

Staying Sane on Campus

Tips and techniques for
optimising mental health
while studying at uni

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The *Staying Sane on Campus* project team has endeavoured to ensure that material contained in this booklet was correct at the time of printing.

The project team would like to stress that the information contained herewith is intended to provide guidelines for staying in study and can be used as an adjunct to other strategies. The project team strongly endorses students seeking professional support to assist in the management of mental health issues.

The *Staying Sane on Campus* booklet provides a resource list of external services and web sites. In providing this information the project team does not accept responsibility for, or endorse the content or condition of any web site.

Authorised by Carmel Murphy, Director, Student Access

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Why read this booklet?

You may find this booklet helpful if you:

- feel you are not in control of, or managing your life
- are feeling stressed about assessment deadlines or exams
- are concerned about the mental health of a friend, partner or housemate
- are thinking about seeing a counsellor, psychologist or other health professional
- have been diagnosed with a psychiatric illness or psychological disorder

The booklet includes:

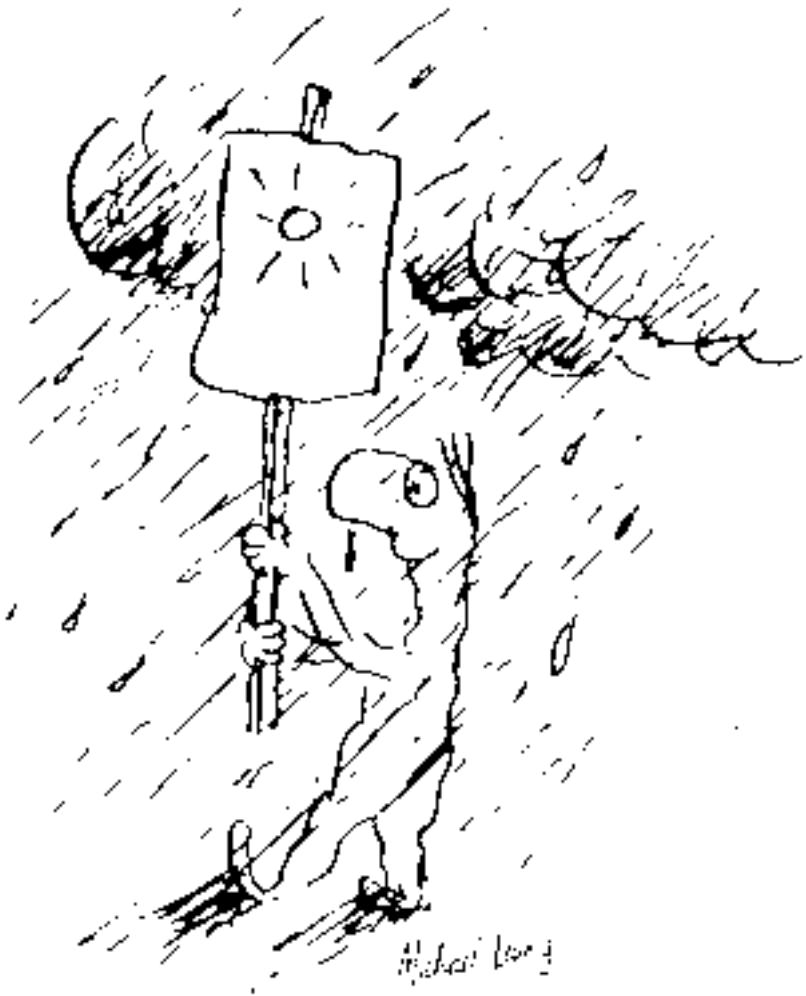
- hints for maintaining a well lifestyle
- tips for coping when the pressure is on
- ideas about who to see and where to go
- tips for keeping you on track
- an information bank of resources

The booklet is written from a student perspective, and while no book can represent every experience of every student, we hope to give an overview of information, academic rights, practical strategies, support services and resources that may be relevant to you.

University study is challenging – adjusting to timetables, attending lectures, writing essays, balancing work and family life. For some, going to Uni means living away from home for the first time and experiencing greater independence than in the past. New ideas and concepts, new people and beliefs all contribute to the ongoing experiences of personal development. University can also be a time of experimentation with alternative lifestyles and the trying on of different identities. **All** students experience times of stress, self-doubt and a loss of motivation. For **many** students, universities can at times be lonely and isolating places.

Better self-knowledge and access to information can help you to make informed choices and assist you to enhance your study experience.

The booklet is designed in sections – different sections may be relevant at different times in your course. We encourage you to read the sections as you need them.



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Maintaining a well lifestyle

How much you work, sleep, exercise, take time out for yourself and what you eat, can all influence how you feel. Many students spend periods of time surviving on three hours sleep, drinking heaps and living on chips. There's nothing wrong with this – it's just that after a while, it catches up with you.

Keeping connected

No-one likes to be lonely and feeling a part of uni life is really important. For most people, their introduction to uni is quite overwhelming. Loads of people in lectures, lots of new faces at O-week and all of them seem to know exactly where they're going and what they're doing. It can be really hard to break into a social group – here are some ideas:

What do you enjoy doing?

Uni's a great time of life to develop new hobbies and creative outlets that can be a great breather from the routine of lectures, tutes and reading. Even if you like things that were considered really 'daggy' at High School, you can be sure that someone else at Uni is into the same thing. So engage in your passion, whether it be cartooning, politics, medieval role-playing, religion or theatre. It's a great way to meet others, and can be one of the most memorable parts of uni when you look back later. Check out the clubs and societies, there are hundreds to choose from (a tip, try some of the smaller groups –you'll find it easier to get to know people).

Not the sporting type?

You may have thought your days of sport are over, but there's a lot of fun to be had joining classes or groups at the Sports Centre. There can be regular snow trips, rock climbing or maybe just a weekly aerobics or yoga session – aside from the health benefits it's a great way to meet people.

Common ground?

You may not think you have a lot in common with anybody else around you, but you are here to do a particular course and so are a lot of other students. It's a fairly major thing to have in common with a sizeable number of people! Check out faculty clubs and department societies. There are also clubs for students from different religious groups or from different ethnic backgrounds. Some departments organise study groups – go along, you'll get to meet people.

Making friends

Lecture theatres are often full of people you don't know – talk to the person next to you about the lecture or the coming exams – maybe go for a coffee after the class. Talk to others in your tutorial about a coming assignment – perhaps brainstorm possibilities over tea and cake in the café.

Make the most of what's on offer

All universities will have programs that aim to make the first year of uni easier. Find out what transition and orientation programs are available through student support services or your faculty.

Keeping up networks outside of uni

Talk to a supportive person or support group regularly, be around people that make you feel good about yourself. Friendships can take time and effort to build and maintain, but the benefits of having a good support base of people you enjoy spending time with, who energise and nurture you, can make life very enjoyable. Catch up with old school and work friends, people who know you and you feel easy with. This can be particularly important for part time students.

Staying healthy

Relaxation

Relaxation is just as important as physical activity.

What makes you relaxed? Walking along the beach? Meditation? Listening to music? Hanging out with your dog? There are many different ways to relax.

