

PHD PSYCHOLOGISTS NEWS

June, July, August 2026

PhD Psychologists team

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



**Universiteit
Leiden**



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1. CELEBRATE WITH US

1st Year of Our Newsletter

After several networking sessions aimed at strengthening collaboration with PhD supporters, we noticed that similar questions kept coming up. We were frequently asked what exactly PhD psychologists do, and when and how a PhD candidate might be referred to us for support.

To respond to these needs, the PhD Psychologist Newsletter was created. It was designed to answer these questions and to keep you informed about the activities we are developing, activities that can be beneficial for PhD candidates and supportive of your work as PhD supporter.

Now, one year after launching this initiative, we would like to sincerely thank you for your response, for sharing the newsletter with PhD candidates, and for your continued efforts in supporting PhDs' well-being and development.

We look forward to continuing this collaboration!



2.1. RECOMMENDATION FOR PHD SUPPORTERS

Our recommendation today is a therapeutic approach that has been very well received by our PhD candidates and students: **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)**. **ACT helps strengthen psychological flexibility and resilience, supporting PhD candidates in coping more effectively with the emotional and academic challenges of the PhD journey.**

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

Embarking on a PhD journey can be an exciting yet challenging experience. The workload can be overwhelming, and the demands of meeting deadlines, producing high quality research, and maintaining a healthy work/life balance may lead to stress, self-doubt, and negative thought patterns.

This is where ACT can be highly valuable. Although the challenges of a PhD trajectory cannot always be changed, ACT helps PhD candidates develop healthier ways of responding to them. **Through ACT, they learn to create distance from unhelpful repetitive thoughts, accept difficult emotions without being overwhelmed by them, and focus on meaningful actions aligned with their personal values and goals.**

ACT can also support PhD candidates in reframing the way they experience supervision and interpersonal challenges within their academic environment, encouraging healthier and more collaborative interactions. By developing psychological flexibility, PhD candidates are often better able to maintain balance, strengthen resilience, and stay connected to their motivation and sense of purpose throughout the PhD journey.

[Check our ACT training for PhD candidates](#) for Dutch speakers, and in 2027 we will be launching this training in English

2.2. RECOMMENDATION FOR PHD SUPPORTERS

Check why many PhD candidates find ACT especially helpful in dealing with stress, self-doubt, perfectionism, and the pressures of academic life. Here are some of the insights shared by participants of ACT training guided by Agnes van Rossum

Session: Acknowledging pain, exploring avoidance and control

I participated in the ACT group because I tend to overthink a lot and get stuck in my head, and I find it difficult to let go of that. As a result, I also struggle to focus on the present moment. The first session was very helpful in acknowledging this and talking about it. I also had a moment of realization that thoughts never really stop, but that it is important to learn how to live with them and relate to them in a different way.

Session: Defusion, creating distance from difficult thoughts

“For me, it was very relevant to create distance from my own thoughts. Giving my mind a name helped a lot with this.”

Session: Body, willingness as a skill

“It helped me to allow space for feelings of sadness or anger. This creates a short dip, but afterwards I feel much less burdened by those emotions.”

Session: Self-compassion

“You are allowed to be kind to yourself, and acknowledging your weaknesses can help you become a more complete person.”

Session: Values and committed action

“Defining your values and then using them as a GPS for making decisions, and afterwards showing self-compassion, if you disappoint someone or do not fully act according to your values, is very helpful.”

3. IN THE SPOTLIGHT

New PhD Peer Support Group Starting September 22, 2026

A PhD journey can sometimes feel isolating, especially when facing challenges such as stress, insecurity, workload pressure, or difficulties with supervision. Following the success of the ADHD and Gifted PhD peer support group, we are launching a new [PhD peer support group](#) open to all PhD candidates, with a focus on prevention and discussing common PhD issues. The group is guided by Agnes van Rossum. Our new group **offers a safe and supportive space where PhD candidates can connect, share experiences, and realize they are not alone in facing these challenges.**

In this group participants decide together which topics will be discussed. Whether you would like help managing stress or workload, dealing with perfectionism or fear of failure, struggling with procrastination, improving motivation, or connecting more with colleagues, the group creates space for honest conversations and mutual support.

How to register?

Send an email to phdpsychologist@SEA.leidenuniv.nl with the subject line: PhD peer support group. In your email, briefly explain why joining this group would be beneficial for you.

After registration, a short intake interview will be scheduled to explore together whether this group is the right fit for you.



4.1. UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



ACT TRAINING **For Dutch speakers**

Next edition:
The end of September

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

Next edition:
September 22

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

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

ROUWGROEP/ GRIEF GOUP **For Dutch speakers**

Next edition:
2nd Semester

Connect with peers experiencing loss and find support to move forward in your PhD journey.

[Link ROUWGROEP](#)

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

4.2. 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](#)

PHD PEER SUPPORT GROUP

Status:
**Starting
September 22**

A safe space for PhD candidates to discuss challenges in their PhD trajectory.

