



UCC

University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh



THE

RESILIENCE

BUILDING JOURNAL

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WE ARE... RESILIENT



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MEET OUR MASCOT, BINKY

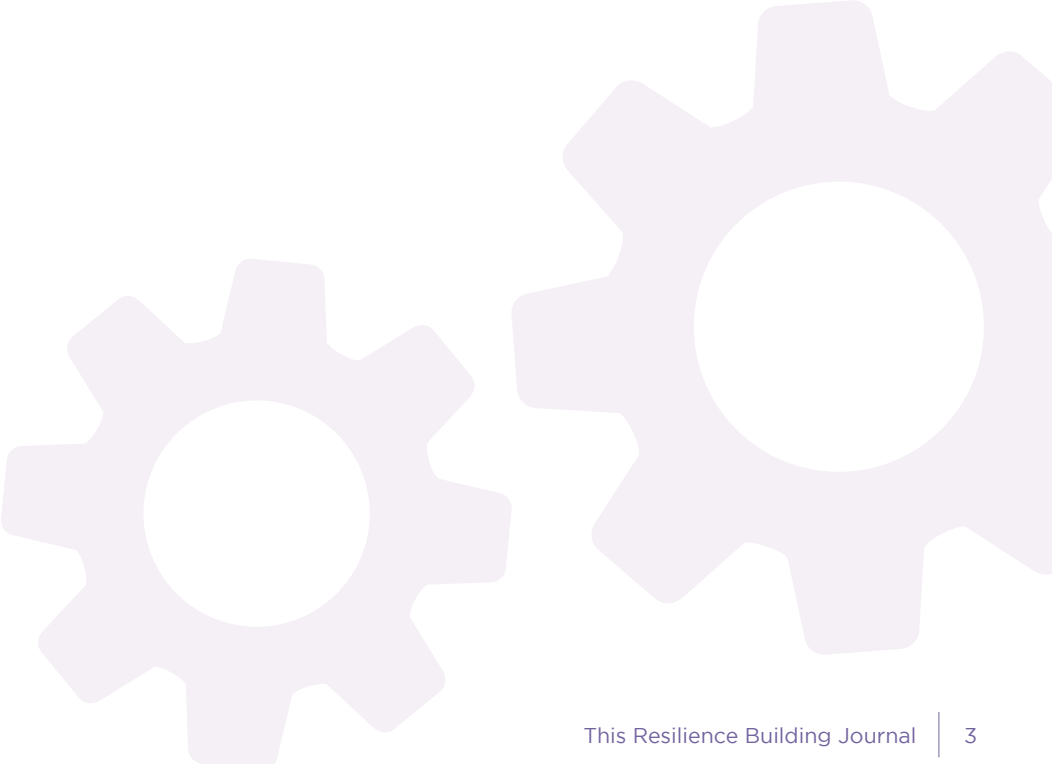




ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CREATING THIS HANDBOOK HAS BEEN A JOY

We are grateful to have had the help of some wonderful people along the way. Special thanks to all our colleagues, friends and UCC global family for their support, curiosity and appreciation while we worked on this handbook. Above all we want to dedicate this handbook to all our UCC community past, present and to come.



WELCOME

This *Resilience Building Journal* has been developed to empower all graduates, students, faculty and staff to reduce stress, improve coping and build well-being and resilience through evidence-based, practical strategies and techniques.

We want to empower you to manage real time day to day pressures and help you bring joy to learning and life.

Resilience is a superpower for success. Everyone needs resilience; we need it every day to cope with life, work and stress, navigate relationships and communication with others, deal with health problems, raise our families, recover from upsets, and simply keep getting on with our lives. More than anything, it determines how we rise above and move forward after trauma, loss, or serious and life-challenging experiences.

Given the age in which we're living, there has likely never been a greater need to boost our resilience (although similar sentiments could have legitimately been expressed on many occasions in living memory – there is always a need for resilience!).

The strategies, tools, and techniques in this book are a distillation of the world's latest leading neuroscientific, psychological, and medical research evidence on improving health, well-being, and resilience, which many of the world's most successful people say will increase your success and joy in life.

The Resilience Building Journal is called a journal because we want you to use it as a reflective learning tool to enable you to strengthen your resilience and to build calm, happiness, and grit for work and for life.

Writing things down in your Resilience Building Journal will help you to 'get it out of your head', examine it, reflect on it, and help you consider options for action. Journaling helps you to slow down and gain perspective, enabling you to review and act. You can also use your Resilience Building Journal to help you monitor progress and keep a written record of how far you have come.

Keeping a journal takes the guesswork out of how to prevent stress and what to do when you are under pressure. It means you have strategy in place, making it easier to do things that help you to feel a greater sense of hope and control.

This journal has been developed using evidence-based, easy to use and implement tips, tools and techniques from neuroscience, mindfulness, and positive psychology.

We do not wish you luck, luck has nothing to do with it.

Success means accomplishments as a result of our own efforts and abilities. Proper preparation is the key to your success, so dream and plan and take great care of your most important asset – you!

If you have the will to prioritise a little self-care and try out some great ideas, we are confident that they will work for you. You deserve to be happy and do something wonderful with your life.

PUT YOUR FUTURE IN THE BEST HANDS - YOURS!





OUR VISION

That every member of the UCC community will have the tools needed to navigate challenging situations, manage high stress, and to enjoy and fully participate in all aspects of life.

By learning about and trying out these tools and techniques and by putting them into practice, that individuals develop core attributes and values, such as grit, gratitude, and compassion – the keys to resilience, and to lasting well-being in a complex and changing world.

The Resilience Building Journal begins with a definition of resilience and answers some general questions about the importance of resilience. Readers will then evaluate their own resilience and determine their personal resilience factor. Then, the **LifeMatters** system at the heart of the Resilience Building Journal will provide tips, tools, and techniques to support you to build resilience through evidence-based strategies which will help you:

- ⚙️ build better physical health
- ⚙️ build better mental and emotional health, optimism and mental fitness
- ⚙️ develop better coping skills, overcome obstacles and build strengths like grit and growth mindset behaviours
- ⚙️ develop great self-aware self-care plans and develop buffers against setbacks and fallout from high stress, challenges or crisis
- ⚙️ develop deepening inner peace, personal values and core strengths, and also grit, gratitude, compassion and happiness habits.

Building resilience will enable you to feel less stressed, pursue opportunities with confidence, and stay calm, grounded and effective in the face of adversity. Building resilience will empower you to cope well no matter what life throws at you.

LET'S GET STARTED!



UNDERSTANDING RESILIENCE

WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

The American Psychological Association defines psychological resilience as ‘the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress – such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors. As much as resilience involves “bouncing back” from these difficult experiences, it can also involve profound personal growth’ (American Psychological Association, 2014).

Put simply, it is your ‘stretch’ and ‘bounce back’ factor, meaning that you can cope and adapt. To be resilient does not mean that you do not experience or suffer stress, pressure, or adversity – it means that you can stretch and withstand stress, setbacks, trauma, crises, and the array of hardships that confront us.

Life will always have its ups and downs and nobody, however strong or fortunate, lives a stress-free life. Resilience is a skill set worth learning and developing, as resilient people can manage stress and pressure more comfortably.

We are not born with resilience; it is developed through life experiences, the interaction of biological systems and protective factors in the social environment, and through practicing intentional activities, habits, skills, and behaviours. The active ingredients in building resilience are **supportive relationships with parents or guardians, coaches, teachers, caregivers, and other adults and peers in the community during childhood and through our own learning, self-care, habits, skills, and intentional behaviours as adults.**

Anyone can learn to be more resilient. Resilience is measurable, teachable and sustainable.

We can all build our resilience by **focusing on building our self-nurturance skills, even when we are under severe pressure or are troubled.** By taking care of our own needs, we can boost our overall health and resilience and be fully ready to face life’s challenges

Resilience is an important life skill, which is always worth learning and expanding, no what age or stage we are at in life.

WHY IS RESILIENCE IMPORTANT?

The differential impact of stressful or challenging events is very largely a function of an individuals’ personal resilience.

Resilience, viewed as a personal resource, is a multi-faceted construct made up of behavioural predispositions, emotional robustness and the individual meaning ascribed to the stressor in question. Nevertheless, several core features can serve as indicators of a resilient person who is less prone to extreme stress reactions.

Stresses and traumas impact us as a society regularly and repeatedly, for example the ongoing climate crisis and the recent COVID-19 pandemic. As individuals, we are constantly subject to a range of stressors – the lessons of the Resilience Building Journal are not limited to now!

Resilience is important because **it is a resource for strength, and the flexibility needed to manage, process, and overcome hardship or adversity.** When people are lacking resilience, they may get easily overwhelmed or may turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms. Resilient people tap into their strengths and support systems to work through or even overcome challenges and problems.

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF RESILIENCE?

Research indicates that resilient people develop several helpful life skills, habits, and behaviours. They:

- ⚙️ maintain perspective and see the bigger picture
- ⚙️ sustain healthy relationships

- ⚙️ set positive and realistic goals
- ⚙️ practice compassion and acceptance
- ⚙️ work within their limits and boundaries
- ⚙️ cultivate self-awareness and reflection
- ⚙️ do not expect themselves to have all the answers
- ⚙️ learn to benefit and learn from missteps, errors and experience
- ⚙️ confront problems and issues in a timely way
- ⚙️ have the ability to sit in silence and let silence “carry the load”
- ⚙️ practice flexibility.
- ⚙️ practice self-care
- ⚙️ develop a range of coping strategies

Additionally, **Resilient people tend to:**

- ⚙️ hold themselves accountable. Resilient people do not blame others or outside forces for their problems.
- ⚙️ are self-aware.
- ⚙️ be courageous and not afraid to ask for help.
- ⚙️ try not (or do not) compare themselves to others.
- ⚙️ know that setbacks, disappointments, upsets are part of life and that you cannot plan everything.
- ⚙️ know how to care and comfort themselves

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM RESILIENT?

You know that you are resilient when you are managing or you have already managed adversity, trauma, major setbacks, threats or challenges and worked through the issues.

You could also build awareness and understanding of your personal resilience using three easy to complete *RBJ* strategies:

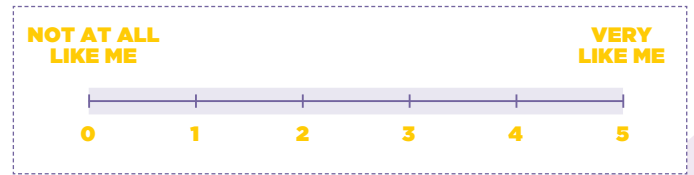
1. Complete the Resilience Building Journal Resilience Estimator – this will help you to estimate your current resilience factor.
2. Check your wellbeing and assess your resilience in the context of your whole health.
3. Answer the important awareness-building questions below and reflect on your personal resilience strategies.

These three strategies will help you build a picture of your current resilience. Reflection will help you decide on next steps.

1. The Resilience Estimator

These questions are designed to find out about the personal resources you have for managing stress. Susceptibility to stress has been found to be linked to the personality of the individual. We hope the questions are not too intrusive.

Please use the following scale to indicate how true each of the following statements is for you.



Place the number that best represents your answer in the brackets provided.

- I always take a measured look at a job to be done before starting it.
- I am mostly in control of my temper
- I like to assume complete responsibility for a job rather than share it with others
- I am able to focus on one thing when necessary
- I am able to say ‘no’ to people when I need to
- I feel that I am as good as the next person
- When confronted with a problem I usually remain optimistic about the outcome
- I drive myself harder than most
- I can usually break down a problem into manageable chunks
- I am very ambitious

Score Yourself

- ⚙️ Simply add up the numbers that you have put for each statement.
- ⚙️ Your score will range between 0 and 50.
- ⚙️ The higher your score, the stronger your resilience factor.

