

Improving the Mental Health of Early-Career Researchers

- Gareth O'Neill
- VAUZ Mental Health Event 2018
- University of Zurich
- 02 March 2018

eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>



This talk

- Eurodoc for early-career researchers
- Why talk about mental health issues?
- What causes mental health issues?
- How to fight mental health issues?



eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>

Eurodoc for early-career researchers



eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>



Eurodoc for early-career researchers

- Eurodoc = European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers
- Registered non-profit organisation established in 2002 & based in Brussels
- Federation of 32 national associations for early-career researchers (ECRs) in Europe
- Run exclusively for & by ECRs in Europe on member fees and in voluntary capacity



The European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>



Eurodoc for early-career researchers

Develop policy on topics for ECRs:

- Career Development
- Employment Status
- Interdisciplinarity
- Mobility
- Research Integrity
- Doctoral Training
- Equality
- Mental Health
- Open Science
- Research Quality

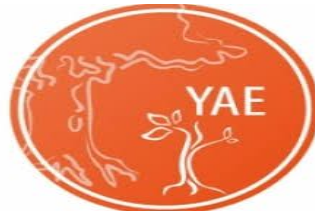
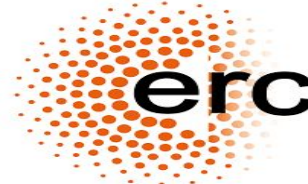


eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>

Eurodoc for early-career researchers



eurodoc

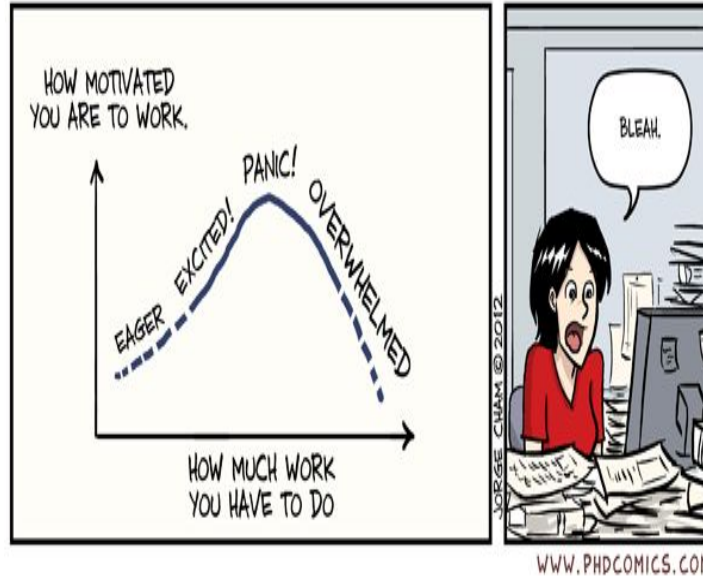
The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>



Why talk about mental health issues?

www.menti.com
75 64 29



eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>

Why talk about mental health issues?

Table 1. The prevalence of common mental health problems in PhD students (SJR) compared to the highly educated general population (HIS) in Flanders 2013: %, age and gender adjusted risk ratio's.

	SJR %	HIS %	Adj. RR ¹
Felt under constant strain	40.8	27.5	1.4
Unhappy and depressed	30.3	13.6	2.1
Lost sleep over worry	28.3	18.1	1.6
Could not overcome difficulties	26.1	12.0	2.4
Not enjoying day-to-day activities	25.4	13.1	2.2
Lost confidence in self	24.4	8.0	3.5
Not playing a useful role	22.5	9.2	2.3
Could not concentrate	21.7	10.7	1.9
Not feeling happy	21.2	11.1	2.2
Felt worthless	16.1	5.3	3.4
Could not make decisions	15.0	6.0	2.8
Could not face problems	13.4	4.3	3.7
Risk of a mental health disorder (GHQ4+)	31.8	14.0	2.4

¹ all RRs were significant at the p<0.001-level.

41% under
constant strain!

30% unhappy
and depressed!



[Levecque et al \(2016\) The Mental Health of PhD Students in Flanders](#)

eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>

Why talk about mental health issues?

	Leiden University PhD candidates	PhD candidates in Flanders	Highly educated in Flanders
	%	%	%
GHQ4+ / risk group	38.3	31.8	14.0
Well-being indicators (GHQ-12)			
Tension, feeling under constant pressure	46.8	40.8	27.2
Unhappy or depressed	32.8	30.3	13.7
Lack of sleep	32.8	28.3	18.1
Unable to overcome difficulties	31.5	26.1	10.7
Concentration problems	29.8	21.7	11.8
Not enjoying normal day-to-day activities	26.4	25.4	13.0
Lack of self-confidence	26.4	24.3	8.1
Not feeling happy	23.0	21.2	11.3
Sense of not playing a useful role	22.6	22.5	9.0
Difficulty in making important decisions	22.1	15.0	6.0
Not able to face problems	18.3	13.4	4.4
Feeling of worthlessness	14.0	16.2	5.4

Table 2: Mental well-being of Leiden University PhD candidates

47% under constant strain!

