



START TO SUCCESS

# TRANSITION HANDBOOK

*Supporting your transition  
into higher education*

Transitions 2021



start to  
**SUCCESS**





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# INTRODUCTION

This handbook has been written to provide you with a guide to help you to make a successful transition into university life, and navigate your way through your first year at university and beyond.

It contains a range of information relating to important steps to take before you start your course, how to look after your wellbeing as a student, and where to go for support if things get tough.

In addition to the common challenges that may be faced by all new students, it's really important to remember that you are starting university after experiencing a global pandemic, and depending on your circumstances. Depending on your circumstances you may feel your last few months have been different to expectations and we understand that whilst your transition into higher education may be different than in previous years, what's important is that the support you can access as a student remains the same and you can make this experience your own.

Good luck, and enjoy your transition to university!





# WHAT IS WELLBEING?

Wellbeing, simply put, is the state of being comfortable, happy and healthy. Having good mental wellbeing means that you are able to have a positive approach to day to day life, and manage the stresses that may occur. It is particularly important to look after your mental wellbeing in times of change and transition, such as starting university.

Starting university can be a time of excitement, but it can also bring with it a number of worries, anxieties or apprehensions. Don't worry though, as there are lots of steps that you can take to look after yourself and your own wellbeing. By making sure you always keep your mental health and wellbeing as an important priority, this can help you to avoid experiencing serious problems later down the line.

There are lots of different ways that you can improve your wellbeing. What works for one person might not work so well for you, so you may need to try out a few approaches to find out what works best for you. A good place to start is to follow the five steps to mental wellbeing.



# FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING

## Connect:

Good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing, so try to make sure you spend time with other people.

- Make time to talk to your friends face to face, rather than sending a message.
- Organise a group dinner within your halls.
- Arrange to walk to your class with your coursemates.

## Be Active:

Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups. There are lots of ways to start incorporating physical activity into your daily life while at university.

- Take the stairs rather than using the lifts in campus buildings.
- Join a sports team, whether it's competitive or just for fun.
- Try out some 'desk exercises' such as stretching while you're studying.



# FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING

## Take Notice:

Being aware of the present moment that you are in and how you are feeling can improve your mental wellbeing. This is sometimes referred to as mindfulness.

- Pay attention to your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you.
- Create a positive and clutter free environment for your desk or workspace.
- Make a note of how you feel in different situations.

## Give

Participating in activities which help others can improve your feelings of happiness and self-worth. Even small acts of kindness within your daily life can make a difference.

- Leave a positive note in a library book for the next person to read.
- Help a struggling classmate by organising a group revision session.
- Take part in a volunteering project with your Students' Union.

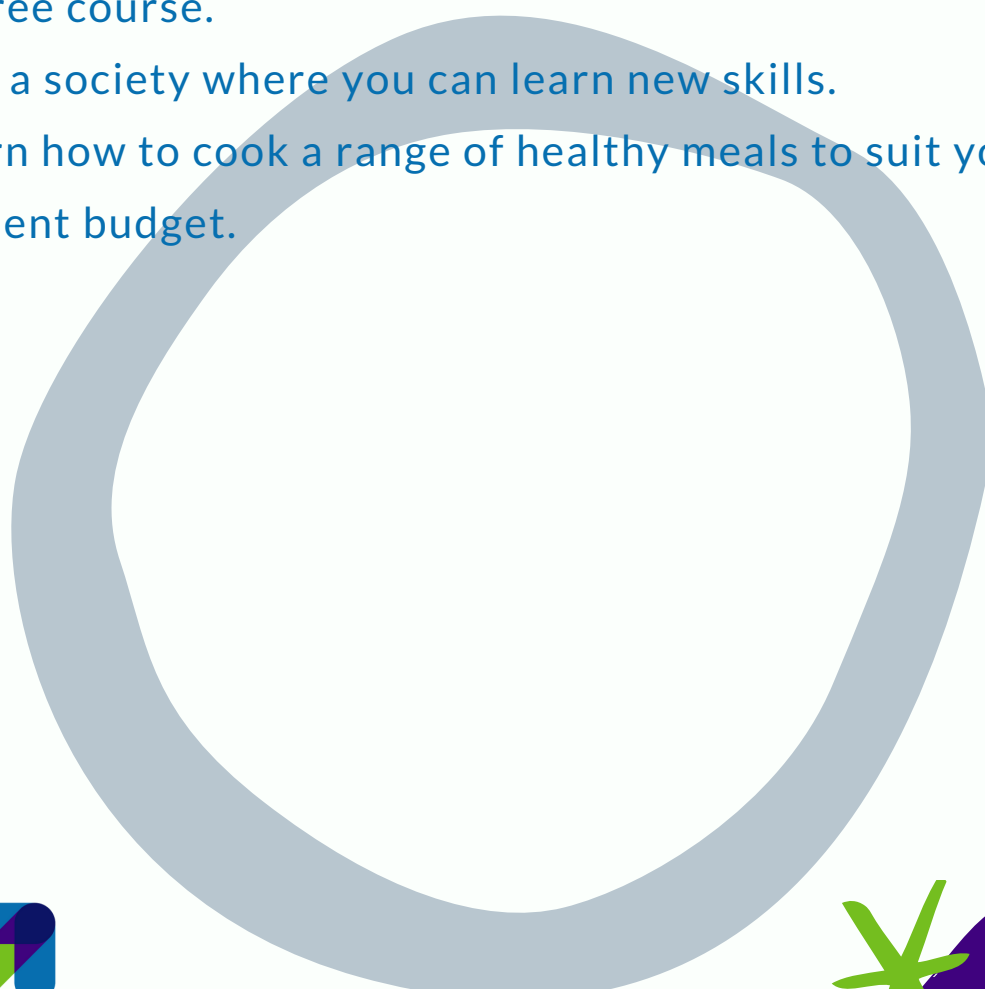




# FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING

## Learn

Lifelong learning can enhance your self-esteem and confidence, which in turn has a positive impact on mental wellbeing. At university the opportunities to learn new skills are endless.

