

WELLBEING DEFINED

What is wellbeing?

“Mental health and wellbeing is not just the absence of mental disorder. It is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

- World Health Organization -

Why does wellbeing matter?

Research shows a clear link between physical and mental wellbeing and academic performance and achievement and a range of improved health outcomes.

Resource

This resource was developed as part of the 'Gender and Mental Health in STEM' Student Shapers Project.

Who is it for?

This resource is for students and staff to encourage conversations around wellbeing in personal tutorial sessions.

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STUDENT WELLBEING

A guide to encouraging open conversations about wellbeing.



What is Stress?

Situations or events that put too much pressure on us and our perceived ability to cope with the pressure of what we have to do or think about doing.

Stress can be a reaction when we think we don't have much control over what happens.

TYPES OF STRESS

ACUTE (Short term)

- Most common body's reaction to a new demand, triggers fight or flight via the sympathetic nervous system.
- Short term stress is not always negative, it can give us a boost for an exam or job interview.

EPISODIC ACUTE STRESS

- Occurs when acute stress happens often.
- Negative impact on health and perceive stress as part of daily life.

CHRONIC STRESS

- Constant stress from unresolved acute stress, long-term stress can be damaging to health and contributes to disease.

Blood vessels constrict-chills and sweating

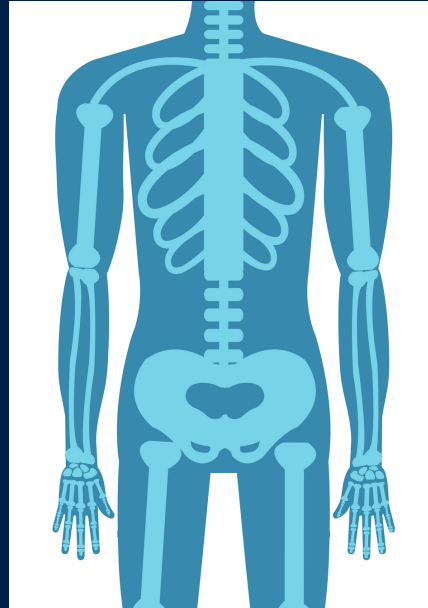
Pupils dilate

Heart beats faster

Quick deep breathing

Output of digestive enzymes decreases

Muscles become more tense



FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE

CAUSES OF STRESS

- high pressure
- excessive worrying
- lack of control
- overwhelming obligations or responsibilities
- lack of change and variation in life
- Many other causes
- Stress can affect everyone differently

BREATHING EXERCISES FOR STRESS/PANIC ATTACKS

- focus on what you can control,
- let go of what you cannot.
- 444 breathing technique
- Breathe in for 4 seconds
- hold breath for 4 seconds-
- Breath out for 4
- REPEAT

INTERVENTIONS

Counselling

Mindfulness

GP doctor medication

CBT and talking therapies

Check your daily stress levels

Exercise

Nutrition and rest

- Are you regularly talking and with family/friends?
- Doing things you enjoy?
- Rest and relaxation?
- Good time management and planning?
- Healthy diet and exercise?
- Maintaining boundaries?

3 COMMON CONCERNS TO LOOK OUT FOR

1. Fear of failure
2. Fear of being a burden
3. Fear of letting others down

THEY CAN IMPACT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH



Imposter Syndrome



Self-Doubt



Feel pressured to excel in my field

Focus on your own progress, do not compare to others

Failure is a learning process

Focus on how much you have achieved

Focus on your strengths

Look out for each other

LOOKING FOR SIGNS OF STRESS

There are signs to look out for stress and poor mental health or wellbeing in yourself and others, though these may not be present or obvious. Stress affects everyone differently.

Potential Triggers for stress

Pressure, big changes, worrying, lack of control over situation, overwhelming responsibilities, lack of activities or change in your life.

- Sleep problems.
- Mood changes.
- Not fully engaging in conversation.
- Low energy or tiredness.
- Being distracted easily.
- Loss of motivation.
- Indecisiveness, difficulty remembering things, concentration problems.
- Procrastination and avoidance.
- Socially withdrawing.
- Comfort eating or restricting.
- If you are suffering from the above or any emotional distress, please reach out to your GP or counselling service or wellbeing advisor.
- For any mention of harm to self or others- contact GP, or visit your nearest A&E.
- See final page for support numbers.