Relaxing is a passive (but positive) activity – vegging out on the couch is not particularly positive, although it does work for some!

Getting active

Exercise – some people love it, some people hate it. But we all know it's good for us. It elevates our mood, gives us energy, reduces susceptibility to colds and flu.

Some tips:

- Do only activities you like.
Jumping around the living room to loud music is still a form of exercise (but less so if you have a drink and cigarette in hand)
- Exercise with a friend
- Take a class – boxercise, belly dancing, tango classes; try something different
- Reward yourself for exercising; buy a CD single, a magazine or book (or borrow one from your local library)
- Walk a neighbour's pet if you don't have one of your own
- Make exercise incidental-wash the floor, run to the train station, walk up the escalator
- There is no rule that the only real exercise is a 5am jog! Finding your shoes at that time of the morning is an effort in itself!

"I need to get a lot of rest and relaxation and cut back on commitments in times of stress. I try not to push myself too hard when I am studying, which means I need to be more organised with study".

Eating well

The food you eat can have a significant impact on how you feel. A diet too high in fat, sugar or processed food can leave you feeling tired and stressed, with low energy. You may find yourself dozing off in those four o'clock lectures or waking at night with sugar cravings.

Most of us know what a healthy diet is. It comes at us from everywhere – television, magazines, books, conversations. The convenience of two-minute noodles or toast for dinner can be pretty enticing after a long day. However there are some easy ways that you can incorporate healthy eating into your lifestyle with minimum effort.

Here are some tips:

Think 3 meals a day plus planned snacks, they keep your energy up, and make you feel better.

Some ideas:

Staples for a student larder

- Fruit – buy seasonal fruit and vegies as they are usually cheapest
- Vegetables
- Rice/pasta/noodles
- Bread
- Cow's Milk/Soy milk
- Weetbix/Rolled Oats/Cornflakes etc
- Tofu/Cheese/Tuna/Salmon/Chicken/Eggs/Tempeh
- Lentils/Chickpeas
- Tinned Tomatoes
- Herbs and Seasonings to Taste (i.e, salt, pepper, parsley, basil, coriander, garlic, MSG free stock cubes, cumin, chives)
- Butter/Olive oil
- Tea/Coffee/Herbal alternatives

With these ingredients you could make

- Lentil and Vegie Soup
- Sandwiches to take to uni (or bring a small tin of tuna or some cheese and salad and buy a plain bread roll)
- Spaghetti Bolognaise (vegie or non-vegie)
- Stirfry
- Fruit crumble
- Risotto
- Chickpea and Lentil Dahl
- Vegies can also be added to noodles or tinned soup for some added healthy bits.

“... management of my whole life is important: balancing time for studying, relaxing and talking to friends”.

Generally if you make an effort to eat this kind of food, your diet is pretty well balanced and a few chocolate bars, chips etc won't do any great harm.

If you drink coffee – drink heaps of water to keep away fatigue, tiredness and headaches.

Feeling depressed?

Aim for foods which maintain or boost your serotonin level – omega 3 rich foods such as chicken, turkey and salmon are particularly good.

Feeling Tired?

Eating whole carbohydrates (brown rice, brown/soy pasta, wholegrain bread) are good for keeping your blood sugar levels stable.

Craving Sugar?

Increase your protein levels (eggs, chicken, tofu)

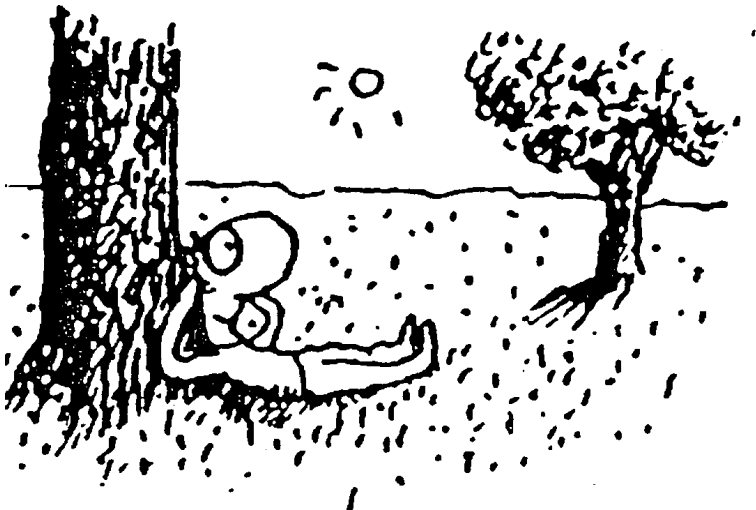
By eating at least 3 meals a day, drinking plenty of water, eating whole carbohydrates, plenty of fruit, veg and protein and dairy you are less likely to need to shell out for Berrocas or expensive vitamins.

Other ideas?

Other ways to maintain a healthy lifestyle:

- Keeping a journal is a great way to think things over. Articulating your thoughts, anxieties, problems, dreams and goals in writing or drawing can give you a chance to look at them in a tangible way. Once you have things down on paper they can seem clearer and it can be easier to weigh up the pros and cons. Additionally, just having a rant to yourself can get a feeling out of your system, even if it doesn't solve the external factors that caused it.
- Having a comfortable living space where you feel safe and happy – home is usually more than a place to crash at night. If you are in a freezing cold house, and are sick of your housemates and their dubious habits, maybe it's time to find somewhere better to live.
- Managing your time and energy well – it's all about balance. Just as you can have/eat too much of a good thing, you can also leave too little time for enjoying yourself.

“...I have had trouble in the past with bad living arrangements, working too much, too many subjects and loneliness.”



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When the pressure is on

Once stress rears its ugly head, managing study can become overwhelming.

As a student, you don't always have a stress free life – you might have to work to eat, essays have to be written eventually, bills have to be paid and relationships can take a lot of attention. Just being accepted into uni means you're a high achiever, but the reality of the increased standards and expectations means that you'll probably also be experiencing your first fail (or maybe a 'B' instead of a long succession of 'As').

Stress is not necessarily a negative thing, in that it can be a mobilising and energising force for short bursts of time. However, when it impacts to the extent that daily life becomes difficult and you are finding it hard to cope, it can be a signal that things aren't quite right. The stress that once was energising, is now exhausting and overwhelming.

Some signs of stress

- Exhaustion/fatigue
- Headaches
- Inability to concentrate
- Sleep difficulties
- Feeling agitated or 'hyperactive'
- Feeling depressed, tired and unable to get anything done
- Procrastinating
- Change in eating patterns

Stress can manifest in different ways. It can also cause you to change your behaviour. Some changes may be:

- Excessive coffee and cigarette intake
- Change in alcohol intake
- Use or increased use of drugs
- Relationship problems and sexual issues

As you would know, there are many things which can trigger stress. Common triggers for students include: relationship breakdowns, family hassles, managing difficult or uninteresting subjects, difficult lecturers, financial problems, feeling overloaded, deadlines, exams, job hassles.

What to do about stress

Often people feel they have to manage all issues on their own.

For some of the issues we've listed above, there are some practical solutions.

