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## Welcome to Autumn!

In this issue Julian Hubbersgilt shares with us research on how palliative care colleagues respond to stress. Irina Roncaglia reflects upon lessons we might learn from the experience of competitors in the Olympics and Paralympics and Olga-Cecilia Farach gets us thinking about the impact of the climate change emergencies on mental and physical health for the many people who are exposed to these things now, in a way that we in Europe rarely are.

Finally, there is an invitation to a public lecture at UEL by Professor John Radford. Among many, many, many achievements, John founded the UEL psychology school, one of the largest in the UK, introduced A-Level psychology and founded the Association for the Teaching of Psychology with James Breese in the early 1970s. Guaranteed to be interesting, at the very least, John will be talking about psychology as a 'liberal science'. To give you a flavour of the timbre (not the content) of what might occur, John once penned an article with the title: 'Academic psychologists: - parasites, priests, proletariat or professionals?'

An interesting title for a senior academic psychologist I am sure you will agree. We can expect to be challenged. No excuse for missing it as it will be both live and streamed.

Finally, as always, if you have something you would like to share with more than 15,000 psychologists in London and the Southeast, now's your chance. Send me 500 words of your best prose and we can discuss. Orthogonal, challenging, constructive are all good descriptors!

**Donald Ridley**  
Editor

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## The Tokyo 2020 Olympics: Some reflections on physical and mental health as a continuum.

**Irina Roncaglia**

As the Tokyo Olympics 2020 have ended, I wanted to reflect on the psychological impact both positive and negative of these games on athletes, coaches, medical teams and family members. What can these Games teach us in terms of lessons learnt or indeed endeavour to teach us in embracing reflections, awareness, and potentially personal and collective growth.

### **Coping with pressure and unpredictability**

The lead-up to these Games was uncertain. With some individual variability, the postponement of the cycle - five years rather than the usual four - has meant for some athletes and respective coaches and teams an added 12-18 months of preparation. For some senior athletes, this has represented a step too far. The result has been either the transition to an alternative career, (and its potential challenging adjustments), or the reality of an injury that has prevented them from either being selected in the first place. This situation, although individually experienced, has brought some common trends in terms of athletes' ability to cope with pressure, accompanied by the unpredictability of the unknown. Our psyches tend to fill in the gaps caused by a void, and unpredictability can nurture in all of us a great amount of anxiety.

**Success tip:** Learning to cope and accept what we can control and let go of what is not under our control, can free a significant amount of positive energy both physical and mental which can be redirected and channeled to other individual and social pursuits and activities.

### **Coping with changes in routines**

Athletes and teams had to adapt to an ever-changing environment, with new regulations and associated restrictions that added an additional element of uncertainty and change from their familiar routines and schedules. This adaptation had to be maintained for an extended period which spanned well beyond the two weeks and three days period of the Games. Since the initial lockdown in March 2020 athletes and elite performers had to adapt and cope with constantly changing regulations that have been part of their preparation for the Games. The uncertainty of whether Tokyo 2020 Games were going to go ahead in the first place was also an additional challenge experienced by many, with consequences both positive and in some cases negative, on their motivational skills.

**Success tip:** Reflecting on these events and associated preparation can teach us ways of coping in future life events that require resilience (Sarkar & Fletcher. 2017), and determination, constancy and commitment, internal and external motivational skills even and more importantly despite adversity.

### **Emotional regulation**

It is well evidenced that regulating emotional states, using tools to harness positive emotions, through positive self-talk, mindfulness meditation, imagery and visualisations or other psychological mental skills is part of any elite performer or athlete's responsibility and indeed training. Self-managing negative thinking - rumination or catastrophizing thinking patterns - become part of any athlete's preparation to optimally perform when it counts. But these Games have been like any others, and seemingly provided a psychological space for athletes and performers to self-reflect on their

successes, and failures, their fears and hopes in a way where a range of different perspectives have been considered. For some this has meant assessing the significance of live audiences' absence, or family members not being able to physically attend as described by Jade Jones (Taekwondo Olympic Champion in 2012). Jade found that these factors significantly affected her performance.

**Success tip:** For some there have been opportunities to recognise and more significantly accept that with each 'failure' comes a specific 'rise', an opportunity for growth (Jayawickreme & Infurna. 2021), an opportunity to build on self-awareness and compassion with oneself and (hopefully) with others.

### Humanity

We have seen on more than one occasion, examples of humanity at its best, whether when choosing to share a gold medal such as high jump athletes Gianmarco Tamberi and Mutaz Essa Barshim, or when accepting and celebrating the withdrawal from competition from a teammate in Simone Biles.

**Success tip:** These actions have provided us with new lenses on the significance and importance of self-care, as a strength and human right rather than something to hide and endure. It has provided us with new lenses on the complexities of human optimal performance and how we ought to provide equal balance, attention and support to our mental and physical health which are to be seen on a continuum rather than on a binary scale.