33% unhappy and depressed!



Van der Weijden et al (2017) The Mental Well-Being of Leiden University PhD Candidates

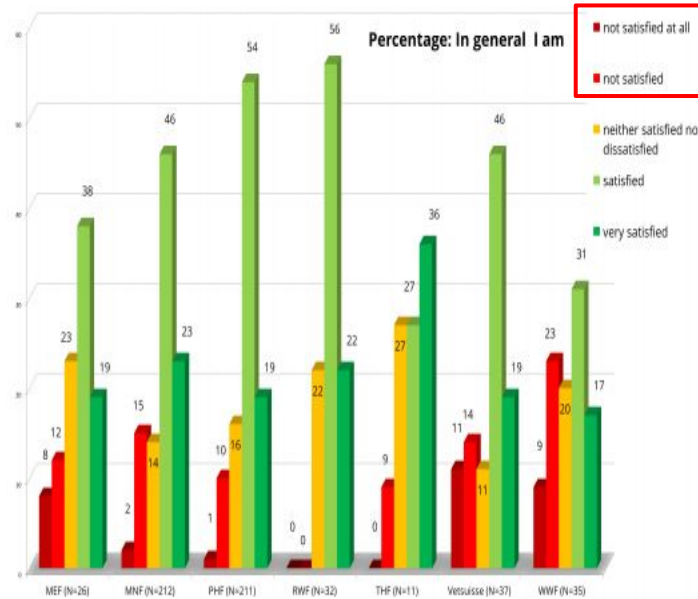
eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net

<http://www.eurodoc.net>

Why talk about mental health issues?



16% not satisfied (at all)!



[VAUZ \(2018\) Survey on PhD Students and Postdocs at University of Zurich](#)

eurodoc

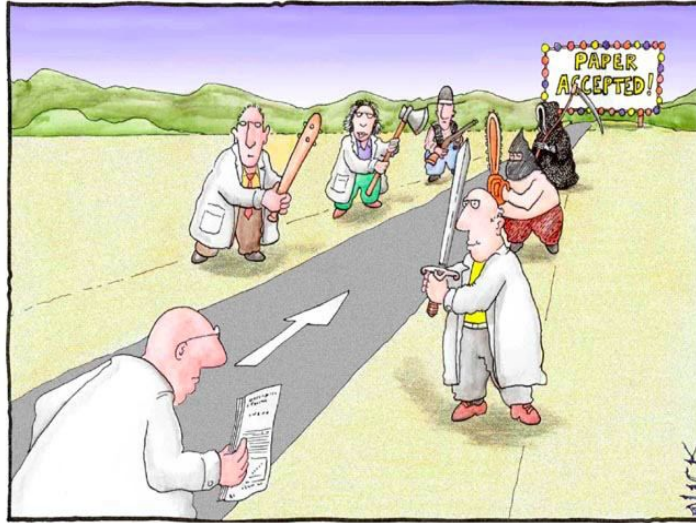
The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net

<http://www.eurodoc.net>

What causes mental health issues?

www.menti.com
75 64 29



Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as "quite an improvement."

eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>



What causes mental health issues?

Wide range of potential stressing factors:

- Career prospects
- Independence
- Mobility
- Social Support
- Supervisor relations
- Teaching students
- Imposter syndrome
- Institution support
- Publish or perish
- Supervision
- Working conditions
- Work-life balance







eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>

What causes mental health issues?

Your Academic Forecast

<p>TODAY</p>  <p>Busy, with a chance of procrastination. Expect chills.</p>	<p>THE NEAR FUTURE</p>  <p>Scattered showers and low brainstorm. Strong pressure front from your department. Expect a lot of hot air.</p>	<p>LONG TERM</p>  <p>Mostly cloudy hypotheses with dry funding conditions, overnight lows in publication with slippery conditions for graduation or tenure.</p>	<p>IF YOU STAY IN ACADEMIA TOO LONG</p>  <p>Low humility and bitter coldness. Expect heavy gusts of productivity and a drop in friends. Remain indoors.</p>
---	---	---	---

JORGE CHAM © 2013

WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

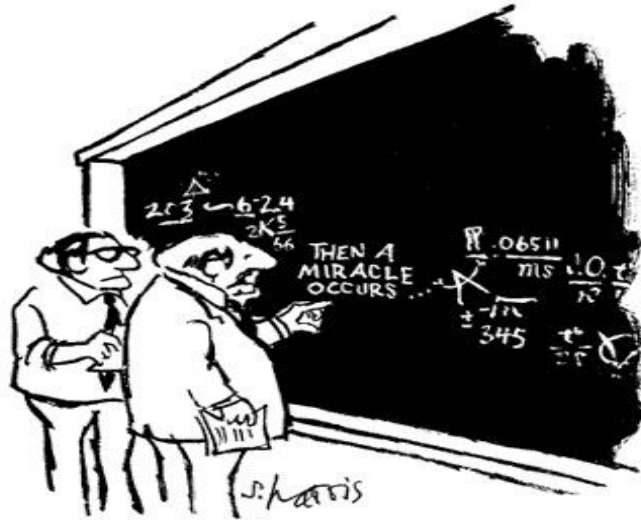


eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>

What causes mental health issues?



