



PhD Survival and Wellbeing in Czech Academia

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ČAD (2016-)



Česká asociace doktorandek a doktorandů, z. s.

- Voluntary association
- Across disciplines
- For both Czech and non-Czech PhDs

Mission

- Representation of PhD researchers
- Improvement of doctoral studies in CZ

Reasons for creation

- Lack of representation
- Bad working conditions of PhDs

Areas of ČAD Activities

Political agenda setting on doctoral studies and conditions of PhDs

Awareness raising activities

- Guides - for prospective PhDs (CZ; 2017, 2020)
 - for 1st year PhDs (CZ 2021)
 - PhD Reform+ in a Nutshell (2025)

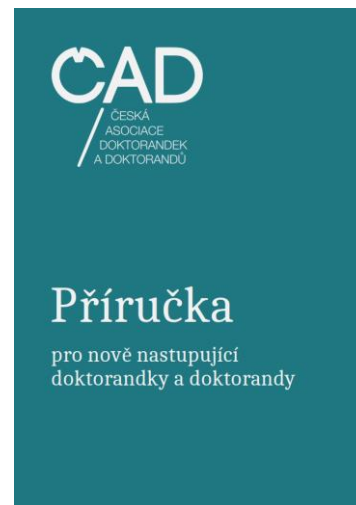
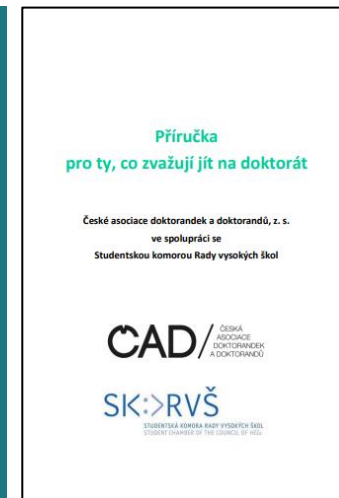
(Now preparing: updated 1st year in English)

- Summer schools, seminars, webinars
- Newsletter, socials(Facebook, LinkedIn, Bluesky)

Consultations and individual help

- Contact via email (info@doktorandivcr.cz)
or via social media

www.doktorandivcr.cz



Why join ČAD?

WEB: <http://doktorandivcr.cz/>

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/doktorandivcr/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/phdcz>