If you have a score of over 34 or over you are relatively high on resilience to stress. If you have a score of below 12 you are relatively low on resilience and you may wish to work on building it.

See Appendix 1 for more details.

2. Assess Your Whole Health

Take a few moments now to think about your personal resilience in terms of your whole health.

Take time to assess your physical health, mental and emotional health, behavioural health, your context and resources and your spirit.

What are you strong on? What could be improved or strengthened or given a little time, attention or respect?

3. Awareness-Building Questions

5 questions to help you to reflect on your current personal resilience in terms of emotional health and wellbeing:

1. What is your ability to receive - do you accept support if it is offered?
2. What is your ability to ask for assistance or support?
3. Are you running on empty? Why?
4. How do you best take care of you? If you know you are vulnerable in a situation, how do you act to protect yourself? What do you do to comfort yourself when upset?
5. What is your ability to manage your emotions? How emotional are you?

Think about your emotional resources and support. Who or what in your life makes you feel most loved? Who or what makes you feel strongest, most empowered? Who are what in your life makes you feel most calm and relaxed?

Think about your resilience over the past few months and over the past year.

5 questions to help you to reflect on the last year:

Last year....

1. What did I accomplish? What setbacks or disappointments did I have?
2. What have I learned?
3. What do I focus my attention on?
4. What have I focused my attention on?
5. What three to five goals will I focus on for the next year? How will these “fit” in my life? How will they create resilience, balance and boundaries in my life?

NOW.....

1. What three to five goals will I focus on for the next year? How will these ‘fit’ in my life? How will they create resilience, balance, and boundaries in my life?
2. What you would like to work on, build, change or improve in terms of your health, wellbeing, and resilience?

There are many ways to build, maintain and sustain resilience. Discovering ways to develop resilience is a personal journey and it begins with awareness and attention to what is important to you.



HOW CAN I BUILD MORE RESILIENCE?

Anyone can build resilience, no matter their life circumstances. Resilience is not elusive; it is very simple.

The following Resilience Building Journal strategies will help you build resilience in your life. The strategies are based on the **LifeMatters** theoretical and conceptual framework, which is a bio-psycho-social whole health model. This means that wellbeing and resilience are conceptualised as multidimensional in nature. The model proposes that there are five domains of **whole health** – body, mind, behaviour, context, and spirit. The model further postulates that what impacts health in one domain of our life affects all other domains. Each domain is independent, interdependent, and essential.

Everything affects everything.

Living a stress regulated, resilient life requires a healthy body, healthy thinking, feelings, and behaviours. Health and well-being are results of how we manage and how we balance our needs in all five domains.

The **LifeMatters** organisational framework, and the evidence-based strategies that will help you to build and maintain resilience for life, is called **TAKE FIVE**. This approach will help you develop:

- ⚙ better physical health
- ⚙ better mental and emotional health, optimism and mental fitness
- ⚙ better coping skills, aiding in overcoming obstacles and building strengths like grit and growth mindset (Mindset is defined as the view you take of yourself the world and the future – growth mindset is one that views life as challenging and changing and believes that there is always an opportunity for growth and change with dedicated hardwork and practice.
- ⚙ great self-aware self-care plans and buffer against setbacks and fallout from high stress, challenges or crisis
- ⚙ deepening inner peace, personal values and core strengths, and develop grit, gratitude, compassion and happiness habits.

There are three steps to building new skills. We call them the **Triple A: Awareness, Acquisition and Action**.

The first step is to invest time in becoming more aware of how you are doing and what you need to pay attention to – you have already done this for your values and resilience.

The second step is acquisition – what habits, skills or behaviours do you need to acquire to develop and improve things for yourself. This journal has lots of strategies and ideas for you to try out.

The third and final step is action – decide to act to make change. Just do it.

Resilient people hold themselves accountable and this journal will help you to do that.

Use The Resilience Building Journal to review and reflect as you practice and employ these steps at university, work, and in life.



TAKE

5

Evidence-based
strategies for
building resilience

STRATEGY 1

BODY

LOOK AFTER YOUR BODY - YOU ASK A LOT OF IT EACH DAY

For mental health, you first need physical health; work on keeping your body healthy through hydration, nourishment, exercise, and rest. It is impossible to feel well, think clearly, make safe decisions, or enjoy work and life without good physical health. The 'Thrive and Survive Theory of Wellbeing' and Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' identify our physical wellbeing as crucial to our ability to thrive in life.

Think about your physical health – how well are you currently meeting your basic physical needs? How would it feel to start your day feeling as good and comfortable as possible? Without 'running on empty'? Take great care of yourself so that you can keep your energy and resilience strong. You have the skills, competency, and compassion required to take great care of yourself. Sleep well to start each day with a full tank and try to ensure good hydration and nourishment.

EXERCISE AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ARE IMPORTANT

There are both physical and psychological benefits to being active. Physical activity and exercise are game-changers for our health – if it were a drug, we would call it a wonder drug. Physical exercise combined with a balanced diet is the most natural way of creating and maintaining physical and mental energy. It is also a great way to relax and 'let off steam'. The greater the pressure you are under, the more useful you will find physical exercise. In the short term, it provides a fast release of tension by giving your muscles a good work out and relieving tightness. In the long term, regular exercise enables your body to better support you through times of stress. A little each day, keeps stress at bay.

Exercise (preferably outdoors) helps you to feel more relaxed in your body and health. There are lots of different types of exercise, many of which do not require equipment or specialist skills. Any kind of exercise is good – choose what you enjoy best, or why not try a variety of activities until you find your favourites. Restorative activities such as yoga, Pilates, stretching, and massage are also beneficial, and aid circulation and flexibility. Outdoor activities are a great choice – fresh air and full spectrum lighting are wonderful for your health.

The connection between movement and the brain goes deeper than you might think.

Exercise improves energy, focus, concentration, cognition, memory, self-esteem, calm, sleep, and your overall sense of well-being.

A healthy body really does create and support a healthy mind and spirit. This is because increased physical energy leads to increased emotional and mental energy. Good physical health sets the foundation for wellbeing and resilience. Master the skill of taking good care of your body and you will have more energy to cope with everything, especially when you are stressed and under pressure.

Be Active And Exercise Daily

it will strengthen your body, calm your mind, and improve the quality of your sleep.

SLEEP IS ESSENTIAL TO YOUR HEALTH

Take good care of yourself by ensuring your body has enough time to rest and rejuvenate. Good quality sleep is a basic human need, it helps your body repair and refresh itself so that you can function well during the day. **Sleep is your superpower.** The World Health Organisation (WHO) advise that adults require between 7-9 hours of sleep to restore energy and maintain health. Your body really needs rest and sleep. When your body is tired and not fully rested, every area of your life is affected. Think back to the LifeMatters whole health model – how does sleep affect each area? Not sleeping affects you in the following ways:

Body - low energy, weariness, and fatigue.

Mind - poor attention, concentration, and information processing; emotions become fragile; learning is impaired; and everything can seem more negative and difficult.

Behaviour - low activity, increased irritability and irrationality, and low energy to tackle and solve problems.

Context - socializing may be impaired, and this can raise stress levels.

Spirit - low energy and easily disheartened.

Good sleep is of major benefit to your physical and mental health and wellbeing, as well as to your alertness and clear thinking during the working day. When it comes to self-care, the best thing you can do is to give yourself a good night's rest.

Sleep is nature's repair and refreshment activity.

Not for nothing did Shakespeare say sleep 'knits up the ravelled sleeve of care' and described it as the 'chief nourisher in life's feast'.

TAKE 5 to SLEEP Well Tips for a restful and healthy sleep



Try to get at least eight hours of good quality rest and sleep every 24 hours – it makes the other sixteen hours so much easier to manage.

Follow the **TAKE FIVE** sleep hygiene advice below to improve your quality of sleep.

The quality of your sleep is very much dependant on the quality of your day; the potential for good quality sleep begins when you get out of bed in the morning – not shortly before and/or after you get into bed at night.

Take good care of your whole health during the day and you will sleep better at night.

BODY

Your inner body clock (circadian rhythm) works on a 24-hour day/night cycle. It has a huge influence on the timing and quality of sleep. Keeping your circadian rhythm regular will have a positive effect on your sleep.

- ☀ Get fresh air and full spectrum natural light during the day.
- ☀ Keep stress in check – daily exercise routines will help enormously.
- ☀ Practice the habit of an unhurried and quiet ‘getting ready for bed’ routine as this will gradually slow your metabolism and prepares your system for rest. Your last exercise should be at least two hours before sleep.
- ☀ Drink hot water or milky drinks (ideally with honey or camomile) for a calming effect
- ☀ Do not drink sugary drinks, tea, coffee, or fizzy drinks within 4-5 hours of bedtime as these may keep you alert and awake.
- ☀ Avoid using medication to help you sleep (unless under medical supervision). It can be addictive and in the long run it will throw your body off its natural rhythm.
- ☀ Avoid alcohol; it does not help sleeplessness, as it will only make you feel ‘unslept’.

MIND

Are you mindful or is your mind full? Try to be ‘present’ and mindful of your attention and focus. Be disciplined and ‘stand guard at the door of your mind’ because the way you think really does impact on the way you feel. Your mind can be calm and ready for sleep if you exercise daily, practice healthy thinking skills (see Strategy 2 – Mind), positive emotions, and avoid cognitive overload as much as possible. Cognitive overload is when your brain is overstimulated or you have too much information, data, or tasks to process in a short space of time.

BEHAVIOUR

- ☀ Go to bed at a regular time, avoid daytime naps, especially after 3pm.
- ☀ Establish regular routine times for activities such as exercise, leisure, and mealtimes.
- ☀ Develop good relaxation and decompression routines
- ☀ Avoid watching TV, listening to the radio, smoking, eating, or drinking in bed. Switch off or remove your phone from your bedroom at night.
- ☀ Avoid work or studying in bed, or using social media in bed - especially at times when you need to sleep.
- ☀ Do not spend hours tossing and turning in bed. If you cannot sleep, focus on relaxing until you feel sleepy again. If this does not work, it is best to get up and distract yourself for a while, and then return to bed.

CONTEXT

Make your bedroom and home a sanctuary – a place for you to relax and restore, and a place of calm that you can retreat to. Keep your bedroom **cool, clean and clutter free**. Make your bedroom a technology free zone.

SPIRIT

Live Your Values. Align your behaviours with your values by trying to match your outer behaviours with your inner beliefs. Avoid pretending to be someone you are not or acting in ways that do not align with your values. Live and behave authentically and you will rest and sleep better at night.

REFLECTION

How are you currently taking care of your body? How is your sleep and physical activity? What would you like to improve on? What changes will you make?



STRATEGY 2

MIND

STRATEGY 2 - MIND IS ABOUT TAKING CARE OF YOUR MIND, MENTAL FITNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

Three strategies that work well for these are mental fitness, healthy thinking, and emotional intelligence.

MENTAL FITNESS To maximise brain health and potential, it is important to take good care of our physical health, by ensuring good nutrition, exercise, rest and renewal, sleep, and achieving balanced stimulation and full spectrum lighting.

In today's busy world, human brains are much more vulnerable to overstimulation than under stimulation. Our 24/7 life is tiring for our mental and cognitive energy. The cognitive load can be extraordinarily high – there are so many tasks, details, and things to remember. The more mentally fit we are, the better we cope during the working day. Practical strategies such as lists, mindfulness, scheduling short breaks, digital downtime (mute and move) and pacing ourselves throughout the working day can all help.

HEALTHY THINKING is an internal skill used to promote positive emotions, shut down counterproductive thinking, build motivation and ensure you focus on the task at hand.

Healthy thinking is a skill you can learn; it starts by being aware of your thought habits.

