

MENTAL HEALTH | RESILIENCE | SOCIAL COHESION | INTERVENTION

ONLINE  
SYMPOSIUM

1.12.—

2.12.22

BERLIN, GERMANY

# SUFFERING AND FLOURISHING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



**SOCIAL**  
NEUROSCIENCE  
LAB

# ABOUT US

The Social Neuroscience Lab investigates human sociality. Adopting an interdisciplinary and multi-method approach, we study the neuronal, hormonal, and developmental foundations of human social cognition as well as social and moral emotions such as empathy, compassion and fairness. Further we are interested in the malleability of social capacities through mental training and its benefits and function for mental health, well-being, social decision-making and human cooperation.

For more information visit:

[www.social.mpg.de](http://www.social.mpg.de)

For more information on the CovSocial project visit:

[www.covsocial.de](http://www.covsocial.de)

The Social Neuroscience Lab would like to thank the Horst Kübler Foundation for kindly supporting the symposium.



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**COVSOCIAL**

# SPEAKERS



George Bonanno



Malvika Godara



Marian González-García



Oliver Kirchhof



Birgit Kleim



Fanny Lalot



Nava Levit-Binnun



Anthony Mancini



Ann Masten



Hannah Matthaeus



Katharina Schacht



Alicia Schowe



Tania Singer



Sarita Silveira



Andrew Steptoe



Andero Uusberg



Henrik Walter

# Schedule of day 1

**09:30 – 09:45** Welcome

**Session 1: Changes in mental health and resilience during the pandemic**

**09:45 – 10:00 Tania Singer**  
Social Neuroscience Lab, Max-Planck-Society  
The CovSocial project  
Mapping mental health, resilience and social cohesion in Berliners

**10:00 – 10:20 Malvika Godara**  
Social Neuroscience Lab, Max-Planck-Society  
Resilience-vulnerability in the pandemic:  
Insights from the With:Resilience framework

**10:20 – 10:30 Alicia Schowe**  
Max-Planck-Institute of Psychiatry  
Genetic predisposition influences resilience-vulnerability trajectories during the pandemic

**10:30 – 10:45** Q&A and Discussion

**Short Break**

**11:00 – 11:05** Introduction

**11:05 – 11:40 George Bonanno**  
Teachers College, Columbia University  
Trauma, the resilience paradox, and flexible adaptation

**11:45 – 12:20 Anthony Mancini**  
Department of Psychology, Pace University  
Heterogeneous outcomes, psychosocial gains, and resilience in response to COVID-19

**12:20 – 12:45** Q&A and Discussion

**Lunch**

**13:45 – 13:50** Introduction

**13:50 – 14:25 Henrik Walter**  
Department of Psychology and Psychotherapy, Charité Berlin  
DynaMORE study  
Resilience in the age of COVID-19

**14:30 – 15:05 Andrew Steptoe**  
Department of Behavioural Science and Health, University College London  
Covid Social Study  
Mental and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic: Insights from longitudinal population studies

**15:05 – 15:30** Q&A and Discussion

**Short Break**

**15:45 – 16:15 Round-Table Discussion**  
Malvika Godara, Anthony Mancini, Andrew Steptoe & Henrik Walter

**Session 2: Relationship between social cohesion and resilience during the pandemic**

**16:15 – 16:20** Introduction

**16:20 – 16:55 Ann Masten**  
Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota  
Multisystem resilience: Reflections on the COVID-19 pandemic

**17:00 – 17:20 Fanny Lalot**  
Faculty of Psychology, University of Basel  
Beyond us and them: Societal cohesion in Britain through 18 months of COVID-19

**17:25 – 17:45 Sarita Silveira**  
Social Neuroscience Lab, Max-Planck-Society  
Changes in social cohesion during the pandemic

**Short Break**

**18:00 – 18:30 Round-Table Discussion**  
George Bonanno, Fanny Lalot, Ann Masten & Sarita Silveira

**From 20:00 Speakers' Dinner**

# Schedule of day 2

09:30 – 09:40 Welcome

## Session 3: Mindfulness-based and socio-affective interventions

09:40 – 09:50 **Katharina Schacht**  
Mindfulness Meditation

09:50 – 09:55 **Tania Singer**  
Social Neuroscience Lab, Max-Planck-Society  
Online interventions during the pandemic:  
Introduction to CovSocial project phase 2

09:55 – 10:10 **Hannah Matthaeus**  
Social Neuroscience Lab, Max-Planck-Society  
Differential effects of socio-emotional  
and mindfulness-based interventions on  
loneliness

10:10 – 10:30 **Oliver Kirchhof**  
Affect Dyad

10:30 – 10:45 **Malvika Godara**  
Social Neuroscience Lab, Max-Planck-Society  
Contemplative practices for mental  
health and resilience

10:45 – 11:00 **Sarita Silveira**  
Social Neuroscience Lab, Max-Planck-Society  
App-delivered training of  
social emotions

11:00 – 11:15 Q&A and Discussion

**Short Break**

11:30 – 11:35 Introduction

11:35 – 12:05 **Nava Levit-Binnun**  
Sagol Center for Brain and Mind,  
Reichman University  
Effects of mindfulness in the first  
waves of the COVID-19 pandemic

12:10 – 12:35 **Marian González-García**  
Faculty of Health Sciences, European  
University of the Atlantic  
Mindfulness and compassion  
practices to promote emotion regulation,  
mental health and resilience  
Insights from a feasibility study

12:35 – 13:00 Q&A and Discussion

**Lunch**

## Session 4: Cognitive interventions

14:00 – 14:05 Introduction

14:05 – 14:40 **Birgit Kleim**  
Department of Psychology,  
University of Zurich  
Selecting and implementing digital  
CBT-based intervention to increase resilience

14:45 – 15:20 **Andero Uusberg**  
Institute of Psychology, University of Tartu  
Reappraisal of a pandemic:  
Insights from Estonia and evidence  
from around the world