- Take an elective module in a subject different to your main degree course.
  - Join a society where you can learn new skills.
  - Learn how to cook a range of healthy meals to suit your student budget.
- 





# TRANSITIONS

## Starting University

Starting university is often described as a stress inducing and difficult period of time. However it is also full of excitement and new beginnings. Starting university usually requires numerous aspects of your life changing in one way or another and this can be complex with many individual challenges. For some people this may mean moving home and being away from family/support or juggling new responsibilities alongside commitments. Some students may be worried about the academic side of university and others may be fearful about making new friends and 'fitting in' amongst many other concerns. It would be fair to say that you would not be the first to worry or find this transition difficult, therefore this section covers some pointers that may help the transition to university feel that bit smoother.





# TRANSITIONS

## EXPERIENCE

There is no ready-made university experience, or a 'one size fits all' aspect to uni life. It is up to you to create your own journey and there will be many ups and down during this time. This helps you build resilience and also allows you to reflect on what works well and not so well for you. Creating your own journey is empowering and makes your university unique to you and your interests.

## SUPPORT

There are so many different options for support at uni so you are able to choose what will be the most beneficial to you. One type of support is Peer Supporters whose role it is to help you navigate university life. Peer Supporters can be a fantastic way to ease into your new surroundings and ask honest questions! Talking to someone who is in, or has been in the same boat as you can be really helpful!

## CONNECT

Feeling 'connected' is a big part of the transition to uni. Familiarising yourself with your chosen university can help you feel a part of its community. Take a look at uni social media pages, most which have options to ask questions in advance! Make sure to look at the Students Union and societies you may be interested in joining! If you are moving away, you can look on Google maps to see what is close by such as supermarkets and shops.



# TRANSITIONS

## Top TIPS

**ALTHOUGH IT IS LITERALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO PREPARE FOR EVERY EVENTUALITY AND SITUATION THAT MAY OR MAY NOT ARISE WHEN STARTING UNIVERSITY, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF THINGS THAT YOU CAN DO TO MAKE TO HELP YOU FEEL MORE PREPARED.**

- If you can, attend a virtual open day at your chosen uni. Even if you already have your offer it gives you lots of opportunity to ask questions, and have a look at the facilities.
- If you are still at school or college you will likely have a member of staff (likely in careers or a counsellor) that can help you with questions or concerns you may have about starting university. They can provide practical details about starting university and what you need to consider.
- When you start uni, you will have a personal tutor alongside the general wellbeing support. Your personal tutor is primarily focused on the academic side of university life but can be really supportive with other concerns too. Get acquainted with them as soon as possible.
- Have a plan for your first week, it doesn't have to be minute by minute or exhaustive. However a written plan with things such as places on campus to visit, a list of essentials to buy from the local shop and organising your work area. Starting uni can be really hectic time with a lot of new faces and info which can cause burnout, so ensure you schedule in some time for you too!

**EVERY UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE IS UNIQUE AND IT IS IMPORTANT TO FIND A BALANCE THAT SUITS YOU. TRY NOT TO BE ANXIOUS ABOUT THE UNKNOWN BUT EXCITED FOR THE FUTURE!**





# TRANSITIONS RESOURCES

## STAFFS

[HTTPS://WWW.STAFFSUNION.COM/  
M/](https://www.staffsunion.com/)

INSTAGRAM- @STAFFSUNI

## FUTURE LEARN

FUTURE LEARN HAVE 500 ONLINE UNIVERSITY COURSES THAT CAN BE TAKEN FOR FREE! THIS CAN DEFINITELY GET YOU IN THE SWING OF UNIVERSITY STUDY.

[HTTPS://WWW.FUTURELEARN.COM/COURSES](https://www.futurelearn.com/courses)

## STUDENT MINDS

STUDENT MINDS HAVE SOME AMAZING GUIDES THAT CAN BE FOUND ON THEIR WEBSITE. CHECK OUT 'TRANSITIONS' AND 'KNOW BEFORE YOU GO'

## HIGHER HORIZONS

HIGHER HORIZONS HAVE SOME FANTASTIC ONLINE RESOURCES. THEY HAVE LOTS OF PRACTICAL INFO INCLUDING STUDENT FINANCE AND COOKING.

[HTTPS://HIGHERHORIZONS.CO.UK/RESOURCES/](https://higherhorizons.co.uk/resources/)



# TRANSITIONS

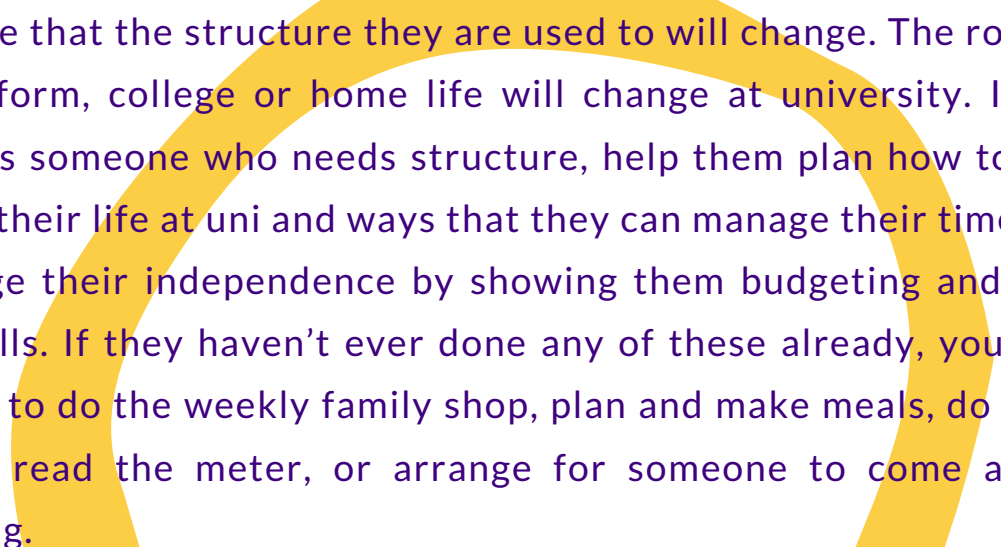
Finally, keep it in perspective; if you feel like you are struggling when you start university some of the things that you may be struggling with may be very common amongst your peers, such as adjusting to living independently, academic pressure and making friends amongst many other worries. It would be fair to say that you would not be the first to worry or find it difficult, and it is important to understand that you can't necessarily stop these uncomfortable feelings and sometimes these obstacles we face can help us become more resilient and equipped for the future. We are not suggesting you can control when these feelings may crop up but by being aware of them and the normality of them you can prepare ways to manage these emotions which can help to prevent small discomforts from escalating into something bigger.

