

A Junior Network event


Surviving academia

Conversations on our well-being

30 March 2023




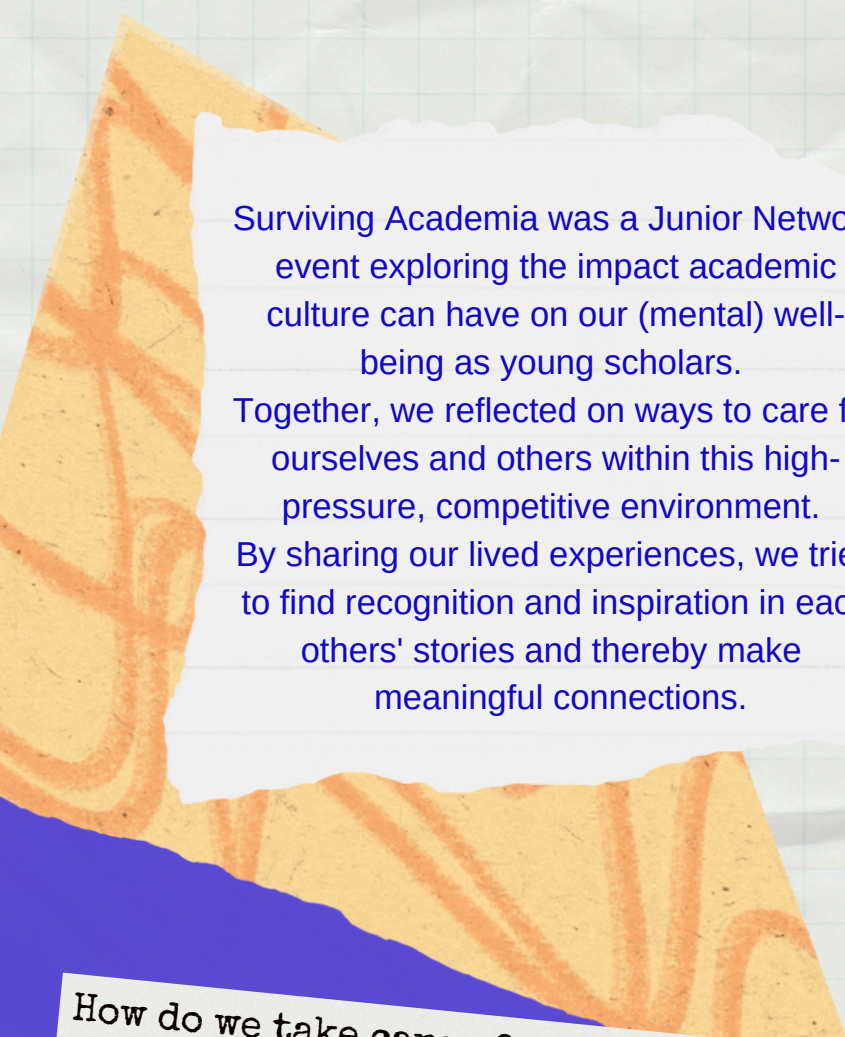
sophia Belgian network for gender studies



Surviving Academia was a Junior Network event exploring the impact academic culture can have on our (mental) well-being as young scholars.

Together, we reflected on ways to care for ourselves and others within this high-pressure, competitive environment.

By sharing our lived experiences, we tried to find recognition and inspiration in each others' stories and thereby make meaningful connections.



How do we take care of ourselves and others?



Growing up, I have never learnt how to listen to my body, how to take care of it. I never learned to listen to myself; to love myself. My parents didn't teach me; society didn't teach me; Now I'm teaching me.

See what's been unseen

Jesse Kempkes



My hypothesis now is: That the more inauthentic you live your life (i.e. the less you are listening to and guided by your inner voice, your needs/boundaries/longings), the more you will probably feel like an imposter, in all areas of life, and the more risk you will face to burn out.

When it comes to academia, for example, it feels to me like there's no other choice than to wear a mask, because of its culture. It's a culture in which you need to be smart, original; where you constantly need to compete or compare yourself to peers. What other way to do that than to create an image of yourself as an intelligent and always well-informed person? The perfect academic fantasy of yourself. This way you will be valuable, this way you'll be loved.

It's an enticing strategy, but will it ever be enough? Will others ever see and love you for it? I think the answer is no, they won't. I think they will love the mask, but not you, hiding underneath. Because how can you feel loved when you are in hiding? When you are afraid to show yourself?

What is there to love?

There is a need for awareness of how regulations, expectations and the organization of a thesis are an important part of an academic education, and in this way, subjected to a normative script and the possibility of displaying power dynamics. To deconstruct and point out its benevolent normativity, the concept of 'queer use', as explained by scholar Sarah Ahmed, considers the possibility of breaking out of its inflicted standard.

To value a different, or queer, use of a thesis as a framework of research shows awareness of different yet equally valid methodologies of proving one's quality as a researcher and academic. Moreover, the idea of 'queer use' is associated with a conscious choice for being used.


The power of witnessing



Josefien Cornette

Autotheory has been regarded as a way of dismantling barriers, and is more horizontal. It centers and legitimizes individual, bodily experiences as a means of processing knowledge production — basically, a way of thinking through “high” cultural theory via our physical, embodied selves.

In *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*, Lauren Fournier positions autotheory as an interdisciplinary approach to history, weighing in on the politics of access surrounding knowledge production and what it means, in the bell hooks sense, to bring everyday life to theory.