Some common myths busted



"Everyone will know if I access support"

False, it is fully confidential. The only exception is if there is concern for risk of harm to self or others. In this case staff may have to disclose to the Safeguarding officer or Senior Tutor, Health centre.

"Disclosing mental health issues will get me in trouble, or be marked on my transcript, I might be marked down"

False, it is confidential and does not get you in trouble or affect your grades.

"I don't believe mental health is an important topic for me to dedicate time to"

Mental wellbeing is really important to lead a healthy life. It can be hard to look after mental health because of the workload, but even exercising and sleeping 6-9 hours can lead to a huge improvement.

"Wellbeing support is only for people who are experiencing a mental health crisis. My situation is not bad enough"

Recovery is much easier when support is accessed at initial stages. There is no issue too small.

"I will be letting others down"

It takes courage to open up about difficult experiences. By accepting that you need help and reaching out, you are actually doing yourself and those who care about you a huge favour.

"Mental health support is only for girls"

Accessing mental health support does not make you less of a man and it is absolutely fine to show emotions because men, like women, are human too.

"I should be able to fix myself"

It is damaging to put so much pressure on yourself. Nobody is perfect and having a mental health difficulty does not mean something is 'wrong' with you. Having a difficult time with your mental health is completely normal and just like physical ailments, there is support available to help with mental health difficulties as well.

"Seeking support means I am weak, if you are strong enough you don't need support"

False, accessing support from anywhere that feels right for you is a sign that you are motivated, self-aware and empowered, if you access support and it does not feel right for you try alternative sources there are different kinds of support available and you can try different sources until you find what is right for you.

Breaking the stigma

Mental health has a stigma attached to it, which discourages individuals from seeking mental health support. In this section, we have attempted to break this stigma. To start with, consider the following scenario.

Joe began his degree with the idea that he must dedicate all his time to academic work. He believed that socialising and dedicating time to wellbeing was a waste of time. However, a few months into the degree, the strain of constantly working caught up to him. He was experiencing prolonged periods of low mood and had been isolating himself from his friends.



During a 1-1 personal tutorial, his tutor noticed the changes and politely enquired into it. They agreed on a plan to make some changes. He suggested that Joe contact support, e.g. counselling service, GP or wellbeing adviser. Joe also visited the student support zone for support and resources.



Understanding this, Joe changed his work habits to include more down-time, and took up an exercise routine and engaged in societies. A few months later, he went back to inform his PT that the lifestyle changes benefited him massively. He said that he is much more spirited and doesn't feel stretched too thin anymore.

Why should I reach out?

As can be seen from the scenario, reaching out resulted in a positive outcome for Joe, as he was able to get the help that he needed.

Bottling up emotions for too long can adversely impact both physical and mental health.

Reaching out and asking for help is undoubtedly not an easy task, however, taking that first step to ask for help has positively benefited the student.

Wellbeing Tips



6-9 hours
of sleep



150 mins of
moderate
exercise every
week



Quit
smoking



< 14 units of
alcohol a week



Healthy
eating



Stress
management



Stay
connected



Help
others



Keep track of
what works
for you

The NHS Live Well website :
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/>



Self-help Guides
<http://www.selfhelpguides.nrw.nhs.uk/imperial/>



- ✓ Healthy eating: eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day. Base meals on higher fibre starchy foods like potatoes, bread, rice or pasta; have some dairy or dairy alternatives; eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other protein; choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat them in small amounts; drink plenty of fluids (at least 6-8 glasses a day).

- ✓ Stress management is an important part to wellbeing. Stress management techniques include good work-life balance, practicing mindfulness, restorative exercises such as yoga, walking and pilates, listening to soothing podcasts, aromatherapy, etc.

- ✓ Find out what works for you and stick to it. (e.g. routine, gratitude, rest to increase productivity, etc.).

- ✓ Alcohol misuse is when you drink in a way that is harmful or when you are dependent on alcohol. To keep health risks from alcohol to a low level, both men and women are advised not to regularly drink more than 14 units a week.

- ✓ Most adults need between 6 and 9 hours of sleep every night. A warm bath will help your body reach a temperature that is ideal for rest. A sleep routine can be very helpful for those who struggle to fall asleep.

- ✓ Try to do at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity a week or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity a week. Try to be physically active every day.

- ✓ Quitting smoking not only improves physical health but scientific studies show stress levels are lower after quitting smoking. It also improves mood, relieves stress.

- ✓ Stay connected to others/ avoid isolating yourself - a quick 10 min catch up may be all that is required to lift your mood.