**If you experience prolonged worry or difficulties that start to impact negatively on your life please do reach out for some support.**



# SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS - INFORMATION FOR PARENTS / CARERS

If you are responsible for supporting someone through their transition into university it can be tough to know how to make the transition feel as smooth as possible. A couple of ideas could be:

- 
- Recognise that the structure they are used to will change. The routines of sixth form, college or home life will change at university. If your student is someone who needs structure, help them plan how to build this into their life at uni and ways that they can manage their time.
  - Encourage their independence by showing them budgeting and other living skills. If they haven't ever done any of these already, you could get them to do the weekly family shop, plan and make meals, do all the washing, read the meter, or arrange for someone to come and fix something.



# SUPPORT AT UNIVERSITY

## Wellbeing and Safeguarding Team

There are a range of ways that Staffordshire University can support you with your Mental Health. We have a team of advisers, practitioners and counsellors that can support any student experiencing mental wellbeing difficulties. The advisers understand that a person's mental wellbeing can differ and therefore support offered is flexible and tailored to everyone. To use this service you can contact the team via phone or email.

Online Booking Form - [Wellbeing Booking Link](#)

T: +44(0)1782 294976

E: [student-wellbeing@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:student-wellbeing@staffs.ac.uk).

## Inclusion Team

The Student Inclusion Team are committed to supporting specific groups of students, this includes Students who have disabilities or additional needs, Care experienced and Estranged Students, Mature Students LGBTQ+ Students, Student Parents and Students from underrepresented groups. The Student Inclusion Team are here to support **all** Students to help them to remain and engaged throughout their studies and to reach their potential

Regardless of your personal circumstances or personal characteristics, you're part of an inclusive and supported community

Online Booking Form - [Inclusion Booking Link](#)

E: [student-inclusion@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:student-inclusion@staffs.ac.uk)



# SUPPORT AT UNIVERSITY

If you are already receiving support for your mental health in your home area, for example through your GP or a secondary mental health service, and are moving to a new area for university, it's important that you plan ahead to ensure a smooth transition for the support that you will need while at university.

For most secondary mental health care services you will need a referral from your GP, so your first step should be to make an appointment to discuss your options. The earlier that you do this, the more likely it will be that the support you need can be ready for your transition to university.

## Counselling

Staffordshire university has a dedicated team of counsellors. Counselling offers an opportunity to talk with a trained counsellor in a supportive setting about anything that is affecting your mental wellbeing. The counsellor will not tell you what to think, feel or do in relation to your situation. But they may suggest information that may be helpful or other support.

**\*Please note that there are also other options for mental health and wellbeing support aside from counselling, for example this could be an appointment with a wellbeing practitioner or the student experience team. We will always ensure you are receiving the support that is suitable and right for you.**

**\*Please note that the counsellors are not medically qualified and cannot provide a medical diagnosis or prescribe medication- you would need to see your GP for this.**



# SUPPORT AT UNIVERSITY

## The Student Hub

The Student Hub is home to a wide range of student support facilities.

**T:01782294751**

**E: [studenthub@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:studenthub@staffs.ac.uk)**

The Student Hub can direct you to support services such as Chaplaincy, Childcare Services, International Student Support, Sexual Violence Prevention and Support Team, Student Success and Student Equality Diversity and Inclusion.

## Student Guidance

Student Guidance are a team of friendly, approachable Student Guidance Advisors who can help you with any problems or questions you may have whilst studying at Staffordshire University. You can talk to them about anything; whether it is a personal problem or an academic issue. They offer advice and guidance across a very broad range of issues and needs.

**Care Leavers and Estranged Students:** Student Guidance are committed to supporting students who come from a care background and students without the support of a family network. The Student Guidance team understands that there may be complex challenges that you may be facing which may be different from other students.

**Appointments:** For more Details and Booking Link [Click Here](#)

**E: [student-support@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:student-support@staffs.ac.uk)**



# WHAT TO EXPECT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

When you start at university, you may struggle at first with the difference in learning style when compared to your previous study - whether this was A-Levels, BTEC or an Access course.

At university you will normally be required to engage with more independent or self-directed study which can be challenging at first. On some courses you may also find that you don't have as much contact time (lectures and other classes) as your previous experiences of education.

That being said, as a university we care about students' wellbeing and we have systems in place to monitor your engagement with your studies. This is so that we can check on how you are if you stop attending classes or don't submit your assignments, and help to support you through any difficulties that you may be experiencing. There will also be additional academic support that you can access, for example by making an appointment to see your module tutor, workshops in the library, or an academic coaching service.





# THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FE AND HE

You may have heard numerous times that university is very different to college and sixth form, and you would be right!

