

Self-care for students



MADE SIMPLE

*Ways to keep your wellbeing in check
every day*

How to use this guide

Wellbeing is a journey, so please keep this in your pocket, your diary, or your bag, and flick through when you want to remind yourself of how to maintain your wellbeing.



Why this guide?

As I have journeyed through my university life, ideas of what self-care and wellbeing maintenance are have been thrown at me through social media and advertisements, to name a few.

However, I don't believe that fancy bubble baths and expensive products are the answer to self-care. Self-care, to me, is something that isn't achievable through possessing items – it is about how we live.

I wanted to make this booklet to share some tips and information that I have come across from a range of perspectives - such as those of psychologists, that

reinforce the simplicity of maintaining our wellbeing, stripped from the expensive price tags, that, let's face it, don't exactly always suit our student budgets!

Contents

Welcome to university! 6

Practical ways to manage your wellbeing every day

How to be mindful throughout your
university day 11

Feeling overwhelmed? 17

Looking inwards

Self-maintenance 20

How to be self-compassionate 23

Building resilience and responding to
failure 25

Welcome to university!

University is often referred to as 'the best time of your life'. Undoubtedly, alongside your enjoyment of studying, this is what brought you here.

I am writing this to say first of all, welcome! It is an amazing accomplishment to have reached this point – I remember the feelings of nervousness and excitement as though it were yesterday.

I just want to talk to you, before we begin, about some of the challenges, fears, and worries you might be facing right now.



Addressing the fish (?) in the room

Many students come to university and experience feeling like somewhat of an outsider, surrounded by so many new people, with different academic backgrounds to you. This is called the “Big Fish Little Pond effect” (Brown, 2016:21). **THIS IS NORMAL!**

I remember feeling significantly less intelligent in my first few weeks of uni than I felt doing my GCSEs and A-levels. Let me take this moment to say that YOU made it here, through YOUR hard work and YOUR grades.

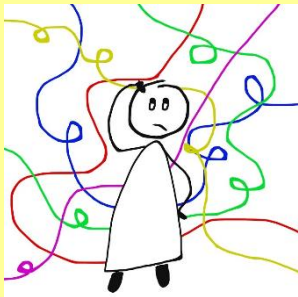
Being a student, you're probably all too familiar with how easy it can be to get stressed, doubt yourself, feel like a failure ... whatever else!

Let me take this moment to say that while these feelings are NORMAL, and many, many students will feel the same as you at times, please take care of yourself. I encourage you to find out about your university's support services available. I've accessed them, loads of people I know have – it's normal!

YOU are #1 in this case. I hope that this booklet provides you with some easy ways of keeping your wellbeing

in check. This is **not** to say that maintaining your wellbeing is simple – quite the opposite. BUT – I encourage you to keep this with you, fold the pages you find useful, and let this be a reminder of how your wellbeing is important, and something to keep a close eye on.

Practical ways to manage your wellbeing every day



In this section, you'll find some practical things to do to keep your wellbeing in check, including mindfulness-made-simple activities and some breathing exercises. Don't knock it 'till you've tried it!

How to be mindful throughout your university day

Mindfulness does not have to cost money, be a strict routine or take up lots of time! Pick and choose which activities work best for you and when!

MORNING



Pull yourself out of bed, it's another day! To start off your day, give yourself 5 minutes. You can do with

these 5 minutes what you'd like, here are some of my ideas. Set a timer for 5 minutes and do one of the following:

Journalling > What is on your mind right now? What have you got planned for the day ahead? Is anything concerning you? This is a good chance to get any worries out onto paper.

Preparing your space > Whether that means making your bed, tidying your room or setting up your workspace for the day, a calm environment will aid a calm mind.

Practise mindful eating/drinking >
after you have made your morning coffee, take a moment and sit there, enjoying the taste, the smell, and the warm feeling in your hands. Do this without distractions – this means no TV and no phone in your hand.

THROUGHOUT THE DAY



Like most students, you'll probably eat your lunch alongside your studies,

grabbing a bite of a sandwich while staring at a laptop screen. I

encourage you to stop working and give yourself time to have some water and eat your lunch. Use this time for reflection: what have you achieved so far? What are your aims for the rest of the day?

Mindful exercise > whether that be in a sports class/club, at the gym, or simply, going for a walk or a jog by yourself, try and really focus on what you are doing as well as what is around you – what can you see, what can you hear?