Each day we have approximately 60,000 thoughts, and the quality and tone of your thoughts affect the quality of your day. As humans, we have a bias towards the negative and a tendency to see the danger and downside of things. This is an evolutionary hangover from the days when we needed to keep ourselves safe from predatory animals. Awareness of this means that we can move to step two: the acquisition of new skills to overcome this bias.

To acquire more helpful healthy thinking, try to discipline your thoughts, 'stand guard at the door of your mind' and only allow helpful, positive, or compassionate thoughts influence your day.

Negative thinking drains your energy, makes your spirit sink, and can increase anxiety and stress.

Try to bring awareness and healthy thinking to your work, and especially to challenging situations at work.

The way you think affects the way you feel. Today, and for the next few days, support resilience building by being aware of your thoughts and practice healthy thinking.

If you become aware that you are worrying or being negative in your thinking, use the 3 C's to refocus to a more helpful and compassionate approach – catch it, check it, and change it.

Catch it: notice negative thinking as quickly as possible. **Check it:** ask yourself, is this a feeling or a fact? Is thinking this way helpful or harmful to me? Am I being negative or unnecessarily harsh? **Change it:** reframe it and swap the negative thought(s) for more helpful, compassionate, realistic, or positive thoughts.

This three-step approach is grounded in the science of positive neuroplasticity. It is very useful to help you overcome the brain's negativity bias, release painful thoughts and feelings, and replace them with self-compassion, self-worth, joy, and inner peace.

Healthy thinking will help you to: cast off harsh self-criticisms and negative self-images; cope with grief and anxiety; navigate through the pressures of high stress; navigate fallout of any kind of crisis; and manage obstacles in relationships, parenting, or at work. It includes effective ways to interact with others and to repair and deepen important relationships and build optimism, take chances, and embrace life.






EMOTIONAL HEALTH

How well do you do? Do you lead with your emotions, or can you stay calm and grounded? How do you present yourself to the world? Practice a growth mindset to feel less stressed and support healthy thinking.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional intelligence (EI) means to be able to express your emotions and be your genuine, authentic self, and engaging with others in ways that allows them to do the same.

There are five skills involved in EI:

-  awareness of our own emotions.
-  managing our emotions
-  perspective taking.
-  awareness of other people's emotions.
-  managing situations and the emotions of others.

Psychological research has discovered that emotions are infectious and are spread within seconds in social situations.

Work and home are social situations; therefore, you have an opportunity to be intelligent about emotions and spread pleasant, compassionate, and positive emotions.

Positive emotions are a powerful resource, and feeling good is vital to our wellbeing and general health.

At work, **we need a minimum of three times more positive emotions than negative in order to work efficiently.** Any less than this impacts on our ability to manage stress and energy throughout the working day.

The skill here is to be aware; 'stand guard at the door of your mind' and build the discipline of healthy thinking and positive emotions. Positive emotions will build and support confidence, happiness, creativity, flexibility, optimism, perseverance, physical and mental health, productivity and energy, communication, team dynamics, connection, and compassion – all things that are helpful in reducing stress at work.

Practical skills for spreading positive emotions are simple. The use of good communication skills and connection with colleagues will spread positive emotion. The below examples are simple ways that you can promote and spread positive emotions.

- **Greet your colleagues in the morning with a smile - it sounds simple, maybe even basic, but it's important and it works!**
- **Be sure to comment when a colleague does a good job - recognising your colleagues' efforts is a great way to connect and spread positive emotions.**

Positive emotions help us to build and broaden our emotionally intelligent behaviours. Use the 3:1 ratio and try to have at least three positive emotions for every negative emotion.

Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.

REFLECTION

How are you currently taking care of your mind, mental fitness, and mental health? What is working well for you? What would you like to improve on? What changes will you make?



STRATEGY 3

BEHAVIOUR

MANAGE STRESS AND ANXIETY BY SETTING GOALS

Healthy Behaviours strengthen real time resilience. Two strategies proven to work are Managing Stress and Setting Goals

MANAGING STRESS

Stress impacts all of us differently, so be aware of your body's warning signs that stress is building. It is important to ensure that you take care of your whole health needs during the working day.

Proactively taking care of your physical and mental wellness helps to keep stress and anxiety well-regulated and managed.

Regular hydration, exercise, and a healthy diet, as well as fresh air and enough sleep can help disperse cortisol and help keep tension under control.

Stress is inevitable. It can be positive or negative, and how we manage stress and pressure makes a huge difference not only to our health and well-being but also to our resilience and ability to cope.

Stress can be positive and even enhance performance so long as it is short term and well managed.

It is a mistake to think that just by working harder and longer hours that you will get more done.

Think about it...

What would happen to an athlete if they trained twelve hours a day and did not take time to rest, recover and refresh? Within a short period of time, they would be stressed, possibly injured and unable to perform at the required level.

The reality is that without recovery time, you maintain stress at a high level longer and risk fatigue and burnout much faster.

Take a break – 'always available' work or living cultures breed problems including fatigue, decreased concentration, compassion fatigue, and increased risk of errors, to name but a few. Evidence shows that health and performance improve when we take breaks to reset and refocus. Try to pause and take some time regularly, no matter how brief it is, as this will help to pace and sustain you.

It is important to **not let things build up** – try to take rest and recovery time in every 24-hour cycle.

It is helpful to learn several different approaches to coping, to vary the strategy from stressor to stressor,



to not always use the same approach. Learn to be flexible, use your best judgement and apply the right strategy and tactics to each situation and circumstance. Keep stress in check – control stress or stress will control you!

Our coping reservoir can be replenished or drained by the way we respond to and regulate stress.

We all have our own ways of understanding and coping with stress and some strategies are more productive than others. Coping skills are methods a person uses to deal with life's challenges and stressful situations.

Psychological science has identified four types of coping skills – problem focused, emotion focused, compassion focused, and avoidance; the most effective will depend very much on the circumstances needing to be managed.

1. Problem focused coping

Where we have some control over the situation, and we can change things, problem focused coping tends to be most productive.

Examples of **problem focused coping skills** are;

- ⚙️ prioritising
- ⚙️ problem solving
- ⚙️ time management
- ⚙️ talking through issues to find solutions.

2. Emotion focused coping

Where we cannot change or control a situation or circumstance, emotion focused coping can limit the negative impact and help us to make things more manageable. That said, some emotion focused coping can be unhelpful and can even make stresses worse.

Examples of **positive emotion focused coping** are:

- ⚙️ seeking comfort and social support from friends or family
- ⚙️ emotional regulation through meditation or mindfulness or journaling
- ⚙️ talking things through with a buddy, mentor, coach or therapist

Examples of **unhelpful emotion focused coping** are:

- ⚙️ inappropriate expression of emotion - shouting, cursing etc
- ⚙️ comfort eating, drinking or drug use
- ⚙️ wishful thinking
- ⚙️ brooding/sulking
- ⚙️ blaming others

Individuals who react to stressful events in a highly emotional way can add to other people's stress and anxiety as well as their own. Why not start by slowing down, taking stock of stress and understanding what is causing an emotional reaction?

It may be worth noting that **the Higher the emotion, the lower the Logic.**

3. Compassion Focused Coping

Compassion is defined as awareness, sensitivity, acuity and sympathy for emotions or distress in self or others, and a gentle, mindful desire to alleviate, accommodate, solve, or prevent suffering in self or others. Compassionate people recognize that failure, errors, and imperfection are all part of our shared humanity and do not exaggerate, minimize, or deny pain or suffering in themselves or others. Compassion focused coping is the **best** strategy for building happiness and resilience. Compassion is both an intra-personal and inter-personal skill which is learned, developed and evolves with time and experience.

4. Coping by Avoidance

Rarely works – if we avoid or deny that there is an issue then we do not fix it. It may be helpful in the immediate, acute phase of stress, but will quickly become counter-productive.

Learn to be flexible, use your best judgement and apply the right strategy and tactics to the right situation and circumstance.

Building and maintaining good coping skills requires situational awareness as context is very important to applying the right strategy, at the right time, in the right way.

Well-being is affected by multiple stressors as well as positive aspects of working life. Attention to individual coping reservoirs can help promote well-being and build resilience.

How we manage our energy generally and specifically during the working day has a direct effect on prevention and how we cope with the stresses and strains of the day/week/months.

We all have our own ways of understanding and coping with stress and some strategies are more productive than others. Obtaining and maintaining good **coping skills** does take practice. However trying out, using, calibrating and building these **skills** becomes easier over time. It is helpful to write things down Keep a track of what is working or not working for you.

Coping skills are just that - skills. Like any skill, especially ones used in times of high stress or pressure they must be practiced in order to be efficient. If a doctor or nurse has not been trained or practiced chest compressions or resuscitation protocols they could not be expected to competently run or assist with a cardiac arrest. The same applies to stress management, coping and resilience skills. **Practice is critical** for success. Calibrating and building these skills becomes easier over time.

SET GOALS

Goals provide us with structure and direction; they improve our performance, build confidence, motivate us, and develop our problem-solving strategies.

Goal setting is particularly helpful during stressful and challenging times, as it helps us to set boundaries and manage competing demands. It helps us to focus on aligning demands, which aids us in managing our working day effectively.

Goals help us maintain a sense of control and purpose. The following three strategies help us focus in on goals.

1. Go for 3-5 wins of the day, every day.

At the beginning of each day, take time to list three realistic wins that you would like to achieve. At the end of the day, note and acknowledge those wins. Remember, partial victories and new learnings count as wins!

Meaningful purpose is a very important human need.

2. Use the OHIO rule: Only Handle it Once






Identify the tasks and the priorities for the day. Check for opportunities to prioritise and complete the task there and then – do not revisit tasks

3. Managing your time and Attention

Time is not something we get; it is something we take

Where we put our time and attention really matters. Distraction and micro-interruptions can be stressful and energy draining. Try to be intentional with your time and attention. To be energy and time efficient, stick to one task at a time and give people and tasks your full, mindful, and undivided attention.

Five Golden Rules for taking time:

-  Plan and set goals – plan your moves then move your plans to prioritise
-  List your priorities for the day
-  Acknowledge obstacles and barriers and act quickly to remove them
-  Notice and acknowledge progress and small wins
-  Summarise success. Tick tasks off the to-do list; it will reduce stress and give you an energy boost.

Managing attention is a very helpful strategy.

Try to be present. When you are at work be fully at work, when you are at home be fully at home.

KISS

KISS each day, this means keep it simple and structured. Maintain awareness of your workload demands and keep things organised and disciplined through structure. This is a great tool to help you manage your attention and energy and build resilience.

KEEP IT

- ⚙️ Make sure each working day has a beginning, middle and end.
- ⚙️ Research on stress has highlighted the value of having a short planning time at the beginning and end of each day, this helps you focus and keep up to date with what you have accomplished. This is especially important for when working days are difficult, stressful, or exceptionally busy.

SIMPLE

- ⚙️ Short clear goals and communications will help you focus on what is important and get to tasks in a straightforward and efficient manner.

STRUCTURED

Structure is very useful.

- ⚙️ Outline tasks that need to be done, the time in or by which they need to be done, and who is responsible for them. .
- ⚙️ Decide on which tasks need to be done and in what order. Watch out – indecisiveness leads to indecision. Plan your moves then move your plans.
- ⚙️ Schedule coffee breaks, lunch and home time.

Learn from Experience, Be Flexible, Keep Learning

Use a range of coping strategies and develop a grit and growth mindset. Listed are some examples of resilience skills worth learning.