- Talk to your lecturer about an extension (they're on your side, it's actually in their interest that you pass). In some faculties applications for extensions are not considered by lecturers, but by the Faculty
- Talk to the Faculty Office about Special Consideration. While everyone experiences study stress from time to time, stress that has got out of hand and had a significant ongoing impact on your ability to study could be grounds for Special Consideration
- Chat to the Student Union advisers about a difficult lecturer
- Talk to your GP about a medical certificate
- Speak to a Learning Skills Adviser about developing an exam or study timetable
- Go to the financial aid or housing officer at uni.

It can also be important to take time to reflect yourself, on what you think the issues are; to gain some perspective.

Talking to someone else (a friend or family member) can also help – Gran may have known something when she said, 'A problem shared is a problem halved'. It's not always about looking for solutions, sometimes just talking issues through can help. There's a limit to how often you can talk to a friend about the status or non-status of your love life/ alcohol intake/ depression. But there comes a point when despite the best efforts of those around you, you feel like things aren't changing, negative thoughts abound or you feel out of control of certain aspects of your behaviour.

Important Point

At these times it's best to speak to someone who has particular skills in listening to problems and helping you identify solutions. All unis have a counselling service – they're usually free, they're close by, and they're used to assisting students. They also work within strict boundaries of confidentiality.

But I don't want to see a counsellor !

If you have the feeling that you are not managing, then you can't deny these feelings. Sometimes the thought of talking to somebody can be intimidating, overwhelming, or even frightening. Dealing with any of these issues is best explored in a safe place.

Some myths about counselling

“You have to be in absolute crisis to see a counsellor”

“Other people's problems are more serious than mine”

“Seeing a counsellor is a sign of failure”

“Seeing a counsellor/psychologist is the last resort...I should wait until things get really bad”

“My problems are so weird – I'd be too embarrassed to talk about them.”

“If I need to see a counsellor then there must be something really wrong with me”

The counsellors who work at universities are very familiar with all the sorts of issues that are likely to affect young people (and older people too, for that matter!). They much prefer it if students come to them earlier, rather than later, when problems are really entrenched.

Making the most of Counselling

Sometimes getting an appointment with a counsellor can be difficult. This doesn't mean they're not interested in your problem. You may have to wait a little while for an appointment, but always advise the Counselling Service if you are concerned about your safety (if you're feeling suicidal or that you may hurt someone), as they will usually have emergency appointment times.

Telephone counselling can be a good short-term option. There are phone services which deal with specific issues such as AIDS, sexual assault, drug and alcohol issues or generalist services such as WIRE (Women's Information Referral and Exchange), Lifeline and Care Ring.

If you decide to use a counsellor outside the university service, have the following questions in mind before you telephone for an appointment.

- Are they members of any professional association?
- How much will it cost?
- How will they ensure your privacy?
- What happens to your file when you leave?
- Is the counsellor sensitive to your situation?
- Do you want to see a male or female counsellor?
- Would you prefer someone who can communicate in your first language.

All registered counsellors (psychologists and social workers) are bound by a professional code of ethics. If you want to know more, ask for a copy of the code. Check that the person you are seeing is registered with their appropriate professional body.

Depending on your issues, counselling can sometimes be challenging. This does not mean your counsellor is doing a bad job. Make sure you talk to them about how you're feeling. If you find counselling unsatisfactory it could be for a number of reasons. It might be that the issues are difficult or challenging but if you feel dissatisfied with the counsellor, you can ask to see another one.

One thing many students find with counselling is that they need to be very clear about how the problems they are experiencing are affecting their studies and their lives. Before you visit the counsellor, think a bit about how you want to discuss your issue. They won't be able to provide help for issues you don't tell them about.

Other avenues for seeking help

You may feel more comfortable visiting your local GP or the university Health Service (doctors who work in university health services understand the pressures of study really well). If they feel it's warranted, they'll be able to refer you on to a specialist. Other avenues to consider are: the Disability Liaison Office, the Student Union Advisory Service or your student union welfare officers.

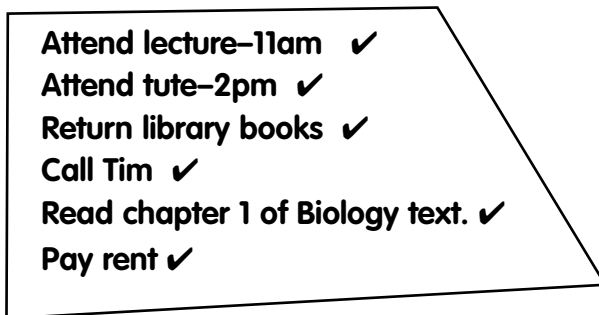
Tips for studying when the pressure is on

Making the most of your time

Use a **diary or wall planner to write down regular events** such as lectures, tutes, doctor's appointments, when assignments are due, dates of exams etc. Think about what times of the year are likely to make you more stressed and make an appointment in advance to see a learning skills/study skills adviser, or a counsellor.

Create a daily "Things to do list". This is particularly helpful if you have a hard time remembering things, or are constantly forgetting to take particular books or materials to class. The list can be in your diary or you may like to use 'post it's' on your computer. You may decide to keep two lists – one 'to do today' and one 'to do this week'. Don't forget to keep the items 'do-able'.

The list may look something like this:



Avoid unstructured time where possible. Unstructured time can be a big source of stress and anxiety for many students as you think of all the work you should be doing or how much you have to do. Unstructured time also allows you to dwell on negative thinking and can make you feel really isolated and lost.

Where possible, plan your uni time table to best utilise 'up times'.

Think about when you feel best. If mornings are particularly hard, you may try to schedule tutes in the afternoon or go to evening lectures.

Reward yourself for turning up to uni each day

Actually getting out of bed, let alone getting to a lecture and taking in the information presented, can sometimes be a struggle. Reward yourself. Listen to a Walkman on the way to uni. Arrange to have breakfast with a friend at uni at a regular time each week.

Reward Possibilities

1. Coffee after the lecture
2. Go to the gym at lunchtime
3. An hour surfing the Internet
4. Buy a magazine
5. Chocolate!!!!!!!!!!
6. More chocolate

Some tips for surviving tutes and lectures

- Do the reading, even if it's only to 'pre-read' (read first para, first sentence in each para and last para)
- Sit near the door or window if you are feeling anxious
- If anxiety is a problem you may find it helpful to talk to someone prior to the tute or lecture – even a friend on the phone for five minutes
- Some students find taping lectures helps their concentration as they can listen to it later, but for others it means that they diligently tape everything but never actually get around to listening to them. Remember, taping lectures can double your workload
- If you are too anxious to ask questions or make comments in front of everyone, you may be able to ask the tutor after the tute.

Nervous about giving an oral presentation?

– You're not alone...

- Arrange to speak early on in the semester, at least you can get it over and done with
- Do a group presentation to take the pressure off: often tute classes are overcrowded, making it more likely you'll be able to present with someone else. Be careful, though, as there can be other pressures associated with group work – especially uneven workload distribution
- You may like to present information in a different format – for example show a video or use overheads. One advantage of this is that everyone will be looking at the screen, not you.

Got exams coming up?

