

PHD PSYCHOLOGISTS NEWS

DECEMBER 2025, JANUARY,
FEBRUARY 2026

PhD Psychologists team

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



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Wishing you a joyful holiday season
and a successful year ahead!



1. BOOK RECOMMENDATION FOR PHD SUPPORTERS

Neurodiversity often plays a role in the PhD path. It has benefits and challenges that are important to recognize. This book will help you to define neurodiversity and offer tools to unlock the power of every brain. Embracing neurodiversity fosters unique talents, innovation, and inclusion in the workplace.

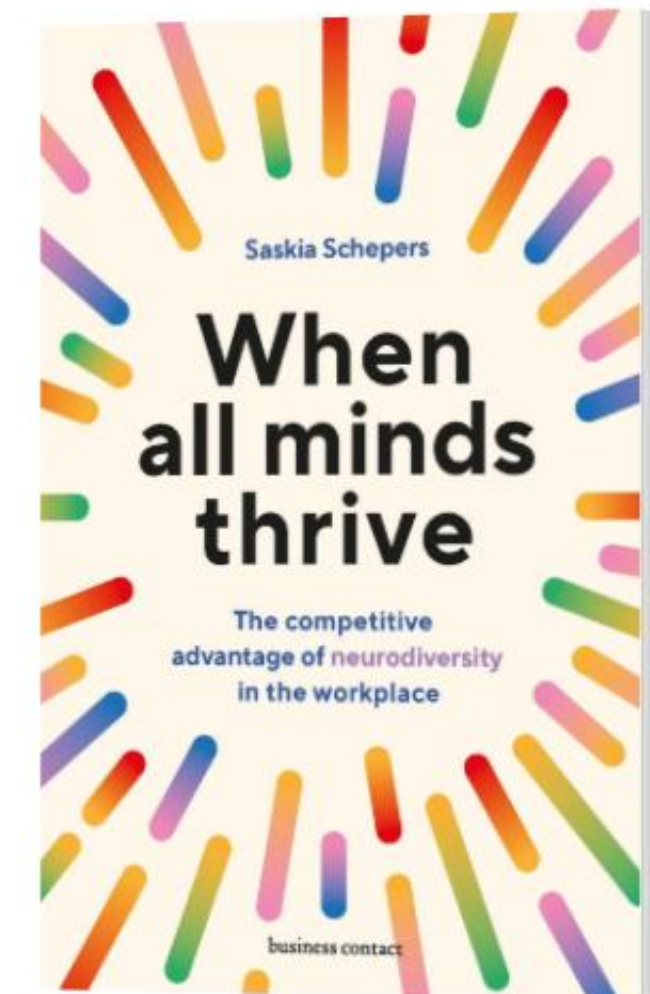
When all minds thrive

The competitive advantage of neurodiversity in the workplace

By Saskia Schepers

No two brains are the same and nowhere is this more evident than at work. While one person may feel overwhelmed by frequent meetings, another may crave daily interaction with their team. And just as one person thrives in remote work, another flourishes amidst the vibrancy of the office.

Unfortunately, many work environments are often tailored exclusively to the most common types of brains, leaving neurodivergent brains (often associated with labels such as giftedness, high sensitivity, autism, ADHD, and dyslexia) without the space to deploy their specific talents. This results in the enormous potential of neurodiversity going untapped.



Source: bol.com

2.1. WORDS FOR PHD CANDIDATES

CLOSING THE YEAR WITH SELF-COMPASSION: AN HONEST LOOK AT YOUR PROGRESS

The PhD path is often not clearly defined. You have to chart it yourself, finding new solutions and making your way through uncertainty. It's the path of a pioneer, and when you're a pioneer, each day is marked by challenges, setbacks, learning, and moments of doubt.

As the year comes to an end, it's normal to ask yourself:

Have I made enough progress?

Am I meeting the goals I set for myself?

To answer these questions, we often turn to strategies that, without realizing it, can hurt us:

- *Comparing ourselves with colleagues who seem to move faster or publish more.*
- *Measuring success only through visible results (articles, conferences, completed experiments).*
- *Reviewing the original plan without considering the delays, pauses, or adjustments that research inevitably brings.*

These ways of evaluating progress can create stress, guilt, and a sense of "not being enough" a kind of expectation hangover. But the problem is not that you evaluate your work, it's how you do it.