But in what way? There are many differences between both institutions ranging from academic differences to structural differences and they can impact individuals differently. For example a student who likes structure and a lot of class time may struggle with have more free time and independent study and may benefit from creating a study timetable.

When you start university you are treated as an adult, so that means that you are responsible for yourself, getting to lectures, supporting yourself etc. Generally in college it might be more notable if you are not feeling yourself as college tutors see you often, but this is less likely to happen at university therefore taking care of yourself and knowing when to reach out for support is imperative for your overall wellbeing.

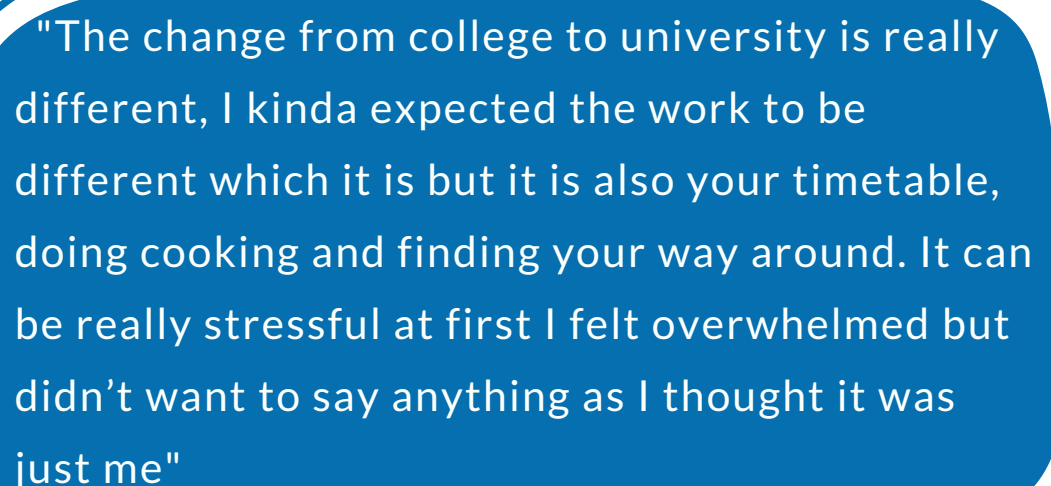
Furthermore coming to university for the first time brings new experiences and challenges. You may find that friends studying in other subjects may have quite different timetables, and that their tutors have different expectations of them. Every student, no matter what their subject, or how they are expected to work at university, goes through a period of adapting and developing over their first year.



# THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FE AND HE

## Practicalities

- Getting ready to go, whether you are moving away or going to university locally it can be tough preparing yourself for what you may or may or not need. If you are moving into accommodation check what it provides. Keep it simple, a decent bag, good sturdy water bottle and some pens. You may want to make sure you have comfy lounge wear for sitting and socialising and for more comfortable ways to get those assignments finished.
- Try keep your paperwork together and keep flyers, course info any anything else you are given somewhere safe where when your ready you can have a look through them.



"The change from college to university is really different, I kinda expected the work to be different which it is but it is also your timetable, doing cooking and finding your way around. It can be really stressful at first I felt overwhelmed but didn't want to say anything as I thought it was just me"



# Top TIPS

- Get to know your tutors so that you feel comfortable asking for help if needed. Most lecturers will have office hours where you can drop in without the need for an appointment.
- Make sure that you attend your lectures. It sounds simple, but with a busy social life it can be easy to fall into a pattern of non-attendance which can then be difficult to break.
- Spend 3-4 hours of work per module outside of class time each week to work on assignments or do some ongoing revision.
- Make a timetable to manage your workload. Having lots of conflicting modules can feel like a challenge, so make sure you devote an equal amount of time to everything you are studying.
- Set your deadlines a day in advance of when the work is actually due, to allow yourself some contingency in case of something unexpected happening.
- Use the feedback that you get from your assignments, whether this is positive or negative, as this will provide you to improve in the future.
- Don't forget to build regular breaks into your study time, as this will help to look after your mental wellbeing.



# EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

As a student, one of the most important skills that you will need to learn is to manage your own workload in order to meet deadlines and make sure that you are prepared to take your assessments. However, we understand that there may be times when circumstances beyond your control might affect your ability to complete a piece of work. We call these exceptional circumstances, and if you experience these it's essential that you notify the university by submitting an EC form. For something to meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances, it must have happened at a time that directly affected your assessments, and it must have been unforeseen. For example, being involved in a road traffic accident on your way to an exam would be classed as an exceptional circumstance.

## Exceptional:

A sudden or extended illness or injury, being the victim of a crime, bereavement, or a major transport incident.

[www.keele.ac.uk/ec](http://www.keele.ac.uk/ec)

## Not exceptional:

General stress or pressure of workload, IT issues, holidays, or other events that are planned or foreseen.

# STUDY TIPS FOR FIRST YEAR

**It's important to start with the basics, and to ensure that you give yourself the best possible starting point for your studies.**

**This starts with looking after yourself:**

- Organise your time to include relaxation as well as studying, hobbies and socialising.
  - Work out where you study best, whether this is in your room or the library.
  - Make sure you eat a balanced diet.
  - Stick to a routine with your sleep hours and practice good sleep hygiene by trying to avoid screens before going to bed.
- Keep your study notes organised into different subjects / modules.
  - Go through your class notes and condense down to help process your learning.
  - Try different approaches to see what works for you – this could be bullet points, charts, diagrams, doodles, voice notes.
  - Revision shouldn't just be something that you do in the weeks leading up to an assessment period, you should revise on an ongoing basis.
  - Create a study timetable to ensure that you dedicate sufficient time to all subjects or modules.
  - Go through past papers to see what type of questions to look out for, and practise your exam technique.