- Arrange specific times to study with friends (even if they are doing different subjects), then reward yourself
- Most students find it really easy to procrastinate when there's study to be done. Think about where you like to work. It may be at a desk at home, in the library, a spot on campus. Some students like to do reading for tutorials on the train or tram
- Going to stay with a relative, whether parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles, may alleviate some of the pressure and take away some of the distractions
- If getting up in time for an exam is a problem, get someone else to wake you up, stay at the house of a friend who also will be going to the exam, organise a wake up call
- Make sure your housemates know when you're studying and come to some arrangements about private space and keeping noise to a dull roar
- Place study notes in places where you will incidentally read them – in the bathroom, on the fridge, above the television, draw flow charts of ideas in colour, use high-lighters on lecture notes
- Consider unplugging the television for a few hours each day, so it's less of a temptation.

Struggling to write that essay or assignment?

- If library research is required, set a limit to how many books you are going to borrow or how many journal articles you want to photocopy. Photocopying can be strangely hypnotic and you may spend more time doing it, than actually reading the articles. Unfortunately photocopying an article is not the same thing as reading it!
- Underlining articles can be equally hypnotic – you underline the stuff that’s important, underline the stuff that you might think is important, underline the stuff you’re afraid to leave off and end up with the whole article underlined!
- Talk to someone else who is doing the same assignment
- With assignments, arrange to show your tutor or Learning Skills adviser a plan of the assignment to check you're on track
- See a Learning Skills adviser about study techniques
- If other thoughts constantly distract you when you are trying to read, keep a notebook next to you. When a worry comes into your head, write it down. You won’t forget it then, and can deal with it after you finish studying
- If you are thinking of kicking a habit, remember that during exam periods or when assessment dates are looming is usually not the time to stop smoking, kick caffeine or give up Tim Tams. Be kind to yourself and stick with what you know works for you.



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Tips for postgrad students

The transition to postgraduate studying can mean many adjustments to your lifestyle, family arrangements and financial circumstances. You may have coped well as an undergraduate student but now be feeling pretty overwhelmed at having to structure your time so that you feel you are doing meaningful research, which has a purpose and is a step in the direction you want to go in the future. Or you may be returning to study after a few years in the workforce and now find yourself poorer financially and struggling to get back into the flow of study. Juggling study with parenting, part-time work and relationships can cause considerable stress. Stress can exacerbate any mental health issues that you may be experiencing. Some tips are:

- Get some assistance with time management. Talk to a Learning Skills adviser on your campus (they're not just for undergrads)
- Consider what kind of support your supervisor can provide up front. For example, you may wish to meet more frequently for shorter periods of time
- Attend any relevant workshops on study skills offered by your postgraduate association or study skills advisers
- Aim to maximise your productivity when you are at your best. Use that time for writing rather than photocopying or research
- If you are in a relationship, discuss with your partner ways in which they can assist you in maximising your study time
- Ensure that you slot legitimate rest breaks into each week, where you do something far removed from study (for example: go for a swim, go rollerblading, watch a movie)
- Meeting with other postgrads can make you feel less isolated. Most Postgraduate Associations organise regular on and off campus social and academic events. Talking to others doing similar research to yourself can generate new ideas and directions for your work.

D Diagnosed with a mental health condition?

Often it's a relief to finally know that there's a reason for how you have been feeling or behaving. For some students, it makes things finally fall into place to be able to put their finger on what's wrong and to be able to access treatment. You've probably got lots of questions about what this all means, what causes your condition and what impact it could have on your life. It's perfectly normal to feel like this.

Mental health conditions can vary enormously in their impact on people as individuals, as well as their affect on study. Most people find that mental illness affects their ability to concentrate and focus on study. It's not as uncommon as you might think – around 20% of Australians will experience an episode of mental illness at some time during their lives. Whatever symptoms you've been experiencing (and they might vary from time to time), the majority can be well managed through strategies such as medication, counselling, diet and exercise. Responsible management of your illness means that it is more likely that you will experience long periods of wellness, and will be better able to cope with the day to day stresses of study.

The more you understand yourself and your symptoms the easier it is to stay well. Educate yourself about any symptoms you may have, treatment options, resources and support available. Learning about the nature of your symptoms and how they can best be managed will greatly assist your ability to study. Check out the resource list at the back of this booklet for ideas on useful workshop programs, support groups and organisations.

Some thoughts on medication

The idea of medication can be pretty scary at first. Medication is usually an important part of managing your condition and enabling you to participate in life and study. It's common to worry that you will be drowsy or 'stoned' all the time, that people will be able to tell that you are taking it or that it will change your personality drastically. Medication will greatly reduce symptoms and give you an edge to start making changes to your life in a positive way. It has the added advantage of making it easier to get out of bed in the morning and generate a feeling of well being.

Medication can take a couple of weeks to start working. When you're on medication a good working relationship with a doctor or health professional is really important. Learn about your medication, how it works, what to expect, possible side effects, and dietary/lifestyle restrictions. Take them only as prescribed.

Going off medication abruptly is a really bad idea, and can make you really ill, both physically and emotionally. It's a bit like having the flu and food poisoning with the symptoms at their worst, all at once. If you are thinking of ceasing your medication, it is important that you discuss this with the person prescribing it. They may not necessarily disagree with you and it can be important to discuss with others why you are considering this move.

If you choose to drink work out for yourself, realistically how many drinks your body can tolerate (the Faculty Ball is not the time to experiment!). If someone wants your medication to take to a dance party, tell them that the best they're going to do is feel crappy or fall asleep!

Study and medication

Try to organise study time around when you take medication. Some medication can cause nausea, headaches or can have a tranquilizing effect. Try to work around these times when you can. If you change medication, work out whether this involves 'wash out periods' where you will be un-medicated for a week or two and will probably be feeling pretty dreadful. Try to ensure that these are not key times in the year, and that you are getting extra support during the process.

Exams and major deadlines can be enormously stressful. Make sure you have your prescriptions filled before the exam period commences. You do not want to be at a 24 hour clinic at 2 in the morning on the day of an exam, trying to get your medication. Speak to your counsellor or health professional about upcoming times of stress and they can help you identify some coping strategies.

If you are an International student, you may have been receiving treatment under a doctor or psychiatrist back home. Whilst in Australia it is helpful to see a doctor, even if you are well, to let them know what medication you have been taking and what kinds of symptoms you have experienced. A letter from your original counsellor or health professional back home is usually extremely helpful. This will ensure that you have someone to go to if you start to experience any further problems.

Important point

If your medication or illness is having an impact on your study, contact your Disability Liaison Unit on campus. The staff there will have a range of ideas and strategies to help you manage your study. Strategies are negotiated, but nothing is implemented without your approval.

Should I disclose my mental health condition?

This is probably one of the first worries you have. Do I tell anyone? What if people find out? What will they think of me? Disclosure is an issue that many students struggle with. There can be advantages and disadvantages to disclosure of mental health issues, and a range of good and bad consequences. Mental illness is often a hidden disability and manifests uniquely in each person.