15:20 – 15:45 Q&A and Discussion

**Short Break**

16:00 – 17:00 Final Panel Discussion  
and Closing

17:00 – 19:00 Housewarming &  
get-together

From 19:00 Christmas Market &  
Dinner

# George A. Bonanno


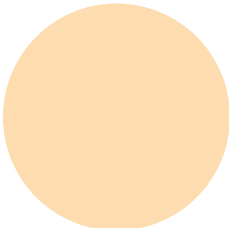


Prof. Bonanno is an internationally renowned expert on trauma and resilience. He is a Professor of Clinical Psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University, and has conducted ground-breaking research on trauma, loss and other kinds of adversity for over three decades. He has been listed among the top one percent most cited scientists in the world and has been honored by the Association for Psychological Science “for a lifetime of intellectual achievements in applied psychological research and their impact on a critical problem in society at large” and by the International Positive Psychology Association for “distinguished lifetime contributions to positive psychology.” His books include the *Other Side of Sadness: What the New Science of Bereavement Tells us About Life After Loss* and, most recently, *The End of Trauma: How the New Science of Resilience is Changing How We Think About PTSD.*”



## Trauma, the resilience paradox, and flexible adaptation

Decades of research has shown that response to potentially traumatic events produce various prototypical trajectories of outcome, the most common being a stable trajectory of healthy functioning, or resilience. Paradoxically, correlates of these patterns only weakly predict who will actually be resilient and who not. The reason is that, because the challenges presented by extremely aversive situations are highly variable, behaviours and strategies that work in one situation may not work well in another. Resilience thus comes about through a complex trial-and-error process of flexible adaptation.






## Fanny Lalot



Dr. Fanny Lalot is a postdoctoral research associate in the Centre for Social Psychology at the University of Basel, which she joined in September 2021. She obtained her Ph.D. in social psychology from the Universities of Geneva and Lausanne in 2019. After graduation, she joined the Centre for the Study of Group Processes at the University of Kent as a postdoctoral research associate (2019-2021). Her research interests are broad and encompass moral behaviour in the broadest sense (e.g. proenvironmental, prosocial), human motivational systems, social influence and group processes, personality and perception of the future, as well as trust and its effects for societal cohesion.

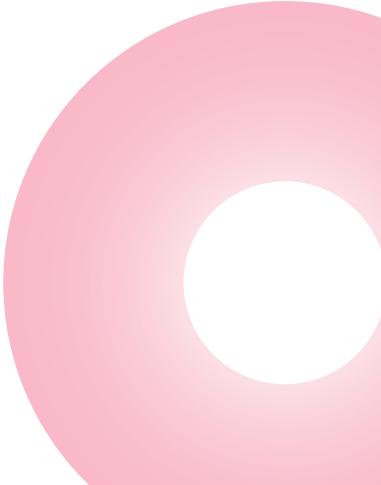
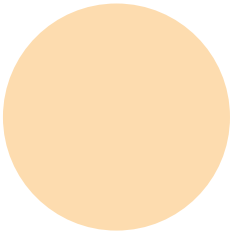
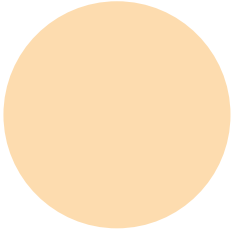






## Beyond us and them: Social cohesion in Britain through 18 months of COVID-19

This talk draws from the research project, “Beyond Us and Them” (University of Kent & Belong – The Cohesion and Integration Network), which investigated changes in social cohesion in Britain during the COVID-19 pandemic. We aimed to understand the effect the pandemic has had on people’s sense of trust in institutions and other people, relations between different groups and levels of discrimination, people’s sense of belonging and how actively engaged with their community they are. We have done so with a strong emphasis on the importance of place and how people’s experience of the pandemic is associated with the places in which they live. The talk will cover some major findings from the research project.



# Marian González-García



Marian González-García, PhD, is a psychologist specialized in mindfulness, emotion regulation and mental health. She combines her work as researcher and university professor with mindfulness teaching and a private practice in psychology.

Her life's passion has been to build bridges between psychology, science, and contemplative wisdom, in order to contribute to a profound understanding and care of the human mind. To achieve this, she began by researching the influence of emotional, psychological, and social factors on health. The insights gathered from this work inspired her to specialize in the application of mindfulness within the field of psychology, developing scientifically validated interventions to promote psychological wellbeing. She regularly teaches mindfulness courses for general and clinical populations. Marian holds a PhD in Health Psychology from the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Her thesis examined the efficacy of mindfulness interventions on both psychological well-being and specific biomarkers of disease in people living with HIV, for which she received the National Award for the best Doctoral Thesis in Clinical and Health Psychology in 2012.

She is also a professor in the faculty of Health Sciences at the European University of the Atlantic, where she teaches courses in emotional psychology and motivation, and has created and directed a Master's Degree in Mindfulness for psychologists. She regularly collaborates with universities, hospitals, and institutions by offering keynote lectures, and has been invited to give talks on mindfulness and mental health at institutions such as the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation at the European Commission in Brussels.

## Mindfulness and compassion practices to promote emotion regulation, mental health and resilience - Insights from a feasibility study

This talk aims to explore the potential value of mindfulness and compassion practices to promote mental health and resilience during globally challenging times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

To begin with, Marian will present the results of a study carried out during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, due to its significant adverse consequences for mental health in vulnerable groups such as university students. The study was designed to examine the feasibility of a brief on-line mindfulness and compassion-based intervention to promote university students' mental health. The intervention was developed ad-hoc. Students learned to (1) focus their attention and stabilize their mind, (2) strengthen awareness and mental health, (3) manage stress, regulate emotions, and develop self-compassion, (4) develop resiliency through ethical responsibility and compassion. Using a pre-post within-subjects design, feasibility was assessed in five domains (acceptability, satisfaction, implementation, practicality, and limited efficacy testing). Overall, the results demonstrated that the MBI was feasible in all domains evaluated and that the participants found the intervention useful. Moreover, significant effects were found for mental health improvements, with medium effect sizes in perceived stress, anxiety, and self-compassion.

After discussing the implications of this study, she will show how mindfulness and compassion interventions may constitute a promising pathway to buffer the mental health burden derived from the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, she will include practical tips and recommendations for the implementation of mindfulness and compassion-based interventions during emotionally challenging times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Malvika Godara



Dr. Malvika Godara is a postdoctoral researcher at the Social Neuroscience Lab, Max Planck Society. She obtained her PhD in Clinical Psychology at Ghent University, and has previously conducted research at Complutense University of Madrid and Yale University. Her research interests broadly center on understanding biopsychosocial risk and resilience mechanisms for psychological health and general well-being, with specific interest in behavioral and cognitive flexibility. She is also passionate about researching and developing evidence-based digital therapeutics for mental well-being.

