"Everything is fine": Unpacking the dimensions and role of psychological resilience in high-functioning depression

Recognizing subclinical mental health conditions is as vital as it is challenging when it comes to effectively preventing transitions to at-risk states. Recently, high-functioning depression has garnered some attention as a subclinical condition that is particularly difficult to detect. People with high-functioning depression fulfill or even excel in their social and occupational roles, yet otherwise suffer from symptoms typical of clinical depression. A main hypothesis posits a key role for psychological resilience in maintaining social functioning. However, existing conceptions of psychological resilience are difficult to reconcile with the empirical data on high-functioning depression. To better understand the specific distress, develop suitable interventions, and prevent deteriorating trajectories, I suggest taking a closer look at different dimensions of resilience. In this talk, I will draw on the role of narrative self-structures in depression and focus on the narrative function of accessible roles, commitments, or obligations. I argue that narrative self-conception in high-functioning depression is reduced to roles and obligations, which provide motives for social functioning without providing reasons-why. Thus, resilient behavior is compatible with different motivational resources, some of which may perpetuate or exacerbate depressive symptoms. Importantly, the availability of such resources varies with the particularities of the social environment.