



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE

Your Student Wellbeing Toolkit



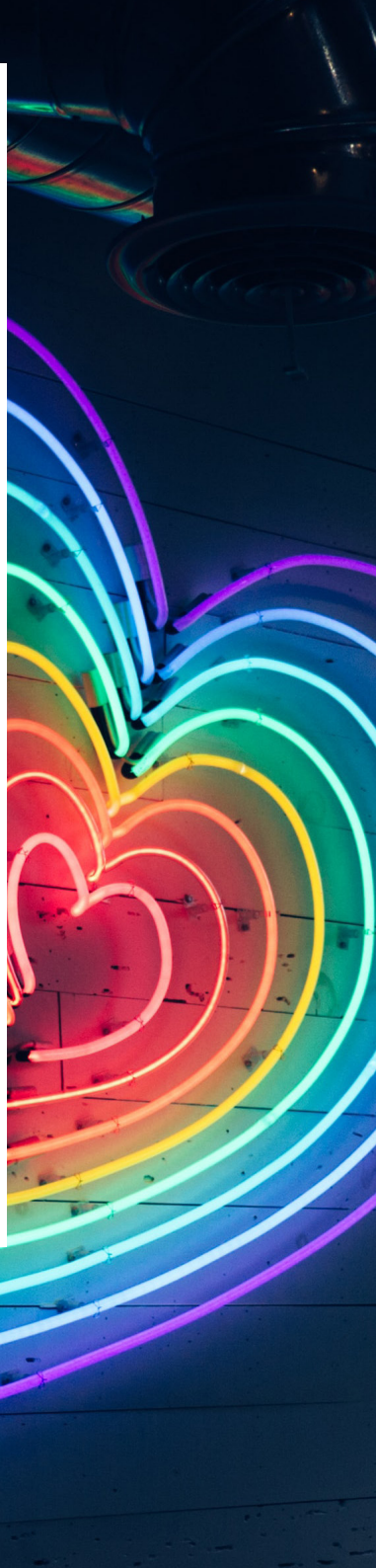
The Importance of looking after ourselves

Just like our physical health, mental wellbeing is something we all have and must look after. Particularly in university when things get a little bit more stressful, we may need some new ways to care for ourselves and our mental wellbeing.

This booklet is a little wellbeing toolkit full of useful strategies and coping skills to help you maintain positive wellbeing during your student life and beyond.

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Coping with adjustment – at university and in life

A lot has changed during the pandemic and throughout the past year itself, but that’s okay. However, sometimes it can leave you feeling slightly stressed or anxious.

What is ‘Re-entry anxiety’?

‘Re-entry anxiety’ is a specific form of stress which is related to the fear of being unable to adapt to previously established routines. But this doesn’t mean you can’t find ways to adapt to this new way of life and alleviate some of this stress.

There are some simple practices you can follow to help you manage adjusting to life after the pandemic/lockdowns:

1. **Focus on what’s in your control**
2. **Make a bucket list of the things you’re excited to do again**
3. **Accept whatever you’re feeling**
4. **Reintroduce activities slowly**
5. **Reach out for help if you need to.**



General (Mental) Wellbeing

What is Mental Wellbeing?

Mental wellbeing is about your thoughts and feelings and how you cope with the ups and downs of everyday life. Good mental wellbeing doesn't mean you're always happy but having poor mental wellbeing can make it more challenging to cope with everyday life.

There are a lot of different ways we can take care of our mental wellbeing.

- 1. Relax and lower your stress:** listen to soothing music, go for a walk to release tension, practice deep breathing, soak in a warm bath, practice mindful meditation, have a warm drink that does not contain alcohol or caffeine.
- 2. Learn new things and be creative:** try doing something creative such as playing an instrument/drawing/baking, join a class or a group to learn something new with other people, if you can't find something you like try joining an online class.
- 3. Spend time in nature:** look at nature outdoors, buy a plant for your room and watch it grow, if possible, spend time with animals, perhaps you can visit a cat café!
- 4. Be in contact with other people:** share your feelings with people you trust, schedule regular calls with friends and family.
- 5. Look after your body:** drink water, eat healthily, avoid the misuse of alcohol and drugs, take care of your personal hygiene, find a type of exercise you enjoy and try to do it every day.
- 6. Get enough sleep:** try to go to bed at the same time each night, avoid your computer and phone before bedtime, do something relaxing before bedtime.

