

BEYOND PERFORMANCE
Emotional Well-being and Stress Management Workshops
Programmes for PhD Students at the University of Pavia

Pursuing a PhD is an extraordinary opportunity for both academic and personal growth. It is a time for research, discovery, engagement with the scholarly community, and the development of one's academic identity.

Alongside these opportunities, however, doctoral study also brings significant challenges: increasing responsibilities, high expectations, deadlines, revisions, competition, uncertainty about the future, and the desire to perform at one's best.

Stress, performance anxiety, and periods of difficulty are neither unusual experiences nor signs of personal weakness. On the contrary, they are a common part of the experience of many early-career researchers and deserve to be recognised, understood, and addressed with appropriate support and practical tools.

For this reason, the Pro-Rector for People and the Right to Study, the School of Advanced Doctoral Training (SAFD), and the University of Pavia Psychological Counselling Service, as part of the Health Mode On – PRO-BEN project, are promoting *Beyond Performance*, an initiative designed to support the psychological well-being of PhD students through programmes specifically tailored to the needs of doctoral researchers.

The **Emotional Well-being and Stress Management Workshops** are the first initiative to be launched as part of the *Beyond Performance* project. Led by psychologists with expertise in promoting psychological well-being and stress management, the workshops will provide practical strategies and evidence-based tools to help participants navigate the challenges of doctoral study with greater confidence, awareness, and resilience.

This first edition is dedicated to PhD students at the University of Pavia and represents the initial step in a broader initiative that the University intends to extend progressively to other members of the academic community.

- What the Workshops Offer -

The workshops have been designed to provide a supportive and confidential environment where participants can listen, share experiences, and learn practical strategies for addressing some of the main challenges that may arise during the doctoral journey.

In particular, participants will have the opportunity to work on:

- managing stress;
- coping with performance anxiety;
- recognising and regulating emotions;
- overcoming periods of difficulty or lack of progress in study and research;
- achieving a healthy balance between personal life and academic commitments.

Through experiential activities, mindfulness exercises, opportunities for individual reflection, and group discussion, participants will develop practical skills and effective strategies to approach the challenges of research and university life with greater confidence, resilience, and self-awareness.

- Workshop Organisation -

Two workshops will be offered, each limited to 15 participants, in order to foster a supportive environment that encourages active participation, meaningful discussion, and mutual exchange.

The workshops will be organised as follows:

- one workshop conducted in Italian;
- one workshop conducted in English.

Each workshop will consist of five two-hour sessions. Registration is for the entire programme; it is therefore not possible to register for individual sessions.

- Schedule -

Workshop in Italian	Workshop in English
Friday 25 September 2026 – 9.00-11.00	Wednesday 23 September 2026 – 10.00-12.00
Friday 2 October 2026 – 9.00-11.00	Wednesday 30 September 2026 – 10.00-12.00
Friday 9 October 2026 – 9.00-11.00	Wednesday 7 October 2026 – 10.00-12.00
Friday 16 October 2026 – 9.00-11.00	Wednesday 14 October 2026 – 10.00-12.00
Friday 23 October 2026 – 9.00-11.00	Wednesday 21 October 2026 – 10.00-12.00
Location: UNIPV Psychological Counselling Service, Palazzo Grassi, via San Gerolamo Miani 3	

- Programmes -

Programme for the Workshop in Italian	Programme for the Workshop in English
First session – "Orienting" <i>What matters to you</i> An introduction to the course and group work. This session will focus on group building and an initial exploration of the theme of values: what matters most to each individual in university and personal life.	First session – "Contact" • Becoming aware and relaxing: exploring through the body • An introduction to body awareness and mindful presence. Participants will learn to recognize bodily



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Second session – "Mapping"

Moving away from and closer to what matters

This session will be dedicated to observing how one functions during periods of stress or blockages: which thoughts, emotions, and sensations arise, what strategies are implemented to distance oneself from discomfort, and which actions can instead bring one closer to what is important.