Examples of resilience skills worth learning

- ⚙️ Flexibility – have several coping strategies and try different approaches if one does not work, which is a problem-solving strategy!
- ⚙️ Self-confidence – this means holding a belief that you have capacity and can succeed. Work on building a growth mindset.
- ⚙️ Self-awareness and compassion, and especially self-compassion.
- ⚙️ Optimism – this allows you to focus on the positive and imagine the good that can result from circumstances.
- ⚙️ Grit – stick with things, do not give up easily, persevere when you face obstacles, and have direction and commitment to your goals or desired outcomes.
- ⚙️ Responsibility, accountability, and patience.
- ⚙️ Communication and teamwork.

REFLECTION

Take this opportunity to reflect on your behaviour. What your currently doing? Are your current strategies working? Which of the above tools and strategies would you like to incorporate to help tackle stress and build resilience?



STRATEGY 4

CONTEXT

CREATE A CALM, COMFORTABLE, AND RESILIENT LIFE

By context, we mean your home, finances, family, friends, social life, leisure, pleasure, and resources. Below are some domains where you can develop habits, skills and behaviours that can make areas of your life happier, healthier, and more content and resilient.

- 1. Home - make it your sanctuary.**
- 2. Friends, family and supports.**
- 3. Your money - manage it!**
- 4. Work and professional life.**
- 5. Leisure and pleasure.**

HOME - MAKE IT YOUR SANCTUARY

Create calm in the world in which you live and play. To live a resilient life, we need to be able to regularly step back, rest, reflect and restore. A calm place of sanctuary helps to provide clarity on everything that is going on around us. It is an important life skill to be able to sort our surroundings in a way that works well for us. This mostly comes down to paying attention and balancing things in our home, surroundings, and environment. Focus on what works for you and work on reducing any stresses and strains. Sort out things that you know will make life easier and more comfortable for you.

For example, perhaps your bedroom could be tidier or more restful and relaxing? Declutter! **Simplify it!**

When we think of our surroundings or context we usually just think of physical things like the room we are in or our neighbourhood. But in reality our environment is taken up by people and activities just as much.



FRIENDS, FAMILY AND SUPPORTS

Get connected. Build strong and positive relationships with loved ones and friends. These important people can provide you with needed support, guidance, and acceptance, in good and bad times. Maintain your friendships, keep in touch, and make an effort with relationships that are nourishing, energising, and important to you.

'Friendship is a sheltering tree.' - Samuel Taylor Coleridge

There are times when we can all benefit from help and advice from others, be that financially or in your home, work, or social life. The world can be a big and lonely place! When you are feeling down, have experienced loss or are under severe pressure, it is easy to think that you are all alone, that no one else has felt how you feel, or that no one would ever want to talk about it with you. That is simply not true.

Reach out and ask for support. Do not be deterred if the first person you ask gives no help at all; ask someone else. **Please do not suffer in silence.** You deserve to be supported and helped when you need it.

There are many organisations, both local and national, that you may connect with for support. There is a lot of truth in the old saying, 'a problem shared is a problem halved'. You will find that these people and organisations have either faced the same stress themselves or have a comprehensive understanding of the issues with which you are coping. They will know what you are talking about and will be able to give you advice, point you in the right direction, or simply listen to you. You don't need to feel isolated, and by building your own 'support team', you will have taken a major step forward in coping with your life's ups and downs.

So, who would be on your team? That really depends on you and who you want to include. It could be as simple as your family and friends, or your doctor. It may be several people or groups who share your interests, hobbies, or experiences.



You may be trying to overcome some serious problems in your life, and you may need more specific help. In these circumstances there are often both local and national groups or organisations that you can approach in addition to your doctor. A little bit of research can go a long way. Online search engines will list all sorts of voluntary organisations, as well as facilities run by local authorities, public healthcare, or social care providers. Directories also list all sorts of national helplines.

We suggest that you begin to build up your own 'address book' of people to connect with.

Practice a positive mental attitude. It is contagious! Other people will become more positive, and everybody benefits, including you!

- ⚙️ Each day, name three good things about your context, your surroundings, or the environment in which you live.
- ⚙️ Actively promote a positive attitude, this really helps you thrive and survive during the natural challenges of life.
- ⚙️ Make time for fun, humour, and light-hearted play – see funny films, look at funny books, cartoons or comedy strips, or visit your local comedy club.
- ⚙️ Communicate with those around you, either by talking with them or by doing things together. Build a network of friends and a variety of fun things to do together. Master the habits of creating calm around you and you'll make everything and everyone around you feel comfortable and easier and nicer to be with.

YOUR MONEY – MANAGE IT!

Managing your money wisely will help you reduce stress and anxiety in your life. The money you spend is more important than the money you earn. This is important at every stage of life, even when you are a student and have little money. Teenage and student years are a good time to build discipline around spending and managing money. Spend wisely and when you start earning, follow the below seven steps to financial freedom.

7 Steps to financial Freedom – Jennifer Dennehy, SYS Wealth Group

1. **Save minimum 10% of all you earn**
2. **Control your expenses**
3. **Invest your capital and let compound interest do the work for you**
4. **Protect and preserve your capital**
5. **Buy your own home and put a tax efficient estate plan in place**
6. **Insurance is the foundation to your financial well-being – insure yourself against loss of income and illness**
7. **Invest in your biggest asset – yourself**

Disclaimer – This information is not financial advice. Always seek independent financial advice.

WORK AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

University and working life involve getting along with other people. Communicating and interacting well with others helps us get the job done. Sometimes it can be frustrating when a person irritates or challenges us in some way. However, we should be aware that most people are trying to 'do right' and it is in our best interest to be generous towards them, so long as their actions are not harming us in any way.

Communicating and connecting with others at work is best when you:

- ⚙️ remember that everyone is different.
- ⚙️ keep the boundaries between you clear. Respect other peoples' right to take care of themselves.
- ⚙️ respect other peoples' culture, dignity, and world view.
- ⚙️ be kind and show positive behaviours.
- ⚙️ always be truthful and honest.
- ⚙️ show you are pleased when others are kind.
- ⚙️ treat others in ways that you like to be treated.
- ⚙️ think before you act. Do not be mean, nasty, or unkind. What you put into life you will get out of life.

Starting at university or on a new course or job can be stressful – follow the below advice.

1. Familiarise yourself with your new surroundings

- ⚙️ Go to induction sessions, they are very useful for helping you orientate yourself and meet with others who are in the same group.
- ⚙️ Walk around and get familiar with where everything is located.
- ⚙️ Get familiar with the surrounding area and the transport links.
- ⚙️ Make sure you are in your comfort zone in terms of surroundings.
- ⚙️ Ask if you need help.

2. Learn to manage work commitments and time

- ⚙️ Be proactive and prioritise getting organised early.
- ⚙️ Take a step-by-step approach; be strategic about outcomes, attendance at teaching and learning activities, and keeping up with assignments.
- ⚙️ Focus on the core concepts and skills you are learning. Ask questions, make comments, and discuss things with colleagues.
- ⚙️ Always admit to mistakes or errors. Discuss, learn and move on
- ⚙️ Remember there is more to university than your course of study. Try to integrate with other disciplines in the university to develop your knowledge of related areas.

3. Connect with your discipline

- ⚙️ Read broadly and stretch yourself.
- ⚙️ Try to see and make connections; you will benefit.
- ⚙️ You are a part of something awesome – join in, contribute, and appreciate it.

4. Keep trying to learn new things right from the start

- ⚙️ Invest time in reading papers and following up on references.
- ⚙️ Think about topics that hold your personal interest. Keep your thinking broad and give yourself plenty of time to develop ideas.
- ⚙️ Be flexible and open to new ideas in your thinking and learning. Develop both yourself and your discipline.

5. Take good care of yourself

- ⚙️ Take time for self-care
- ⚙️ Find people both within your discipline or subject and in the wider university community to connect and spend time with..
- ⚙️ Join clubs and societies – this is a great way to make friends and explore passions.
- ⚙️ Keep fit and well.

LEISURE & PLEASURE

Rest, relaxation, free and fun time are essential to our energy, well-being, and resilience.

Emotional health and fitness are difficult to achieve if we are overworked, frazzled, or fatigued.

Leisure and pleasure time is very important for positive emotions, life satisfaction, and freedom from the negative effects of stress. It is good to slow down and give attention to self-renewal.

Health is not simply the absence of illness; it is excellence and flourishing in all aspects of the human condition, including play.

If you want to actively promote your well-being and resilience, it is essential to enrich your life with leisure and pleasure. There are many benefits; engaging in physical leisure activities, especially outdoors, will improve your physical and consequently your mental health. Fun and participation in hobbies and other recreational activities improves your psychological well-being and physical health, including improved immune system, heart, and brain health.

Freedom from the demands of work or duty and time to enjoy hobbies, sports or social connections can boost energy and help us reset.

Through leisure, pleasure, and free time, you can replenish yourself and wash out stress and stagnant energy, allowing opportunity for new energy to flow. A different headspace is an important and useful mood lifting and stress reducing strategy. Try to build in free and fun time every day.

Find wonder in all you do, even in the smallest of things. Cultivate this habit and you will reduce stress.

Look for something soothing and beautiful in each day. Enjoy life's simple pleasures. What is your favourite fun activity? What is your most relaxing thing to do? What is your favourite music, film, or joke? Take some time to engage in leasurable and pleasurable activities to reset and refresh. Find fun and laughter in your day.

Work, rest, and then play.

REFLECTION

Take this opportunity to reflect on your context. What is working well? Are there any changes that you can make to better support yourself?





STRATEGY 5

SPIRIT

DEVELOP GREAT SELF-CARE AND DEEPEN INNER PEACE WITH GRATITUDE, COMPASSION, AND HAPPINESS HABITS.

If every activity you undertake is accompanied by concerns for what is ahead, you will be living and working in a state of restlessness.

Instead, try to think of the present moment, what is important, and make plans for the care of your spirit.

Apply your full attention to following through and ensuring your efforts are directed in the present; this is the most calming way to operate.

Mindfulness and mental relaxation skills help keep our spirit calm and centred.

Focus on the present to promote coping and resilience.

THE PRACTICE OF SELF-CARE

Self-care is the corner stone to building resilience. Self-care is primarily a preventative strategy and involves cultivating habits, skills, and behaviours to sustain wellbeing and build resilience. It is best to take time to **consider how you would like** to support self-care and acquire the habits, skills and behaviours that will help. As you know the Resilience Building Journal approach to building new habits and routines is called **Triple A - Awareness, Acquisition, and Action.**

Step 1 is Awareness

- ⚙️ Become aware of your needs by using the **TAKE FIVE** method.
- ⚙️ Become aware of what you can and cannot control in the context of your life, such as friends, family, finances, and work.
- ⚙️ Use your awareness to reflect on what you need in terms of new skills and behaviours to build health and well-being in all five domains.

Step 2 is Acquisition

- ⚙️ Acquire the habits, skills, and behaviours to build and maintain whole health and meet all your human needs – especially health and wellness needs.
- ⚙️ Identify and practice using strategies for developing, implementing, and maintaining healthy boundaries. Get personal – in what areas of your life do you need to tighten up boundaries?

Step 3 is Action

- ⚙️ Take your self-awareness and the newly acquired skills and put them to use daily, to build health, resilience, and happiness. Self-aware, Self-Care is about paying attention to what you need and following through on the current reality of what you need to feel healthy and well.
- ⚙️ **TAKE FIVE** to manage stress, improve resilience and protect against burnout. Reflect on your human needs first; the five domains will help you to focus in on what needs attention.
- ⚙️ **Develop a practice of self-care tailored to your personal stresses and needs.** Self-care can be small, simple tweaks to your week, such as moving more, eating better, or getting to bed earlier. Self-care can also go deeper, such as taking time to pause, go within, reflect, and get in touch with how your habits, skills or behaviours are serving you in the short and long term.
- ⚙️ **Create a personal support plan.** Writing things down and keeping a record takes the guesswork out of what to do to prevent stress and are under high pressure. A strategy makes it easier to stick to what you know, and this helps you feel a greater sense of hope and control.