It is important to remember that looking after our mental wellbeing can be difficult at times. It might be helpful to:

- Only try what feels comfortable
- Give yourself time to figure out what works best for you
- Go at your own pace and take small steps.

If you're struggling and feel that the following tips feel impossible, it's OK to ask for help.

See page 13 '**Help at Northumbria**' and page 14 '**Helpful Contacts**' to find help and support.



Preparing for Student Life

Becoming a student is an incredible opportunity for new experiences. Here are some ways you can make your student journey as smooth as possible:

Planning your healthcare

If at present you're receiving treatment for a mental health problem, starting university may result in changing GP and the support you receive may be slightly different. To minimise disruption, it could be useful to talk to your current GP or Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) about:

- Changing healthcare providers and the challenges it may bring to your treatment
- How medical notes will be transferred to ensure your new GP understands your medical needs
- Consider if any of the medications you are currently taking can affect your learning
- Consider writing a summary letter about your medical history to your new GP.

Managing finances

It is likely for students to experience financial problems at some point throughout their academic journey. It is important to consider how you will pay for essentials such as housing, food, fees, and course costs such as books and other equipment.

It might be handy to create a weekly or monthly budget plan to help you keep track of your finances. You can do this by using an app or a spreadsheet - many can be found online!

Managing your studies

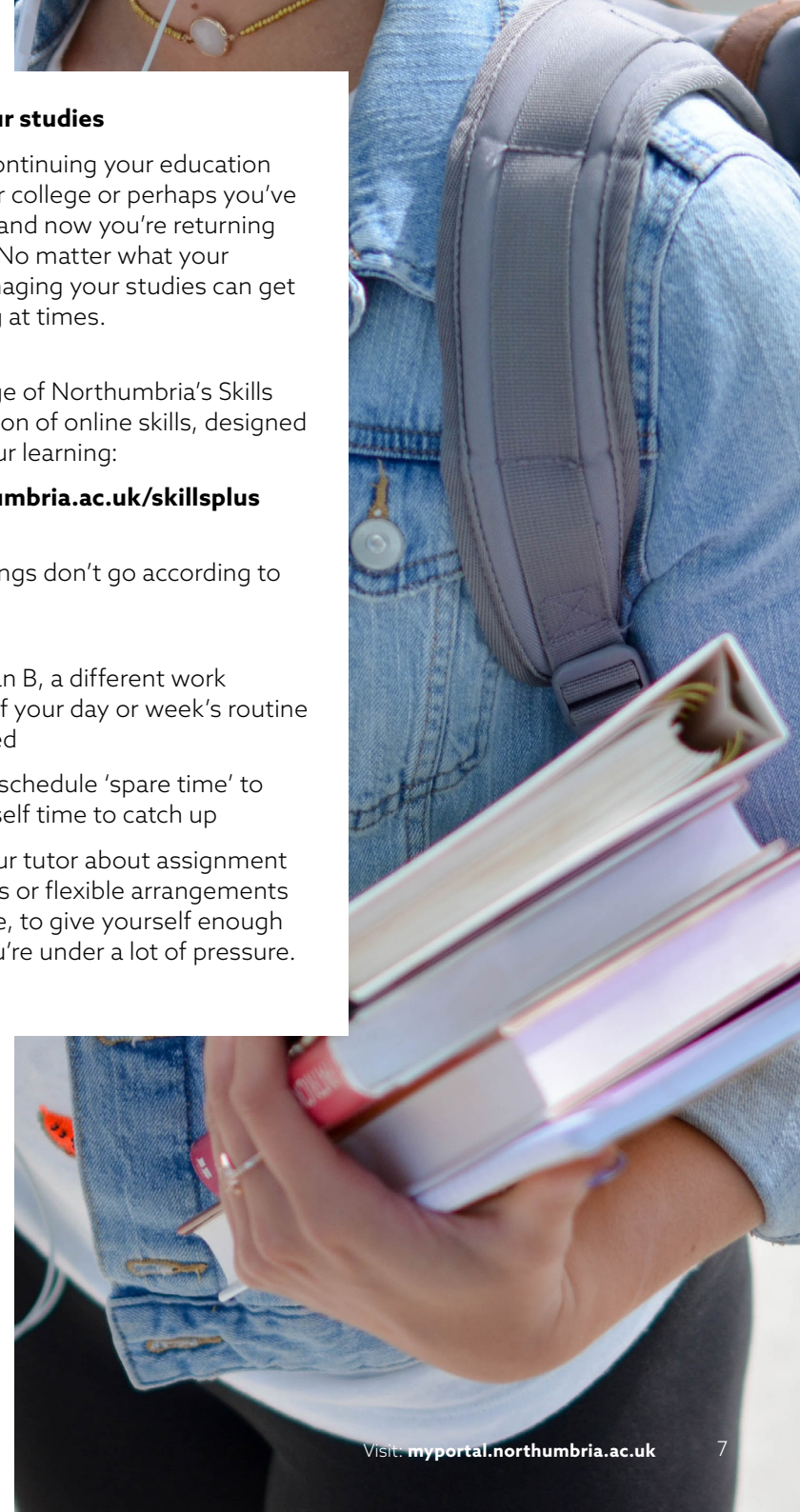
You may be continuing your education from school or college or perhaps you've taken a break and now you're returning to education. No matter what your situation, managing your studies can get overwhelming at times.