## Resilience-vulnerability in the pandemic: Insights from the With:Resilience framework

This talk draws from the data collected as part of the first phase of the Cov-Social project. We aimed to understand how mental vulnerability and resilience evolved over the various phases of the pandemic in Germany, and explore the associated risk and protective factors. Introducing the pandemic-specific With or Thrive model of Resilience (With:Resilience), the talk will elaborate how resilience-vulnerability responses in Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic have been more complex and dynamic than previously thought. The talk will highlight the emerging mental health disparities in our data and will identify especially vulnerable groups that could benefit from interventional support.

## Contemplative practices for mental health and resilience



Effects of app-based low-dose contemplative practices, especially partner-based practices, on psychological well-being remain understudied, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, there is little understanding of potential affective-cognitive mechanisms underlying practice effects. In this talk, effectiveness of two brief online interventions (mindfulness-based and socio-emotional partner-based) in improving mental health, emotion regulation and resilience is discussed. We observed significant training-related reductions in depression, trait anxiety and emotion regulation difficulties in both intervention groups, compared to a waitlist control group. Only the socio-emotional training group showed a significant increase in multidimensional resilience and a reduction in negative interpretation bias. The impact of partner-based intervention on reductions in depression and trait anxiety was mediated through reductions in negative interpretation bias. Findings highlight efficacy of brief app-based mental trainings, including partner-based daily dyadic practices with complete strangers, for psychological well-being, suggesting scalability of such approaches in times of global crises.



## Birgit Kleim




Birgit Kleim, PhD, earned her Ph.D. from King's College London on early predictors of posttraumatic stress disorder, supervised by Anke Ehlers, PhD. She completed her postdoc and clinical training in cognitive behavior therapy at the same institution and then obtained faculty positions in Switzerland, at the University of Basel and the University of Zurich. Since 2016, she is full professor of Experimental Psychopathology and Psychotherapy at the University of Zurich and at the Psychiatric University Hospital. Her research focuses on understanding psychopathology and active psychotherapy mechanisms to augment effectiveness with focus on trauma-related disorders, anxiety and suicidality, as well as on understanding why some people succumb to stress while others are resilient. As a clinician scientist, she is dedicated to translating (basic) science findings to advance prevention and intervention science.





## Selecting and implementing digital CBT-based intervention to increase resilience

Resilience is a key topic in behavioral and neuroscience, not least because of the pandemic and the current geopolitical situation creating global exposure to stress and potentially traumatic events affecting a large part of the population worldwide. There have thus been numerous calls for interventions to foster resilience. Empirical investigation into the determinants of resilience, or resilience factors, may inform such prevention and intervention science. The presentation will provide recent empirical work into (i) identification of such resilience factors in large-scale prospective studies and (ii) their translation into interventions to foster resilience. Ideally, such interventions should target diverse populations, be feasible across different contexts, as well as scalable.



# Nava Levit-Binnun




Prof. Nava Levit-Binnun is a neuroscientist and social entrepreneur, currently serving as the director of the Sagol Center for Brain and Mind at the Reichman University (former Interdisciplinary Center), Israel. Her research focuses on understanding healthy mind qualities such as self-regulation, empathy and compassion, and elucidating mechanisms that drive the beneficial effects of mindfulness and compassion practices. In 2009 she founded the Muda Institute for Mindfulness, Science and Society which operates as part of the Sagol Center and trains, develops and disseminates mindfulness-based interventions to various sectors of Israeli society. To date, the Muda Institute has trained over 250 mindfulness instructors (MBSR and MBCT protocols), has worked with more than 2000 school teachers in both Jewish and Arab schools, and is developing culturally-adapted mindfulness programs, as well as contemplative practices for cultivation of conflict-transforming mindsets.





## Effects of mindfulness in the first waves of the COVID-19 pandemic

In the talk, I will present data from several studies that were conducted by my students during the first two waves of the Covid-19 pandemic in Israel. The first study (N=92) investigated the effects of two, online (zoom-based), Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) courses on aspects of mental health. Individuals that enrolled in the MBSR courses were compared to individuals who decided not to enroll. The second study (randomized, wait-list controlled) investigated the effects of a brief (2.5 hours across 5 days), asynchronous mindfulness intervention on anxiety and depression of older adults (N=143). The third randomized-controlled study, in a second cohort of older adults (N=161), investigated and compared the effects of two brief (2.5 hours across 5 days) mindfulness or loving-kindness interventions to active- or wait-list control groups. The fifth study is a cross-sectional study examining the relation between emotional styles and mental health in individuals (N=162) who became unemployed due to the pandemic in its first 3 months.



# Anthony Mancini



Anthony D. Mancini, PhD, is a clinical psychologist who studies loss, trauma, social processes, and stressful life events. He earned his bachelor's degree in psychology from Hunter College, and masters and doctoral degrees in clinical psychology from Columbia University. He is currently an Associate Professor of Psychology at Pace University. He has published extensively on psychological resilience, individual differences in responses to stress, and the role of social processes in adaptation. His work has examined events as varied as the Virginia Tech campus shootings, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, military deployment, traumatic injury, bereavement, having a child, and the COVID-19 pandemic. His theoretical work argues that acute adversity can directly improve, in some cases, psychological functioning, which he describes as "psychosocial gains from adversity." He is currently Principal Investigator on a 4-year National Institutes of Health grant to study the economic and social consequences of COVID-19 for mental health. He also serves as the Chief Editor of *Anxiety, Stress & Coping*, a Taylor & Francis journal. His work has also been featured in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, the *Desert News*, the *Mercury News*, and other outlets. He has published over 60 journal articles and book chapters.

