURE WORKSHOP SERIES](#)

For signing up, please send an e-mail to phdpsychologist@SEA.leidenuniv.nl

3.1. BUILDING WELL-BEING AWARENESS TOGETHER

From Surviving to Thriving: Overcoming Self-Sabotage in PhD Life

Why do we sometimes become our own worst enemy, especially when striving for success?

By Margarita Lourido

That was the guiding question behind the workshop ***From Surviving to Thriving in PhD Life: Leading Your Path to Success by Overcoming Self-Sabotage***, which I led for PhD candidates from the Faculty of Law.

In this interactive session, participants explored how hidden mental patterns, our “saboteurs”, quietly influence our thoughts, emotions, and actions. These inner voices, often rooted in fear, judgement, people pleasing, perfectionism, among others, may hold us back from reaching our potential or finding joy in the academic journey.

Through a self-assessment and guided reflection, participants learned how to recognize their own patterns of self-sabotage and the critical role a positive mindset plays in reducing their power.

In this way, PhD candidates not just survive the PhD journey, but to thrive with greater emotional resilience.

In the words of a participant...

Very confrontational but at the same time comforting and empowering workshop.

3.2. BUILDING WELL-BEING AWARENESS TOGETHER

In the words of the organizer...

I approached the PhD psychologists for the organization of a well-being workshop during the VSL & ELS Academy PhD Days. **The result was a very engaging and insightful session on self-sabotage for a group of 12 PhD candidates.**

Even if the participants were encouraged to critically reflect on their self-sabotaging patterns; Margarita's warm personality contributed to a safe and friendly atmosphere in which participants were eager to share their thoughts with each other.

With this workshop, the PhD candidates gained useful insights that are directly applicable in their daily work.

I highly recommend this workshop to Leiden University colleagues.

Merel Cornax, PhD-fellow Business Studies, Leiden Law School



3.3. BUILDING WELL-BEING AWARENESS TOGETHER



Please let us know how we can help you create well-being awareness in your faculty. Invite us to talk in your event, these are the options that we have to offer you:

1.

10 – 15 min presentation. **Introduction to PhD psychologists' services.**

2.

90 – 120 min workshop. **Coping with living abroad.**

3.

90 min workshop. **From Surviving to Thriving in PhD Life: Leading Your Path to Success by Overcoming Self-sabotage**

Invite us to be part of your event (with anticipation) by sending an e-mail to phdpsychologist@SEA.leidenuniv.nl

4.1. YOUR STORY, YOUR STRENGTH

Creating Belonging and Confidence in the PhD Journey: The Power of Intercultural Sensitive Support

The autonomous nature of PhD work can make this journey feel like a lonely one. This sense of isolation can be even greater when you have an international background and are constantly reconciling different cultural landscapes.

Intercultural competence is not just about speaking another language or learning different behaviors; it's about being skillful at managing diverse and sometimes contradicting cognitive worlds and considering a variety of life perspectives.

The performance of a multicultural team is valuable, but it also requires significant effort and awareness to collaborate effectively. ***Approaching cultural differences at work with compassion allows you to see the potential and opportunities that diversity offers for achieving greater outcomes.***

When PhD candidates feel seen, heard, and understood considering their background and challenges, they are more likely to feel safe, gain clarity, and take empowered steps forward.

Having access to culturally sensitive professionals, colleagues, and resources can make a meaningful difference. The following testimonial highlights how intercultural attuned support not only helped one PhD candidate feel a sense of belonging but also provided him with the tools to thrive.

4.2. YOUR STORY, YOUR STRENGTH

TESTIMONIAL FROM PHD CANDIDATE — INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS

“A PhD track can be lonely, and from this perspective it can be hard to oversee where your issues lie.

Before I went to the PhD psychologist, I had an idea of where my problems would be.

In the first session I gained insight into what was causing friction in me regarding my work environment.

By reflecting on my issues with the PhD psychologist I felt empowered which allowed me to change perspective on my situation.”



4.3. YOUR STORY, YOUR STRENGTH

*“To share my experiences, it was important for me that **I felt safe during the conversations**. This was certainly the case as **I felt that the psychologist was culturally sensitive and was able to empathize and understand why my experiences were problematic to me**.*

*I feel grateful that I was able to have these conversations with a professional that was culturally sensitive. I found it very beneficial that each time I would describe an issue in the following sessions, I was given methods and techniques to help understand where my issues would stem from, also that **I was able to actively change my situation by including these methods and insights into my life**.*

I would recommend the PhD psychologist to anyone that has a feeling that they might not belong. You will be met with understanding, and you will be offered tools to navigate your PhD journey successfully.”

PhD candidate from Faculty LUMC

[Check here the resource: Navigating a New Culture – Workshop series](#)

5.1. HOW CAN THE PHD PSYCHOLOGIST HELP?

You can turn to the PhD psychologist with problems arising from your PhD trajectory and other related personal problems, for example:

- Excessive (work) pressure, work-life imbalance
- Physical and mental stress
- Exhaustion and burn-out
- Concentration problems
- Motivation problems
- Procrastination
- Anxiety issues, including fear of failure and panic attacks
- Mood issues
- Perfectionism, imposter syndrome
- Uncertainty (about your future)
- Difficulties being assertive
- Low or negative self-esteem
- Social isolation, loneliness
- Adjustment problems, culture shock
- Problems with supervision or other aspects of the working environment

5.2. OUR TEAM, OUR VISION

We believe that behind every PhD candidate is a human being with unique needs, strengths, and challenges.

In our team:

- We work with empathy and professional expertise
- We offer a place where vulnerability is welcomed and growth is supported



5.3. OUR TEAM, OUR VISION

Through our guidance, those who seek our support find:

- **A sense of being seen and heard**
- **A safe space to reflect, feel, and grow**
- **A stronger foundation for moving forward in life**

They learn to say:

“I am good enough.”

“My emotions are human.”

“Mistakes are part of the PhD journey.”

“I can do this.”

Most importantly, **they discover that seeking help can be a positive and empowering experience.**

5.4. WHO ARE THE PHD PSYCHOLOGISTS?

Agnes van Rossum



Agnes van Rossum worked for many years as a scientist in the position of technician, PhD candidate and post-doc, obtaining her PhD in 2006. She quit science in 2010. Agnes studied clinical and health psychology at Utrecht University, after which she started her own practice as psychologist and walk-and-talk coach. In the role of PhD psychologist, Agnes brings her two worlds together.

Margarita Lourido



Margarita Lourido obtained her PhD in Clinical Psychology in Barcelona in 2016. She has an extensive international background which has included work and study in numerous countries such as Colombia, the USA, Spain and the Netherlands. Since 2018, she has had her own practice as a coach-psychologist through which she channels her passion for helping highly-educated internationals navigate the challenges of establishing a life and career abroad.



CONTACT US



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Don't hesitate to contact us, send an email to:
PhDpsychologist@sea.leidenuniv.nl

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