Bluesky: <https://bsky.app/profile/phd-cz.bsky.social>



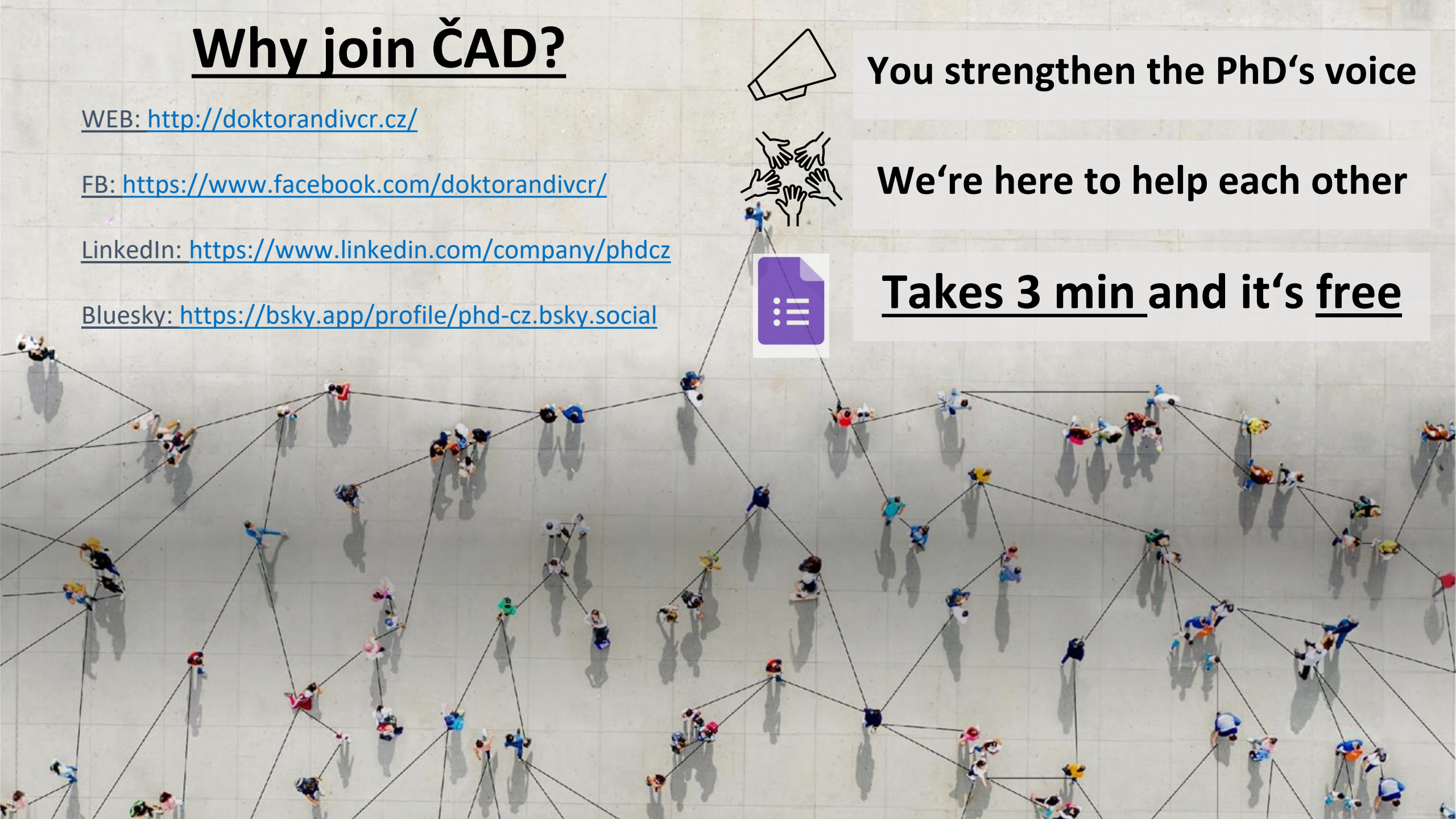
You strengthen the PhD's voice



We're here to help each other



Takes 3 min and it's free



Meeting Schedule 16:15 - 18:15

- **Introductions + expectations** (16:15-17:10)
- **1) Why survival?** (Motivations and obstacles during a PhD)
Group discussion + sharing

Short Break (17:30ish)

- **2) Open discussion** – whatever comes up
- **Final Discussion + take aways** (18:15ish)

Feel free to ask questions /comment throughout :)

Who do we have here? 😊

What is your dissertation about?

Which year are you in?

Why have you come?

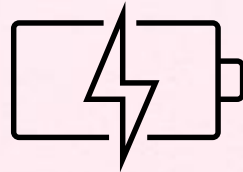
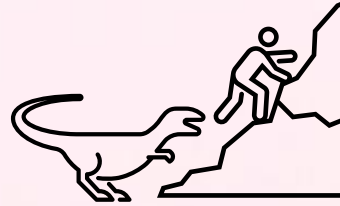
Your expectations / things you want to discuss?

Why PhD might test your “survival skills”

- University hierarchies – PhDs as junior
- Strong dependence on the supervisor
- Fewer people in a cohort – risk of isolation
- Workaholism culture
- Non-transparent rules



The uneasy life of a PhD researcher in the Czech Republic



Mental health and preventing isolation

- [PhDs as a high-risk group](#)
(2019: „“Things seem to be getting worse.”)

Structural pressures

- strict time plan + requirements
- xxx lacking conditions
= chronic stressors (cost-of-living)

Work-life balance

- (time-off, hobbies to lower stress)

Sleep **+** Unprocessed stress **⊖**

TIP: PhD = like a marathon, not a sprint!
(-->motivation fluctuation and obstacles)

Group discussion
(15 min in groups)

What motivated you to start a PhD?

(....Was it your supervisor?)

**The main difficulties
you faced in your PhD so far?**

Balancing sense of control **external** vs **internal locus**



**Learned
helplessness**

I have no control



**Unjustified
Self-blame**

I control it ALL

Avoiding Toxicity in (Academic) Self-Worth



I will be finally worth something ... only once I ...
I need to work ... hours per week to
I do not deserve to experience fun, sleep enough / not to be abused until ...



You and your health > your PhD / dissertation
Academic skills and accomplishments only part of who you are
Comparing to others is not really helpful

You deserve dignity, your rights respected NOW!
(or would you abuse, humiliate an undergrad student??)