Cis Coudenys

In this society we are addicted to thinking and analysing. There's barely any focus on the body and on emotions. "You should not feel the way you feel" is the message we hear so often, both explicitly and implicitly. Don't be angry, don't be sad, dry your tears, be strong, ... We are collectively afraid of the more uncomfortable emotions, because we don't know what we have to do with them.

Allowing discomfort into our lives

All too often we want to immediately fix them by finding solutions. But in doing that, we deny parts of ourselves to rise to the surface, where they can be seen, felt and processed. We can learn a lot from going inside, listening to our bodies.

I think we need to see emotions as the intelligent bodily messengers that they are. They tell us something about the state of our body, our being. In ignoring and suppressing them, we ignore and suppress parts of ourselves, resulting in unrest, discomfort, dissociation, etc. The energy within our bodies will get stuck and only by allowing what wants to be seen within the body will the energy be able to flow again. When we reconnect to ourselves in this way, we will find back the calmness, serenity and joy that we long for. That's why I think embodiment starts with allowing discomfort into our lives. Sitting with it; feeling it; processing it. Stop resisting what is present in this moment, here and now.



Zine

Together we created a zine bringing together all kinds of tips and inspirations that we would like to share with each other when it comes to self-care and embodiment.

Participants shared resources such as books, articles, blogs, podcasts, video's, documentaries, meditations, yoga or other body oriented exercises, IG-accounts, therapists, quotes, etc, that inspire them or have helped them in any way.

The themes of the collages are centred around self-care, embodiment and healing:

How do I care for myself when I experience a lot of stress?

In what ways do I come back to my body?

What makes me feel safe/cozy/relaxed?

What does healing mean to me?



DON'T FORGET **TO DO**

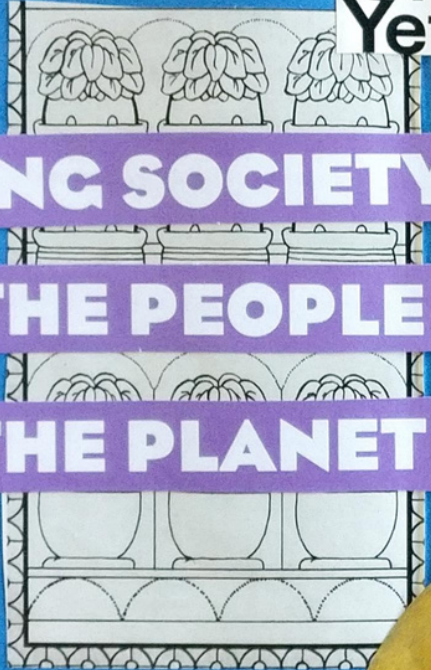
Healing

féministe et solidaire

Divination
Healing

'ZAADJES PLANTEN
GEEFT ALTIJD RESULTAAT'

それ
Yet



CARING SOCIETY

FOR THE PEOPLE

AND THE PLANET

Les amours

Een zorgzame
kritiek op zorg

Race tegen
de klok



Dream
your way
back to



What does healing mean to you?

ation



Zorg dragen



それでも人は立ち向かう。
Yet Still, We Rise.



TY

LE

ET

POUR UNE
POLITIQUE ÉGALITAIRE

Gesprekken
over
goud

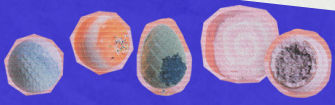
Vredelust



COME
ALIVE

PLAATS MAKEN VOOR
KWETSBAARHEID

How can we connect to ourselves and to our community?





Elles disent

Embodiment

Contre nature



Dansen

tot de

dood

LIBRE



Troost



on se chauffe à la sororité!



Droog
Droog

Meal Plan

Een politiek van zorg

- by singing

Écrire



steen per steen

How do you relax?

Meditation App

Rituals

Celebration

féministe aujourd'hui ?

VEILIG DE ZEE IN

freedom



RELEASE

EN

LAAT ZE GROEIEN

OPEN HART

How do you (re)connect to your body?

mplek
mplek

lichaam

power

EXERCISE

GOALS



Self-care

NEE,

Déconstruire

IMPORTANT!

Take Care of Your Self

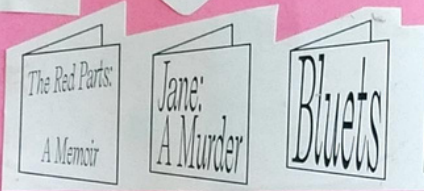
Trauma-talk

MOET ER NOG ZORG ZIJN?

Kijk eens



PODCAST while I'm taking my bath.



stories

practice music ♡ A FEMINIST VISION

Zorggebieden

arts



als een van

ORGASME(S)

L'ÉTHIQUE DU CARE



How do you take care of yourself?

What makes you feel safe?

SPEELVOGEL

RUST

litteratur
litteratur
litteratur

On Freedom,
Four Songs
of Care and
Constraint

The
Argonauts

theater

Poëzie
praxis
org


Slow is more

Imagination

MEMORIES OF
CONNECTION

DAAR ZIJN
VRIENDEN VOOR





Join the Junior Network!

The **Junior Network** is an online and offline community for junior and early-career researchers (Master, doctoral and postdoctoral) in Belgium. In this group, members meet and reflect on what it means to be a feminist inside and outside of academia in an **informal and supportive space**.

Interested in **joining** the Junior Network?
Send an email to info@sophia.be and we will make sure to add you to the mailing list :)