EVENING



Journalling is great to do in the evening when you have some alone time. Reflect on how the day has been, how have you felt in yourself? Allow any negative thoughts to be expressed. It can be great practice to do this right before bed, so that you don't go to bed with a head clouded with worries.

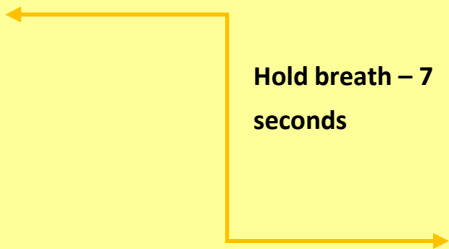
Clear away your workspace >

Declutter your environment, close your laptop and take some time to listen to some music, read, whatever helps you to unwind. Take notice of how you feel as you wind down.

Feeling overwhelmed?

This can be a scary feeling, but here are some psychologist-approved methods of how to cope with feelings such as extreme stress.

Breathe in - 4 seconds



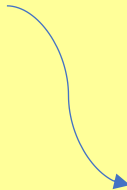
Breathe out - 8 seconds

(Duff, 2018:27)

2 quick, deep inhales



1 deep exhale



(Huberman, 2020)

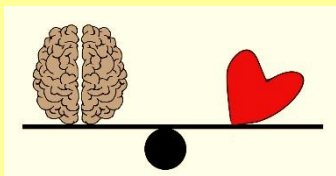
Looking inwards



It's important to be aware of the thoughts and feelings going on within our minds. In this section, I'll be encouraging you to consider these things.

Self-maintenance

This is all about looking after yourself. Today's society doesn't encourage this, and we often consider ourselves robots. It's therefore important to check in with yourself.



Take some time to reflect on these (seemingly boring) but essential aspects of your life:

How much sleep have you been getting? (yes, maybe you've been having some all-nighters and nights out!)

Have you been eating **solid, healthy meals each day?**

Do you take time out of your busy day to **exercise?** This can literally be a walk. I for one, am appalling at home workouts and the gym. Find what works for you!

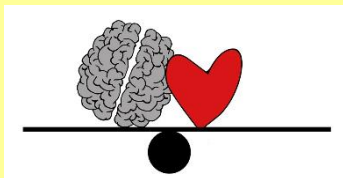
Have you **checked in with your friends** recently?

What is **important to you**?

Friendship? Family? A particular hobby?

Set yourself some goals for the upcoming week. What area of your life do you want to work on?

How to be self-compassionate



How nice have you been to yourself recently? Be honest! When we hit a bump in the road, it is all too easy for the first person to blame to be you.

So, I'd like you to consider:

How are you feeling today? You could jot this down or talk it through in your mind.

REMINDER: It's ok to feel however you're feeling!

If you've made a mistake, or something's gone wrong, talk to yourself as you'd talk to a friend. You are only human!

I also want you to consider something you've done today that you're proud of.

Do something kind for yourself: run a bath, buy yourself a coffee, watch TV, anything that makes you happy. You don't need a reason to do this for yourself!



Building resilience and responding to failure



Students, naturally, fear failure.

Failure can be in the broadest sense here – actually failing an assignment, or not doing as well as you had hoped to. “Failing well” means redefining failure as a normal part of life (Wellbeing Support Services, 2019).

Next time something goes wrong, instead of immediately criticising yourself, take a look at this scroll,

displayed on the Warwick Wellbeing team's site (2019):

*“You are hereby authorized to **screw up, bomb or fail** at one or more relationships, hook ups, friendships, texts, exams, extracurriculars or any other choices associated with college ... and still be a **totally worthy, utterly excellent human.**”*

Being resilient means being able to get back on your feet when something doesn't go right. The only way you can build this is by repeatedly getting

things wrong, and every time, coming back stronger.

How do we develop this? Practice!
Next time you mess something up, practice how you talk to yourself. Instead of 'I'm a failure', how about 'I tried my best, but it didn't go to plan'.

It can also be a good idea to try new things that you know you won't be perfect at – rediscover an old hobby that you gave up because you 'weren't good enough'.

These approaches will make the idea of failure much less scary!

This booklet was designed by a student, for students.



Hi, I'm Abi. 😊

I'm a final year undergraduate student, and I have experience of challenges with my mental health throughout my student life. This booklet contains a few strategies for managing your own wellbeing. I hope it offers some useful advice that you can carry around with you.