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Student Life and Wellbeing

**Managing anxiety when returning
to the 'new normal'**



What is anxiety?

anxiety

noun, plural anx·i·e·ties.

1. distress or uneasiness of mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune: *He felt anxiety about the possible loss of his job.*
2. earnest but tense desire; eagerness: *He had a keen anxiety to succeed in his work.*
3. *Psychiatry.* a state of apprehension and psychic tension occurring in some forms of mental disorder.

What is anxiety?

While feeling anxious is a natural response, suffering from anxiety long-term can be very intense. Anxiety will affect individuals differently, however, there are common symptoms listed below:

Rapid and/or irregular heartbeat

Trouble sleeping

Feeling irritable

Lack of concentration

Panic attacks

Fast breathing

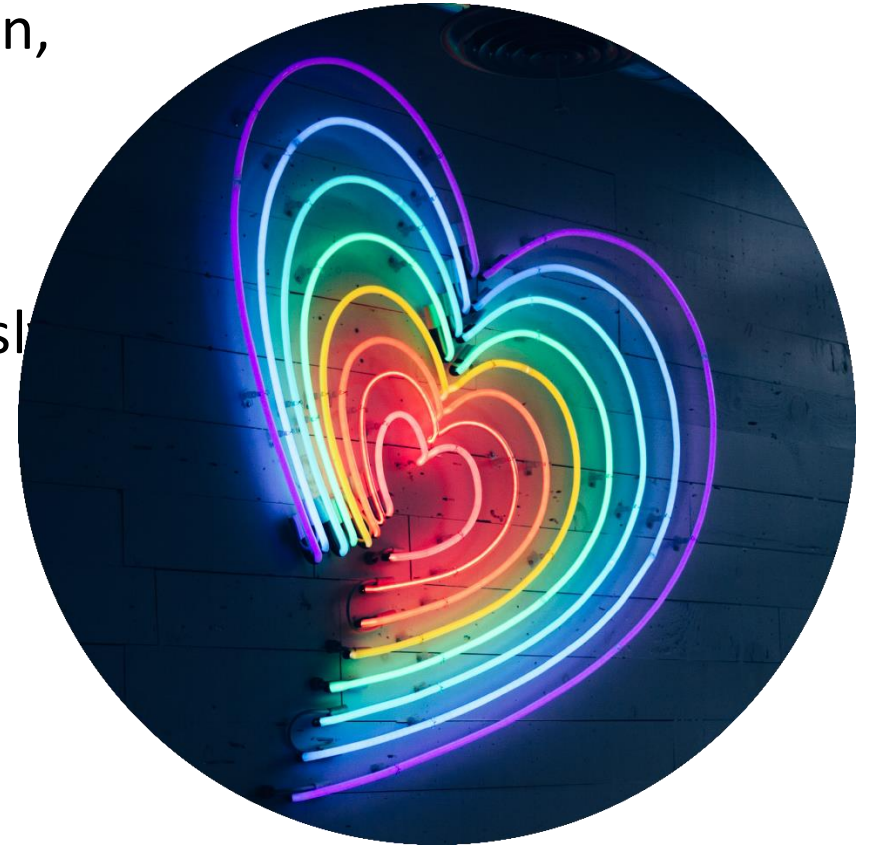
Nausea

Dizziness

Sweating

What is re-entry anxiety?

- Whilst many are eager to feel a sense of normality again, the prospect of a 'new normal' may bring some new anxieties.
- 'Re-entry anxiety' is a specific form of stress related to the fear of being unable to adapt to previously established routines. Lockdown created a safe bubble for many in their own homes, and the threat of bursting that bubble can make people feel nervous.
- We must remember that most of us has never lived through a pandemic in our lifetimes, and re-entry is inevitable, but it can be at your own pace.





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The importance of pacing

Pacing is important. Gradually build things up at a pace that suits you.

If we keep adding stressors to the bucket (even tiny ones, like the school run or commuting to work), over time it fills up until one day it overflows.

This can be a good way of looking at anxiety as it explains why sometimes anxiety can seem to come out of the blue, with no significant trigger.

(Anxiety UK)

The importance of pacing

Anxiety is like a bucket of water.

If we keep adding stressors to the bucket, over time it fills up.

Until, one day, it overflows.





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NHS Five Ways to Wellbeing

Evidence suggests there are five steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life.

- 1. Connect with other people**
- 2. Be physically active**
- 3. Learn new skills**
- 4. Give to others**
- 5. Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)**



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Connecting with people

**Good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing
They can:**

- **Help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth**
- **Give you an opportunity to share positive experiences**
- **Provide emotional support and allow you to support others**



Connecting with people

There are lots of things you could try to help build stronger and closer relationships:

- Make the most of technology to stay in touch with friends and family. Video-chat apps - Skype, Zoom and FaceTime - are useful, especially if you live far apart
- Take time each day to be with, or speak to your family and friends
- Try switching off the TV, to talk or play a game with children, friends or family
- Volunteer at a local school, hospital or community group. [Find out how to volunteer](#) on the GOV.UK website
- Search and download [online community apps](#) on the NHS apps library

**Remember social distancing doesn't mean we can't be social.
It just means we need to stay safe. It's important to adhere to the latest
guidance on social distancing when on campus and in the community.**



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Be physically active

Being active is not only great for your physical health and fitness. Evidence also shows it can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

- **Raising your self-esteem**
- **Helping you to set goals or challenges and achieve them**
- **Causing chemical changes in your brain which can help to positively change your mood**





