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Bio

Prof. Alena Slezackova, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the Dept. of Medical Psychology and Psychosomatics, Faculty of Medicine, Masaryk University, in Brno, Czech Republic. Her scientific interests include mainly hope, mental health, and well-being. She also has a particular interest in the research and practice of mindfulness. Alena is a founder and director of the Czech Positive Psychology Centre (CPPC), a member of the Advisory Council of the International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA), and a member of the Executive Board of the European Network for Positive Psychology (ENPP). She has been a member of several international research projects and serves on the editorial boards of five academic psychological journals. Alena is the author of the first comprehensive monograph on positive psychology in the Czech language and dozens of scientific publications in positive psychology and health psychology.

Keynote Address on:

Hope in the Face of Despair: Lessons Learned from Life's Challenging Times

Abstract

The events of recent years have caused many crises and challenging life situations that have taken their toll on the mental health of the Central European population. However, it turns out that despite adversity, many people are able to maintain hope and even come out of difficult times strengthened.

In this lecture, we will briefly introduce the concepts of perceived hope and posttraumatic growth and present the results of current research studies conducted on large samples of Czech adults. It showed that despite the past two years being associated with higher stress and anxiety, there are vital sources of hope and encouragement that can contribute to posttraumatic growth. We will discuss which coping strategies contributed to better mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic and what protects us from despair in the face of close war. We will also suggest effective positive psychology strategies for increasing psychological well-being and resilience, which can pave our way to personal growth, humanity, and wisdom in difficult times.