

Show notes

Doing Science Differently

#4 – Dragonfly Mental Health [45:32]

Guest: Wendy Marie Ingram, PhD

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In this episode of *Doing Science Differently*, we will tackle the important topic of mental health in academia. The high-pressure environment as well as other aspects of academic research contribute to or even cause mental health problems. The likelihood to experience depression and anxiety is six times higher in graduate students as compared to the general population. However, there is still a strong stigma surrounding mental illness and a lack of institutional support. In the fourth episode of our podcast Wendy, our guest and CEO as well as co-founder of Dragonfly Mental Health, will tell us more about her personal journey of becoming an academic mental health advocate. She will also explain how the globally operating, non-profit organization Dragonfly aims to change the climate and culture surrounding mental health.

In this episode, you will hear more about:

[01:37] Wendy's academic research journey

"And I love, I love the pursuit of science. I love research labs. I love academia. I love teaching. I love mentoring. And have done all of those things from 2003, [...]"

[04:57] the initial reasons why Wendy became a mental health advocate

„[...] we realized everyone was struggling, everyone was having a really hard time. And nobody was telling each other about it. Everyone thought they were the only one struggling [...]"

[07:29] the tragic inspiration behind Dragonfly Mental Health

"And Dragonfly Mental Health is named after, after Chris, in honor of Chris Alvaro, who also graduated in 2015 from UC Berkeley with a PhD and went on for a postdoc at UCSF and was just a pillar of our phenomenal academic community and, and always giving to everybody else."

[10:33] mental health challenges in academia and their stigmatization

"[...] high achieving, high educational attainment, high intellectual, you know, IQ folks have higher rates of self-reported anxiety and depression and bipolar disorder than the general population. And they're also less likely to seek care for that."

[14:43] how the academic research environment can affect mental health

"[...] that was a major source of anxiety and stress and gave rise to what now everybody's kind of calling imposter feelings or imposter symptoms."

[22:46] the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health advocacy

"And then the pandemic has really made things much, much worse. And really, unfortunately, in a lot of ways, set back the progress that had been made [...]"

[26:01] programs, services, and networking opportunities provided by Dragonfly Mental Health

"Another thing that we care very deeply about, other than creating content, is community building."

[39:18] Wendy's excitement for Dragonfly and the need for change

"So, this is just something so incredibly wonderful. And we are walking our talk, it is all about community building and community support and community knowledge and community learning."

Guest biography

This episode's invited guest is **Wendy Marie Ingram, PhD**. Wendy received her PhD in molecular and cell biology from UC Berkeley in 2015. She continued her research career as a postdoctoral fellow at Geisinger Health in the field of computational biology. Followed by her second postdoctoral fellowship in the Psychiatric Epidemiology Training Program at Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health. Currently, Wendy is working as a Medical Informatics Researcher at Geisinger Health focusing on the improvement of healthcare outcomes following surgery. Her fields of interest are brain and behavioral research and as such, Wendy is well trained and knowledgeable about psychiatric disorders. In addition, Wendy actively engages in academic mental health advocacy. She was part in the creation of a peer-led organization to address mental health issues at UC Berkeley and helped start a mental health graduate network at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. Furthermore, Wendy is the CEO and co-founder of Dragonfly Mental Health, a globally operating, non-profit organization dedicated to cultivating excellent mental health among the academic community.

List of resources

In case you are in a psychosocial crisis or in an acute mental and psychiatric emergency, please contact the Berlin Crisis Service (Berliner Krisendienst): <https://www.berliner-krisendienst.de/en/>

Support hotline in English for people in crisis situations: 030-44010607 (daily from 18:00-24:00)

Support hotline (Telefonseelsorge e.V.) in German for people in crisis situations: 0800-1110111

[08:00] Follow this link to the main webpage of Dragonfly Mental Health:

<https://dragonflymentalhealth.org/>

[18:44] To learn more about the imposter syndrome, watch this interesting video narrated by Elizabeth Cox:

https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_cox_what_is_imposter_syndrome_and_how_can_you_combat_it

[22:24] Evans, Bira, Gastelum et al., Evidence for a mental health crisis in graduate education. *Nat Biotechnol.* 2018 36, 282–284. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nbt.4089>

In case you cannot access it freely, please read the article 'Mental Health Crisis for Grad Students', which refers to the 2018 study published in *Nature Biotechnology*:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/03/06/new-study-says-graduate-students-mental-health-crisis>

[23:59] To get more information on the programs and services provided by Dragonfly, please visit: <https://dragonflymentalhealth.org/programs-and-services/>

[26:38] Aside from the website, Dragonfly Mental Health provides useful information via their Youtube channel. You can find their channel here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTXMQmAoGaMIPXcOYPCPajg>

To find more information on Dragonfly's Mental Health Literacy programs, check out their Youtube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bKwwKKgeY&t=650s> or go to <https://dragonflymentalhealth.org/programs-and-services/#MHLit>

[26:58] Dragonfly also provides seminars on the imposter syndrome. Here, you can find an exemplary seminar talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4mRIXU6Kvw>

[27:18] Follow this link to learn more about the seminar on burnout:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2VTuTuPQw4>

[28:55] Interested in becoming a volunteer for Dragonfly Mental Health? You can learn more about the members here: <https://dragonflymentalhealth.org/members-dfmh/>, or go directly to the Volunteer Interest Form:

<https://dragonflymentalhealth.org/volunteer-interest-form/>

[29:53] To get more information on the Dragonfly Café, go to:

<https://dragonflymentalhealth.org/events-and-media/>.

Or join the mailing list to be up to date with all the information related to the Café and other Dragonfly activities: <https://academicmentalhealth.us19.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=afcefo5d6e9892b110d81fb9e&id=50ff253711>

[31:03] Join the newsletter to be part of the Dragonfly community:

<https://dragonflymentalhealth.org/newsletter/>

[32:40] To get in contact with Dragonfly directly, please visit:

<https://dragonflymentalhealth.org/contact-us/>

[33:30] Dragonfly Mental Health provides workshops on how to organize your own peer-network. If you are interested, watch the exemplary Youtube video from 2020:


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82-dEaPgkLg> and 2021:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-DyS6t77XY>


[34:21] This comprehensive program can help you bring long-term sustainable change to your campus and local scientific community:

<https://dragonflymentalhealth.org/programs-and-services/#Comp>

You can find out more about the 'Doing Science Differently' Podcast-team under <https://www.bihealth.org/en/quest/projects/spokes/think-tank-members>.

Sponsored by: SPOKES Wellcome Trust Funded Think Tank. For more information visit <https://www.bihealth.org/en/quest/projects/spokes>.

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