

# MANAGING STRESS

Studying at university can be stressful. Students are often required to manage part-time work, social commitments, and financial pressures, all in between working on assignments and studying for exams. It's no wonder that many students feel overwhelmed from time to time.

A little bit of stress can be motivating in the short term. However, stress experienced over a long period of time—sometimes referred to as chronic stress—can impact on your physical and psychological wellbeing. Below are some tips to reduce stress.

## 1. Exercise regularly

It's hard to overstate the benefits of regular exercise. It releases feel-good brain chemicals, it improves the quality of your sleep, and can even increase concentration. There are many ways to exercise at UWA. You could start a social sports team, join the fitness centre, or try a Recreate course. You can also build exercise into your daily routine by cycling to uni or simply going for a walk with at lunchtime. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise, five times a week.

## 2. Do things you enjoy

It may sound obvious, but it's important to make time for the enjoyable things in life. Do you like listening to music, walking along the beach, playing team sports, reading, or gardening? Allocate time to do the things you enjoy at least a few times each week.

## 3. Manage your time

Effective time management can help reduce stress. Use planning tools to make a realistic and achievable study schedule. (Check out our survival guide on effective time management for more tips). Split your study up into multiple short sessions over the week, take regular breaks and reward yourself.

## 4. Stay connected

Did you know that socialising reduces stress? Take the time to connect with friends and family. Uni is also a great place to make new friends. You can meet people by joining a sports team, a club/society, by volunteering, or simply saying 'hi' to the person next to you in your tute. It can sometimes seem daunting, but remember that most people find it hard at first.



## 5. Talk to someone you trust

When you are feeling stressed, don't be afraid to ask a family member, partner or friend for some emotional or practical support. Maybe you need a little help to renegotiate some of your responsibilities or just someone who will listen to your concerns without judgement.

## 6. Practice relaxation and mindfulness

Take time each day to slow things down a bit. You could take a warm bath, meditate, take a yoga or tai chi class, go for a walk, or listen to some relaxing music. You may also like to try mindfulness. We tend to spend a lot of our mental energy either planning the future or analysing the past; mindfulness teaches you how to stay present in the moment. There are many apps that can guide you through mindfulness exercises. Check out: Smiling mind, ReachOut Breathe, or Headspace.



## 7. Spend time outdoors

Spending time in nature can increase feelings of happiness, as well as reduce your blood pressure, heart rate and stress. UWA has many beautiful green spaces so take your breaks outside when you can!

## 8. Prioritise sleep

Avoid those all-nighters and aim for 7-9 hours of sleep each night. Sleep is essential for memory consolidation so there's actually no use studying all night. Research shows that the day after a good night's sleep you have improved memory and concentration. In the long term, consistent high-quality sleep improves your overall wellbeing and reduces stress.

### TIP. If you are struggling to sleep:

- Avoid caffeinated drinks in the afternoon.
- Exercise regularly.
- Relax before bed – try having a hot shower or reading a book. Avoid screen time an hour before bedtime.
- Aim for a consistent sleep routine – go to sleep and wake up around the same time each day.

## 9. Know when to get help

Remember, a certain amount of stress is normal, but if the stress you feel is significantly impacting on your daily life then seek help. Call in at the Student Wellbeing Reception on the first floor of Student Central or telephone 6488 2423 to make an appointment with UniAccess or Counselling.

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### Any suggestions?

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