Third session – "Untangling"

Recognising one's inner "counsellor" and the role of thoughts

Through experiential exercises, participants will explore the role of the mind in challenging moments: judgements, self-criticism, comparisons, forecasts, and rigid rules. The goal will be to train the ability to recognise thoughts simply as thoughts, without necessarily having to follow or fight them.

Fourth session – "Observing"

Pausing, noticing, and making space for the present experience

This session will focus on mindfulness practices, body awareness, and connecting with the present moment. Participants will be guided to observe challenging emotions and sensations, creating a space for choice between what is felt and how one acts.

Fifth session – "Exploring"

Small steps towards what matters

The final session will be dedicated to integrating the course outcomes and building personal strategies to apply to daily and university life. Participants will be invited to identify small, concrete, and sustainable steps aligned with their values, even in the presence of stress, uncertainty, or difficulties.

sensations, increase self-awareness, and use the body as a pathway to relaxation and emotional regulation.

Second session – "Regulate"

- Rough sea, calm sea, still sea: the role of breathing
- An exploration of breathing as a tool for emotional regulation. Through experiential practices, participants will learn how the breath can influence physiological activation and support balance in challenging moments.

Third session – "Communicate"

- Emotions in the dance of attunement: boundaries
- A workshop focused on emotional awareness, interpersonal connection, and personal boundaries. Participants will explore how emotions influence relationships and how to develop greater attunement with themselves and others.

Fourth session – "Integrate"

- Maps as a tool to interrupt circular patterns
- A session dedicated to recognizing recurring emotional and cognitive patterns. Through reflective and experiential activities, participants will explore new perspectives and strategies for creating change.

Fifth session – "Support"

- The importance of supporting intention: a menu for a healthy mind
- A final session focused on consolidating personal resources and developing sustainable practices for psychological wellbeing. Participants will identify strategies to support their intentions and maintain a balanced relationship with themselves.

- How to Express Your Interest -

PhD Students who wish to participate are invited to express their interest by 10 September 2026 by sending an email to:

serviziopsicologia@unipv.it

The email should include the following information:

- full name;
- doctoral programme;
- year of enrolment;
- email address;

- telephone number.

Please use one of the following subject lines, depending on your preferred workshop:

- Beyond Performance – Italian Workshop: Expression of Interest
- Beyond Performance – English Workshop: Expression of Interest

- Admission Process -

To ensure a high-quality learning experience, each workshop is limited to a maximum of 15 participants.

Places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, according to the order in which expressions of interest are received, until all available places have been filled.

If the number of applications exceeds the number of available places, a waiting list will be established. PhD Students who are unable to participate in this first edition will be given priority for the next edition of the programme, which the Vice-Rector for People and the Right to Study intends to offer during the 2026/2027 academic year.

An Invitation to Participate

Taking care of your psychological well-being does not mean taking time away from your research. Rather, it means creating the best possible conditions to pursue it with greater clarity, balance, and self-awareness.

If you are interested, we encourage you to express your interest in the workshops as soon as possible, as registration will close on 10 September 2026 for organisational reasons.

We also warmly invite you to attend the inaugural *Beyond Performance* event, which will take place on 16 September 2026 at 2:30 p.m. in the Aula del '400, and will focus on psychological well-being and performance anxiety during doctoral study and in the transition to postdoctoral and professional careers. The event will officially launch the Beyond Performance project and provide an important opportunity for reflection and discussion.

The final programme and event flyer will be circulated between late August and early September. In the meantime, we encourage you to save the date.

Those who are unable to attend the event in person because they are conducting research or studying abroad will be able to participate online. To receive the access link, simply send an email



to ufficio.propersona@unipv.it, using the following subject line: "Remote Participation in Beyond Performance (16 September 2026) – Link Request".

Every research journey is also a journey of personal growth. *Beyond Performance* was created to support both.

Kind regards,

Pro-Rectorate for People and the Right to Study

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