Two types of academic feedback

Introduction

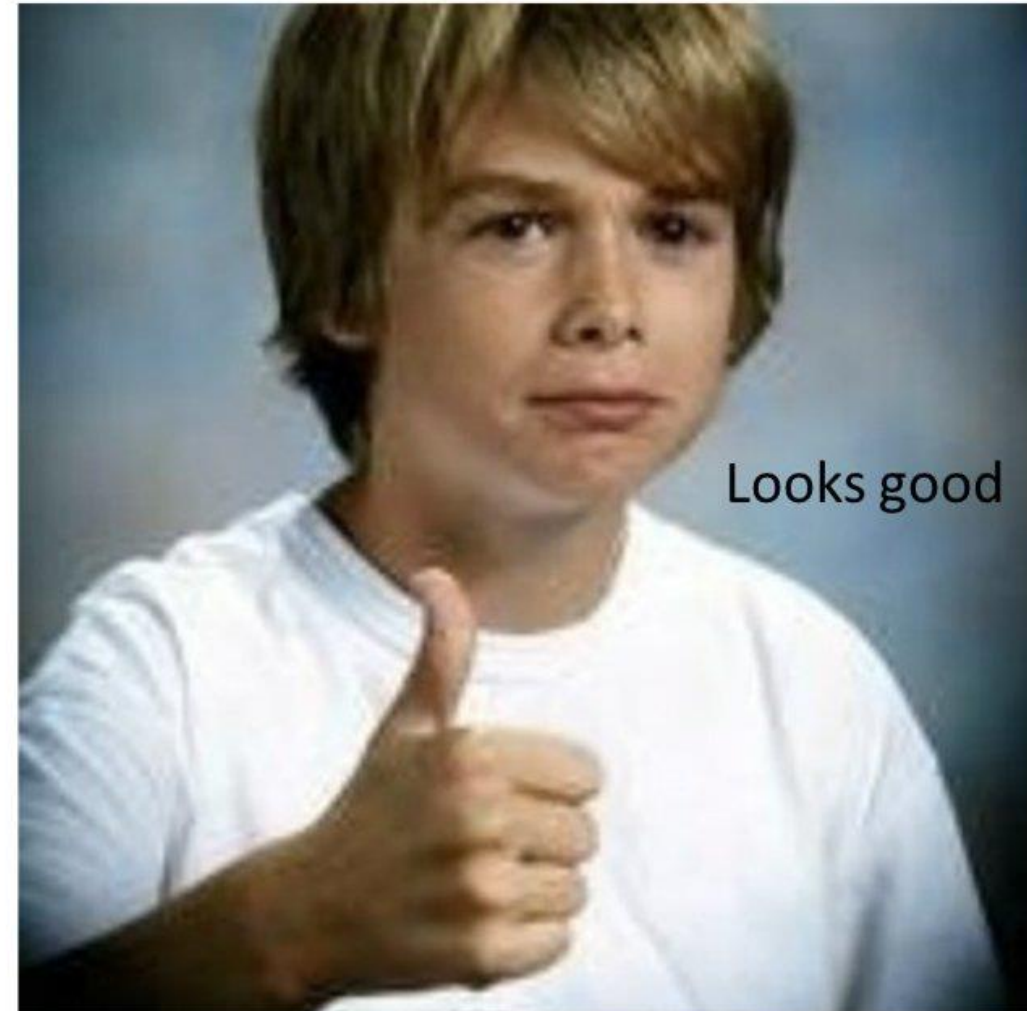
STARTS WITH THE CURRENT OR EXISTING SITUATION, EXPLAINS WHY AND HOW THE PROBLEM EXISTS, AND THEN PRESENTS THE PROPOSED SOLUTION. THE PROPOSED SOLUTION IS PRESENTED WITH A CLEAR AND CONCISE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND A CLEAR STATEMENT OF THE PROPOSED SOLUTION. THE PROPOSED SOLUTION IS PRESENTED WITH A CLEAR AND CONCISE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND A CLEAR STATEMENT OF THE PROPOSED SOLUTION.

Category	Weight	Score	Comments
Design	30%	25	Good design, but needs more detail.
Writing	30%	28	Clear and concise, but needs more detail.
Research	30%	25	Good research, but needs more detail.
Analysis	30%	25	Good analysis, but needs more detail.
Conclusion	30%	25	Good conclusion, but needs more detail.

For your assignment, you will be required to write a paper that includes a clear and concise statement of the problem, a clear statement of the proposed solution, and a clear and concise statement of the problem and a clear statement of the proposed solution.

1. Design
a. Writing
b. Research
c. Analysis
d. Conclusion

For your assignment, you will be required to write a paper that includes a clear and concise statement of the problem, a clear statement of the proposed solution, and a clear and concise statement of the problem and a clear statement of the proposed solution.



Looks good

Risks and pitfalls

- Nontransparent and **informal rules** favor the stronger

- Unequal level of duties (teaching, admin. duties)
Relative to others --- how much is fair and sustainable?

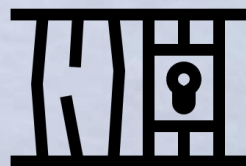
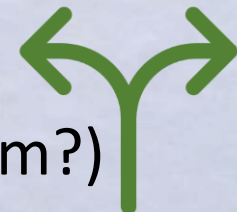


- Obligatory co-authorship, appropriation of PhD's work



- Harassment, bossing, psychological pressure

- **Possibility to change the supervisor**--> study/subject board
(If supervisor also head of the Program Board or friends with them?)