A personal support plan (PSP) is a useful tool for facilitating the practice of self-care. A PSP is essentially a record of how you intend to take care of your well-being, your health, and your resilience. It is a useful tool for managing stress, optimizing performance, and building wellbeing. PSPs can help you feel in control and enhance your planning, confidence, and outcomes.

A personal support plan is best as a written record of a plan of action – designed for you by you to meet your health and well-being needs. Below is an example of a PSP for body health. PATs are Personal Achievement Targets – you decide on your PATs.

PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN – SELF-CARE PRESCRIPTION FOR YOUR BODY HEALTH

Why not start by listing some **SMART** PAT's right here:

Examples:

- Take a short walk every day
- Eat fruit every day
- Late nights only at weekends

Add your best ideas here:

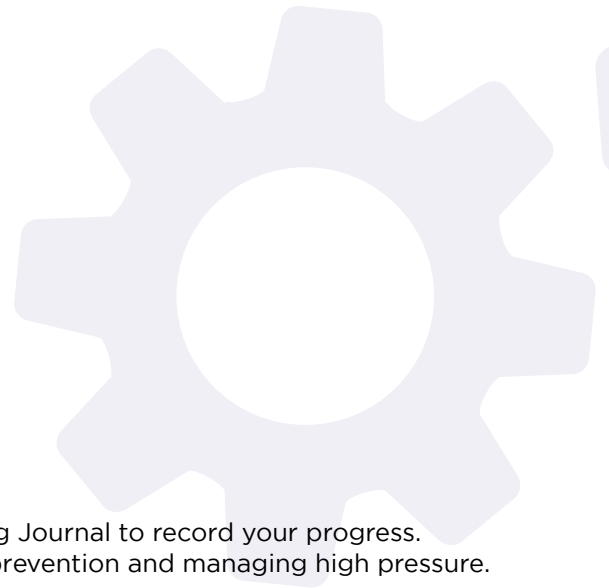
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

NOTES

A good personal support plan should not only focus on problems or needs; it should be a way of managing aspects of your life to support your resilience and make life more joyful.

You can benefit from writing things down.

- ⚙️ You observe and see objectively.
- ⚙️ Things become simpler and clearer.
- ⚙️ You gain perspective and see the bigger picture.
- ⚙️ It provides time to pause before acting.
- ⚙️ You remember it.
- ⚙️ You act on it.
- ⚙️ You remember it
- ⚙️ You act on it
- ⚙️ It provides a record of your progress.



Keep note of what works for you and use your Resilience Building Journal to record your progress. Remember, keeping a journal takes the guesswork out of stress prevention and managing high pressure.

Some ideas for self-care are:



**Structure
& simplify life
sleep well**



**Exercise regularly
& eat well**



**Learn
& laugh daily**



**Find joy, focus
& flexibility**



**Connect with
others**



**Appreciate
& give thanks**



**Rest, reflect
& reset**



**Evolve -
adjust & develop
naturally as
life changes**

To improve your well-being you might focus on the five domains of whole health; think of a health issue you would like to manage better and have a plan a personal support plan or a personalized care plan to manage it better.

Here are some TAKE FIVE strategies to improve resilience

Whatever aspect of self-care you choose to focus on, it is best to be very specific about your PSP. It helps to use a **SMART** plan, which is a tried and tested tool for success in business. Your plan should be **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and have a Timescale**. SMART plans help put an onus on you to follow through and act – knowing what and when you'll do something makes it easier to start.

It is best to be firm but not rigid with your plans.



PILLAR 01 BODY

- Exercise daily to reduce stress and increase energy
- Keep Hydrated – drink water
- Optimal nutrition
- Rest and Digest
- Relax and Reset
- Sleep
- Cut down / out 'brain drainers': junk food, caffeine, alcohol, sugars



PILLAR 02 MIND

- Increase wellbeing by trying mental relaxation to calm the mind
- Use reflection
- Try puzzles & crossword to stretch the mind
- Brain Gym to get clear thinking and confident decision making
- Develop mindfulness
- Develop healthy thinking
- Visualize Health & wellbeing
- Sleep



PILLAR 03 BEHAVIOUR

- Engage
- Communicate and connect with others
- Act to protect yourself and your goals
- 'Drop-in' on yourself every day
- Review and refine where you are up to in relation to your life goals and desires
- Plan for pleasant enjoyable days : Be proactive
- Make wise food and drink choices



PILLAR 04 CONTEXT

- Make your environment comfortable
- Get plenty of rest and reset periods, leisure or pleasure with friends or family
- Work in 'chunks', don't have an unrealistically heavy workload
- Cut down / out hectic days or late nights
- Cut down 'jobs' and being busy with stuff, focus on outcome
- Manage money wisely



PILLAR 05 SPIRIT

- Meaningful Purpose
- Gratitude Practice
- Mindfulness
- Compassion for self and others



Sleep Designing and maintaining a reasonable work-rest-sleep cycle is a vital element of self-care. Sleep is essential to our health. The World Health Organisation recommends that we get between seven and nine hours of sleep every 24 hours. To get that amount of sleep, we need two to three hours of wind down time to achieve a good sleep. Ideally, a well-managed day should be no longer than twelve hours to ensure time for rest, reset, recovery and sleep. Please see the sleep hygiene section above in Strategy 1 – Body.

A better work and home life starts with a healthy, happy, and resilient you.

Q. What small steps do you think I can take to become more resilient about rejection?

Rejection, pressure and stress are a normal part of life, it is a good idea to learn how to BUFFER against pressures, stresses, rejections or times of transition. Evidence shows that personal resilience and quality relationships in our lives can act as a buffer or a protective factor, particularly during times of challenge and transition. There are steps we can take also to help our physical and emotional wellbeing – to put us & keep us in a good place – so try BUFFER

BODY HEALTH - being aware of how your body feels when you are stressed is the first step. Stress impacts us all differently, so be aware of your body's warning signs that stress is building. Eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly, getting fresh air, and enough sleep can help to keep tension under control. Take great care of your health and avoid running on empty or low energy.

UNDERSTAND - your context, what is happening, and what precisely is making you stressed or uncomfortable. By understanding what your stresses, you can start to use positive coping strategies. Try not to personalise things that may not be personal.

FOCUS - on what you **can** control, not what you cannot. Write down your goals for the day. Small steps. Keep things simple and structured. Focus on the positives, what is realistic and what is achievable.

FIND BALANCE - make sure **energy out** is balanced with **energy in**. Step back and rest when you have had a stressful day. Be gentle on yourself. Find three wins for each day and write them down. Feel good about what you have achieved.

ENGAGE - with others and ask for help when you need it. Relationships are a key determinant of health and wellbeing. Communicate regularly with family, friends and colleagues. You may find that others are also feeling stressed, and that shared experience can help to normalise things for you. You may find that they can support you and help you to cope better.

REST - rest, relax and restore. Develop a decompression and reset routine. Perhaps it's going for a walk, listening to music, or phoning a friend. Use resources to help you to manage pressure and feel supported. Remember the importance of relationships, connections, and reconnections – the power of human interaction should never be underestimated.

A transition is the psychological process people go through to come to terms with a situation, make sense of it, and come to live with it; this is something we all experience at various stages throughout our lives.

We are all in life development, ages and stages, transition at university from year to year, from remote teaching back to in person teaching and learning; we are mindful of the additional stress and challenges faced as you work to re-establish connections and rebuild old relationships and make new connections and friendships.

Q. I get really anxious coming up to exam time and it's almost overwhelming, how can I build resilience to exam stress?

It is all in the preparation. Exam preparation does not start a few weeks out from the exam – it starts at the beginning of each term. Important tools include good study skills, exam practice, learning, memory preparation and more. We have collated useful tools for this in Appendix Three, and we hope that you find it useful.

Q. If someone doesn't agree with me I can get upset, I think I'm not resilient to criticism. How can I get better at taking criticism? It can really knock me back

This is a great question; it is concerned with self-confidence and comfort and about real time resilience - being strong in a the moment of pressure. Implementing real time resilience techniques is as simple as **ABC**

A Awareness, attention and actions

B Behaviours, boundaries and buffers

C Care, compassion and connection

 **Awareness, attention, and action**

Become stress aware and know what supports work for you as an individual. Pay attention to your needs and energy. This may involve developing a conscious schedule of self-checking which may become automatic with time. Where you put your attention matters, choose to focus on what can be done. Healthy thinking, emotional control and 'tuning in to the good' are vital and are learnable skills. Focus on one step at a time. Take action to protect your health, wellness, and happiness.

 **Behaviours, boundaries, and buffers**

Pace yourself, your time, your tasks, and your goals. Build healthy thinking, positive emotions, habits, skills, and behaviours for your wellbeing. It helps to be aware of your stress and energy levels. Set limits and boundaries for your personal wellbeing. Boundaries and buffers are important to keep things manageable and stress regulated.

 **Care, compassion, and connection**

Take time for self-care and care of others. Make your contribution to a culture of wellness at university and in life. At UCC, we believe that a culture of wellness is the responsibility and creation of individuals, peers, teams, and leaders. Demonstrate compassion and respect through words and actions. To create a culture of wellness means taking care of all five domains of health and wellbeing and fostering an approach that encourages and promotes healthy habits and behaviours for everyone.

Social and cultural wellness is about healthy relationship development and maintenance, being compassionate, and supporting diversity. It involves interacting and connecting with others around you by using good communication skills, respecting yourself and others, and creating a supportive working environment. A 'buddy' system can be helpful to connect and support one another.

RESET

Use **RESET** to help you after challenging or highly stressful events.

R is for reality check. Suffering is an inevitable part of life. Acknowledge and allow the feelings that come from suffering, trauma, or overwork.

E is for evaluate. Ask yourself, 'how am I?' 'What do I need now?' Notice and accept where things are at, take action to meet your needs.

S is for sanctuary and social support. Where and how do you find peace and solace? Take time to go there. Who is your 'go to' person? Connect with them, however briefly, to recharge and support your spirit.

E is for emotional control. Ask yourself, is what you're doing helping or harming you or the problem?

T is for take a break. Take five minutes to attend with care and compassion to your whole health – your self-care needs in all five domains.