### Curtain call: Final reflections

A reflective approach offers us an opportunity to learn how to better understand and manage enduring and challenging emotional states, through self-regulation and self-expression which can be positive, and constructive rather than acted upon potentially negatively and in some cases with devastating outcomes.

As we move forward and continue to navigate through uncertainty in post-pandemic times we can find common humanity, learning from each other and ultimately looking compassionately within and after ourselves. This allows us to reflect and pause with oneself and each other, and support us nurture, promote and maintain our subjective and collective well-being which is hoped to lead to further human flourishing (Seligman, 2011) and growth.

Irina is a BPS London & Home Counties Branch committee member and an HCPC registered practitioner psychologist specialising in sports and exercise psychology and dance.

You can visit her website [here](#).

## Palliative Care and Staff Burnout

**Julian Hubbersgilt**

This research explored the ways in which palliative care professionals (PCPs) respond to stressors in the workplace and how they build resilience to such stressors. Constant exposure to dying and death is the prevailing context of the PC workplace.

Well-established evidence of the negative consequences of stress, on both an individual and organisational level (Maslach, Shaufeli, & Leiter, 2001) is commonly associated with psychological morbidity, and burnout.

Findings of lower levels of burnout amongst PCPs than for other acute medical specialties (Parola et al, 2017), however, have prompted this present research. The tools used were the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC 10).

A primary outcome from this research was an insight into the component stressors within palliative care (PC), and how these are mitigated in both workplace and private domains. Additionally, practical tools were identified for assessing appropriate management of workplace stressors for PC which can inform organisational policy and practice.

There is evidence that high-functioning teams provide a strong foundation for dealing with stress, allowing PCPs to share both experience and workload. This is a significant factor in mitigating stress for the team members. The sharing of decision-making within multidisciplinary team (MDT) structures provides a further amelioration of the burden of case responsibility.

The research provided findings within a UK context involving the interplay of resilience, coping strategies, and burnout. A comprehensive understanding of the protective factors employed by PCPs in the face of their workplace stressors also informed policy and practice regarding wellbeing within the profession.

The qualitative component of the research explored PCPs' experiences of stress in the workplace and protective measures, both organisational and personal, that they used. The questionnaire-based quantitative component sought to measure burnout and resilience, to elicit factors contributing to workplace stress, and how these were addressed by PCPs. It was distributed to designated PCPs and via the Association of Palliative Medicine (APM).

A key semantic category identified through thematic analysis was 'Workplace Culture/Setting', This reflected the building of resilience both within the workplace and outside it; the former through workplace support structures; the latter through domestic frameworks and specific coping strategies.

The Workplace Culture/Setting category comprised four themes: (a) the PCP culture and setting itself (b) workplace stressors; and (c) support structures. The fourth, potential

stress mitigators, described organisational elements which were considered to offer additional cultural and structural support to ameliorate both the causes and effects of workplace stress.

Though stress is significant and pervasive in the workplace, PCPs access a range of 'personal strategies' to manage these, six on average, in addition to reflective, and other practices. These are supplementary to workplace structures that are supportive of stress mitigation, principally team cohesion.

The derivation of a high-level framework for use in the PC workplace provides a practical model which may help to correlate stress, as measured by burnout, or conversely resilience, with the resources available in the workplace which bear on these.

*Julian Hubbersgilt carried out this work as part of his MSc Psychology at Oxford Brookes University, is in the process of seeking publication of this research and would welcome comments and suggestions.*

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## John Radford speaks...

Psychology, a liberal science. Emeritus Professor John Radford | UEL University of East London, School of Psychology, Stratford Campus

First annual public lecture | Wednesday 20 October 2021 4pm

Many of you will know John. There is an open invitation to hear John at the School of Psychology at the University of East London. John was the Founding Head of the School, the first major Department of Psychology (then West Ham College of Technology) outside the university sector.

The School of Psychology at UEL is now one of the largest in the U.K. John led the introduction of psychology as a GCE 'A' Level subject. From an initial 120 students in 1971 there are now over 68,000, making it the second most popular A-Level subject.

In view of the great increase in demand, John, with James Breese, founded the Association for the Teaching of Psychology. In view of these and numerous other activities, including many books and papers, he was made an Honorary Life Member of

the British Psychological Society, and was the first recipient of the society's two awards in education and teaching in psychology. In his lecture John will explain why, after sixty years as a psychologist, he regards it as a 'liberal science', with a vital role to play in education, and essential to the changes in human behaviour we must make if we are to overcome the many unprecedented threats we now face as a species. The lecture is open to all who are interested.

### [An interview with John from 2012](#)

This event will be both live (Room CC101, Stratford campus) and streamed. [You can book here](#) and for further information please contact [Professor Ian Tucker](#).