- ✓ Altruism- helping others is proven to instill a sense of wellbeing in you- many studies show that doing something for others promotes physiological changes in the brain linked with happiness.



Tips from the Student Shapers



We all run out of motivation sometimes but in such instances, remember why you started, think of where you want to be, and get going. Remember, life is full of ups and downs, so brave through the downs and celebrate the ups! Acknowledge achievements and how far you have come from this time last year.

It's good to take your mind off work so doing Horizons, joining a society or doing sport can help.

Arrange some time for what you love. This can be person you love, things you love to do or your pets. Giving time for what you love can be very healing.

Reward yourself for a task you have achieved or a work-period you have completed with something you like/enjoy doing. Keep these as incentives for completing a task/piece of work.

Be kind to yourself just as you are to your friends, Extend the same kindness to yourself as you would to a friend in the same situation. Be your biggest cheerleader, focus on your strengths and don't compare yourself to others. Know that you are unique.

If you ever feel low or even don't know what you feel, talk to someone about it- parent, sibling, friend, anyone. It will require some effort but it will really feel like a weight off your shoulders.

If you are someone who often procrastinates, like me, using a planner would be very helpful. Write out the to do list in detail and set the exact time for them everyday. By doing so, you will see that if you miss one action, your later plans will be ruined and hence you are less likely to miss any plan. Scheduling apps like Trello and using simple strategies like the Pomodoro technique, Eisenhower matrix or just setting small but achievable tasks for the day are also super helpful.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. There is a lot of support out there - take that first step by reaching out. If you want someone to talk to about mental health: student wellbeing adviser, senior tutor, student counselling and mental health service, union, MHFA, reps. In my experience these have been kind and understanding sources of support.

Put on some music and go for a walk in the evening or when the weather is better someday. Try to not think about study/work related things during this time and just briefly enjoy what both nature and your favourite artists have to offer.

Work-life balance is your best friend. Make sure you take care of yourself, even when your schedule is hectic. Sometimes you might feel that you don't have time for self-care and that you'd rather keep working but remember - you're only at your best when you take care of yourself. Prioritise preventive wellbeing- good sleep, diet and exercise.

DEPARTMENTAL CONTACTS

Student Wellbeing Adviser

Miss Amy Picton
a.picton@imperial.ac.uk

Senior Tutors

Dr. Siti Ros Shamsuddin (Years 1 and 2)

aero.seniortutor@imperial.ac.uk

Dr. Yongyung Hwang (Years 3 and 4)

aero.seniortutor@imperial.ac.uk

Student Reps

Check wellbeing webpage for your most recent wellbeing and academic departmental reps

Tutor for Women

Dr Zahra Sharif Khodaei
z.sharif-khodaei@imperial.ac.uk

Disability Officer

Dr. Siti Ros
s.shamsuddin07@imperial.ac.uk

Further Support

STUDENT SUPPORT ZONE

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/student-support-zone/>



AERONAUTICS WELLBEING PAGE

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/aeronautics/local/wellbeing/>



WELLBEING TEAMS PAGE

<https://bit.ly/3jkB2tQ>

AERONAUTICS CODE OF CONDUCT

<https://bit.ly/3jwuWGK>



MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/mental-health/mental-health-first-aid/>



GENDER-SPECIFIC CHARITIES

Calm

<https://www.thecalmzone.net/>

Women's Aid

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/>

NHS, Voluntary and Charity services

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/nhs-voluntary-charity-services/>

OUT OF HOURS SUPPORT

SAMARITANS

116 123 24 Hours 365 days
EMAIL: jo@samaritans.org



PAPYRUS AND SHOUT

0800 068 4141 9am -midnight

For people under 35 and those concerned for a young person
EMAIL: pat@papyrus-uk.org



Text SHOUT to 85258 for 24/7 support

NHS MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS SERVICE

0800 0234 650 Single Point of Access 365 days Central and West London.

EMAIL: cnw-tr.spa@nhs.net

Call 111 for nhs medical advice



IN AN EMERGENCY

999 or visit your nearest Accident and Emergency department

If on campus call security on 4444 from college phone to arrange a ambulance.

From external phone south Kensington:
020 7589 1000

if you are feeling very low speak to your GP

STUDENT MINDS AND STUDENT SPACE
0808 189 5260 BETWEEN 4PM AND 11PM.

WELLBEING RESOURCES AND
ADVICE FOR STUDENTS.