Advantages of disclosure

Disclosure of mental health issues to friends, family and relevant university services may ensure that your time at university is positive. Mental health issues are not always apparent without disclosure, and disclosure can allow you access to the support and accommodations you are entitled to, such as:

- Obtaining access to accommodations, like adjustments to courses or facilities and services
- Being better understood and accepted

- Increased emotional support
- Greater interest, care and follow up from staff
- Receiving appropriate actions in difficult situations from staff
- Receiving clear rights
- Not being seen as a difficult student
- Receiving advice on advocacy

“I was really hesitant about telling anyone about my illness. I didn’t want to be seen as different or be known only by my diagnosis.”

Disadvantages of Disclosure

Unfortunately, myth and misinformation is still an issue for many students with mental health issues. Disclosure can in some instances cause stigma, in that people treat you differently or have a propensity to see you as your illness, especially if they do not know anyone with mental illness.

Things to think about with disclosure

What is my purpose?

It is not always important for everyone to know everything about you. Knowing what outcome you want from disclosing to anyone can determine who you disclose to and what you tell them. What you tell your housemates about your troubles with early morning starts might be quite different to the information you disclose to a lecturer when asking for an extension.

Who am I telling?

Some people disclose openly and liberally, for others it’s on a need to know basis. It is possible that friends, family and house-mates may suspect that something is ‘not quite right’ and have been waiting for you to say something. Ethics of confidentiality can provide you with some protection. Registering with the Disability Liaison Unit can ensure that the exact nature of your issues is kept confidential, yet you are still able to receive appropriate accommodations. They will however, require documented evidence as to the nature of your mental health condition.

What am I telling?

Mental health issues affect people in many different ways and describing your symptoms may assist in providing greater insight to the kinds of supports that you need. For some people such as disability services, documentation outlining your diagnosis is important, but ultimately they will be more interested in how your

mental illness impacts on your ability to study.

To let your housemates know what is going on? Get special consideration or an extension?

You may prefer to not use diagnoses but rather to describe how mental illness affects you and in what ways it manifests. It may be possible to apply for Special Consideration or for an extension, while maintaining confidentiality, with an appropriately worded letter from the Counselling or Health Service.

Will this person tell anyone?

If you are worried about other people knowing, it can be important to be selective in whom you tell. There are strict guidelines about confidentiality in the university. However friends are not always so discrete.

In a University environment confidentiality is taken very seriously. University staff should tell you if they are planning to tell anyone else about your mental health issues and why. For example, your campus Disability Liaison Unit or service may inform your faculty that you are registered with them to ensure that you are eligible for Alternative Exam Arrangements. However confidentiality cannot be assured where it is believed that you are at risk of harming yourself or others, or if there is a legitimate concern for your wellbeing.

Should I tell my friends I'm not coping?

It's quite likely that your friends are aware that there is some kind of problem. Have a think about how you'd like them to support you. You may like to explain what some of the symptoms you experience are like, what effect they have on you and what your friends can do to help. If they are good friends, they'll stick around.

Creating a personal action plan

When you have mental health issues, one of the best things you can do to maximise your ability to study is to consider what kinds of supports you can put in place for when you are unwell or your symptoms become unmanageable. Educating yourself about your symptoms will help you gain greater insight into the mental health issues you experience and over time you will be more able to manage your studies. One option is to create an action plan that you can refer to when you are starting to feel unwell. You may wish to work on this with a friend, counsellor or family member.

My Action Plan

When I am feeling well I am:

In good spirits, calm, sociable

Some of my triggers for getting unwell are:

Stress, exam periods, working over time, drinking too much

When I am starting to get unwell the following happens:

Always feeling tired, sleep too much or too little, forgetting or losing things, can't get out of bed in the morning, feel negative about everything, becoming withdrawn from people

What I need when I am experiencing these symptoms:

Contact my doctor, arrange a friend to stay with, spend extra time doing things that I enjoy, take some time off, get more rest. Try to have one or two trusted friends who know it is OK to tell you when you're unwell.

What I don't want when I am experiencing symptoms:

Added stress—from work, family, study

People I may need to talk to when experiencing difficulty

Doctor: telephone no

Counsellor: telephone no:

Disability Liaison Unit: telephone no

Friend telephone no

Things I need others to do for me:

Arrange to get notes from missed lectures, return my library books, remind me of doctor's appointments, and make me dinner

Who I would like to do them:

Friend, housemate, partner etc.

What I don't want from people when I am experiencing symptoms:

*Talking about me to others without my permission,
Having drugs and alcohol in the house*

Things that have helped in the past when I am experiencing symptoms:

Counselling, getting extensions on assignments, working on assignments in small amounts, checking in with a friend every day.

Things I can do in the here and now to make myself feel better:

Cook up a big pot of vegetable soup, make an appointment with my counsellor, read a trashy novel, take Vitamin B

Will I still be able to study?

Mental health conditions affect study in many different ways and at varying intensities, depending on how you are feeling.

Some of the ways these conditions can impact upon study include:

- Poor concentration when studying or during class
- Difficulty maintaining motivation
- Episodes of low confidence
- Poor memory
- Anxiety about exams
- Missing out on classes (or difficulties getting to morning classes)
- Difficulty making your needs understood
- Feeling unsafe or uncomfortable on campus
- Problems relating to other students or staff
- Difficulties getting (and staying) organised
- Feeling stressed
- Difficulties meeting deadlines

It is helpful to think about what aspects of study you find most difficult when you are unwell, and then develop specific strategies to manage them. Talking to a learning skills or study skills adviser is a good option for mapping out specific strategies to deal with your particular symptoms. However, many students find that when their symptoms are particularly bad and their concentration levels are very low, it can be extremely difficult to get work done.

" ...When I am ill I have trouble concentrating. This is further exacerbated by the medication I am on, which affects both study and understanding."

When you're not coping

When you are really unwell and experiencing symptoms to the extent that they impact on your ability to study to a substantial degree, you may find you need to make some decisions about your time at uni and the likelihood of academic success in the short term. You may find that you need to spend more time getting support in managing your symptoms, exploring medication options, or treatment such as hospitalisation. This does not mean that you will never be able to study again in the future or that your symptoms will always require such high maintenance. Take some time out to consider strategies that will assist you to increase periods of wellness and improve your time at uni. It can be really hard to admit that things have become too much to handle.

"...Your health is more important than passing subjects."

What to do if things are overwhelming

- Make an appointment with a doctor or counsellor
- Slow down – think about what is overwhelming you
- Make a plan
- Talk with someone about how to tackle the problem
- Try to break the problem down into “doable” things
- Take some time out. Going to stay with a friend or family can give you a breather from uni for a few days
- Think about what things you need to do, to be well. For example, sticking to medication, getting enough sleep
- Try not to have too many demands placed on you. It can be hard to make decisions when you are feeling unwell
- Think back to what has helped you in the past when you have felt unwell
- Be kind to yourself/ distract yourself if you are waiting for an appointment time to come around. Go get a massage, buy a new CD, soak in a bubble bath, get a friend to stay with you until you have to leave, watch a video, talk to friends on the phone.

Some practical solutions for when things get tough

Leave of absence

When things are getting completely overwhelming, one option is to take leave of absence. This means you take time out from your course but usually keep your place, with the option of returning at a later date. This period of leave is often limited to a maximum of one year. Usually leave of absence is granted for a semester but it is also possible to negotiate shorter periods of leave with your faculty, eg one month. However, it may not be possible to catch up with a month of missed classes, especially prac sessions. To apply for leave of absence, you need to fill in a special form, obtainable at your faculty office.