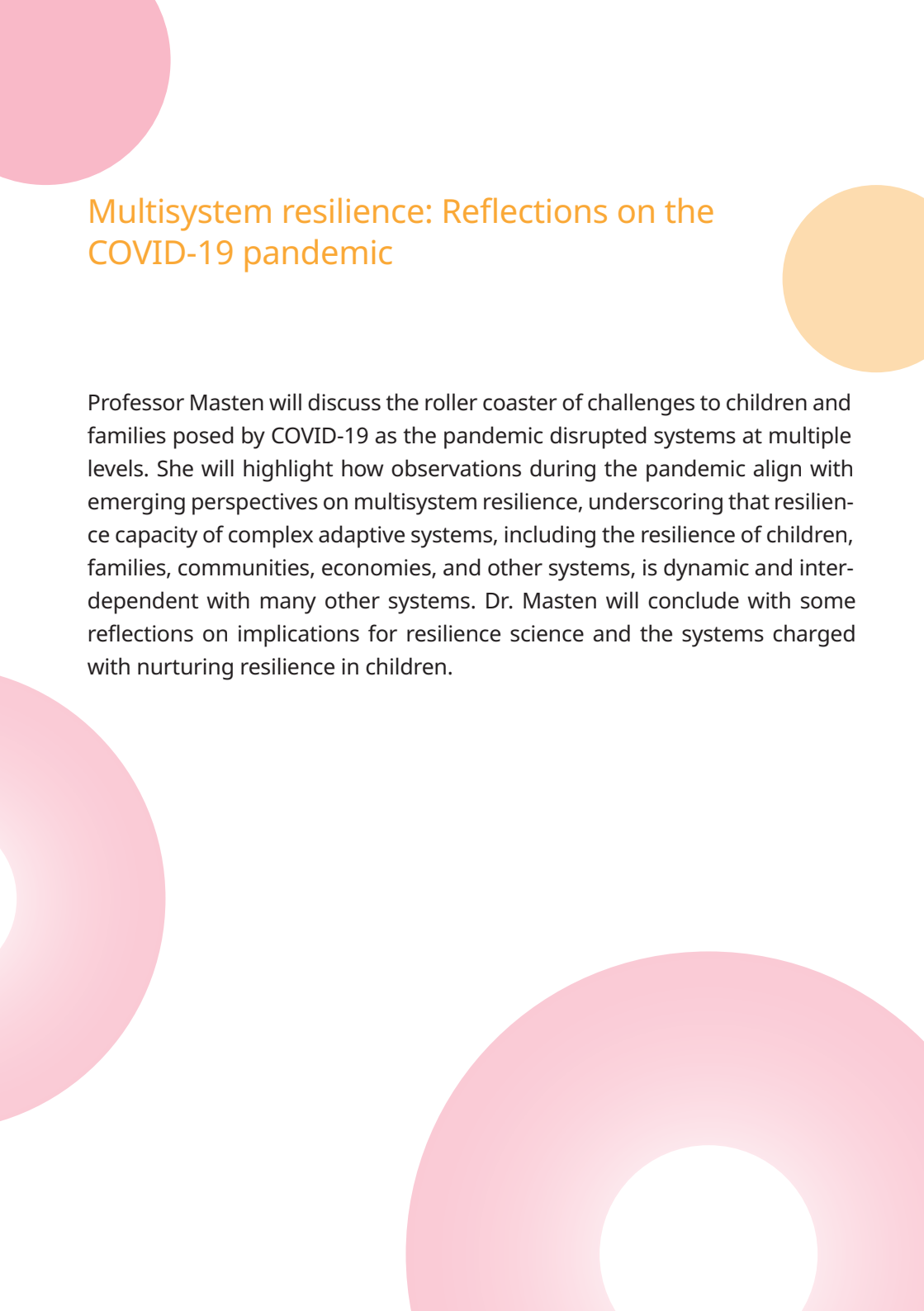
## Heterogeneous outcomes, psychosocial gains, and resilience in response to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a staggering toll on human life and altered every aspect of normative functioning. In this talk, I present data on three primary issues in relation to its mental health impact. First, I provide evidence that impact of the pandemic has been substantially heterogeneous. Specifically, I present data from a) meta-analysis on the effects of the early lockdowns, indicating marked differences across studies and small overall effects; b) quasi-experimental comparisons showing unexpected variation in regions high and low in cumulative prevalence in the United States and Italy; and c) longitudinal analysis of time-varying trajectories of adjustment among United States and Israeli citizens in the early phase of the pandemic. Second, I examine the key role of social factors in illuminating this heterogeneity. I show that d) increased worries about the pandemic predicted increased social behavior; e) that regions higher in COVID-19 prevalence reported more social behavior, relative to regions with lower prevalence; and f) that a proposed syndrome of “pandemic disengagement,” marked by social withdrawal, fears of infection, and estrangement from close others, had particularly devastating effects. Third, I propose that the pandemic had the potential to benefit well-being. I provide evidence that increased social behavior in response to COVID-19 worries improved subjective and social well-being. I also use a prospective examination of happiness in Italy to show that happiness improved from pre- to post-pandemic. I conclude with a consideration of the clinical, theoretical, and policy implications of these findings.

## Ann Masten



Ann S. Masten, PhD, is a Regents Professor and Distinguished McKnight University Professor in the Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota. She completed her undergraduate degree at Smith College, her PhD in psychology at the University of Minnesota, and a clinical internship at the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute. She directs the Project Competence Research on Risk and Resilience, focused on elucidating processes that promote positive development and prevent psychopathology in normative and adverse conditions. She is internationally known for her research on resilience in human development, especially in the context of homelessness, poverty, disaster, war, and migration. She is a past President of the Society for Research in Child Development and also Division 7 (developmental) of the American Psychological Association (APA). She has received numerous awards, including the Bronfenbrenner Award for Lifetime Contributions to Developmental Psychology from APA. She was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2021. Dr. Masten has published more than 200 scholarly works, including the book *Ordinary Magic: Resilience in Development*. She offers a free MOOC (Mass Open Online Course) on “Resilience in Children Exposed to Trauma, Disaster and War” that has been taken by thousands of participants from more than 180 countries.

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## Multisystem resilience: Reflections on the COVID-19 pandemic

Professor Masten will discuss the roller coaster of challenges to children and families posed by COVID-19 as the pandemic disrupted systems at multiple levels. She will highlight how observations during the pandemic align with emerging perspectives on multisystem resilience, underscoring that resilience capacity of complex adaptive systems, including the resilience of children, families, communities, economies, and other systems, is dynamic and interdependent with many other systems. Dr. Masten will conclude with some reflections on implications for resilience science and the systems charged with nurturing resilience in children.

# Hannah Matthaeus



Hannah Matthaeus is a PhD Student at the Social Neuroscience Lab in Berlin. She received a MSc in Clinical Psychology at the Technical University Dresden. She started a student research assistant position in the Social Neuroscience Lab in January 2020 and wrote her Master thesis on alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic in phase 1 of the CovSocial project. After her graduation, she stayed in the Lab and began her PhD in May 2021, now focusing on phase 2 of the CovSocial project. In the context of her PhD, Hannah is researching the impact of psychological interventions on stress and loneliness using behavioral and biopsychosocial methods. Additionally, she is interested in how these effects can be predicted by stressor-related changes in vulnerability, resilience and social cohesion.