*Top*  
**TIPS**



# LEARNING STYLES

## KINAESTHETIC

- Like to learn by doing something practical.
- You may find it easy to remember information when you learn through hands on activities or trying something out.
- Try moving around as you process information, for example listening to notes on your headphones while out for a walk.
- Take regular breaks so you are not sitting still while studying for too long.

## AUDITORY

- Like to learn by listening to something being explained.
- Work in quiet areas to reduce distractions, avoiding areas with conversation, music, and television.
- Teach someone else by explaining what you know.
- Read through your notes out loud.
- Record your revision notes so you can listen back to them.

## VISUAL

- Like to learn by seeing, for example watching a demonstration.
- You may find it easy to remember information in diagrams, charts and illustrations.
- Try highlighting key points as you read through notes to create a visual reminder
- Use flashcards with text and symbols to indicate key points.
- Create diagrams within your revision notes.





# RESILIENCE AND MANAGING STRESS

Mental health 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 fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

*World Health Organization, 2014*

In many ways, mental health is just like physical health: everybody has it and we need to take care of it. University can bring many stresses and challenges to a student's life, which can have a negative impact on your wellbeing and cause problems with your mental health. Although stress can be a part of everyday life and a normal response to a difficulty that you have to deal with, it can become unmanageable for some people. That's why it's important to understand the difference between a normal stress response, and one that may be a sign of mental distress. It's normal to go through periods when your mental health takes a dip, and to learn the steps that you can take to stay mentally healthy. It's also important to recognise when you may need professional support with your mental health - there are lots of support services as mentioned earlier in this handbook, so don't suffer in silence.



# RESILIENCE AND MANAGING STRESS

As a university student, you may experience times when you feel stressed - perhaps you've left that assignment a bit too late and need to pull an all-nighter, can't quite get to grips with the theme of a module, or are juggling multiple deadlines. These can all be part and parcel of student life, so the important thing to think about is how you will develop positive coping strategies to help you get through the challenges of university life.

## *Healthy*

Stress can be helpful when experienced in small amounts. It can spur you on to take action in difficult situations, and can lead to you achieving and succeeding.

For example, feeling a healthy amount of stress before an exam can motivate you to focus on your revision and do well.

## *Unhealthy*

Sometimes you may experience levels of stress that can't be managed through your usual coping strategies, and this can start to have a negative impact on your wellbeing. If you struggle to manage stress, then you should take some steps to develop your emotional resilience to help you bounce back and adapt in the face of challenging circumstances.

# RESILIENCE AND MANAGING STRESS

It's important to remember that everyone will have different coping strategies for stress management, and what works for someone else may not work for you. However, there are lots of different approaches that you can try to see what works best for you.

## Top TIPS

- Solution based thinking - try to consider the pros and cons to your options to help you decide the best way forward.
- Be realistic about your goals and what you can and can't change. Don't sweat the small stuff - not every obstacle is the end of the world, and most will help you to learn and grow.
- Acknowledge your feelings and don't bottle them up. The old saying 'a problem shared is a problem halved' really can be true!
- Get into a good sleep hygiene routine to help you get the right amount of sleep that your body needs.
- Practice good time management to help you stay organised and on top of your responsibilities.
- Take action to find solutions, and seek help when needed.





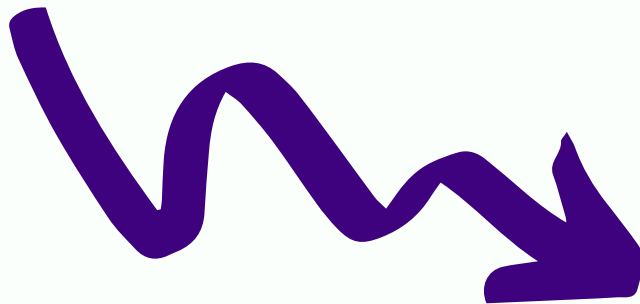
# MANAGING YOUR MONEY

For many students, starting at university is the first time that you will be managing your money independently. Even if it's not the first time, your university finances may be a more challenging position than you are used to. Whatever your circumstances, planning carefully and creating a yearly budget can help you to avoid financial difficulties later down the line.

## Income

Start your budget by recording where your money will be coming in from. This may include:

- Maintenance loan from Student Finance.
- Savings.
- Income from a part time job.
- Financial support from family.
- One off payments such as a bursary or scholarship.

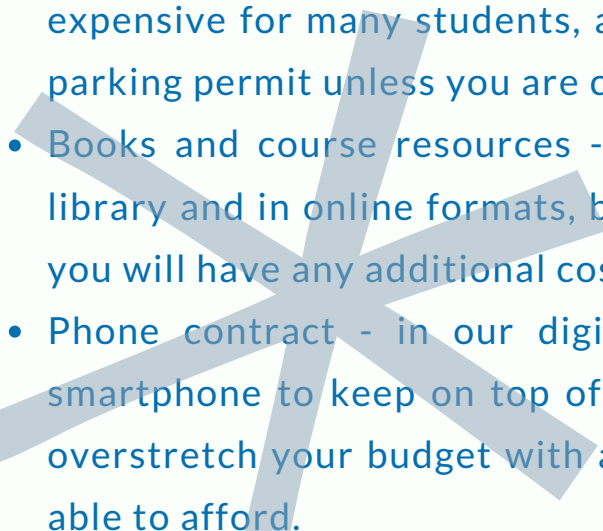




# MANAGING YOUR MONEY

## Outgoings

Make a list of all of the essential expenditure that you will have as a student, including:

- Rent - if you will be living on-campus your accommodation fees will include all utilities as well.
  - Utility bills such as gas, electricity if you're living off campus - although some rents will include bills, so be sure to check.
  - Food - it can be tempting to splash the cash on takeaways, but funds will soon run out! The average food shopping bill for a single person should be around £20 to £30 per week.
  - Transport costs - likely to be public transport, as running a car can be too expensive for many students, and as a student you won't be eligible for a parking permit unless you are commuting from a further distance.
  - Books and course resources - many core books will be available in the library and in online formats, but make sure you plan ahead to consider if you will have any additional costs such as lab equipment or field trips.
  - Phone contract - in our digital world it may be essential to have a smartphone to keep on top of communications, but make sure you don't overstretch your budget with a top of the range phone that you won't be able to afford.
- 



# MANAGING YOUR MONEY

## Weekly Budget

Once you have worked out your overall income and outgoings, you can then break this down into a weekly budget and work out whether or not you have sufficient income or will need to find a way to supplement this. Follow these steps to do this:

1. Work out your total income for a term at university.
2. Deduct all of your essential expenses during a term at university, such as rent, transport and food.
3. Divide the number you're left with by the number of weeks between your maintenance loan payments.