Some of the reasons people take leave of absence:

- Acute illness and/or hospitalisation
- Time away from study to get appropriate medical support and medication
- When you are so far behind that catching up would make you even worse.

If you are receiving Austudy, Youth Allowance or other payments you should notify Centrelink of any changes to your enrolment. If you take leave of absence, or reduce your workload after the HECS census dates (March 31 and 31st August), you will have to pay the HECS, unless you qualify for a remission of your HECS debt. If there are circumstances beyond your control (such as a documented mental health condition) that force you to withdraw from subjects or take leave of absence, remission of HECS debt may be granted.

If you are paying fees, it's important to contact your faculty office to discuss how leave of absence will affect your fees.

" ...Having time off was really useful. I worked out my medication, saw my psychiatrist once a week and gradually regained my confidence through doing volunteer work."

You can take leave any time of the year, although, in some courses, leave of absence would not normally be granted in the first six months of your enrolment. If you decide not to enrol in your course immediately, explore whether you can defer your offer. In some instances you may have to reject the offer or withdraw from your course and reapply when you are ready to undertake the degree or diploma. However, there is usually no *guarantee* that you will be offered a place in the course again, at a later date.

Returning from Leave

If you decide to take leave of absence, it is a good idea to talk to someone about your plans whilst on leave, to ensure that you can maximise the time to work on your health. You also need to consider factors such as housing arrangements (particularly if you are currently in college) and what forms of financial support you are eligible for. When you feel ready to return to uni, be prepared for a bit of a culture shock. You may wish to reflect on what strategies you can put into place to ensure that you are able to get back into the routine of study (perhaps seeing a course adviser, learning skills adviser or only taking on a part time load). Make an appointment with your Disability service on campus, to discuss your needs and learn about the services and support available.

Withdrawing from a subject and/or studying part time

Reducing your workload to part-time by withdrawing from a subject or two may be possible within your faculty. This can then give you time to deal with things. If you wish to withdraw from a subject after the first two weeks of the year, you should seek faculty approval and you will receive a 'WD' (Withdrawn) result. There is also a final census date to withdraw, after which withdrawal (or failure to complete assessment) is likely to result in a 'Fail'. There can be time limits in which you have to complete your course so be careful to seek advice about these limits. Austudy, HECS and fees can be affected, so you will also need to speak with the relevant people about these issues.

There's help out there

When your mental health is making study difficult, you can ask for accommodations to make your student life easier. Accommodations include extensions, special consideration and alternative exam arrangements. For these to be put in place, you'll need to be in touch with at least one of the following people in your uni: the Disability Liaison Officer, the Counselling Service, the Health Service, your Faculty Office, your lecturer or a person from your department.

Important point:

Make contact with your Disability Liaison Office for advice on what support is possible for you.

Extensions

You may sometimes find it hard to complete work by a due date, particularly if you have been experiencing symptoms or been struggling with medication. You may have been spending a lot of time in counselling or trying to find appropriate support. You may have been in hospital for a period of time. Your mental health could have meant that you struggle to attend lectures and tutes, your concentration is poor and your ability to read or study is limited. Sometimes you may find that you are simply literally unable to complete pieces of assessment by the due date.

There are a number of ways that an extension can be obtained, such as by talking to your lecturer, tutor or Faculty Office, or writing a written submission. Typically they will want to know:

- Why you want the extension,
- If you have any evidence to support your claim (a medical certificate if appropriate)
- How much time you need.

Keep in mind that the longer the extension, the longer you have to procrastinate or stress about the work you have yet to do, so try and aim for a realistic length of time. It will help if you have at least picked your assignment topic or question. Also, overly long extensions can often mean that you have no real mid semester or end of semester breaks due to unfinished work hanging over your head.

If you have been given an extension but are still unable to complete the work by the due date, it would be useful, when seeking another extension, to meet with your lecturer or tutor to show them where you are up to in your assessment and how much you have to finish.

Special Consideration

Special Consideration exists to ensure that you are not disadvantaged by circumstances beyond your control. Your studies may have been affected by mental health symptoms or consequences of mental health issues (examples include: adverse side effects of medication, financial problems due to problems maintaining employment, housing problems caused by stigma etc). Personal problems such as family difficulties or relationship breakdowns are also valid reasons to apply for Special Consideration.

To qualify for Special Consideration you need to have been affected substantially in your ability to complete all or part of a component of assessment (such as an essay or exam or other piece of assessment). However, applying for Special Consideration because you have not attended a lecture all semester, or done any of the reading, will not be looked upon with any sympathy! Written documentation from a counsellor, doctor or health professional will help substantiate your claim and will generally be required.

You can apply for Special Consideration any time during the semester, but the earlier the better. It's useful to let your lecturers and tutors know that you have applied for Special Consideration. Your application may result in one of three things, depending on your faculty. You may be able to complete extra work, such as a supplementary exam, your mark may be raised, or no action may be taken, if your claim is not considered significant. Some universities may offer on-going Special Consideration, but in most cases you would need to apply each semester you required the consideration.

Alternative Exam Arrangements

Alternative exam arrangements are available in some instances, to ensure that your ability to undertake an exam is not unfairly hampered by mental health issues you may be experiencing. Exams can be a particularly stressful time, which may exacerbate symptoms, and you may experience stress and anxiety in excess of that felt by students without mental health issues. You may find being in a crowded exam hall extremely stressful, or your ability to concentrate may mean that extra

time is the only way you can complete all of an exam. Some of the accommodations Alternative Exam Arrangements may provide include:

- Smaller examination room with a supervisor (An examiner should still be available at the commencement of your exam to clarify examination instructions)
- Extra reading time
- Extra writing time
- Specific rest breaks during examination
- Answers dictated to a scribe provided by the department

The extent and severity of mental health symptoms can vary throughout the semester. Because of this, if you wish to have alternative exam arrangements, you may need to apply before each exam period.

I feel like I'm the only one....

When you are unwell you may have a lot of time off. You may have initially made friends at the start of the year and find that they already have an established social group. A leave of absence may mean that everyone you knew from classes has graduated. If there is one thing you can be sure of, it is that there are many students who feel isolated for any number of reasons, such as cultural differences, not drinking alcohol or coming from a rural area.

“When I am ill, I feel very self-conscious on campus and feel like retreating. I find myself withdrawing from friends, which is why I am glad I told most of them about my illness and they are sensitive to my troubles.”

Strategies to combat isolation

Also check out the ideas in the section *‘Maintaining a well lifestyle’*.

- Think about what you like to do. If you have a particular hobby, try to go to places where you’ll meet other people with the same interests. Short courses are also a really good way to meet other people who like drawing, belly dancing or whatever

- Many faculties have regular social events – balls, barbecues, and camps. These are all a good way to meet people in your course
- Many students prefer to cultivate a social life outside campus, especially if they are part-time and only studying one or two subjects
- Volunteer work is also a great way to meet people
- Virtual friends – email can be a great way to meet others experiencing similar situations to you
- In lectures and tutes sit next to people you know, or the same people each week – this way you will soon know them
- Go to any coffee or drinks organised after tutes. It’s a good way to meet others – it’s common to not really get to know anyone until after the subject is over
- Find a quiet space on campus for when you are feeling unwell or unsafe, need a sleep or to be alone.

