

# 2022 Wellbeing Guide



By Hannah Lunnon



# Let's Talk About...

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Working Smarter, Not Harder

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# A Quick Introduction from Hannah...

For a lot of us the pressures of exam season can be overwhelming and somewhat counterproductive. When we're stressed, our brains release a high level of cortisol which can cloud the way we think and gets in the way of rational thoughts. Because of this, it's important to stay as cool, calm and collected as you can during the exam period.

Recognising and acknowledging feelings of anxiety and stress around exam season can sometimes be a significant hurdle and it is easy to compare yourselves to your peers. However, it is important to concentrate on yourself and how to look after your own wellbeing through what can be a very stressful time.



# 1 Working Smarter, Not Harder

## Make a Timetable!

Try breaking your revision up into chunks and create a daily timetable or checklist for what you need to do in the lead up to your exams. I always find it is also useful to start with what I find the hardest too - that way it gets easier as you go along. Also, be realistic and honest with yourself about what you can achieve in one day, otherwise you may end up putting too much pressure on yourself and in-turn, burning out. When it is chunked up into smaller sections, revision also can seem like less work to get through.



## Social Media Breaks!

From my past experience I have found that this is the most effective thing for me to do in the lead up to my exams and assignments. I have found from the past that as hard as it might be, stepping away from your phone and/or social media during the exam period does wonders for stress levels. We all know how quickly the time can disappear when we're swiping through our social media feeds. However, if we remove social media from the equation, that given us so much more time that isn't being spent procrastinating on our phones, and instead can be spent studying. In addition to this, many of your friends may also be in the same boat and may be likely to talk more about how much studying they're doing (or not doing!) and this can also influence our own stress levels and revision too.



## Breaks from Studying!

When it comes to revision, it's quality not quantity. Try not to run yourself in to the ground by attempting to work solidly for hours on end, this will only make you feel worse about your revision! Taking regular breaks helps your memory function and will keep you energised and motivated throughout the day. Make a list of all the things you enjoy and try and find some time in your days to do them. This can help reduce your stress levels, improve your mood, and help you feel refreshed and relaxed, it also gives you something to work towards and look forward to. There is no need to feel guilty for taking some you-time. You're allowed to have a social life and interests outside of studying.



## Take Care of your Physical Wellbeing!

You want your body and mind at their peak state to function at their best during the exam period. Unhealthy, greasy and sugar foods will most-likely leave you feeling lethargic and tired. You should try your best to eat healthy and nutritional foods that can help nourish your body. You want to have your body alert, energised and ready to tackle the exam period and, of course, the exams themselves. If you eat well, your brain will work better meaning that you should find your revision to be more effective. Try to also give yourself regular things to look forward to, whether it's a tasty revision snack or a quick tea/coffee with a friend. It doesn't have to detract from your revision, and it will keep your spirits up.



# 2 How NOT to Cope with Exam Stress!

## Doing it Alone

It can be easy to get into a very solitary mind-set during exam period, especially for those who prefer to revise alone. During high pressure exam periods, asking for help can sometimes feel like admitting to a lack of confidence, or failure. However, try to remember that everyone needs help sometimes and a lot of your peers are probably in the exact same boat. Please don't hesitate to approach your lecturers or peers for assistance in those topics you find tricky. I'm sure that they will be happy to help you.



## Over-caffeinating and Under-sleeping

One of the most important things you can do during exam time is to be well rested. Caffeine is a stimulant and in large quantities will likely increase your stress levels rather than reduce them and it is proven that caffeine has negative effects on sleeping patterns. Instead of having a coffee every hour of your day, try to pace yourself throughout the day and try to lay off the caffeine after a certain hour. It is recommended to try and not drink any coffee/caffeine past 3pm to help avoid a crash or lack of sleep later in the evening. It is also important to wind down before bed to help you try and achieve a proper sleeping cycle and wake up feeling refreshed in the morning. Try not to work from your bed and prevent yourself from countlessly scrolling through social media before you go to sleep. Your bed is a sanctuary, not a desk; a good sleep helps you remember what you learned that day.



## Under-hydrating:

Being even a little dehydrated can create an environment where you lose cognitive performance. Drinking water consistently throughout the day will keep you hydrated and help your body flush out any toxins. Water also can help you with your sleep as well as your mood. This also might sound obvious but try to avoid alcohol during the exams period too. Alcohol acts as depressant when consumed in large quantities and as a stimulant when consumed in smaller quantities – neither of which is helpful as they can both send your stress levels through the roof. Exam season is only a couple of weeks out of your whole Uni year, so try and save the date with your mates for after exams!



## Most Importantly...**LISTEN TO YOUR BODY!**

If you are tired, then sleep.

If you are restless then try going on a walk and take a break from your work and come back to it when you feel like you are more able to.

If you can no longer concentrate, then do not continue, take some 'me-time', and do something that might improve your concentration, such as a word-search.

If you are hungry then feed your body

If you are feeling lonely or isolated, then go and see a friend from your course and study together.



# 3 Dealing with a Disappointing Result

Sometimes if you don't get the mark that you were expecting, it can feel absolutely devastating, but please remember that not everyone's journey is the same. Success comes in all different forms, and sometimes the best way to learn and move forward in is by making mistakes in the first place.

## Step 1: Breathe!

At first when you see a result that you're not happy with, it can often be the case that you will begin to spiral and think of the worst-case scenario, an example being 'OMG now I'm going to fail my whole degree, that's three years wasted...' (one that I was ALWAYS guilty of) – but don't panic, take a step back and a moment to breathe. Unfortunately, life doesn't always go to plan, but stay calm, you are going to be ok and there are still loads of options available to you and you are not a failure.



## Step 2: Speak to Someone

First off speak to someone, whether that be a friend, a family member, or a member of staff, but make sure it is someone who will be able to help you stay calm and who you feel comfortable talking to about how you're feeling. Sometimes just talking about things can make you feel better and the person you talk to may help you put things into a better perspective.



## Step 3: Explore your Options

Explore your options and next steps properly. Reach out to your personal tutor or module coordinator and ask them what their advice would be – lecturers are here to help support you with your academic progress. Here at the SU, we also have a student Advisor who may also be able to help you with some of your questions (should you have them).



## Step 4: Take your Time

It is important to remember that you do not need to make any snap decision in the heat of the moment, as those are often the decisions come to regret. Focus on what went well and take the time to properly explore you next steps and learn from you past mistakes.



# 4

## Key Contacts

Although I stand by these tips for making your study season a little easier, there is no denying that this time of year can be tough. If you are needing an extra helping hand, here are a few key contacts you should know about:

### **Togetherall**

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/sscs/wellbeing/togetherall/>

### **AberSU Advice Service**

<https://www.abersu.co.uk/advice/>

### **Student Support Wellbeing Service**

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/sscs/wellbeing/>

### **Me! Your Wellbeing Officer**

[eawstaff@aber.ac.uk](mailto:eawstaff@aber.ac.uk)





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That's all from me now, but above all, remember that exams aren't everything. There are many options that don't rely on getting the top grades and in ten years' time, most people won't care or notice what grades you got when you were younger. You are not defined by your exam results - you are so much more than the letters that appear on a sheet of paper.

If you're struggling to manage your mood or anxiety levels, don't keep it to yourself. Friends and family members can be a great source of support, and there's no shame in seeking professional help.

Remember that everybody has different study patterns and energy levels, so try not to worry that you're not doing enough work. Keep in mind that people might exaggerate the amount of time they claim to be working for!

I wish the best of luck to every single one of you in your exams this year, you've got this! From, Hannah  
your SU Wellbeing Officer x