This will leave you with how much money you have left for non-essential spends each week.

At Staffs, your Students' Union have Money Doctors to support with all things finance.

<https://www.staffsunion.com/advice/money/>

If you find yourself in financial hardship despite your best laid financial plans, you can find information about university hardship funds:  
<https://www.staffsunion.com/advice/money/hardshipsupport/>



# MAKING CONNECTIONS

## MEETING PEOPLE

Meeting new people and building new connections and relationships is something that most students will likely look forward to but also dread at the same time! A bustling social life is usually what comes to mind when you think of University. But remember that it is far too easy to make assumptions about how everybody else is getting on when you don't have the full picture. For example you may see a picture of a load of 'friends' on social media, but it can be far easier to post things from behind a screen and still feel incredibly lonely. Struggling to make friends and meet people at university is very common, especially in the beginning! Therefore the first tip is knowing that you are not alone if you feel this way!

## SOCIALISING

Socialising doesn't have to mean going out or partying or feeling pressured to drink alcohol. There are lots of ways to meet people at university and most don't involve drinking! Welcome Week can hold a lot of expectations, and some may refer to it as being 'the best week of their life' but this can also be a touch of rose-tinted glasses! Remember that this is only the first week and doesn't dictate your whole university experience. There will be many more interesting opportunities to meet people beyond welcome week, so take it slow and do what you enjoy.

# MAKING CONNECTIONS

## Top TIPS

Before you start university the general consensus will be that this will be the best time of your life! And it absolutely can be, but for many starting uni can be a mix of emotions as there is so much to take in. Making connections and finding your way can be stressful, difficult and maybe different to what you initially expected! One consistent however across everyone's experience is that they meet new people are in the same position.

You are becoming part of a student community and everybody is in the same boat. You will meet like minded people, those who share your interests and who you click with straight away. And you will meet those who don't share your passions and that is okay. Uni is a great chance to learn about different people.

## START THE CONVERSATION

- If you are in university accommodation, hang a friendly sign on your door/leave your door open, this gives an opportunity to start conversation
- Ask your housemates if they would like to explore the town centre/do a food shop.
- Consider having a stash of biscuits/tea for communal chats.
- Start a conversation after a lecture.
- Join a club or society.

## ONLINE LEARNING

Course forums or email groups can keep you connected if you are studying online. Speak to your tutor if struggling to use them. Getting to know people online can also make it easier to form friendships and plan events like study weekends etc.

Exchange numbers with people on your course so you can set up a Whatsapp and keep up communication/motivation when course work sets in. This gives you an opportunity to form academic and social friendships.

# LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

Lots of students feel lonely and we all feel lonely from time to time. Feelings of loneliness are personal, so everyone's experience of loneliness will be different - Student Minds

It can be nerve wracking getting out and attending events at uni and it is important not to feel pressured. However sometimes it can be important in making friends and meeting new people that you may not meet otherwise!

Loneliness and enjoying your own company are two different things. Spending time on your own to study, do things that you enjoy does not always mean you will feel lonely. In fact it is essential for self care!

## Social Media

Social media can give the impression that everyone and their dog are hanging out together and having the best time, all of the time! This comparison can make you feel more lonely. Remember to take social media with a pinch of salt!

**"ONE THING IVE LEARNED IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FEELING ALONE AND FEELING LONELY- AND HOW YOU CAN FEEL LONELY IN A CROWD FULL OF PEOPLE, BUT QUITE PEACEFUL AND CONTENT WHEN ALONE"- STUDENT MINDS**







# LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

## Combatting loneliness

- Do something practical, such as heading out for a walk, this can give you chance to clear your thoughts and connect with your surroundings.
- Read a book or listen to an audiobook, this can help you relax and immerse yourself in something you enjoy.
- Join a society, one of the key bits of feedback from students is how much joining a society stopped them feeling isolated. There really is something for everyone and if not create your own!
- If you are away from home try bring something into your room that reminds you of home or brings you comfort. Creating a space that is calming and comforting has a really positive effect on our mental health.
- Phone a friend! Sometimes picking up the phone and having a chat can seem tough but it can be great when we do feel connection.

## What our students say:

"you'll make friends for life, and you don't need to rush finding them"

"it is ok to not fit in straight away, it will work out"

"stepping out of your comfort zone is the best way to learn about yourself"



# LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

Furthermore, change is never easy and it is normal to feel lonely if you are in a new place and are looking to build new relationships. If you are experiencing loneliness over an extended period of time, try to change your daily patterns and connect more with people. Don't be afraid to reach out to people you trust and let them know how you are feeling! - Student Minds

## Talk to someone

If you are finding you are feeling lonely or experiencing isolation most of the time talking to someone for support is essential. Understandably this can be easier said than done however talking to someone about how you feel can be really helpful. If you feel unable to talk to a friend or family member there are lots of helpline that can support you with how you may be feeling:

- The Mix - [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)
- Papyrus - [papyrus-uk.org/](http://papyrus-uk.org/)
- Samaritans - [www.samaritans.org/](http://www.samaritans.org/)

## Local Support

- Staffordshire Mental Health Helpline - [T:0808 800 2234](tel:08088002234)
- Big White Wall - [www.bigwhitewall.com](http://www.bigwhitewall.com)

# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

When starting university, sometimes, our expectations can be different from the reality and this can be difficult to adjust to. Most representations of university do not show some of the tougher aspects of university life and it is impossible to know what may be different and difficult for each individual student. Therefore students may be less prepared to manage the unknown. For example see below some common expectations and how the reality may be different.