Take advantage of Northumbria's Skills Plus, a collection of online skills, designed to support your learning:

library.northumbria.ac.uk/skillsplus

But what if things don't go according to plan?

- Have a plan B, a different work schedule if your day or week's routine is disrupted
- Regularly schedule 'spare time' to give yourself time to catch up
- Talk to your tutor about assignment extensions or flexible arrangements in advance, to give yourself enough time if you're under a lot of pressure.



Student Stress and Anxiety

During this time of becoming a student and dealing with all the changes this brings, the likelihood is that you will face some challenges associated with student life. These challenges may also induce feelings of stress and anxiety. This is okay, this is normal. Stress can sometimes help to motivate us to achieve our goals.

Some of the challenges you may come across include:

- Balance between studying, deadlines, work and social life
- Managing money and budgeting
- Meeting new friends
- Leaving home and being independent for possibly the first time
- Homesickness.

However, too much stress can be bad or unhelpful for us. Think of stress as a bucket. If we keep adding stressors to the bucket, over time it will fill up and eventually overflow. This is why it is important we pay particular attention to our wellbeing during these stressful periods. Spotting the signs and causes of our stress can help manage it. So, what are the signs?

SIGNS OF STRESS

There are many physical, behavioural and emotional signs you may display when experiencing stress. Stress may leave you:

Emotionally

- Feeling anxious, nervous or depressed
- Losing interest in activities and life
- Feeling like you can't switch off
- Feeling more irritable or impatient.

Physically

- Experiencing panic attacks
- Having headaches
- Having trouble with sleep, such as getting to sleep or staying asleep
- Feelings of exhaustion or tiredness.