"I think you should be more explicit here in step two."



eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>

How to fight mental health issues?

www.menti.com
75 64 29



eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>



How to fight mental health issues?

Mental health is a top priority for Eurodoc:

- Raise awareness with European stakeholders
- Develop proactive policies for mental health
- Push for support for early-career researchers
- Push for more positions of PhD Counsellors
- Push for funding for mental health research



eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>

How to fight mental health issues?

get a social life!



eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>

How to fight mental health issues?

talk to friends!



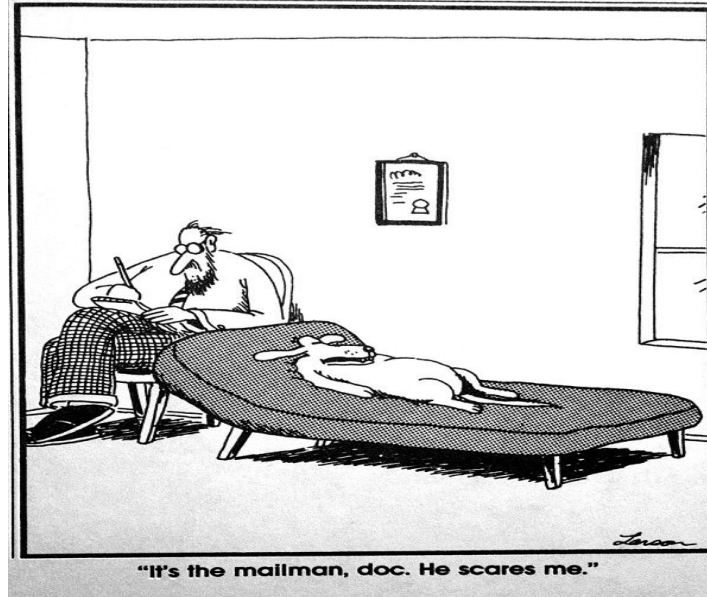
eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>

How to fight mental health issues?

ask colleagues!



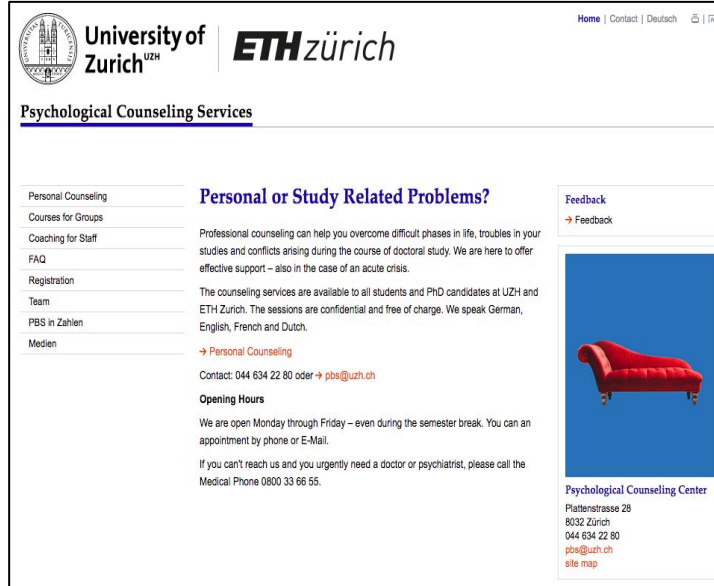
eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>

How to fight mental health issues?

get counselling!



The screenshot shows the website for Psychological Counseling Services at the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich. The page features a navigation menu on the left with links for Personal Counseling, Courses for Groups, Coaching for Staff, FAQ, Registration, Team, PBS in Zahlen, and Medien. The main content area is titled 'Personal or Study Related Problems?' and provides information about professional counseling services, including contact details (044 634 22 80 or pbs@uzh.ch) and opening hours (Monday through Friday). A red sofa is featured in a small image on the right side of the page.

Psychological Counselling Centre at University of Zurich + ETH Zürich

eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>



Improving the Mental Health of Early-Career Researchers

Thank you for listening!

- Gareth O'Neill - President of Eurodoc



eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

gareth.oneill@eurodoc.net
<http://www.eurodoc.net>