## Differential effects of socio-emotional and mindfulness-based interventions on loneliness

Loneliness is known as a high-risk factor for the development of numerous physical and mental diseases. In times of lockdowns and social restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, the numbers of people who report to suffer from loneliness have increased. While different types of mental training programs have shown positive results in reducing loneliness, most of these interventions usually include in-person meetings that could not take place during the pandemic.

In the CovSocial project phase 2, we investigated how different aspects of loneliness and social connectedness change differentially depending on the respective type of app-based mental training. Loneliness was assessed before and after the training period through the UCLA loneliness scale and 8 days of an ecological momentary assessment (EMA) protocol, and directly before and after the practice every day during the intervention period. Over the period of intervention, daily reports of loneliness were reduced in both intervention groups immediately following the training, however only in the socio-emotional training a significant decrease in trait loneliness and EMA loneliness was found. This implies that a socio-emotional training might be more effective in reducing loneliness in the long run. Clinical relevance and theoretical implications of the findings will be discussed.

## Alicia Schowe



Alicia is a Ph.D. student at the Max-Planck-Institute of Psychiatry, Dept. Translational Research in Psychiatry, Munich. In 2019, she completed her bachelor's degree in psychology cum laude at Tilburg University, NL. Fascinated by the biological underpinnings of stress-related psychiatric disorders, she continued with a Research Master in Cognitive and Clinical Neuroscience, specializing in Fundamental Neuroscience, at Maastricht University, NL. After graduating cum laude with her internship project on stress hormone determinants during pregnancy at the Max-Planck-Institute of Psychiatry, she began her current Ph.D. position in November 2021 and joined the Graduate School of Systemic Neurosciences (GSN, Munich) in October 2022. Her research project focuses on unraveling the role of genetic risk and epigenetic changes (i.e., DNA methylation) in the context of stressful life events and associated mental health impairments.



## Genetic predisposition influences resilience-vulnerability trajectories during the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns have had far-reaching consequences for all people's daily lives. Yet, the individual stress experience and its psychological impact vary, with some individuals showing particularly vulnerable and others resilient psychological symptom trajectories. One of the factors setting the course for these trajectories may be genetic predisposition and associated downstream biological and behavioral mechanisms. The purpose of this study is to explore whether polygenic risk for mental health-related traits (i.e., major depressive disorder [MDD], schizophrenia [SCZ], cross-disorder phenotype, neuroticism, anxiety-tension, worry-vulnerability, loneliness, and life satisfaction) predicts resilient-vulnerability (RV) symptom trajectories. Individual genotypes and RV trajectories were available for N = 1314 CovSocial participants (mean age = 45.3, 67% female). Polygenic scores (PGSs) were computed using PRS-CS and PLINK 1.9. PGSs were significantly correlated overall and within each RV trajectory. Preliminary analyses confirm expected trends of the highest polygenic risk for MDD, neuroticism, and loneliness in the two most vulnerable symptom trajectories.

# Tania Singer



Tania Singer, a professor of social neuroscience and psychology, heads the Max Planck Society's Social Neuroscience Lab, Berlin. After her PhD in psychology at the Max-Planck-Institute for Human Development, she worked at the Wellcome Centre for Imaging Neuroscience, at the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience in London and held the inaugural Chair of Social Neuroscience and Neuroeconomics at the University of Zürich.

She is a world expert on compassion and empathy, and has a passion for creating bridges between fields that typically never interact. Her research focus is on the hormonal, neuronal, and developmental basis of human sociality, empathy and compassion, and their malleability through mental training. She has initiated and headed one of the largest meditation-based secular mental training studies on compassion, the ReSource project. Linking such findings to the field of (neuro)economics, she developed a Caring Economics approach, developing new models of economy based on care and social cohesion. She is also heading the CovSocial project, a large-scale study on stress, resilience and social cohesion during the corona crisis. Tania Singer is author of more than 160 scientific articles and book chapters and edited together with Mathieu Ricard the two books Caring Economics (2015) and Power and Care (2019). Throughout her life she has explored how inner change can bring about societal change putting science in the service of societal transformation.



## The CovSocial project: Mapping mental health, resilience and social cohesion in Berliners


I will introduce the overall design and first results from the CovSocial project that aims to unravel the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on various aspects of mental health, psychological resilience and social cohesion among the Berlin population in 2020/2021/2022.

In a first phase, different trait- and state questionnaires were assessed via an app over 7 measurement time points before, during and after the first lockdown in 2020 (t1-t3) and again from October 2020 to April 2021 during the long-lasting second lockdown in Germany (t4-t7).

With respect to mental health and factors salient to psychological vulnerability, two distinct effects emerged during the course of the pandemic: an acute first lockdown effect and a second lockdown fatigue effect. For example, on average, anxiety, loneliness, stress and depression as well as negative affectivity increased during the first lockdown in March 2020, recovered in summer after re-opening, but decreased again in autumn during the second lockdown and most indicators declined from month to month. Similar patterns were observed for resilience and social cohesion.

## Online interventions during the pandemic: Introduction to CovSocial project phase 2

In a second phase in 2021/22, the same Berliners were taking part in a 10-week online mental training intervention study to explore whether mental health and resilience could be fostered through either socio-emotional or mindfulness-based short-term daily practice supported by weekly web-based deepening lessons lead by expert teachers.