Q. Can resilience vary in different environments? I feel more resilient around my friends, or is that just confidence?

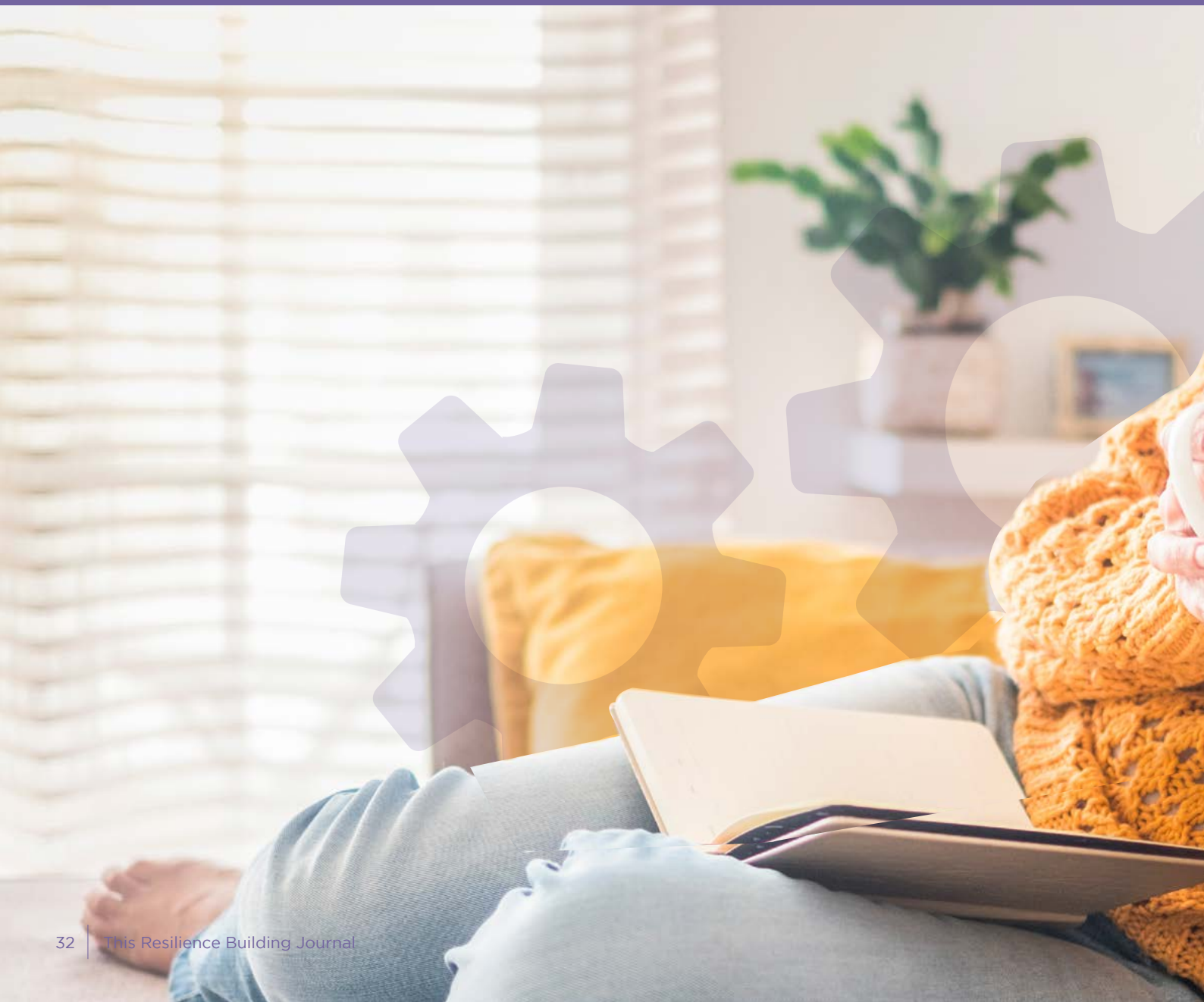
This is another great question. It gives us a chance to summarise and repeat some proven resilience building strategies featured in this Resilience Building Journal. These strategies and techniques will help you to manage stress and transitions to diverse environments whether you are with friends or by yourself.

“It is not the load that you carry, it is the way that you carry the load “

Why not use the Resilience Building Journal tool TAKE FIVE to help you become more aware of your needs and create an organised framework to work on self-care and real time resilience?

The **TAKE FIVE** strategy is based on the five domains of whole health and wellbeing.

1. Body – look after your body, you ask a lot of it each day.
2. Mind – healthy thinking and emotional intelligence.
3. Behaviour – set goals, manage stress and anxiety, choose where to direct your attention.
4. Context – contribute to a culture of wellness, be your own best friend.
5. Spirit – focus on the present, practice gratitude and happiness habits.



Use the **TAKE FIVE** tool to design your resilience building journey.

If you practice and employ these strategies and skills, everything you do will become easier, and you will become more mentally calm, robust, and resilient. You will be more agile, adapt quicker to different situations, and be more able to deal with stressful events with increased confidence, comfort, and compassion. One size does not fit all, and you are encouraged to try out different strategies and build resilience habits to find what works best for you. Use this handbook as a journal to review and reflect on how you are doing as you practice and employ these strategies in your life.

Attending to all our human needs is an important wellness strategy. Start with care and compassion for your most important asset – you. Pay attention to self-care first, and then to peer support.

REFLECTION

How is your spiritual wellbeing? What do you need to build your spiritual well-being? What actions can you take to improve health and well-being in all five domains?



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Loving kindness meditation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkCOK1F8nPk&list=PL6DbJmB3fDQp_vwTqepv7LDjx3UqB2Ht5&index=5

Positive Psychology. *What is Resilience and Why is it Important to Bounce Back?*

<https://positivepsychology.com/what-is-resilience/>

US Dept of Health & Human Services. *Individual Resilience*

<https://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/abc/Pages/individual-resilience.aspx>

Harvard Business Review. *Five Ways to Boost Your Resilience at Work.*

<https://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/abc/Pages/individual-resilience.aspx>

Mayo Clinic. *Resilience - Build Skills to Endure Hardship.*

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/resilience-training/in-depth/resilience/art-20046311>



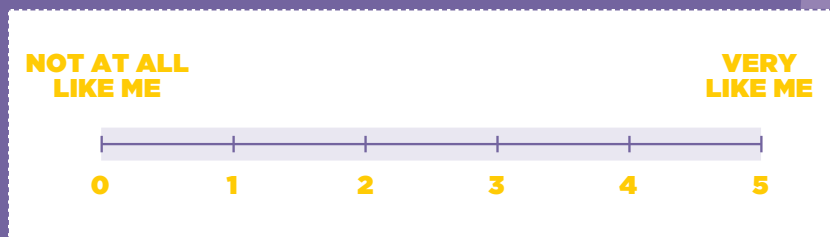
APPENDIX 1

Check Your Resilience with The Resilience Estimator

This resilience estimator is a short screening tool to assess resilience. Initially, two general subscales of Positive Self Worth and Negative affect emerged with good psychometric properties ($w=0.88$ and $w=0.85$ respectively).

Personal Resilience

This questionnaire is designed to find out about the personal resources you have for managing stress. We include this section due to the fact that susceptibility to stress has been found to be linked to the personality of the individual. We hope the questions are not too intrusive although some may seem a bit odd. Please use the following scale to indicate how true each of the following statements is for you.



Place the number that best represents your answer in the brackets provided.

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------|
| I always take a measured look at a job to be done before starting it. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Planning |
| I am mostly in control of my temper..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Impulse Control |
| I like to assume complete responsibility for a job rather than share it with others | <input type="checkbox"/> | Responsibility |
| I am able to focus on one thing when necessary | <input type="checkbox"/> | Focus |
| I am able to say 'no' to people when I need to | <input type="checkbox"/> | Assertive |
| I feel that I am as good as the next person | <input type="checkbox"/> | Self-Worth |
| When confronted with a problem I usually remain optimistic about the outcome | <input type="checkbox"/> | Optimism |
| I drive myself harder than most | <input type="checkbox"/> | Motivation |
| I can usually break down a problem into manageable chunks | <input type="checkbox"/> | Logical |
| I am very ambitious | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ambition |

Score Yourself

- Simply add up the numbers that you have put for each statement.
- Your score will range between 0 and 50
- The higher your score, the stronger your resilience factor

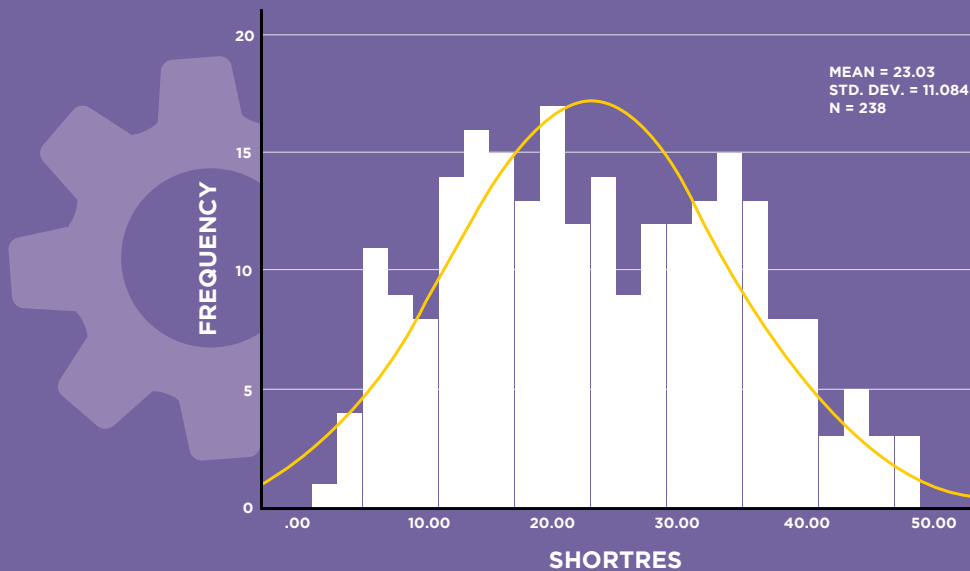
Interpreting your Score

The graph on the left is a histogram showing the scores of your peers collected over the last few years.

If you have a Score over 34 or over you are high on resilience to stress.

If you have a score below 12 you are low on resilience and you may wish to work on building it.

Most people at university will be somewhere in between.



APPENDIX 2

Understanding and Managing Stress

What is Stress?

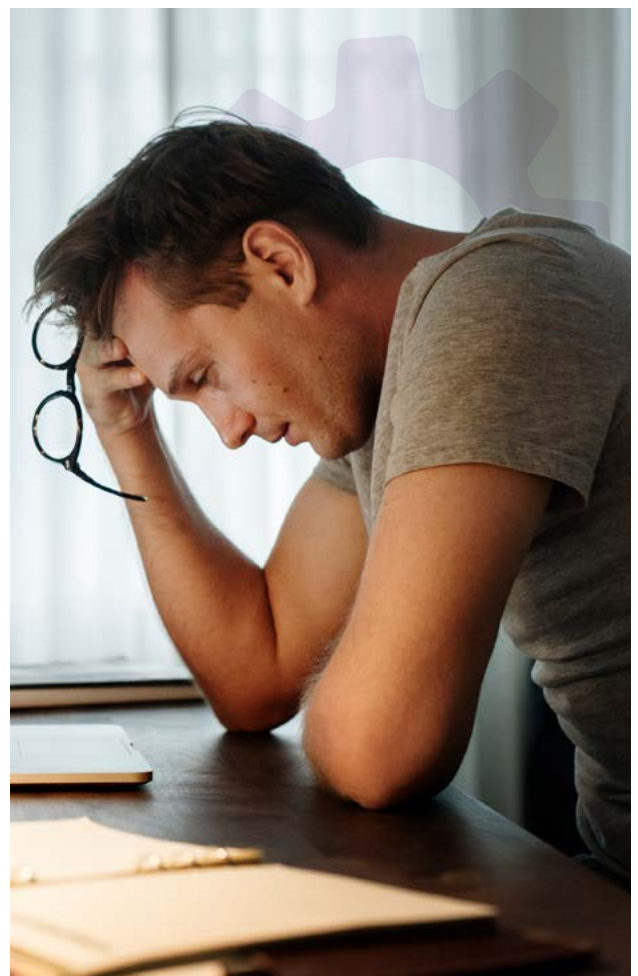
Stress is a physical and emotional reaction to a perceived threat, stressor or aggressor. While elements of stress are an inevitable part of student life, the dynamic demands of the journey itself can result in significant stress. Demanding assignments, difficult exams, gruelling schedules, and high workloads all contribute to stress and exhaustion, which are becoming increasingly prevalent.

