

Managing your mental health during your PhD

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WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE OVERWHELMED WITH WORK



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What problem?

- Expectations
- Workload
- Financial situation
- Family situation
- Physical health



Mental health in academia

Culture of acceptance

“If you’re not suffering, then you’re not doing it right.”

“It’s part of doing a PhD.”

“Your work is more important than (your health, your family, your time)”

Culture of shame

“If you can’t handle the stress, then you shouldn’t be an academic.”

“Other people have it worse than you, so deal with it!”

“People like me don’t ask for help.”

My thesis story: Coping

- I rationalised my depression
- I found ways to try to deal with the stress
- “People like me don’t need help”

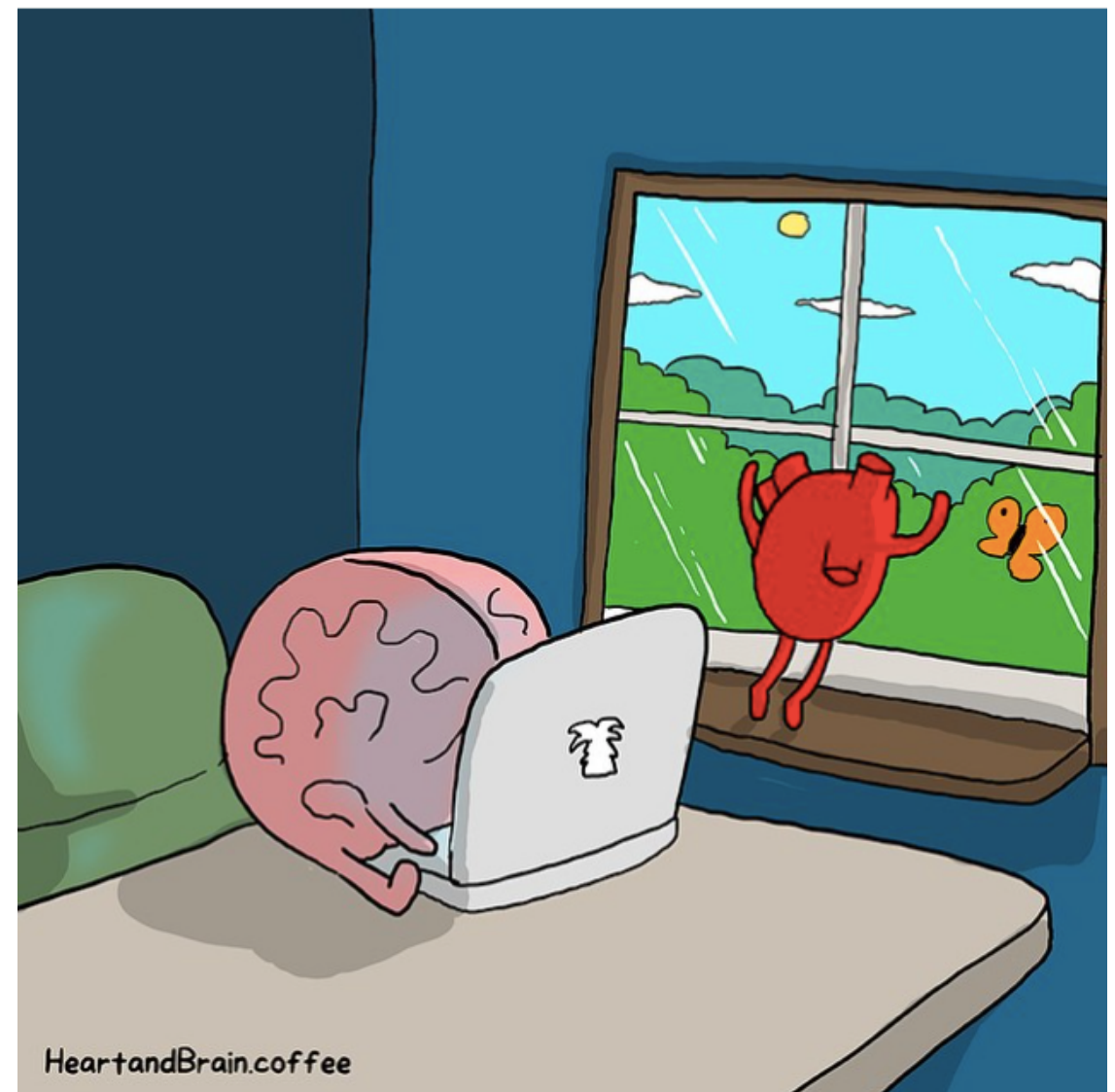


Image by awkward yeti: <https://instagram.com/p/24lo2-Emg7/>

My thesis story: Wake up call

- Running 4 times a week
- Sleeping schedule was not normal
- What my doctor said



My thesis story: Changes

- Scheduled breaks during the day
- Scheduled day off
- Less running
- Sought professional help



Learn how you work

- Work less hours but make those hours count
- Pomodoro technique: one activity for a set time (e.g. write for 25 minutes)
- Turn off wifi at the source (e.g. unplug the router)
- Know when you need a break, then take one!
- Find your “best time(s) of day” and schedule your work around this time
- Use a schedule

Get help

- Admit that you need help
- Talk to someone
- The University of Manchester Counselling Services <http://www.studentnet.manchester.ac.uk/counselling/>
- Students Against Depression <http://studentsagainstdepression.org>



What others have to say about academia and mental health

- Viewing leisure as yet just another do to list item (by Eljee Javier): <http://eljeejavier.com/2014/11/13/post-submission-thoughts-2-viewing-leisure-as-yet-just-another-to-do-list-item/>
- The Mentally Healthy PhD (by Jo Clements) <http://www.nadinemuller.org.uk/academia-and-mental-health/the-mentally-healthy-phd-by-jo-clements/>
- There is a culture of acceptance around mental health issues in academia (by Anonymous Academic -The Guardian) <http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/mar/01/mental-health-issue-phd-research-university>
- Dark Thoughts: Why mental illness is on the rise in academia (by Claire Shaw and Lucy Ward - The Guardian) <http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2014/mar/06/mental-health-academics-growing-problem-pressure-university>
- The Valley of Shit (by The Thesis Whisperer) <http://thesiswhisperer.com/2012/05/08/the-valley-of-shit/>