# Feeling good & doing well

## Losing focus Studying at university can be stressful and at times you may find it hard to concentrate. This happens to most students, especially before exams or when facing multiple deadlines, and is an important part of learning to cope with pressure in preparation for employment. Here are some tips on how to stay physically and mentally healthy and improve your academic performance.

## Get enough sleep Try to establish healthy and regular sleeping habits. Go to bed at a similar time each night and get up at a similar time every morning. Try to maintain this pattern at the weekends so that you can concentrate during early Monday morning lectures. Calming bedtime rituals such as listening to relaxing music, reading something other than your coursework, or drinking a cup of herbal tea can be helpful.

## Insomnia?

Finding it hard to fall asleep, or sleeping badly for long periods? The solution can be as simple as avoiding eating close to bedtime; the energy you get from the food is likely to wake you soon after you’ve fallen asleep.

However, you may have specific worries, anxiety or a bout of depression. In this case seek help - approach your tutor, Academic Adviser, Student Support Officer or another member of staff in your school, a Learning Adviser in the Skills for Academic Success team, a counsellor in Student Support and Wellbeing or your GP.

## Eat and drink well Try to have regular meals with at least some fresh fruit and vegetables every day. Living on ready meals and take-aways will lead to tiredness, make you less resistant to colds and viruses and may lead to other health issues and weight gain. Drink plenty of water, especially when you are feeling tired, or if you drink alcohol.

## Concentration and your environment

Concentration takes effort and practice. If your thoughts and feelings interrupt your concentration, try to do something about them, e.g. talk issues through with a friend or seek professional help (nursing service, counselling, your tutors etc.).

Keep your study environment free from clutter, noise and distractions (put your mobile out of sight). Try working offline sometimes.

To keep your mind from wandering:

* Break your work down into smaller chunks, writing a paragraph is more manageable than writing an essay; completing tasks can help to motivate you.
* Vary your activities: reading, note taking, asking yourself questions, comparing new material with old material, converting a text into a flow chart, etc.

At the end of each study session, try to recap the main point. The feeling that you have achieved something will help motivate you, which in turn will help with your concentration.

## Take breaks Even during busy times or if you feel under pressure before exams or at the end of term when deadlines pile up, plan-in some breaks. Remember, however, that a break before undertaking your work is procrastination. Ideally breaks are factored into your study plan after having undertaken work – they can be a good motivator for getting work and revision completed. Do something different during your break to help take your mind off your studies. The Kent Union supports over 150 different societies catering for a variety of interests (for details see the Kent Union website).

## Exercise Doing some form of exercise is a great way to recharge and boost your energy levels. Look at the activities on offer at the Sport Centre and via the Kent Union or just go for a walk each day. Walking in a peaceful environment for 20-30 minutes will help you to improve your thinking and cognitive ability and is a great stress buster.

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