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Be physically active

- **Find out more about getting active**
- **Find free activities to help you get fit**
- **If you have a disability or long-term health condition, find out about getting active with a disability**
- **Start running with couch to 5k podcasts**
- **Find out how to start swimming, cycling or dancing**
- **Find out about getting started with exercise**

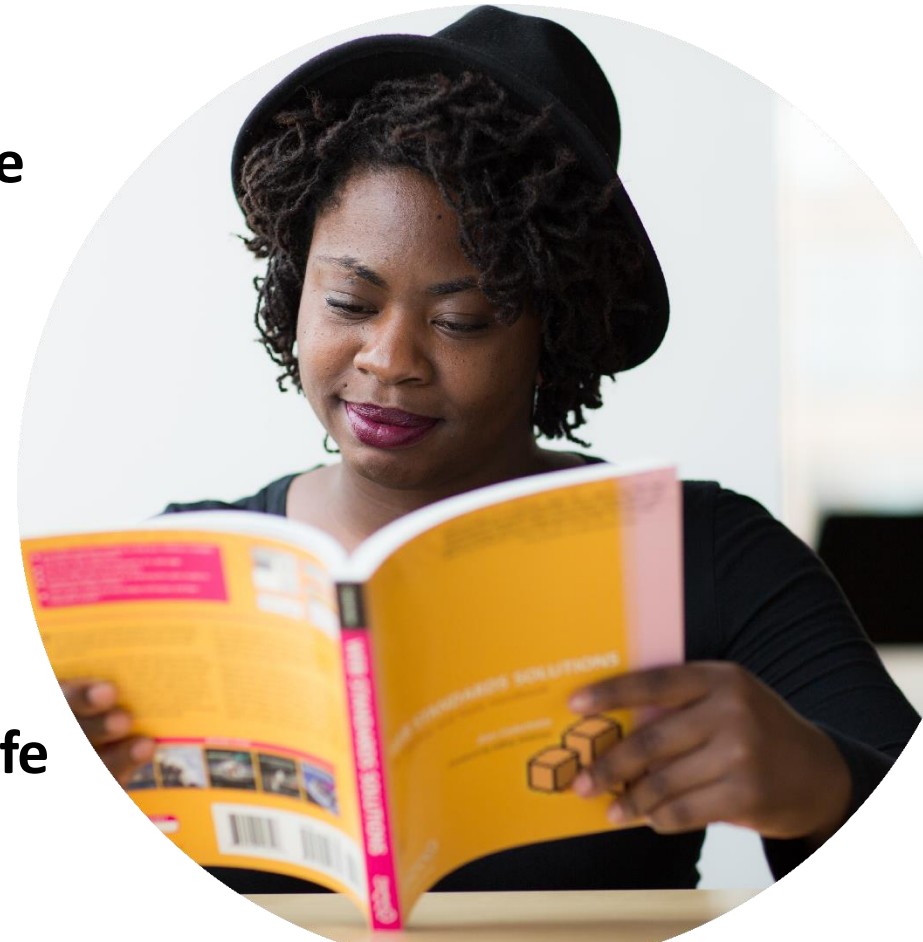


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Learn new skills

Research shows that learning new skills can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

- **Boosting self-confidence and self-esteem**
- **Helping you to build a sense of purpose**
- **Helping you to connect with others**
- **Even if you feel like you do not have enough time, or you may not need to learn new things, there are lots of different ways to bring learning into your life**





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Learn new skills

Some of the things you could try include:

- Try learning to cook something new. Find out about [healthy eating and cooking tips](#)
- Try taking on a new responsibility at work, such as mentoring a junior staff member or improving your presentation skills
- Work on a DIY project, such as fixing a broken bike, garden gate or something bigger. There are lots of free video tutorials online
- Consider signing up for a course at a local college. You could try learning a new language or a practical skill such as plumbing
- Try new hobbies that challenge you, such as writing a blog, taking up a new sport or learning to paint



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Give to others

Research suggests that acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by:

- **Creating positive feelings and a sense of reward**
- **Giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth**
- **Helping you connect with other people**
- **It could be small acts of kindness towards other people, or larger ones like volunteering in your local community**



Give to others

Some examples of the things you could try include:

- Saying thank you to someone for something they have done for you
- Asking friends, family or colleagues how they are and really listening to their answer
- Spending time with friends or relatives who need support or company
- Offering to help someone you know with DIY or a work project
- Volunteering in your community, such as helping at a school, hospital or care home



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Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)

Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing. This includes your thoughts, feelings, body and the world around you.

Some people call this awareness "mindfulness".





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Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)

- Mindfulness can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better. It can positively change the way you feel about your life and how you approach challenges.
- Read more about mindfulness, including steps you can take to be more mindful in your everyday life.
- Mindfulness resources – <http://franticworld.com/free-meditations-from-mindfulness/>



Counselling and Mental Health Team

If, during your time as a Northumbria student, you feel you might want some support with a personal, emotional or mental health issue, you can access support from our Counselling and Mental Health Support team.

Our service is available to all enrolled Northumbria students. You will need to sign into your student portal and complete our [online registration form](#) – it just takes a few minutes. If you have any queries please contact us at ask4help@northumbria.ac.uk.

Details of our workshops can be found [here](#). We also run a two week [Mindfulness Course](#).



[Visit our webpages for more information](#)



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For a general guide to our services, check out our video here:

