

Mental Health and the Job Market

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Mental Health among PhD Students

Recently, mental health issues have come under scrutiny within the econ community

Two studies – Bolotnyy et al. (2022) and Macchi et al. (2023) – document patterns of poor mental health among Ph.D. students

- ▶ Prevalent anxiety and depression symptoms
- ▶ Less likely to reach out or contact a mental health professional, especially among men
- ▶ Especially in students at the end of their PhD Evidence

Feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression are not uncommon

Having those feelings does not reflect on your quality as a researcher or on how the market will go for you

This presentation

- ▶ Discuss sources of stress on mental health throughout the market
- ▶ Discuss strategies and recommendations to keep healthy during the market

Market is different for everyone, and so will mental health issues

Broadly speaking two different sources of stress throughout the market

- ▶ “Too much to do, too little time”: application, interview stage, flyouts
 - ◇ Feelings of being overwhelmed
 - ◇ Anxiety related to social interactions
- ▶ Waiting: time in between, post-flyouts stage
 - ◇ Feeling powerless/helpless
 - ◇ Burnout after high levels of stress and anxiety

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- ▶ “Too much to do, too little time”: applications, interview stage, flyouts
- ▶ Waiting: time in between, post-flyouts stage
- ▶ Uncertainty: How many interviews are good enough? When should I have received invitations for interviews/flyouts? Will I get a job?
- ▶ Randomness: events out of your control in your personal and academic life

Good news!

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You'll be fine

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Honestly, regardless of how the market goes, you will be fine

You have already come so far in your PhD journey, this is just the last step

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Attending this session is already a great first step!

Before the Job Market

Get informed

- ▶ A lot of anxiety comes from uncertainty, some cannot be result but
- ▶ Talk to previous candidates, advisor, and other faculty
- ▶ Good to know what to expect and when

Know who to talk to

- ▶ Family or friends (outside academia)
- ▶ Colleagues and classmates (*very* personal choice)
- ▶ Mental Health Care professionals
 - ◇ Resources made available by your department/university
 - ◇ Resources made available in your local healthcare center

Before the Job Market

Communication is key

Convey expectations and preferences to your advisor(s) early

- ▶ Can seem daunting but it's better to do it before the official start of the market
- ▶ Openly discuss options outside academia if that's something you want to consider
- ▶ Your advisor wants to help you get the job you want the most!

Reach out to alumni if you have questions on the job market experience

- ▶ Could help prepare for interviews
- ▶ Recent experience and will understand very well what you are going through
- ▶ Could be less stressful than talking to current candidates

During the Job Market

The market is different for everyone and there is a lot of randomness

- ▶ Avoid comparing yourself to others, everyone is different!
- ▶ Your cohort is *not* your competition

The process of the market or its outcome is not a reflection of your quality as a research or of what you can accomplish in the future

Communication is still key

- ▶ Talk to others regularly, reach out to mental health care professionals
- ▶ Organize meetings with your cohorts to practice interviews, spiel, get and give feedback (great time to commiserate)

Maintain a balanced schedule, especially in times of high stress/workload

- ▶ **Regular** sleeping schedule, eating well, going out, exercising, etc.

During the Job Market

Be kind to yourself

- ▶ Don't expect to be productive every day
- ▶ Productive days take many shapes and forms, sometimes it just means you're cleaning your room that day
- ▶ Don't feel bad for taking breaks, your health is the most important thing
- ▶ The market is a long process, want to avoid burnouts!
- ▶ Listen to the cues your body gives you, you don't want to push your body too far

Trust yourself

Enjoy!

- ▶ The market is a unique experience and it can be super exciting
- ▶ Meet new people and visit different places
 - ◇ Know about you, are interested in your work!
 - ◇ Great feedback
 - ◇ Networking that will be very helpful for the next steps in your career

Celebrate milestones during the job market!

We tend to be a bit short-sighted during the market

- ▶ Keep in mind your **long-term** goals
- ▶ Work on other research projects

Useful Resources

[EconGradAdvice](#)

[How To Mentally Prepare for the Job Market](#)

[Breathing Exercises for Stress](#)

[Exercises for Back Pain \(1\) and \(2\)](#)

[Exercises for Hand and Wrist Pain \(1\) and \(2\)](#)

Sleeping Resources

No screens 60-90min before sleep

Try meditation, breathing exercises, journalling, or yoga

[Bedtime Meditation Video](#)

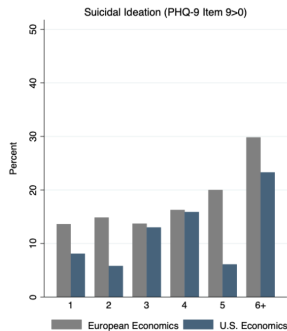
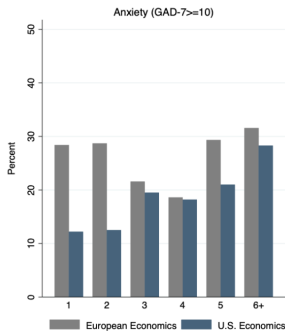
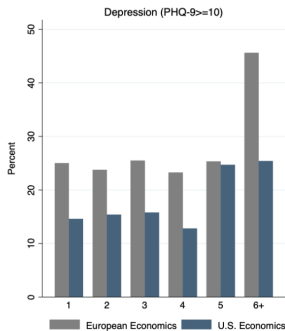
[Breathign Exercises for Better Sleep](#)

Regular sleeping hours (wake-up and sleep time)

Listen to sounds that help you unwind (white noise works for some people)

Get outdoors in the sunshine as much as possible

Mental Health during the PhD



Source: Macchi et al. (2023)

[Back](#)