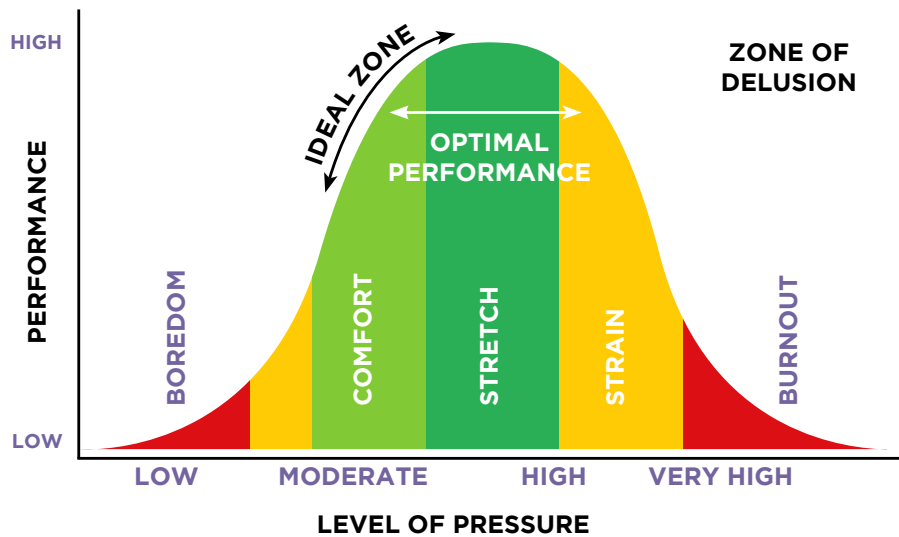
Stress can have surprisingly negative effects on not only us, but our friends, our colleagues, and the community in which we work. Stress can have toxic effects on cognition, learning, engagement, empathy, and relationships. Chronic and unmanaged stress can lead to changes in our hormone balance and body chemistry which can impact our physical health, including our weight, sleep cycle and immune system. Our mental health is also affected by this, giving rise to increased risks of anxiety, depression, addiction, and burnout.

It is important to acknowledge that not all stress is bad for us. Stress can be functional and positive too. After all, that is how most of us pass our exams!

We all have a unique way of perceiving and defining stress and stressors. The most important thing that we can do for ourselves is to become aware of what stresses us. This is the first step in learning to manage stress.

There are steps we can take to mitigate the damage caused by chronic and unmanaged stress and regulate our response to stress.





Stress management is all about finding what the optimal stress-stretch point is for you.

This is a very well-known phenomenon in psychological science and is often known as the Yerkes-Dodson Law, named after the psychologists who made the initial observations in the early 1900's.

A useful concept in this area was described by medical practitioner, Richard Swenson in his book *Margin*. This highlights the value of knowing our personal margin, which is the space between our load and our limit. *Margin* refers to the reserve of energy or capacity we might have at any given time; it is the opposite of overload. It is important that we become aware of the amount of stress we can manage comfortably (Swenson, 2019).

Unmanaged stress has many negative consequences on our lives, which is why the recognition of personal stressors, reducing stress reactivity and stress management are so important.

There is no such thing as zero or no stress. Research has indicated that there are three types of stress: ordinary stress, extraordinary stress, and toxic stress.

Stress impacts wellbeing and resilience and human factors such as communication, situational awareness, decision making and teamwork. Stress unchecked and poorly managed leads to anxiety, fatigue, and a wide range of bio-psychosocial and behavioural issues. Toxic side-effects of stress may continue to build which, if not addressed, will ultimately lead to burnout.



APPENDIX 3

Doing your best when it matters most: optimise study and exam performance with *LifeMatters* - Dr Margaret O'Rourke and Kate O'Connell, Psychologist.

TAKE FIVE steps to better prep

- 1. Body** - take care of your physical wellbeing by exercising and developing good quality sleep hygiene.
- 2. Mind** - manage your thoughts, emotions, cognitive load stress, and mindset; develop cognitive learning strategies.
- 3. Behaviour** - consider active study techniques, strategies to deal with procrastination, time management techniques, and study plans.
- 4. Environment** - find balance between study, work, rest, and leisure. Prepare and set up your study environment well to make it easier to learn and retain information.
- 5. Spirit** - identify your personal motivators.

BODY

Benefits of Sleep for exam performance

- ⚙ Better assimilation and recall of information.
- ⚙ Makes us less stress-reactive (sleep is restorative).
- ⚙ Greater problem-solving ability, creativity and sustained attention.

SLEEP HYGIENE

- ⚙ Keep sleep and wake times regular (aim for seven to nine hours of sleep every night).
- ⚙ Stop studying at least an hour before sleep.
- ⚙ Develop a bedtime routine (wash face, tidy room, read, meditate) and avoid use of phones

(The National Sleep Foundation, 2015; Vandekerckhove & Cluydts, 2010)

BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

- ⚙ Boosts energy levels and mood
- ⚙ Help to alleviate stress through regulating breathing and heart rate, which moves our bodies out of survival mode.
- ⚙ Flushes out excess adrenaline in the body that would otherwise hinder our concentration.
- ⚙ Improves memory.

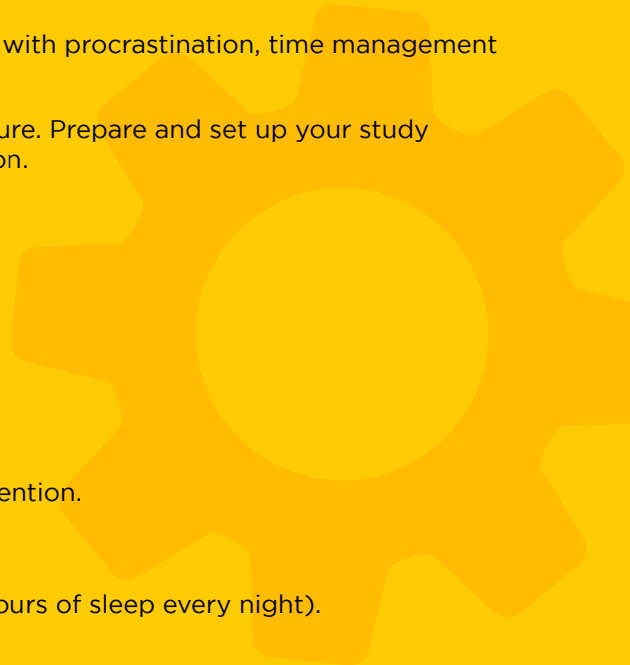
EXERCISE HABIT

- ⚙ Aim for 150 minutes a week (five 30-minute sessions or three 50-minute sessions). Build up to this slowly over 30 days.
- ⚙ Fit it feasibly into your weekly routine e.g., choose morning or evening, walk to college, take stairs, or get off the bus earlier.
- ⚙ Choose a form of exercise that you enjoy e.g., alone or with company, gym or classes, indoor or outdoor, or high intensity or low intensity.

MIND

Examples of Unhealthy thinking

- ⚙ Perfectionism.
- ⚙ Imposter syndrome.
- ⚙ Making comparisons with others.



- ⚙️ All or nothing mindsets, catastrophising, disempowering questions e.g., 'what is wrong with me?', or using 'should', 'must', or 'ought to' statements.

Negative self-talk can leave us feeling anxious, disempowered, and unmotivated. These feelings can lead to unhelpful behaviours like procrastinating, withdrawing, wishful thinking, and distracting oneself. How can you address this?

Reduce stress to study better

When we are in survival mode (fight or flight), energy is diverted from our brain to our muscles, which narrows our attention and makes it harder to think clearly, creatively, and with perspective (Cottrell, 2019).

Physical and Mental effects of stress

- ⚙️ Racing thoughts, finding it difficult to concentrate and think clearly.
- ⚙️ Intrusive thoughts, worrying, or ruminating.
- ⚙️ Inability to switch off and relax, especially at night.
- ⚙️ Stomach 'in knots', resulting in a low appetite.
- ⚙️ Tension in certain muscle groups e.g., neck and shoulders.
- ⚙️ Difficulty sleeping.
- ⚙️ Pervasive low mood.

Negative behavioural responses to stress

- ⚙️ Over or undereating.
- ⚙️ Procrastinating work related tasks.
- ⚙️ Overworking to keep up with workload.
- ⚙️ Sacrificing basic needs such as nutrition, hygiene, and sleep.
- ⚙️ Having no work life balance e.g., not spending time with friends or taking rest days.
- ⚙️ Using substances to relax.

Ask yourself

What are your personal signals of stress? How do you usually respond to stress? How do you perform under pressure? To be able to perform well in exams and with study, we need to learn flexible techniques for managing stress.

Methods for getting stress under control:

- ⚙️ Write down what is worrying you. What are your main fears? What is the likelihood of your fears coming true? What will you do if this does happen? Would it be the end of the world? Would you still care about this a year from now? Asking yourself these questions and reflecting on your answers helps you to get ruminations out of your head and onto paper, and gain perspective.
- ⚙️ Start tasks early so you have time to deal with unforeseen issues.
- ⚙️ Develop a meditation, mindfulness, and breathing exercises.
- ⚙️ Talk to others when you are feeling stressed
- ⚙️ Look after basic needs: sleep, nutrition, exercise, time off.
- ⚙️ Maintain a positive mindset: focus on what you can control

BEHAVIOUR

Study skills – cognitive strategies for better study

We remember 40% of what we see, 50% of what we say, 60% of what we do. 90% of what we read, hear, see, say, and do. When studying, it is wise to use integrative study techniques so that information is

encoded in different ways – multisensory information processing.

- ⚙ Watch videos, podcasts, online seminars, and real-life examples of topics.
- ⚙ Read, write and speak information out loud to real or imagined person. Record yourself, debate topics, draw diagrams, pictures and mind maps, and seek out real life examples or controversies.
- ⚙ Keep engaged by studying actively.
- ⚙ Rewrite concepts in your own words.
- ⚙ Relate information to areas you already know and group related concepts together to develop a conceptual pyramid.
- ⚙ Relate material to personal stories or emotional events.

Encoding information in different ways will help you to remember it more clearly. Try different techniques to make study topics more interesting.

Active and passive study styles

Active - Engage with material by rewriting it in your own words, link information, think of real-life examples, list questions you want answered prior to your study session or lecture, discuss with others, evaluate evidence, teach the topic to someone, review and practise past exam questions.

Passive - repeat or rote learning without understanding concepts, writing down every word the lecturer says, learning off essays, rewriting notes neatly rather than succinctly.

PQRST method of reading

- ⚙ Preview – skim read the whole chapter, sections, concluding points, and figures.
- ⚙ Question – generate questions based on what you have read.
- ⚙ Read – absorb meaning and connect to other areas.
- ⚙ Summarise – answer questions and summarise main points, learnings, understandings, and key concepts in your own words.
- ⚙ Test - write or say everything you know and check against notes/text

(Thomas and H. A. Robinson, Spache and Berg and R. P. Robinson)

STUDY SMART

How do you study? Are you virtuous or effective concerning study?

Virtuous

- ⚙ Read books from cover to cover when not all information is relevant.
- ⚙ Read several books on the same topic.
- ⚙ Writes detailed and long-winded notes
- ⚙ Work for several hours in a row without breaks.
- ⚙ Withdraws from classmates, friends, and social events to put more time into study.
- ⚙ Never asks for help or accesses resources.

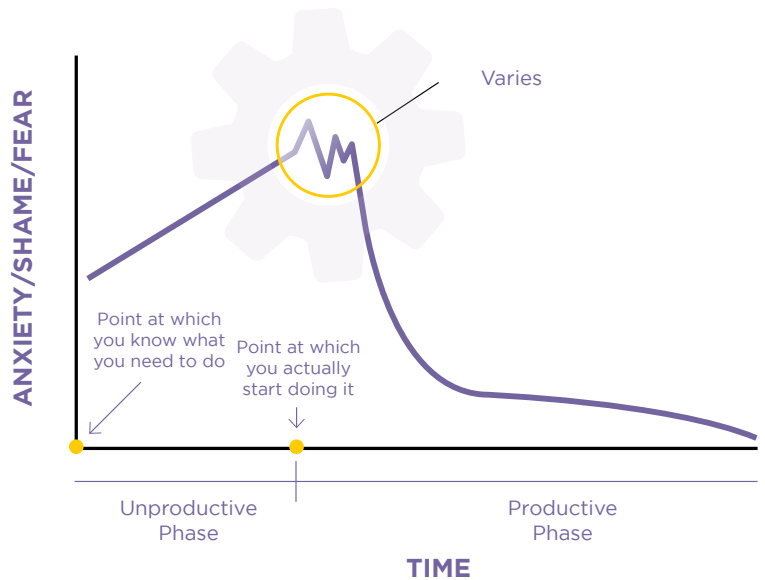
Effective Study

- ⚙ Select one high quality textbook and read only relevant and select sections.
- ⚙ Rewrite notes in a concise manner, outlining the most important points
- ⚙ Write down everything you know about the topic and research selectively to fill gaps in knowledge. What questions still need to be answered?
- ⚙ Work in groups to gain a new perspective.
- ⚙ Maintain a work life balance for wellbeing and sustainability.