2.2. WORDS FOR PHD CANDIDATES

Rethink the Evaluation: From Criticism to Recognition and Self-compassion

A healthy self-evaluation is not about judging, but about understanding and acknowledging. Here are some questions that can help you reflect on your year with more compassion and realism:

- ***What did I learn this year, even from the things that didn't go as planned?***
- ***Which skills have I strengthened (patience, resilience, communication, organization)?***
- ***When did I feel most connected to my purpose and my work?***
- ***What sources of support (people or personal resources, skills, knowledge), helped me stay grounded?***
- ***What do I need to let go of to enter the new year with more clarity, empowerment, and energy?***

Allow yourself to celebrate your inner progress: your ability to keep going, to adapt, and to continue learning.

Enter the New Year Empowered

There is no single right way to advance in a PhD trajectory. What truly matters is that, when you look back, you recognize not only what you accomplished, but who you have become in the process.

That quiet growth: patience, clarity, and self-compassion, is what prepares you to keep creating, researching, and contributing with purpose.

Margarita Lourido - PhD psychologist

3.1 UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



ACT TRAINING

Status:
Registration is open
Starting 27 Jan 2026

For Dutch speakers

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

[Link ACT TRAINING](#)

NAVIGATING A NEW CULTURE WORKSHOP SERIES

Status:
Registration is open
Starting 12 Mar 2026

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

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

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](#)

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

3.2 UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



HOOGBEGAAFDHEID/ GIFTEDNESS PHD PEER SUPPORT GROUP

Status:
**Registration
permanently open**

Gifted individuals may set exceptionally high standards for themselves, leading to potential anxiety and difficulty with self-acceptance.

[Link GIFTEDNESS PHD PEER
SUPPORT GROUP](#)

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.

[Link AD\(H\)D PEER SUPPORT
GROUP](#)

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

4.1. BUILDING WELL-BEING AWARENESS TOGETHER

Graduate School of Humanities Introductory Meeting

We would like to thank the Graduate School of Humanities for inviting the PhD psychologists to participate in the PhD Introductory Meeting of 25th of September 2025.

This initiative provided a meaningful platform for mutual understanding between PhD candidates and supervisors.

The event offered an opportunity to connect with both new PhD candidates and staff members through two panel sessions. **During these sessions, participants openly shared their experiences, challenges, and insights about navigating the PhD trajectory within the Faculty of Humanities.**

As PhD psychologists, we deeply value opportunities like this that promote awareness, dialogue, and collaboration within the academic community. Creating spaces for honest conversation helps strengthen the relationship between supervisors and PhD candidates, and fosters wellbeing and sustainable success.



4.2. 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.

45 min presentation. **Bridging the Gap: Building a Safe and Supportive Supervision Relationship**

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

5.1. YOUR STORY, YOUR STRENGTH

Thinking About Quitting Your PhD?

Some PhD candidates wonder whether they should continue their PhD path.

A PhD is demanding, and your well-being during this time depends on many aspects, for example: the relationship with your supervisors, feeling safe in your work environment, stress levels, high workload, support from colleagues, and what is happening at a personal level. When several of these aspects become difficult and overwhelming, it's understandable that a PhD candidate might start questioning whether to continue.

Even though quitting is an option, people rarely talk about it, and it happens more often than you might think. When considering whether to continue your PhD trajectory, what matters most is finding the path that protects your well-being and supports your future.

If you'd like to talk about your doubts in a safe space, you are very welcome to contact the PhD psychologists. You don't have to figure this out alone.

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5.2. YOUR STORY, YOUR STRENGTH

TESTIMONIAL FROM PHD CANDIDATE WHO QUITTED THE PHD TRAJECTORY

*Starting a PhD in a foreign country, in a new research group, social environment, and maybe partly new field is a big commitment and a lot to navigate at the same time. **I found myself in a position where I was emotionally exhausted, overworked, and overwhelmed.** I knew I had to change something, and deep inside I also knew that my project and general setting weren't the right fit for me, but I wouldn't want to acknowledge it. I contacted the PhD psychologist to have a space without judgement and to discuss with an expert about my situation and feelings. It made me lighter. I got the space to open up without holding back. **I was able to be honest with myself and my feelings so I could understand myself better.** Feeling heard and having professional guidance allowed me to make a difficult decision: to end my PhD and go down a different academic path. **Having support throughout the process, I never regretted my decision, because I had faced all of my fears, concerns, and emotions previously.** I am now happy and fulfilled following my new path (and heart). I encourage everyone to fight for their PhD but also to recognize when it crosses a line and affects their physical or mental health!*



6.1. 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
- Neurodiversity (AD(H)D, giftedness, Autism)
- Problems with supervision or other aspects of the working environment

6.2. 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



6.3. 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.**

6.4. 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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PhDpsychologist@sea.leidenuniv.nl

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