## **EXPECTATION** \_

"I will meet my best friends in the first couple of weeks of uni"

## **REALITY** \_

Sometimes meeting people you really click with happen when you least expect it. Don't put a time limit on it.

## **EXPECTATION** \_

"I have always done really well in assignments from college so I will get really good marks at uni"

## **REALITY** \_

University study is really different to college and this might mean that initially getting used to new methods of writing assesments.

## International Students

As you start to settle into your new surroundings, you may find that things are very different than at home. Remember that adapting to a new environment may take time and that there will be some challenges that you may not have thought about before you arrived.

# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

"Two days after moving into my room in halls, I phoned home, my mum told me to see how I would feel in a week. Reluctantly I agreed. A week later I was back at home for the weekend and that is how I managed by breaking it up into small, achievable, time based goals. Now I visit home occasionally and love it at uni!"

Even if university doesn't match your initial expectations or the picture that others may have painted, sometimes stepping out of our comfort zone means we learn about ourselves and discover opportunities that we hadn't expected before!

All in all University can be a very exciting time in your life, and we hope this section illustrates that sometimes it can take a little while to get into the swing of university life and help you navigate the ups and downs. In doing so you're setting yourself up for success over the next several years!

## Self Care

A good way to stay positive through difficulties is to prioritize self care.

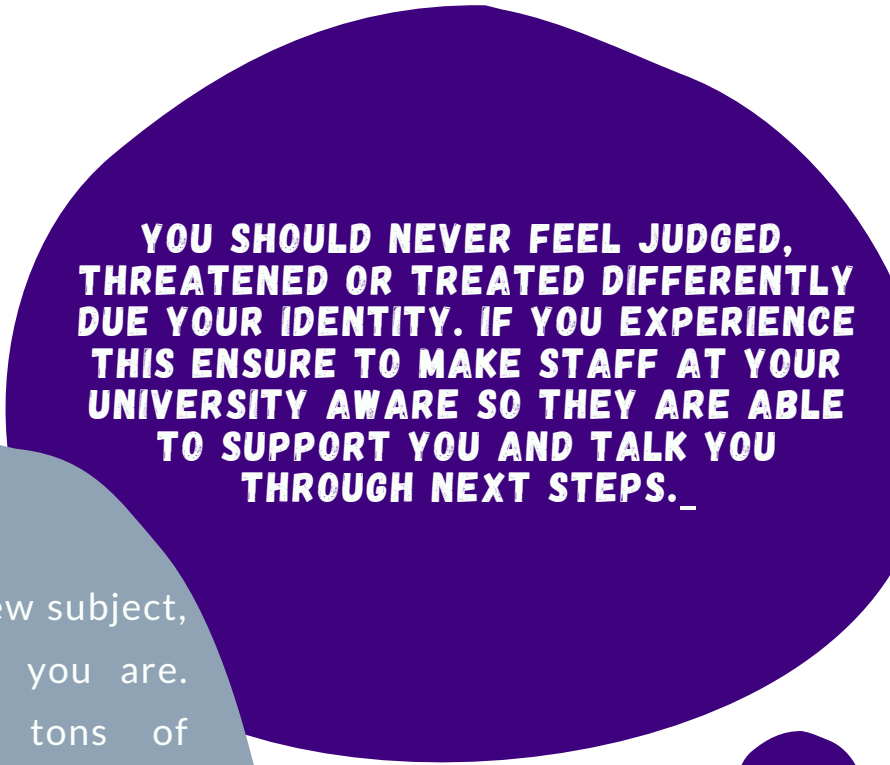
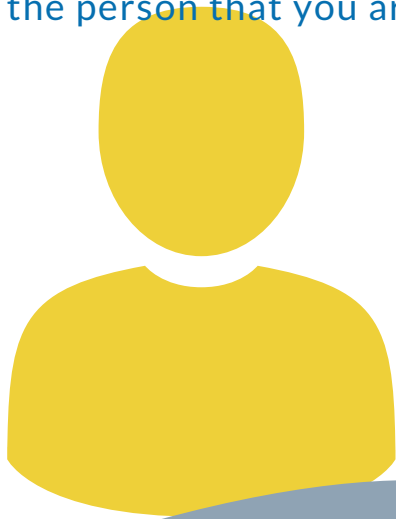
Contrary to common thoughts about self care, it is not all bubbly baths and chocolate! Self care is completely individual to you. And may be more about getting enough sleep or reaching out when you need support. It is important to focus on yourself when things maybe haven't turned out as completely expected or you are getting used to a new environment or routine as it helps you ensure that you are taking some time out to focus on the things that bring you happiness and tackle what is in front of you.