Academic rights

Experiencing mental health issues can mean that you may not always be in control of how you are feeling or the symptoms you have. However, you can make choices about how you can best manage your symptoms and what support you need at university to enable you to study. Many students are hesitant about asking for what they need, for fear that they may not be believed, or be seen as having an unfair advantage over students without mental health conditions. However, negotiating with the university can ensure that you are able to study to the best of your ability and receive the support you are entitled to. Other people may not be aware that you have mental health issues, and your needs may not be as apparent as for a student with a physical disability. It is often your responsibility to be able to articulate what your needs are, to ensure that they are met. However, you don’t have to do this alone. Talk to the Student Rights or Welfare Officers in your Student Union or staff at the Disability service on your campus for specific strategies, support and representation. These staff are trained and experienced. It is part of their role to facilitate you to access the support you need to maximise your study.

Discrimination and your rights

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) is a Federal Act passed in 1992. It provides protection for everyone in Australia against discrimination based on disability (including mental illness). All universities now have specific policies and practices for dealing with discrimination.

Disability discrimination happens when people with a disability are treated less favourably than people without a disability. Disability discrimination also occurs when people are treated less fairly because they are relatives, friends, carers, co-workers or associates of a person with a disability. If you want more information about discrimination, contact your Disability Liaison Office, Anti-discriminator Adviser or Student Rights Officer.

Financial advice?

Financial hardship can add to your stress. It may also mean that you are not eating properly or are unable to afford the medical treatment you need. Don't just suffer – talk to the financial advisers at your student services centre. They can talk to you about Austudy and in some circumstances they can arrange short-term loans (Austudy normally requires that you study full time but there are some exceptions relating to disability).

Some other options are:

- Gaining a dispensation to study part-time, on the grounds of disability
- Changing to Newstart (you will need to be actively looking for work)
- Changing to a Sickness Allowance – you will need suitable documentation from a psychiatrist or health professional.

Bear in mind that changing to a new benefit may result in a delay of payment or a change in the amount you receive.

“I’m really worried about... (insert name)”

It can be challenging and painful when someone you care about is not well. As a friend, partner or housemate you are in a position where you can notice changes of behaviour over time. You may be unsure of how to help or what you can do. Some tips:

- Talk to the person about how you are feeling. Be specific. Discuss what your concerns are (“I notice you are crying a lot and sleeping”)
- Learn about what kinds of supports are available for the symptoms they are experiencing. Help them explore options that will get them the help they need (the Useful Resources section at the back of this booklet has some ideas)
- Spend time with the person when they are in need of support. However there may be times when someone wants to remain silent and alone for a while. This is not necessarily a bad thing
- Respect the person’s right to make his or her own choices. Encourage them to think about what they would like you to do if they are unable to make decisions for themselves
- Take time out for yourself. There are a number of organisations, which support the friends, partners and families of people with mental health issues
- It’s okay to set boundaries, eg. “I know you are upset, but it is not okay for you to yell at me and slam doors”. You have rights too!
- Remember that mental health issues form only one aspect of the person. With treatment, support and choices that aim to empower the person to take responsibility for their mental health, they are likely to improve
- Don’t feel that you have to ‘fix it’ yourself. Having a friend with a mental illness can be very scary. It is often hard to know what you can do to help, while still respecting the independence of a person who may be unwell. Sometimes a person who appears to be behaving in a self-destructive/other people-destructive way can vehemently deny there is anything wrong. How can you help without betraying them? What are the boundaries? This is where it may be useful for you to talk to a counsellor about your friend, without disclosing the friend’s identity.

Frequently asked questions

I'm feeling really stressed and I have all this work to do. Help?

Don't panic. Work out how much work you have to do, when it is due and whether you will be able to complete it realistically. Talk to your lecturers and tutors about extra help and if there's any possibility of an extension. Work out your priorities: you might be able to take some time off work, cut down on social activities and then get the work done. Draw up a timetable for yourself so that you can do the work in bits and pieces. Reward yourself each time you hand something in, with some chocolate, a coffee with a friend or a magazine. Talk to Learning Skills advisers about how to manage your time the next time assignments are due, so you don't have a huge build up of panic.

I hate to say it, but I've been here for a semester and I still haven't made any really good friends. It's starting to make me feel like a freak and I feel rather depressed. What can I do?

You're certainly not the only student in this situation. It takes time and effort to make sustainable friendships, especially if you are on a really big campus or surrounded by people who all knew each other at high school and you're the only one from your school. Think about what activities you enjoy doing. Seek out other students who enjoy the same activities. Maybe you could join a club. In class, if you do any small group work, invite your group out for coffee. Could you get a study partner to study with? In the meantime, keep doing things that you enjoy – movies, visiting galleries, whatever – even if you have to do them alone.

I'm really worried about a friend of mine. He drinks a lot and gets into these fits of rage. Afterwards he doesn't remember any of it. How can I handle this?

Could you talk to your friend about his behaviour when he is sober? Let him know why you are concerned. You could provide specific examples of his behaviour that worry you. Encourage him to see a counsellor on campus or in your student union. You could offer to go with him or meet him after the appointment. But make sure you are getting some support for yourself so that you don't have someone else's behaviour weighing on your shoulders.

I've been feeling really anxious and having trouble sleeping. It seems to be getting worse. Does this mean that I have a mental illness?

Not necessarily. Everyone feels anxious at times and especially around the exam period. Mental illness is an umbrella term covering a wide range of illnesses and symptoms. The symptoms can be mild and occasional such as stress around exam time, or long term. It can be helpful to talk to someone about specific strategies to make things easier and make study less stressful.

I've been diagnosed with a mental illness. Does this mean I'm going to have to leave uni? Will I have this for the rest of my life?

No. When treated appropriately and early, it is possible for many people to recover fully from most mental illnesses. Many students experience a range of mental health symptoms, from mild to severe. Some are chronic, while others are transient. For many students, having a mental illness is similar to having a physical illness which requires ongoing treatment, such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease, and the condition can be managed to enable them to study. Many people who suffer even major mental illnesses manage to live quite ordinary lives, studying or working while continuing to receive treatment or medication for their illness.

Can anyone develop a mental illness?

The causes of mental illness are unclear. A predisposition to some mental illness, such as schizophrenia, can run in families. Many other factors, such as stress, bereavement, relationship breakdown, child abuse, unemployment, social isolation, accidents and life threatening illness, can contribute to the onset of mental illness in people who have a predisposition.

One in five people in Australia will experience some degree of mental illness throughout their lives and many more will feel the impact (family, friends, partners). You usually can't spot a person with a mental illness. It could be the person sitting next to you on the tram, a friend, lecturer or even a family member.

I've heard that there's a new wonder drug and it can make people happier. Is that true?

Every now and then the media will tout a new medication as the new "wonder drug".

It is vital to understand that medication is carefully thought about before being prescribed. You, your environment, your experiences, all form a picture that is carefully considered when medication and dosage is recommended.

