

Elementary - R1

Advanced - R1

Postdocs - R2

Senior Postdocs - R3



Trainer



Dr. Desiree Dickerson

Dickerson et al.

Desiree Dickerson PhD is a clinical psychologist who specializes in the mental health and well-being of researchers and the academic community.

A former researcher in the neurosciences, Desiree works globally with universities, lab groups, and academics in the pursuit of a healthier, sustainable approach to research.

Isolation & Belonging in Academia

Objective

This session aims to explain why isolation and loneliness are widespread in academic environments and to clarify their impacts on mental health, well-being, and performance. It introduces social connection and belonging as protective, health-enhancing resources.

Description

The session analyzes structural, cultural, and psychological factors that contribute to isolation in academic life, including mobility, workload, systemic norms, and individual dynamics. It further presents practical approaches for strengthening social connection and fostering a sense of belonging.

Key themes covered include:

- The difference between solitude, isolation, and loneliness
- How mobility, culture, and language barriers drain cognitive and emotional capacity
- The impact of workload, overwork, and blurred boundaries on social connection
- How competition, niche fields, and systemic academic norms fuel disconnection
- How self-doubt, anxiety, and imposter feelings amplify isolation
- Why social connection protects health, reduces stress, and enhances cognitive performance
- How the right cues for belonging can shape confidence, behavior, and engagement

Methodology

This 90-minute session draws on clinical psychology, social psychology, and neuroscientific evidence to explain how isolation acts as a chronic stressor, affects cognition and well-being, and why the brain is wired to interpret disconnection as unsafe.

It uses behavioral science and research on social interaction and belonging to guide participants toward small, practical actions that rebuild connection and support healthier living.

Organizational Information

Language / Format	English / Online
Target group	Doctoral Candidates at all stages and Postdocs (R2/R3) from all faculties
Date	Tuesday, 2 June 2026, 9:00 – 10:30
Registration	Click here for registration