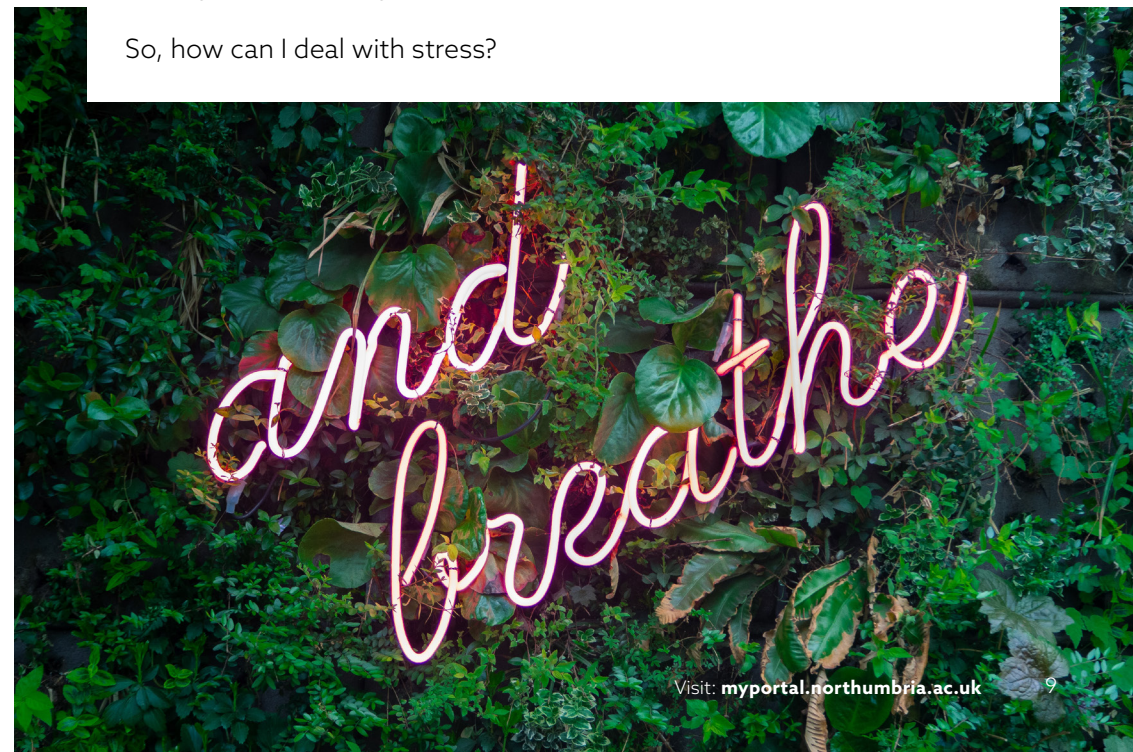
Behaviourally

- Having trouble making decisions
- Unable to concentrate
- Changes to diet, such as eating more or less than before
- Feeling restless or fidgeting a lot.

You may have noticed a lot of these things in the past in yourself or others and not realised you were stressed.

Knowing how you are impacted by stress can help you manage these feelings in the future.

So, how can I deal with stress?



TIPS FOR MANAGING STRESS

Identify and address

Work out what may be causing you stress so you can prepare for these in future. These may be regular events, ongoing events or major one off events.

When you have identified these events or triggers, you can attempt to address some of them in practical ways.

Organisation

Organising and arranging your time effectively can help you handle pressure, particularly when you have tight deadlines, exams or a lot of tasks to do.

A few ways in which you can organise your time are:

- **Making lists** of all tasks and ordering them in terms of importance or urgency. You can then create timetables to divide your time.
- **Setting SMART goals** which divides tasks up into smaller achievable goals to make you feel more in control.
- **Asking for help** from friends, family members or flatmates who can help with your daily tasks.

Acceptance

Accept there may be some things we may not be able to control or change. By acknowledging there are things you may not be able to do anything about, you can help focus your attention onto other tasks which you can complete.

Anxiety

Stress is also closely linked to mental health and can both be the cause and be caused by mental health problems. One of these mental health problems associated with stress is anxiety.

Anxiety is feelings of worry, nervousness or fear especially for future events or what we think may happen in the future. Much like stress, anxiety can actually be helpful in some instances as it is the body's natural threat response, otherwise known as fight or flight.

TIPS FOR MANAGING ANXIETY

Self-care can be very important when managing anxiety, as it can be difficult to live with sometimes. Here are some tips to look after yourself and your wellbeing during anxious periods.

Looking after yourself physically

Make sure you are maintaining a good diet and getting enough sleep at night to help with your energy levels and mood. Physical activity can also be a really effective way of improving your mental wellbeing, so why not try out a new sport or spend some time outdoors?

Keep a diary

Making a note of your mood and what may impact it can help you spot signs and triggers of anxiety. Outlining a time where you can also focus on what may be worrying you and writing this down can help to address what is making you anxious.