New developments in medication do not mean that a new drug is the best answer for you. Always speak with your doctor about your medication – if you hear about something new and you are interested, discuss this with your doctor.

Some useful resources

Community support services

This list is not intended to be exhaustive but is included to give you an idea of the kinds of services available. You may like to check your local phone book for services in your area. Inclusion in the list is not intended as an endorsement. Details were correct at time of printing.

General Advice and Support

SANE

Ph: 9682 5933

Freecall Helpline: 1800 688 382

Eating Disorders

Anorexia and Bulimia Nervosa Foundation of Victoria Inc

1513 High St Glen Iris, 3146.

(03) 9885 0318

Overeaters Anonymous

70 Punt Road, Windsor, 3181.

(03) 9521 3696

<http://www.overeatersanonymous.org>

Psychosis and Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia Fellowship of Victoria Inc (SFV)

223 McKean St, Fitzroy North 3068

(03) 9482 4189

Depression

Grow Victoria
29 Erasmus Street, Surrey Hills 3127.
(03) 9890 9846

Post and Ante Natal Depression Association Inc (Panda)
18 Balwyn Road, Camberwell 3124
(03) 9836 7677

OCD and Anxiety

Obsessive Compulsive and Anxiety Disorders Foundation of Victoria
600 Orrong Road, Armadale 3143
(03) 9576 2477

Panic and Anxiety Disorder Association (PADA)
Rear of 1423 Toorak Rd, Burwood, 3125
Ph: 9889 6760
<http://members.ozemail.com.au/~gent/pada.htm>

Addiction

Tranquillizer Recovery and New Existence Inc
Rear of 1423 Toorak Rd, Burwood 3125
(03) 9889 7355

Legal Assistance and Discrimination Advocacy

Mental Health Legal Centre
Level 4/520, Collins Street,
Melbourne VIC 3000.
(03) 9629 4422

Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria
Level 3, 380 Lonsdale St,
Melbourne VIC 3000.
Advice Line
(03) 9281 7100
1800 134 142 (Toll free)

Peak Bodies

Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council
23 Weston St, Brunswick 3056
(03) 9387 8317

Psychiatric Disability Services of Victoria (VICSERV) Inc.
370 St George's Road, North Fitzroy 3068
(03) 9482 7111
<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~vicserv>

Mental Health Foundation of Victoria
270 Church St, Richmond 3121
(03) 9427 0407

Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit
St Vincents Hospital
Level 2, Bolte Wing Nicholson St, Fitzroy, 3065.
(03) 9417 4300

Drug Information

Directline (for advice and referral)
Metropolitan Ph: 9416 1818
Toll Free: 1800 136 385

Support for Friends, Partners and Families

Association of the relatives and Friends of the Emotionally and Mentally Ill
Victoria Inc (ARAFEMI)
1091 Toorak Road, Camberwell 3124
(03) 9889 3733

Alternative Health

Melbourne College of Natural Medicine
Southern School of Natural Therapies

Virtual Support (the Internet)

The internet can be a great way of getting information about mental health issues, including symptoms, treatment options and resources. Chat rooms and email lists can be a good way to talk to others in similar situations.

Some useful sites

Sites specific to disorders and issues

Anorexia and Bulimia Foundation

<http://www.eatingdisorders.org.au>

Anxiety Disorders

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~adavic/>

Depression

<http://www.depressioNet.com.au/>

Bipolar disorders

http://www.bipolarbear.org/new_home.htm

<http://members.iinet.net.au/~fractal1/fhello.htm>

<http://www.thewindsofchange.org/>

Psychosis

Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centre (EPPIC)

<http://www.eppic.org.au>

Get on Top

<http://www.getontop.org>

Self Harm and Self Injury

<http://www.selfinjury.freemove.co.uk/copind.html>

Social Phobia

<http://www.socialphobia.org/> include email list

Schizophrenia

<http://www.sfv.org.au/>

Consumer Services

Aussie Consumer Newsletter

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~aussiecn/>

Mental Health Foundation

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~mhf>

Mental Health Legal Centre
<http://www.home.vicnet.net.au/~mhlc/>

Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council (VMIAC)
<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~vmiac/>

Sane Australia
<http://www.sane.org/>

Help for Carers, Partners, Family and Friends

Beacon of Hope
<http://www.lightship.org>

Carer's Association of Australia
<http://www.carers.asn.au/info-for-carers/fact-sheets/mental-illness.html>

BPD Central – Caring for someone with Borderline Personality Disorder
<http://www.bpdcentral.com/>

Alternative Resources:

The Student Counselling Virtual Pamphlet Collection
<http://counselling.uchicago.edu/vpc>

Alternative Mental Health On line
<http://www.alternativementalhealth.com/>

Government Services

Centrelink
<http://www.centrelink.gov.au/>

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
<http://www.hreoc.gov.au/>

Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria
<http://www.eoc.vic.gov.au/>

Victorian Mental Health Services
<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/acmh/mh/index.htm>

Mental Health Research Institute
<http://www.mhri.edu.au>

Some useful books:

Al Mahmood, R., McLean, P., Powell, E. and Ryan J. (1998) *Towards Success in Tertiary Study*. VicCPHESD. Melbourne.

Towards Success in Tertiary Study with psychiatric conditions

Towards Success in Tertiary Study with learning disabilities

Towards Success in Tertiary Study with Asperger's Syndrome

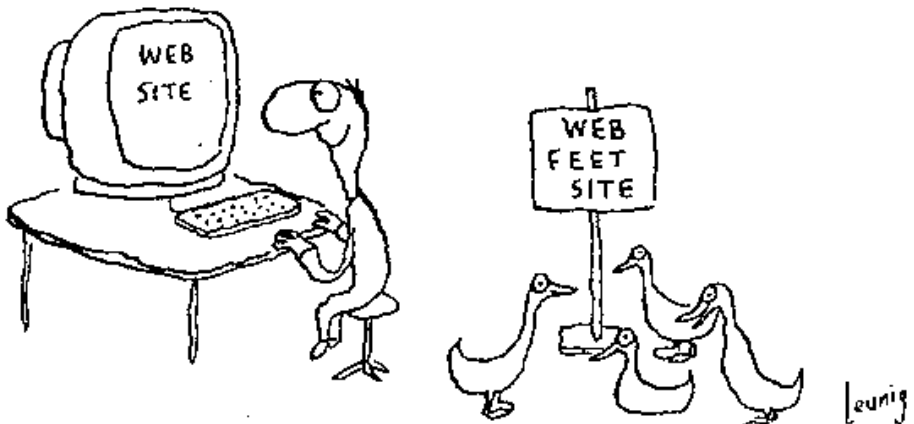
Towards Success in Tertiary Study: discover your learning style

The “Towards Success” series was developed building on the practical ideas of many students who've successfully studied with a mental health condition. The books are available from the University of Melbourne's Equity and Learning Programs Unit (03) 8344 0930 or email p.mclean@elp.unimelb.edu.au

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This Kit is based on a survey carried out Australia-wide and on the experiences of over 300 tertiary students. The book is available from NCVET through their website at: <http://www.ncvet.edu.au/ncvet.htm>.

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