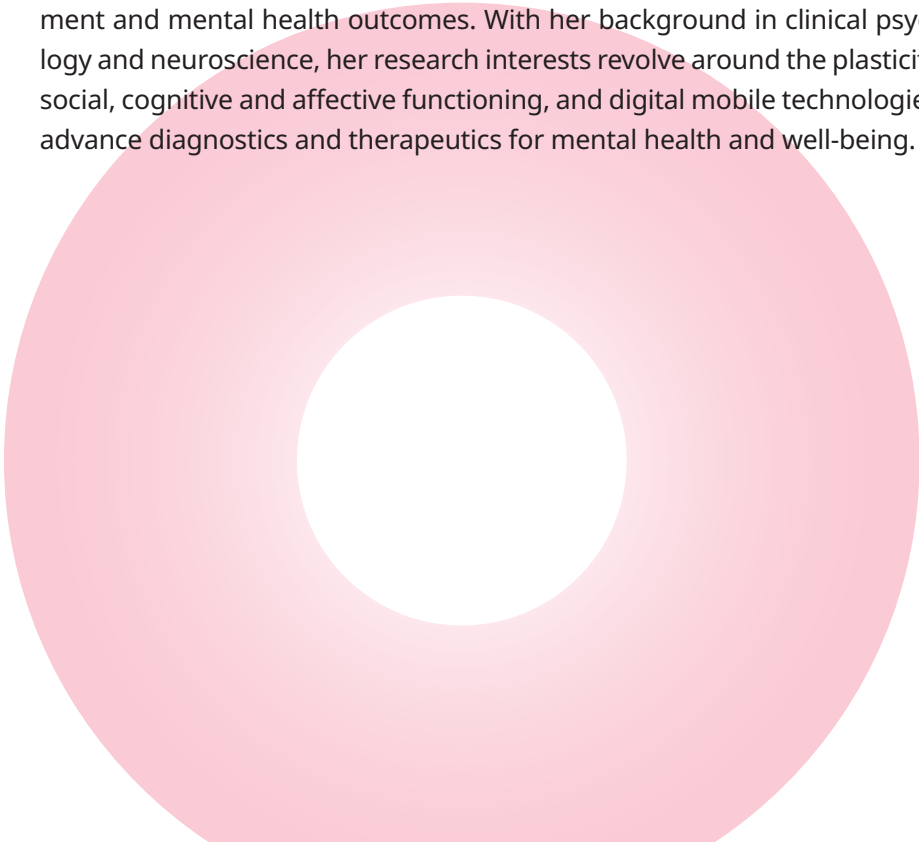




## Sarita Silveira



Dr. Sarita Silveira is a postdoc at the Social Neuroscience Lab, Berlin. She holds a PhD in Human Biology from Ludwig-Maximilian-University, Munich, and worked as a postdoc at the University of California San Diego, Neural Engineering and Translation Labs, studying neurotechnologies for scalable brain health mapping, monitoring and therapeutics. Her previous research has focused on environmental and social impacts such as effects of adverse childhood experiences and traumatic life events on neuro-cognitive development and mental health outcomes. With her background in clinical psychology and neuroscience, her research interests revolve around the plasticity of social, cognitive and affective functioning, and digital mobile technologies to advance diagnostics and therapeutics for mental health and well-being.



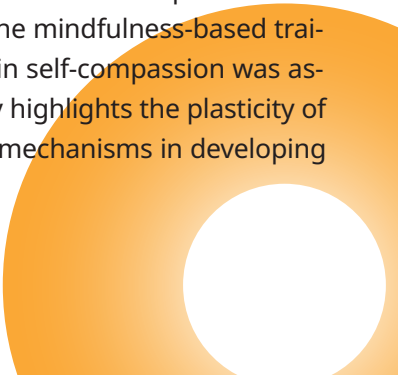


## Changes in social cohesion during the pandemic

This talk will focus on changes in social cohesion on various psychological dimensions (e.g. trust, belonging, social interaction and social engagement) and multiple social system levels (e.g. family, friends, neighbors, institutions, nations) during the COVID-19 pandemic in Germany. Findings support tend-and-befriend and rally around the flag behavior during the first lockdown, and suggest that future research should investigate social cohesion as a multidimensional construct and take the duration of a collective stressor or crisis into account.

## App-delivered training of social emotions


Compassion has previously been identified as a treatment target to promote emotional well-being, alleviate emotional distress and foster mental health recovery. In this talk, effects of two daily app-delivered mindfulness-based and socio-emotional mental trainings on (self-)compassion, empathy and theory of mind are presented. Results show that 10 weeks of brief daily online contemplative practice fostered (self-)compassion in self-report measures. Besides, both trainings were effective at buffering a general decrease in empathy. Only the partner-based affect dyad in tendency promoted compassion in a behavioral task. No changes were found for theory of mind, highlighting differential impact of contemplative practice on socio-affective and socio-cognitive skills. Further, while an increase in self-compassion was mediated by an decrease in empathic distress in the mindfulness-based training, in the socio-emotional training, an increase in self-compassion was associated with an increase in acceptance. The study highlights the plasticity of social emotions, as well as differential underlying mechanisms in developing self-compassion.



# Andrew Steptoe

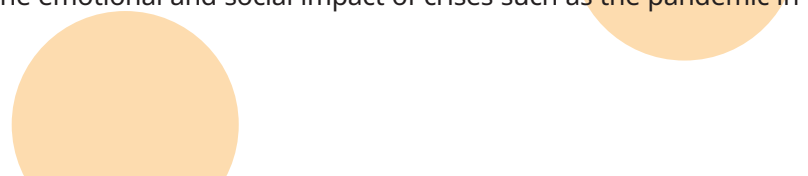


Andrew Steptoe is professor of psychology and epidemiology at University College London, where he is Head of the Department of Behavioural Science and Health, and director of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA). He graduated in Natural Sciences from Cambridge University and completed his doctorate at the University of Oxford. He was head of the Department of Psychology and Chair of the Academic Board at St. George's Hospital Medical School before moving to University College London in 2000. He was British Heart Foundation Professor of Psychology from 2000 until 2016, and Director of the Institute of Epidemiology and Health Care from 2011 until 2017. He is a Fellow of the British Academy, the Academy of Medical Sciences, the Royal Society of Biology, and the Academy for Social Sciences. Dr. Steptoe's research is primarily focused on links between psychological and social processes and physical health, and on population ageing. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he was co-investigator on the COVID-19 Social Study. He is author or editor of 22 books and around 950 journal articles and chapters.



## Covid Social Study - Mental and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic: Insights from longitudinal population studies

Community-based studies are crucial for understanding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health and social activity of the population. These studies have been of two types: new surveys started in response to the pandemic, and additional waves of data collection in existing longitudinal studies. This presentation will discuss findings from both types of study: the Covid-19 Social Study (CSS), which was initiated in March 2020 with weekly and then monthly online assessments from around 70,000 adults in the UK; and the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) which carried out data collection by internet and telephone during 2020 on a representative sample of men and women age 50 and older. In the CSS, we found marked variations in anxiety and depression over the two years since the start of the pandemic, corresponding broadly with fluctuations in infection rates and with legal restrictions on activities (lockdowns or stay at home orders). Mental health was also affected by confidence in government handling of the crisis, and worry about access to services and essential supplies, with certain groups (women, young adults, people living alone or with children, and those with low incomes) being particularly vulnerable. Analyses of ELSA showed substantial increases in depressive symptoms during the pandemic compared with pre-pandemic years, accompanied by deterioration in quality of life. There were again large variations in response, with greater increases in distress among women and people with disability. Both studies have shown that certain psychological and social characteristics and everyday activities are associated with greater resilience, and capitalizing on these factors may lessen the emotional and social impact of crises such as the pandemic in the future.