Good practice

- Regular meetings
- Goals and milestones (ISP +revisions)
- Agree on a communication plan
- Know your obligations (to finish the PHD)
- Be open to feedback and constructive criticism



Tip:

Be pro-active in communicating your needs, problems! (sooner than later)



Mutual Expectations

- unique case by case
- clarify (sooner than later)

Tip:

Transparent written agreement
can be beneficial to all!

Expectations of Research Supervision

Supervisors and research students often have differing expectations of supervision. The supervisor and student should complete this scale independently and then compare their responses. Circle a number depending on whether you think the responsibility lies more with the supervisor or the student.

	Supervisor	Rating	Student
1.	It is the supervisor's responsibility to select the research topic.	1 2 3 4 5	The student is responsible for selecting her/his own topic.
2.	The supervisor should decide which theoretical framework and/or methodology is most appropriate.	1 2 3 4 5	The students should decide which theoretical framework and/or methodology they wish to use.
3.	The supervisor should develop an appropriate program and timetable of research and study for the student.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should develop their own program and timetable of research.
4.	The supervisor should ensure that the student has access to the resources and facilities that they need.	1 2 3 4 5	It is the student's responsibility to locate and access all necessary resources and facilities.
5.	It is the supervisors' responsibility to advise the student of all relevant policies, procedures and requirements.	1 2 3 4 5	The student is responsible for being familiar with the relevant policies, procedures and requirements.
6.	It's up to the supervisor to build an appropriate professional relationship with the student.	1 2 3 4 5	It is the student's responsibility to manage the relationship with their supervisor.
7.	The supervisor should insist on regular meetings with the student.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should decide when she/he wants to meet.
8.	The supervisor should check regularly that the student is working consistently and on track.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should work independently and not have to account for how and where time is spent.
9.	It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the thesis is finished by the required submission date.	1 2 3 4 5	It is up to the student to finish within the allocated timeframe.
10.	The supervisor should insist on seeing all drafts of work to ensure that the student is on the right track.	1 2 3 4 5	It's up to the student to decide when to show drafts of their work.
11.	The supervisor should assist in the writing, editing and presentation of the thesis.	1 2 3 4 5	The writing of the thesis should only be the student's own work and they must take full responsibility for presentation of the thesis.
12.	The supervisor is responsible for deciding when the thesis can be submitted for examination.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should decide when they are ready to submit the thesis for examination.

Adapted from: Moses, I. (1985). Supervising postgraduates. HERDSA Green Guide No 3, Kensington: Higher Education Research & Development Society of Australasia.

Isolation vs Peer networking (department, faculty etc.)



You do not have to be alone, reach out!

Connect with your colleagues:

- research cooperation + emotional support
- know if you are being exploited
- strength numbers, deal with structural issues

Where to look for help?

CAD / THE CZECH
ASSOCIATION
OF DOCTORAL
RESEARCHERS

Getting information on what to do

- Seminars, workshops

Local university Guides, Services

NTK Academic service

Peer support

- Your local PhD group or **ČAD**


Appeal, consultations

- Your supervisor, department, program boards
(Dean, Vice-Dean for doctoral studies)
- Academic Senate – Ethics Committee
- Ombudspersons



Professional psychological help in hard situations

- crisis (for you or people around you
- when no longer able to deal on your/their own)

- [Help Lines](#) (phone and online contact)
- **Modrá linka** www.modralinka.cz (English email consultations)
549 241 010 / 608 902 410
<https://www.linkapsychickepomoci.cz/> (116 123)
- + many other <https://nevypustdusi.cz/kde-hledat-pomoc/>
- Walk-in [Crisis centers](#)
- (<https://www.csspraha.cz/kc-riaps> **Chelčického 39, 130 00 Praha 3**
 **+420 222 586 768**)
- **+University Counselling services:** (Counselling Walk-in, Online Crisis Intervention)

Mental Health – more resources

- **ReMO** – [Imposter Phenomenon \(vs „Imposter Syndrome“\)](#) video

"Sometimes the world is shit and your reaction is a very normal reaction to that."

- [Completing stress response cycle \(stres and stressors + Beyond self-care – TED discussion\)](#)

Nagoski, Emily, and D. M. A. Amelia Nagoski.
Burnout: The secret to unlocking the stress cycle.
2019.

HOW TO DEAL WITH ACADEMIC BURNOUT WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO DEAL WITH ACADEMIC BURNOUT

NOVEMBER 15, 2023



BY KATHRYN PETERSON, PHD

Thank you for taking part in this discussion!

Feel free to reach out with any question or comment 😊

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