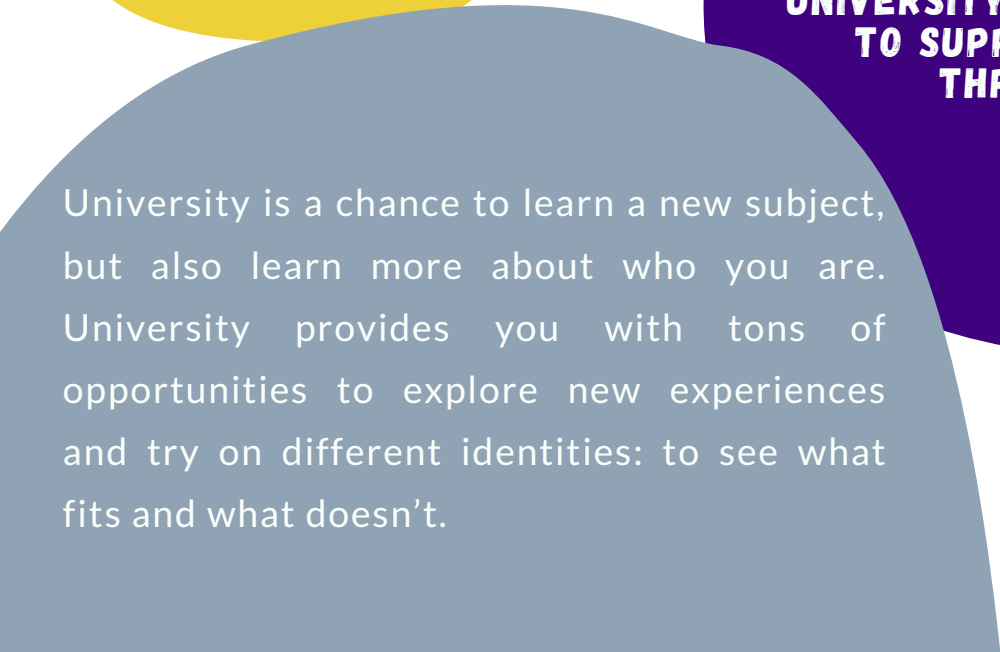
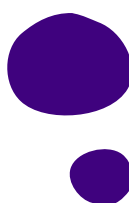
# YOUR IDENTITY

**YOUR IDENTITY, IN SHORT, IS NOT ANY ONE SET THING, BUT A COMBINATION OF MANY DIFFERENT IDENTITIES. YOUR IDENTITY CAN BE MADE UP FROM YOUR UPBRINGING, YOUR BELIEFS AND VALUES AMONGST MANY OTHER FACTORS AND EXPERIENCES!**

Your identities integrate and emerge from your personal strengths and weaknesses, your preferences and so much more. It is important to realise that this is changing in who you are continues over your entire life, and that each life stage helps set the person that you are and that you are becoming.



**YOU SHOULD NEVER FEEL JUDGED, THREATENED OR TREATED DIFFERENTLY DUE TO YOUR IDENTITY. IF YOU EXPERIENCE THIS ENSURE TO MAKE STAFF AT YOUR UNIVERSITY AWARE SO THEY ARE ABLE TO SUPPORT YOU AND TALK YOU THROUGH NEXT STEPS.**



University is a chance to learn a new subject, but also learn more about who you are. University provides you with tons of opportunities to explore new experiences and try on different identities: to see what fits and what doesn't.



# YOUR IDENTITY

'Identity is all of the pieces of you that make you who you are' - Student Minds


## Exploring Identity

Sometimes University may be a place where you feel you are able to explore aspects of your identity that you may not have previously. Whilst this is really important you may also feel that you experience confusion or distress and inner conflict due to this, which can be really tough. If this is the case you can seek support from Student Services or other support networks.

## Understanding Identity

Understanding your own identity can help you understand how you experience stress, why you react the way you do in certain situations, and what you need in terms of support and self-care as you encounter challenges through your life.

## Identity Reflection

- Do I identify with a particular race or ethnicity?
  - How do I identify my gender?
  - How do I define my family and community?
  - How would I describe my personality?
  - What do I value?
- 



# COOKING

We know that a well-balanced diet makes you mentally and physically stronger, and with a bit of organisation cooking for yourself can **save you money** and even become an enjoyable hobby! However we understand feeding yourself can feel like an endless task no matter how much you enjoy cooking. See below for some important tips with shopping, cooking and eating!

- **Make food that you want to eat and that is tasty! This will mean different things to different people but you are more likely to want to cook for yourself if you enjoy it.**
- **If you are stuck for ideas the internet is ram packed with recipe ideas. Check out [@beat the budget](#) on Instagram and online for some budget friendly delicious and easy recipes!**
- **Cook big where you can, money can disappear fast when hungry, planning ahead and have batch meals ready to go is a great way to avoid spending a fortune on takeaways. We definitely don't know that from experience...**
- **There are lots of benefits with eating with others. Try and take the opportunity to make food as social as possible such as Sunday lunches and sit down dinners.**



# COOKING

Cooking is an amazing skill to have! Don't be scared to get creative and don't be disheartened if difficult at first as practice makes perfect!

## Student Tips

- 'Create a mini recipe booklet before you start university, full of quick and simple recipes that include using non perishable goods such as tinned foods, pastas etc in case you can't get to the shop, then there is still food to cook!'
- 'Make water your drink of choice as much as you can, drinking lots of juice and fizzy drinks can be tempting but keep them to every so often.'
- 'Prioritise doing a big shop, it may be a bit more effort but larger supermarkets are generally much cheaper than smaller convenience stores especially the ones plonked near halls.'
- 'Treat yourself! Food shouldn't feel like a chore or be boring, baking can be a really fun way of making delicious treats that are comforting.'





# THANK YOU

Thank you so much for reading this handbook, we really hope that you enjoyed reading and found the contents useful. This handbook has been written from research, student voices and personal experiences.

This handbook has been developed by Start to Success, a project that is passionate about student wellbeing and our aim is to create resources that help students get the best out of their university experience and personal journey. We strive to be open, inclusive and supportive of all students.

We are always thinking of ways to create meaningful resources that support students and would love to hear your thoughts on what resources would best support the wellbeing of the student community.

Furthermore what else do you want to know about starting university? What did we miss? We would love to hear your feedback, comments and suggestions. Please contact us at [www.starttosuccess.co.uk/contact-us](http://www.starttosuccess.co.uk/contact-us) and follow us on social media to keep up with our ongoing initiatives.

With Care and Best Wishes,  
The Start to Success Team