[Link PEER SUPPORT GROUP](#)

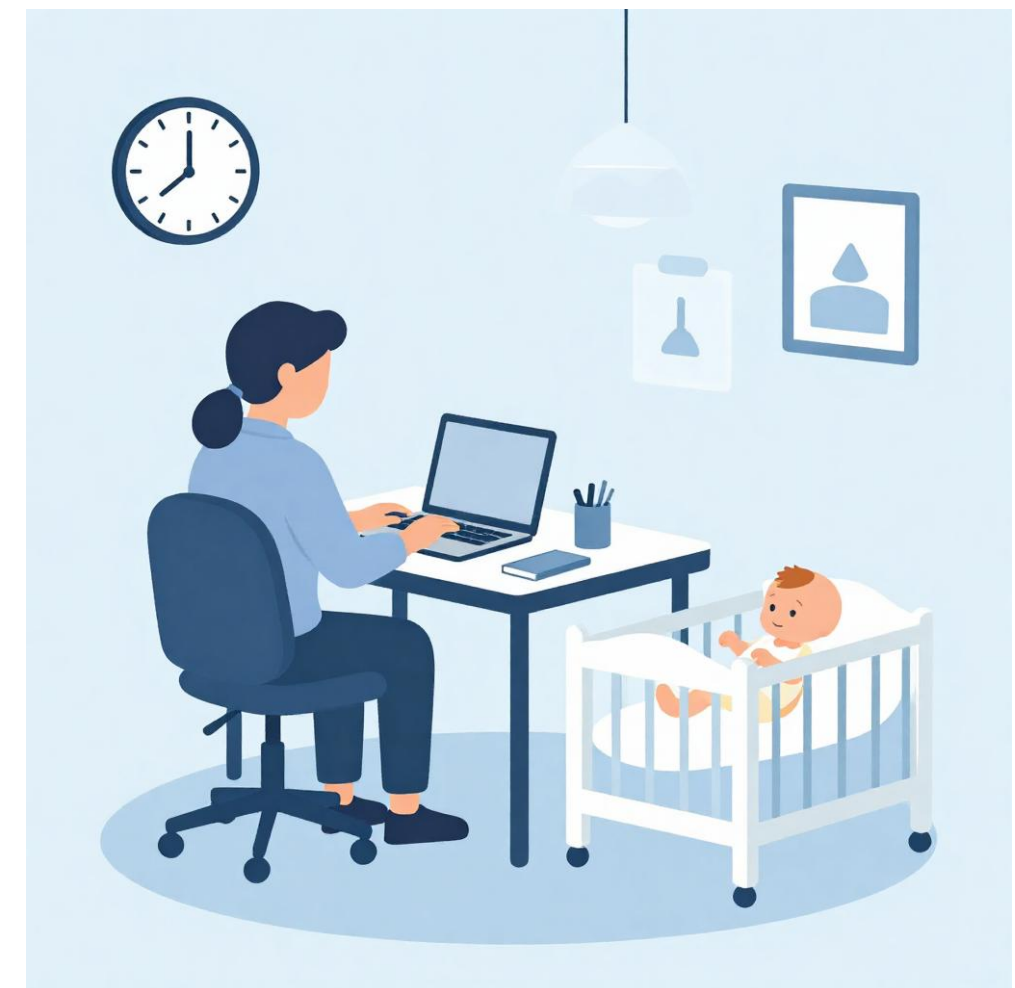
For signing up, please send an e-mail to
phdpsychologist@SEA.leidenuniv.nl

5.1. PARENTHOOD DURING THE PHD JOURNEY

The PhD journey often takes place during young adulthood and adulthood, a period in which many people experience significant life changes. Some PhD candidates become parents during their PhD trajectory, while others begin their PhD while already raising children.

Combining parenthood with a PhD journey is particularly challenging and may include competing demands and time pressure, feelings of guilt and self-criticism, identity shifts, social isolation, and difficulties balancing academic and family responsibilities.

Despite being a significant part of life, parenthood is often not openly discussed within academia. In a professional and achievement-oriented environment, some PhD candidates may find it difficult to share the challenges they experience as parents. By starting this conversation, we hope to create more openness, understanding, and support for PhD candidates who are navigating both academic and family responsibilities.



5.2. PARENTHOOD DURING THE PHD JOURNEY

WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU

We are interested in learning about your experiences and observations regarding this topic.

- Are PhD candidates sharing concerns or seeking support related to parenthood?
- What challenges do PhD candidate parents most frequently talk about?
- Which other challenges related to parenthood during the PhD journey do you think deserve more attention?
- Do you see a need for a support group for PhD candidate who are parents?

Please send us an email with your answers and thoughts on this topic to phdpsychologist@SEA.leidenuniv.nl.

Thank you in advance for your care and collaboration to create a better support for PhD candidates.



6.1. BUILDING WELL-BEING AWARENESS TOGETHER

Navigating the Transition Moment: Finding Clarity After the PhD.

On March 23, 2026, the PhD psychologists team participated in the Career Event for PhD Candidates and Postdocs in The Hague, focused on the theme [Finding Your Career Inside or Outside Academia.](#)

As part of the event, PhD psychologist Dr. Margarita Lourido led the interactive workshop **“Navigating the Transition Moment: Finding Clarity After the PhD.”** The session explored the emotional and professional challenges that often arise at the end of the PhD trajectory, helping participants reflect on their skills, talents and values.

Through reflection exercises participants were encouraged to move from uncertainty and pressure toward greater clarity, confidence, and self-understanding during this important transition period.

One of the key messages of the workshop was:

Clarity in making a decision is a process of self-discovery.



6.2. 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:

- 10 – 15 min presentation. **Introduction to PhD psychologists' services.**
- 45 min presentation. **Bridging the Gap: Building a Safe and Supportive Supervision Relationship**
- 60 min presentation. **Creating Safe Spaces to Promote Resilience Among International PhD Candidates**
- 60 min presentation. **Navigating the Transition Moment: Finding Clarity After the PhD.**
- 90 min (online or live) workshop. **How to deal with stress during the PhD journey**
- 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

7.1. 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, including grief
- 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

7.2. OUR TEAM, OUR VISION

We believe that 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



7.3. 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.**

7.4. 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



Visit our [website](#) by scanning the QR code.
Don't hesitate to contact us, send an email to:
PhDpsychologist@sea.leidenuniv.nl

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