MINDFULNESS

Paying attention to the present moment

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”. Mindfulness can help you understand yourself a bit better and enjoy life more. It can positively change the way you feel about your life and how you approach challenges. This can be done through breathing exercises, using imagery, touch or sounds.

Why not try a few and see which works best for you. Check out our helpful resources page for helpful apps, podcasts and guided meditation to practice mindfulness.

Help at Northumbria

Student Assistance Programme: for emotional support and practical guidance from qualified counsellors and advisors call **Health Assured** on **0800 028 3766** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

The Student Assistance Programme also gives you access to the **My Healthy Advantage** smartphone app. Through My Healthy Advantage, you will have access to a range of features, all aimed at improving your health and wellbeing. These include:

- Live chat and support
- Personalised news feed
- Weekly mood tracker
- Four-week plans
- Mini health checks
- Breathing techniques.

Available for iOS and Android devices, you can access My Healthy Advantage with the following login credentials:

Unique code: **MHA179036**

If, during your time as a student here, you feel you might want or need some support with a personal, emotional or mental health issue, you can access support from our **Counselling and Mental Health Service**. Our service is available to all enrolled Northumbria students who are residents in the UK. To access support please complete our short online registration form by logging on to your **Student Portal** at **myportal.northumbria.ac.uk** and searching for ‘**Counselling and Mental Health Registration Form**’.

Helpful Contacts

- **ASK4HELP:** for all general Student Life enquiries.
Phone: 0191 2274646
- **KOOTH:** online mental wellbeing community, includes chat with the team, discussion boards and helpful articles.
Online: kooth.com
- **SHOUT:** text help by trained volunteers for people in crisis.
Text: 85258
- **ANXIETY UK:** offers a helpline and instant messaging/live chat service with other helpful information and resources.
Phone: 03444 775 774, Text Support: 07537 416 905
- **STUDENT MINDS:** In collaboration with The Mix, web chat, phone and email support for students.
Phone: 0808 189 5260, email: students@themix.org.uk
- **SAMARITANS:** 24 hour a day phone support.
Phone: 116 123

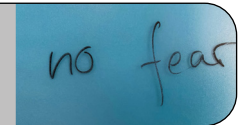
My Wellbeing Plan

This page is your own personalised wellbeing plan. The purpose of this is to build your awareness of possible stressors within your life, and helpful ways to approach these.

THINGS THAT MAKE ME HAPPY:



IN A CRISIS I NEED TO:



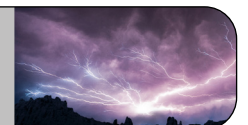
THINGS I SHOULD TAKE NOTICE OF:



THINGS I CAN DO TO KEEP ME ACTIVE:



THINGS TO AVOID/OR THAT STRESS ME OUT:



THINGS I CAN LEARN:



THINGS THAT CALM AND SOOTHE ME:



PEOPLE I CAN CONNECT WITH:





Helpful Resources

Online Self-Help Materials

Programmes designed to help you improve and maintain your wellbeing:

- **SilverCloud:** northumbriauniversity.silvercloudhealth.com/signup

Need to Relax and Unwind?

Try these Youtube Meditation channels:

- **Goodful Channel**
- **The Honest Guys Meditations**
- **Great Meditation**

Useful Apps:

General Wellbeing:

- **Happify**
- **Whats Up?**
- **CBT Thought Diary**

Meditation/Mindfulness:

- **Headspace**
- **Ten Percent Happier**
- **Calm**

Anxiety Management:

- **Clear Fear**
- **Mindshift**

Self Harm/Suicide Prevention:

- **Stay Alive**
- **Calm Harm**

Fancy a podcast? Try these:

- **The Happiness Lab**
- **The Well Mind Podcast**
- **Conversations about Student Mental Health**
- **Students of Mind**
- **Shine a Light On**
- **Not Perfect**
- **The MIND Mental Health Podcast**

Contact Us

Please enquire via the 'help and support' section of your Student Portal: myportal.northumbria.ac.uk

northumbria.ac.uk/slw