



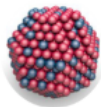
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# *Swimming in the leaky pipeline:* Supporting female PhD students

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2023 Annual Conference of Nordic Network for Diversity in Physics (NORNDIP)

# Motivation & Outline



## ... & Disclaimer

- Why am I talking
  - My friends are leaving
  - Maybe it helps to be open
- This is a personal account of the situation
- Everyone has their own story
- This is a talk about human behaviour and work environments
- It may be a little rough around the edges

## Outline

- **Different starting points**
- Mental health and performance
- Falling down vs falling off
- Discussions about diversity
- **Leadership action**
- What helps (me) stay motivated



# Different starting points

*A starting point  
below zero...*

## Everyone has different “baggage”

- Words of discouragement, judgement or surprise
- Fewer role models
- Standing out / not relating to peers -> Lack of belonging
- Seeing other female colleagues being mistreated
- Being ignored, dismissed or talked over
- Experiencing direct & indirect unequal treatment
- Or worse



# Mental health and performance

## Common challenges PhD students face:

Feelings of failure

Comparison and imposter syndrome

Feeling isolated

Stress (physical and mental)

## The environment

Discouraged vs encouraged? (Lifted or facing more barriers)



# Falling down vs falling off

Being inclusive is taking the starting point into account

The “sacrifice for science” mentality & keeping motivation

Special treatment?





# Discussions about diversity

## Speaking to minorities about diversity topics

- Your starting point is important;  
*Do you want to lift the person? Or challenge them?*
- The “I am (also) disadvantaged” / “you’re getting special treatment”
- Give mental support (focus on **community and confidence**)
- The importance of listening, humility and educating *yourself*
- Generalizing and/or judging statements can be harmful



This is a tired minority koala

**We need institutional initiatives to support, educate and increase awareness**

# Leadership action

## How can we increase (or even just maintain) the diversity of the group/section/institution?

- Start by focusing on the **people you already have**
- Foster an **environment** people feel they can thrive in
- Listen, and reach out to **listen more**
- Take **action** when cases arise of inappropriate behaviour
- **Support** & create the space for **DE&I initiatives**

## Supporting female PhD students day-to-day (e.g. supervisors)

- Take education on **leadership skills** seriously
- Be there
- Evaluate structure of **meetings and task divisions**
- Watch your behaviour and language
- Be a **human first**, then a scientist

❖ *If you want cool science, support cool humans*

# Things that help (me)

i.e. things that make me feel supported

Conferences like this one



Networking groups  
for minorities



My colleagues



Support from leaders  
*Mainly the non-scientific kind*







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Thank you