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## **Inequalities of the most affected by Climate Change emergencies in mental and physical health**

### **Olga Cecilia Farach**

In my interest to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion of our BPS-LHC branch newsletter, in this edition, I observe the inequalities of the most affected by climate changes in mental and physical health.

Several potential long-term impacts of climate changes such as population migration, food and water scarcity, gas emissions, loss of employment, and the absence of social support have huge consequences in mental and physical health.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, inhabitants' migration related to climate change is an ongoing problem. Since 2008 more than 20-million people have been move involuntarily because of emergency events, such as floods, hurricanes, wildfires, extreme temperature, droughts, and coastal destructions.

Due to negative ecosystems, individuals living in poverty might find it harder to cope and to adapt to climate changes, impacting their mental and physical health. This will be exacerbated by the increase in diseases, pollution, wars, extreme weather, lack of medications and infrastructures after adversities. The rise of pandemics such as Covid-19 can be a cause of climate changes. Together with the excess of drugs and medications causing mental and physical illness.

Vulnerability is the major risk in climate change. Some ethnic minority communities, those of lower socioeconomic status, and the ones living in deprived areas are the principal sufferers, as well as the elderly, the chronically ill, people with mental/physical problems and impairments, pregnant and postnatal women, migrants, refugees and the homeless. Children are the most affected and likely suffer continuous trauma symptoms after devastations, separations and displacements from parents or

caregivers.

Included in the vulnerable group are the health supporters, emergency-workers, soldiers, police, and others involved with responding to extreme adversities all of which are at high risk of mental and physical ill-health, chronic exposures and to injuries or deaths.

Climate change and related disasters can cause long-lasting and severe mental and physical health effects. To think about the fatalities from a disaster such as losing a home, a job and being disconnected from the community, can contribute to anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorders. Weather conditions are also associated with the increase in hostile behaviours, domestic-abuse, and the use of alcohol to cope with the strain.

Apparently, individuals might be resilient to disasters, however the trauma that is not observed and treated might have long-term chronic trauma effects and therefore every single person should be psychological and physical supported and monitored to avoid consequences, such as suicidal behaviours.

Thus, we need a positive planetary health solution, observing and contributing to psycho-biodiversity in human health with education, financial supports, responsiveness to the climate crisis, and the ability to work together looking for the intensification of accessibility and improvement to health services.

We need to support hospitals and emergency admissions for people with mental and physical health issues affected by climate changes in order to reach a universal balance for our present lives. And why not contemplate a future greener health system?

### **Olga Cecilia Farach**

Olga is a BPS London & Home Counties Branch committee member.

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## **Shorlisted Senate Campaign proposals announced**

Voting in the 2022 BPS Senate Policy Campaign has now closed. We received ten excellent, eligible campaign submissions. The three proposals receiving the highest number of votes will be presented and debated at the November senate meeting.

Senate members will then choose the successful proposal via a senate member vote on Thursday 4 November. All members will be informed of the outcome of the vote naming the successful proposal which will be the 2022 policy priority via the BPS website and via our social media channels on Friday 5 November.

The three shortlisted proposals are

**Proposal 10: Tackling social class and class-based inequalities**

Psychology of Women and Inequalities Section; Community Psychology Section; Social Psychology Section

**Proposal 11: Emerging Stronger: Living Well, Protecting our Planet**

DCP, DOP & DHP with support from DECP and DFP and is supported by DCoP.

**Proposal 1: Climate change is the most pressing issue of our era and impacts on all other issues.**

Psychotherapy Section (Chair) Division of Counselling Psychology, Special Group of Independent Practitioners

Congratulations and thank you to the successful networks and thank you to all networks and members involved in drafting each of the ten proposals and the proposal leads for creating their videos. These videos were so helpful in promoting the campaign across our BPS social media channels helping members decide which of the proposals should go forward into the final round of voting in November.

Thank you also to all members who took the time to vote.

The successful proposal will be announced on the BPS website and social media channels on Friday 5 November 2021.

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## 20th EAWOP Congress

11-14 January | Glasgow

There is still time to take advantage of our early bird discounted rates for this exciting international Congress. Book before the 29 October and you will receive up to a **20 per cent discount**.

We have a great programme of [half-day and full-day workshops available](#). These events can either be included in your booking when you first register or added later. Many of the sessions have limited capacity and are likely to fill up fast.

Our workshops offer a range of exceptional high quality experiences at competitive prices. If you are looking to acquire new techniques, fine-tune an existing skill, improve your professional practice, explore real-world problems, or expand your understanding of a specialist topic, you will be able to [find a workshop](#) to suit your needs.

We are operating a very positive refund policy for registrations and have hotel arrangements that require no deposit and can be cancelled with 48 hours' notice.

**Book now**

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