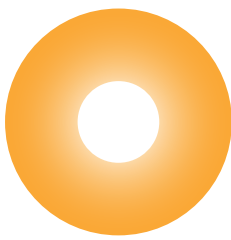

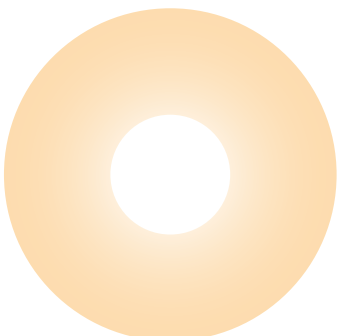




## Andero Uusberg



Andero Uusberg is an Associate Professor of affective psychology at University of Tartu. He investigates how affective processes such as emotions and desires regulate, as well as are regulated by, cognitive processes such as attention and appraisal. He is also involved in applying behavioral science for societal aims. Andero holds a PhD from University of Tartu and worked as a postdoc at Stanford University. In 2021 he served as a member of the COVID-19 scientific advisory council to the Estonian Government.








## Reappraisal of the pandemic: Insights from Estonia and evidence from around the world

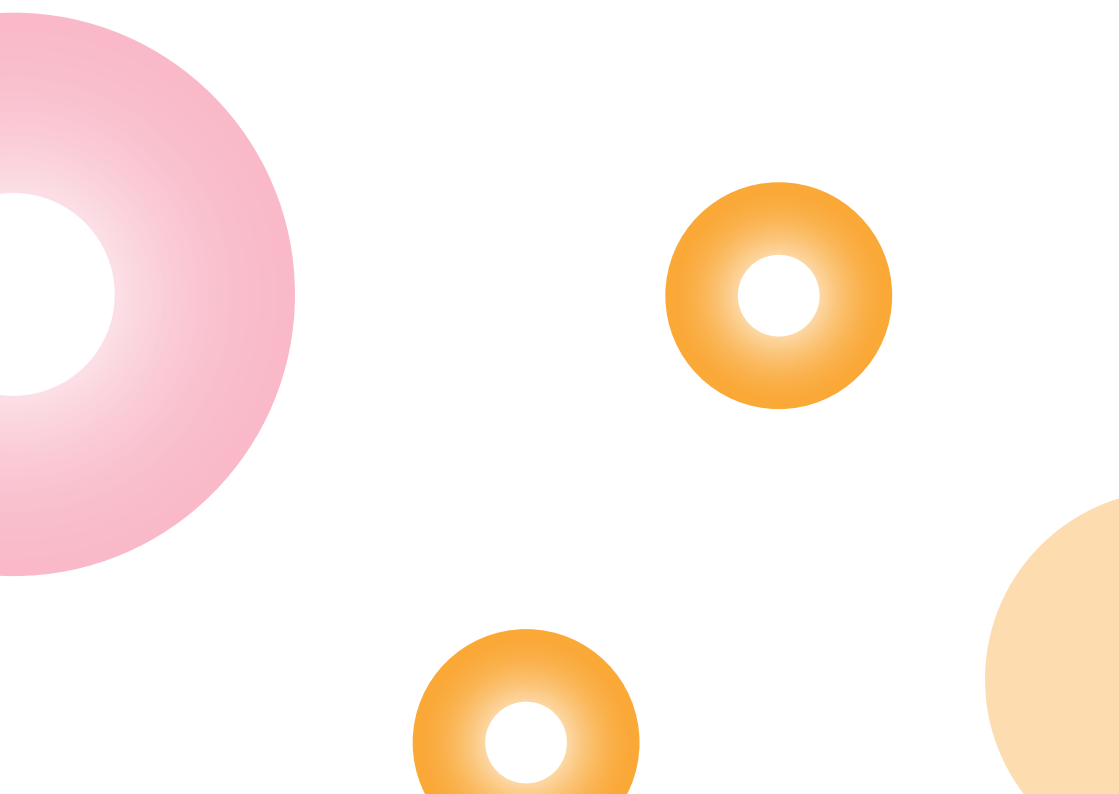
The emotional turmoil accompanying the COVID-19 pandemic provided fresh evidence for the adaptive value of regulating emotions in general and using reappraisal to do so in particular. In recent years, I have been trying to understand the cognitive mechanisms that make reappraisal possible and effective. In this talk, I will share the reAppraisal framework designed to systematically chart these mechanisms. I will illustrate key insights of the framework using findings from pandemic-related datasets. For instance, a unique international study with collaborators from over 80 countries demonstrated how the two principled approaches to reappraisal – reconstrual and repurposing - can be equally effective. I will also discuss the ways in which the reAppraisal framework can become a useful tool for studying as well as facilitating reappraisal.



# Henrik Walter




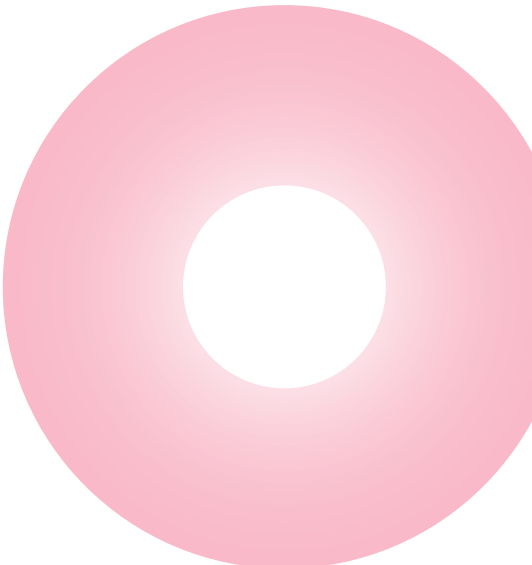
Prof. Dr. med. Dr. phil. Henrik Walter is psychiatrist, psychotherapist, neurologist and philosopher and since 2010 Director of the Research Division of Mind and Brain at the Department of Psychiatry at Europe's largest University Clinic Charité in Berlin, where he also is Deputy Medical Director. He is an expert in cognitive neuroscience and clinical neuroscience, as well as in philosophy of mind and philosophy of psychiatry and interested to improve the practice of psychiatry and psychotherapy through the sciences of the mind.





## DynaMORE study - Resilience in the age of COVID-19

With the COVID pandemic, many people predicted that this global challenge would increase anxiety, depression and suicide to a large extent. Although there clearly are effects, they have been less dramatic than expected. The reason for this probably is that humans are much more resilient to stress and trauma than usually is assumed. I will present some data from our own research in particular from our European resilience study DynaMORE which accidentally was started during the pandemic. In this context I will in particular discuss the role of positive emotions and emotion regulation for resilience. Finally, I will address the question if these findings are relevant for prevention by discussing the resilience paradox.



# Oliver Kirchhof



Oliver Kirchhof is a coach, trainer and management consultant with over 20 years of work experience. He was born and raised in Cologne, is the father of three children, and studied engineering and business administration at the RWTH Aachen.

He dedicated the first half of his professional career to topics related to corporate management, project management and business processes optimization. In 2014, his professional focus shifted towards guiding and supporting corporate employees, particularly in times of professional transitions and personal transformations, in a mindful and compassionate way. In projects, trainings and workshops, he employs approaches of change and conflict management, mindfulness and systemic coaching. A main focus of his trainings for managers and teams is the introduction of the concept of mindful leadership, which is based on a combination of classic mindfulness practices and novel neuroscientific findings. As a certified MBSR teacher, he conducted mindfulness and compassion trainings in the CovSocial project, and supported the masterclass of Prof. Dr. Tania Singer. Starting in 2023, he will be one of the first coaches worldwide to conduct training of affect dyads via the Humanize-App.

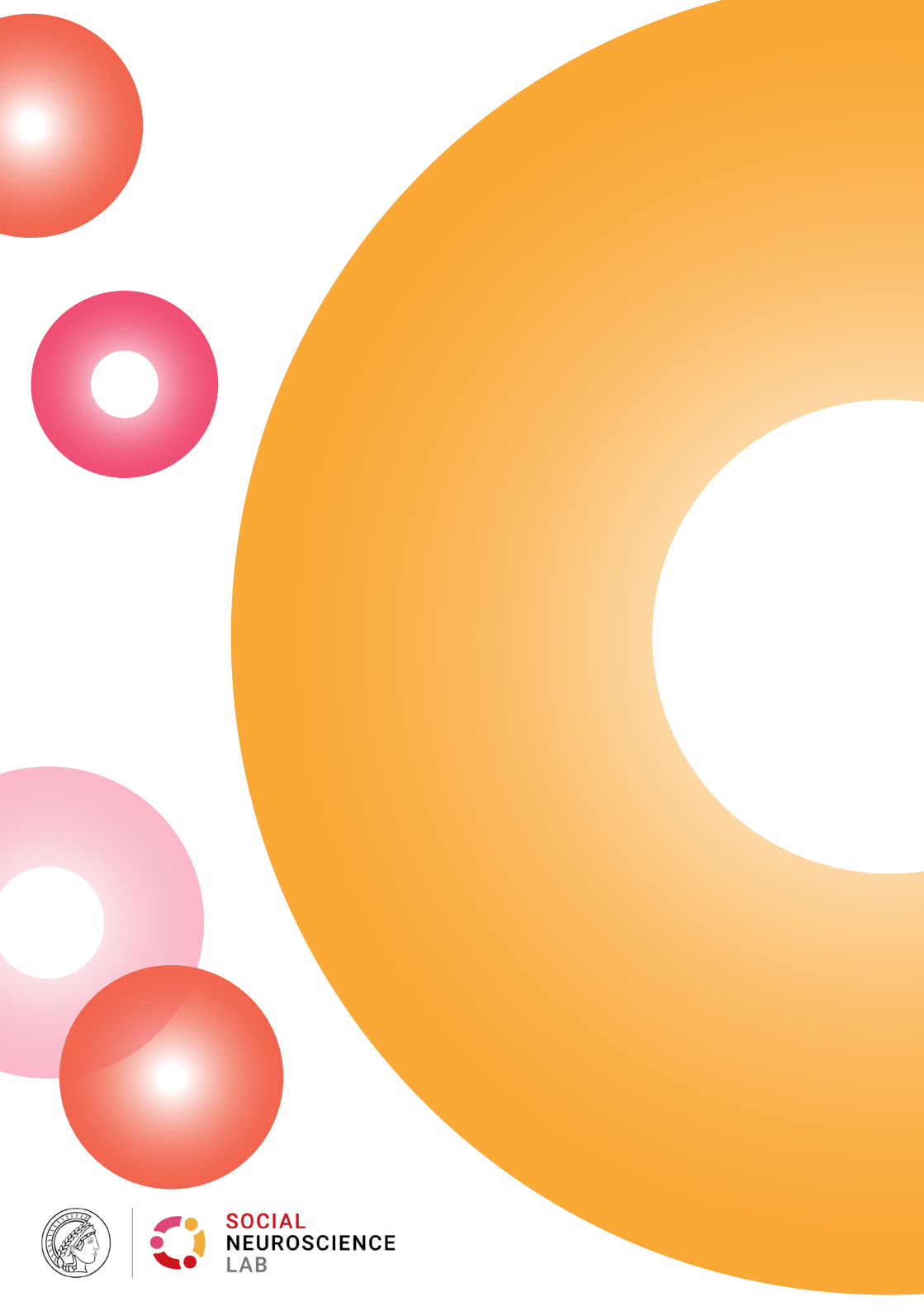
# Katharina Schacht



Katharina Schacht is a certified mindfulness and compassion teacher (MBSR, MBCL, MBCT) and an alternative practitioner for psychotherapy. She works as mindfulness-based therapist in mental health units, as mindfulness and compassion trainer in companies, and is co-owner of MBSR-Eppendorf in Hamburg ([www.mbsr-eppendorf.de](http://www.mbsr-eppendorf.de)). In addition, she is a board member of the German national MBSR organization.

Within the CovSocial project, she provided emotional trainings and mindfulness interventions.

Both, Katharina Schacht and Oliver Kirchhof, were mental trainers in phase2 of the CovSocial project which was leading CovSocial participants through a 10-weeks online mental training program containing daily mental practices and weekly coaching sessions supported by expert mindfulness teachers. During the symposium they will guide the participants into two short experiential practices, a short mindfulness meditation and a socio-affective partner-based practice, the so-called Affect Dyad, as both practices were core mental practices within the two intervention programs of the CovSocial project. Such first-hand experience will help participants better understand the empirical findings presented by the research team of the CovSocial project.



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