MANAGING PROCRASTINATION

Breaking The Cycle of Procrastination
David Cain 2015

- ⚙️ Identify why you are procrastinating. Are you overwhelmed by the size of task, fears of not being capable, or a lack of interest in the task?
- ⚙️ How do you normally trick yourself into putting things off? “I’ll just watch one episode on Netflix”, “I’ll just take a nap first”, “I’ll just start tomorrow when I feel more rested” “I’ll do this other non-priority thing first”



How to trick yourself into doing the task:

- ⚙️ Commit to doing something small and easy for 15 minutes: read the question, brainstorm ideas, plan a timeline and schedule for the task. Try to make it light-hearted and enjoyable.
- ⚙️ Avoid perfectionism: don’t wait for the perfect conditions, just start.
- ⚙️ Break down the large overwhelming task into smaller manageable tasks (chunk it). Make daily and weekly goals.
- ⚙️ Identify studying triggers: answering emails, reading over notes, or making a to-do list.
- ⚙️ Commit to shorter periods of study at first with daunting tasks, do two hours rather than six hours, or just 20 minutes.
- ⚙️ Note down some of the benefits of completing the task. This helps you to focus on long term outcomes rather than short term distress.
- ⚙️ Reward yourself after completing scheduled tasks. Turn distractions into rewards
- ⚙️ Forgive yourself for past procrastination (Lombardo, 2017, Psychology Today; Mel Robbins, 2018; Watchwellcast, 2012).

Follow the ‘do something’ principle.

Action isn’t just the effect of motivation; it’s also the cause of it.



Not just a three step linear cycle:

Emotional inspiration > Motivation > Desirable action



But rather an endless loop:

Inspiration > Motivation > Action > Inspiration > Motivation > Action > Etc.

Source: *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* by Mark Hanson, 2016. Mark Hanson, *Business Insider*, 2017.

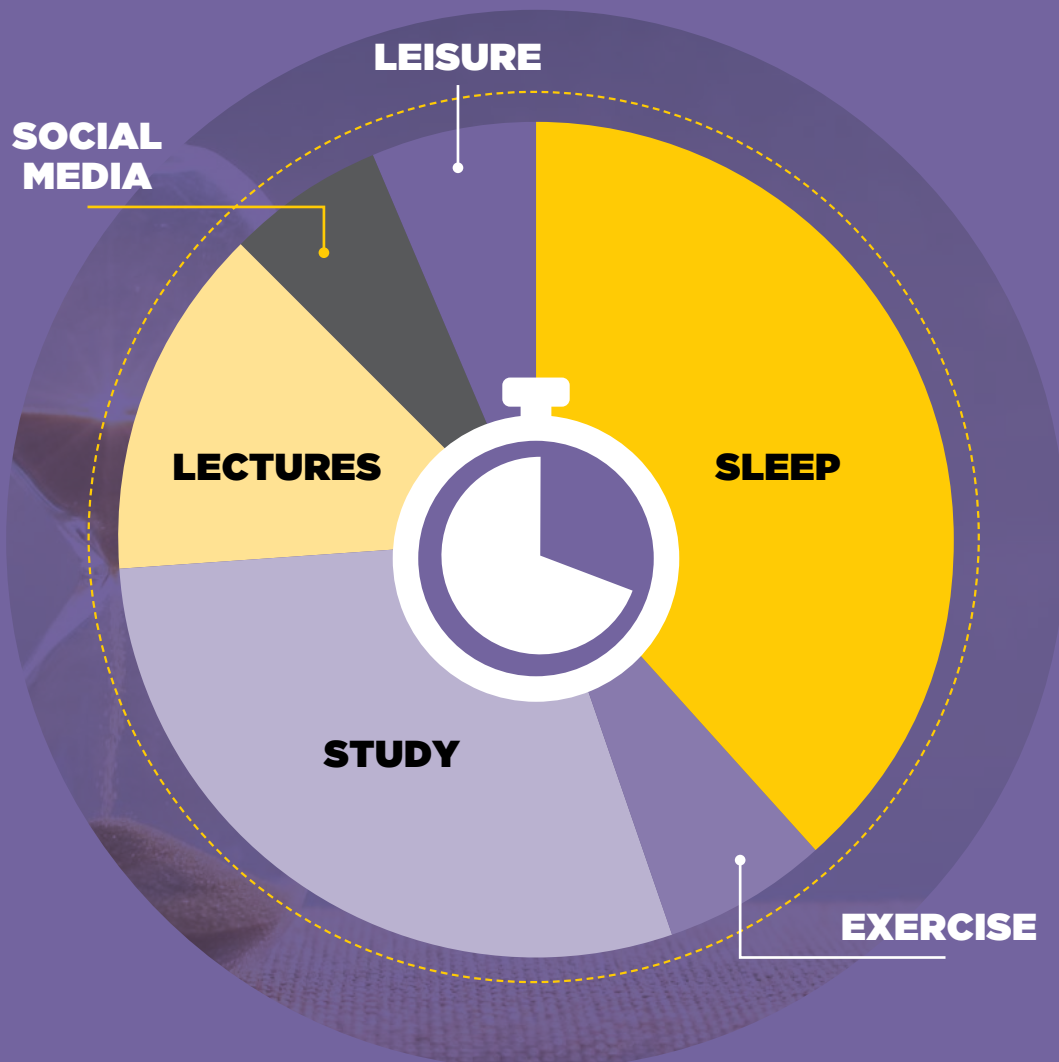
TIME MANAGEMENT - Pomodoro Technique Involves:

- ⚙ Working for 25 minutes uninterrupted.
- ⚙ Use a timer.
- ⚙ Stop when the timer goes off and take a short five-minute break.
- ⚙ Take longer breaks every four Pomodoro's (every two hours in total).
- ⚙ Keep track of the number of Pomodoro's you complete.

Where do you place your time currently?

- ⚙ Plan difficult tasks during your natural peaks in energy (are you a morning or evening person?).
- ⚙ Work in short bursts if you find long study blocks too daunting.
- ⚙ Efficient breaks: have fewer but longer breaks if you find it difficult to settle back down or have frequent but short breaks if you find it difficult to concentrate for extended periods
- ⚙ Turn independent study into a routine by blocking out set times for study.
- ⚙ Set a goal/challenge for each individual study block.
- ⚙ Be flexible by varying your study period lengths depending on your energy levels.
- ⚙ Avoid distractions by putting your phone on airplane mode or do not disturb during study blocks.

Make sure there is an end in sight! Study for two hours and then stop.



STUDY PLANS AND TO DO LISTS

- ⚙️ Make a schedule for the whole first semester. Plot when exams start, when assignments are due, how many hours are taken up by lectures, schedule in study periods, time to work on assignments, exercise, and time off. Knowing how much time you have and when you should be starting things can kick you into gear and kick start that healthy stress of working under pressure.
- ⚙️ Set short term, medium term, and long-term goals, e.g., daily, weekly, monthly goals.
- ⚙️ Break down large tasks into smaller daily or even hourly tasks.
- ⚙️ Schedule time for unforeseen circumstances e.g., illness, setbacks, etc.
- ⚙️ Prioritise tasks: tackle the rocks, then the pebbles, and finally the sand. If you fill the jar with sand or pebbles, there will be no room for rocks.



EXAM SKILLS

'Research shows that students who do best at problem solving spend longer than other students in working out exactly what the problem is before trying to solve it' (Cottrell, 2019, p.70).

Preparation:

- ⚙️ Get informed about exam early on: identify exam formats and credit weighting of exam and exam questions. Schedule and prioritise study accordingly.
- ⚙️ Practice answering exam questions before revising exam topic (this will focus your study).
- ⚙️ Mindset: focus on aspects you can control such as sleep, study schedule, and practicing exam questions.
- ⚙️ Maintain perspective: see exams as a pleasant challenge rather than an ordeal.
- ⚙️ Write attractive and concise notes after studying each topic (to refer to), draw diagrams and essay plans.

On the day:

- ⚙️ Give your mind time to settle. Put notes away a half hour before the exam starts, meditate, focus on breathing, or listen to music.
- ⚙️ Avoid talking to others before the exam. Get familiar with the exam setting before the exam.
- ⚙️ Plot allocated time for each question based on mark/credit weighting.
- ⚙️ Get your thoughts rolling by making notes before the exam officially starts
- ⚙️ Devote time to selecting and defining the question e.g., rephrase the question. Understanding the problem/question will allow you to provide better quality solutions/answers.

ENVIRONMENT

- ⚙️ Ensure a balance between study, work, rest, leisure and pleasure. Develop a decompression routine to replenish resources, which will increase resilience.
- ⚙️ Be strategic with your workload to prevent burnout and sustain high performance.
- ⚙️ Maintain a clean comfortable study friendly environment to support you. Is this alone or with others, at home or at the library?

- ⚙️ Cut out distractions: put phone on airplane mode or do not disturb during study periods.
- ⚙️ Develop self-care routines and maintain social support e.g., friends and family.

SPiRiT

Clarify your personal motivation for completing this academic year. Why are you doing this?

- ⚙️ Write down as many reasons as you can think of e.g., 'I've always wanted to be a social worker'.
- ⚙️ Consider your intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.
- ⚙️ Utilise your unique strengths, creativity and interests to optimise your study.

Improving study and exam skills is as easy as ABC

- A** Awareness, attention, and action.
- B** Behaviours, boundaries, and buffers.
- C** Care, compassion, and connection.

⚙️ **Awareness, attention, and action**

Become stress aware and know what supports work for you as an individual. Pay attention to your needs and energy. Where you put your attention matters, choose to focus on what can be done. Healthy thinking, emotional control and 'tuning in to the good' are vital and are learnable skills. Focus on one step at a time. Take action to protect your health, wellness, and happiness

⚙️ **Build resilience behaviours, boundaries, and buffers:**

Pace yourself, your time, your tasks, and your goals. Build healthy thinking, positive emotions, habits, skills, and behaviours for your wellbeing. It helps to be aware of your stress and energy levels. Set limits and boundaries for your personal wellbeing. Boundaries and buffers are important to keep things manageable and stress regulated.

⚙️ **Care, compassion, and connection**

Take time for self-care and care of others. Make your contribution to a culture of wellness at university and in life. At UCC, we believe that a culture of wellness is the responsibility and creation of individuals, peers, teams, and leaders. Demonstrate compassion and respect through words and actions. To create a culture of wellness means taking care of all five domains of health and wellbeing and fostering an approach that encourages and promotes healthy habits and behaviours for everyone.

Social and cultural wellness is about **healthy relationship development and maintenance, being compassionate, and supporting diversity**. It involves interacting and connecting with others around you by using good communication skills, respecting yourself and others, and creating a supportive working environment. A 'buddy' system can be helpful to connect and support one another.



HOW TO Building Health, Wellbeing and Resilience with LifeMatters Tools





THE
RESILIENCE
BUILDING JOURNAL



UCC

University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh