



The time has come for the first Max Planck Mental Health Awareness Week!

Scientists have the best job in the world! They can follow one of the strongest driving forces in human nature: curiosity. Our job is to figure out the unknown, which in itself is very compelling. This motivation can be so strong, that we forget everything else aside from our project. Some people argue that such dedication to science is the root of innovation, on the other hand there is striking evidence on how many casualties this approach causes:

Especially early career scientists have a much higher probability to suffer from mental health problems than groups of comparable age. Evidences of this connection were supported in our [PhD survey 2017](#) and are a matter of investigation in our currently running PhD survey 2019 (Participate now via the token you have received as Email!).

Event though it is actually a very abundant phenomenon mental illnesses are still regarded as a tabu topic among colleagues. Speaking openly about prioritizing well-being with a more healthy and sustainable lifestyle is perceived as showing weakness or laziness. This is pretty ironic as research shows, that making breaks and not working extensive over-hours enhances productivity. We believe it should be in the utmost interest of oneself to maintain personal well-being for the long term and not trade it for short visioned fulfillment of deadlines.

With the Mental Health Awareness week we want to spark more open conversations about this topic. Furthermore many institutes are offering workshops where one can get advise how to cope with stress and prioritize well-being at top performance. We strongly encourage all employees of the Max Planck Society to participate in these events, many of which have been organized together with the occupational health management (BGM).

We would like to thank all local organizing committees, those that prepared videos and resources, Anette Rapp from the BGM, and everyone involved in the central planning, in particular Michelle Frei and Lindsey Bultema for dedicating their time to for this topic and making this such a big initiative!

In order to break the stigma associated with mental illness we hope many of you will share your thoughts and insights with colleagues in and outside of the MPS. If you wish do that online, please use #MaxPlanckMHAW. We will provide resources with this tag and upon your approval share your stories. Together we can help break this tabu.

Sincerely,

The Max Planck PhDNet Steering Group