

# DE-STRESS



A USE WORKBOOK

2023

The exam period can be a stressful one. Deadlines can seem like they're coming at you all at once, with continuous assessments, project deadlines and exam dates all happening around the same time at the end of semester.

Whether you have kept on top of things throughout the year, or you're just making a start now, there are things that you can do to make sure that you don't get too overwhelmed during this time. No matter which camp you fall into, your mental and physical health must come first above all else. It might be tempting to pull all-nighters, or skip lunch to keep working in the library, but keeping yourself healthy will help you to perform better no matter what else might happen.

We hope this booklet helps you to feel more in control of yourself and your time in the run up to the end of the semester. It's ok to feel anxious or stressed, but if these things are affecting your day-to-day life, it's important to seek help. Information about these things, as well as places to go for help are available within these pages, as well as on the USI mental health website, [mentalhealth.usi.ie](http://mentalhealth.usi.ie).



Make a note here of your library exam opening hours:

Monday: \_\_\_\_\_

Tuesday: \_\_\_\_\_

Wednesday: \_\_\_\_\_

Thursday: \_\_\_\_\_

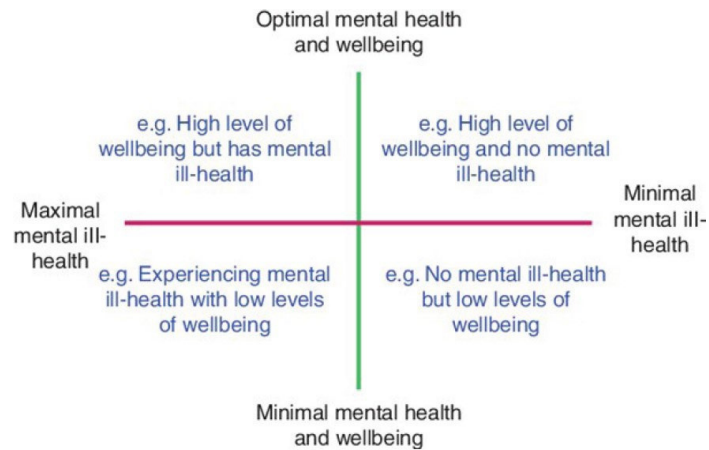
Friday: \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday: \_\_\_\_\_

Sunday: \_\_\_\_\_



## Check In With Yourself



This worksheet allows you to check in with your wellbeing and mental distress levels. It helps to check in with this tool at regular times to see how things are fluctuating or staying the same. If you are consistently in the bottom left corner, please reach out for help, and make sure you are getting the support that you need.

For each of the areas of the wheel, either give each section a score out of 10, or colour in how full you think this area should be in terms of how things are going in that part of your life.



Fill in the blank section with a part of your life that's important but not already listed.

# STUDY PLANNER

DATE

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## STUDY HOURS

EXPECTED	HOUR		MINUTES	
ACTUAL	HOUR		MINUTES	

## TODAYS SUBJECT

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## DEADLINES

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## STUDY PROGRESS

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## NOTES & DOODLES

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## A Strategy for Mindful Time Management

At the start of each week, look at your goals in the context of the upcoming week. What takes priority? Make a list of the priority action items from each goal for the week.

Next start to fill up your schedule:

- Put yourself in first. Schedule time to eat and rest, as well as any personal appointments that you might have, and if possible, your downtime.
- Next put in the times you have classes, and the times you plan to study
- What time is left? If you can, schedule a meeting with yourself towards the end of the week – this is protected catch-up time.

Look at the to-do list of action items from your weekly planning in the pages ahead

- Consider your energy levels, now, and how you normally find yourself – for example, do you tend to feel most energised in the mornings or evenings? Do you start the week strong but run out of energy by Thursday? Maybe you get a second wind come Friday morning?
- Fill the gaps that are left in your to-do list with the action items, considering your energy levels. Try to overplan for how much time something will take. For example, if reading a chapter of a book normally takes about an hour a day, put it in your schedule for an hour and a quarter, or an hour and a half. You might not use that extra time, which will mean you can take a break between things, or get ahead on other things, but if you end up needing it. You will thank your past self for building it in.
- It may be the case that you have less gaps to be filled than you have things to do. That's ok, but there is only so much time in a day and in a week. This means that you need to look at the priority of the things you need to get done, and assign time either to the most important things, or spread across your list as you see best. The important thing to remember is that you only have the time that you have, so the only thing you can change is how you spend that time.

Sometimes it might be the case that **you just have too much on**. If this is the case, it might be that you need to re-assess the feasibility of your goals. Again, that's ok, even if it's disappointing. If you need to delegate, ask for help, or consider asking for extensions, reach out to whoever you need to for support/advice as soon as possible, and communicate your needs as clearly as possible.



## Weekly To Do List

Make a to-do list for each week between now and the end of exams - now, not as each month comes up. Divide the tasks required into those weeks, aligning them with any relevant deadlines.

At the end of each week, re-assess the list and make adjustments as required.

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## Ways to De-stress

Make a list of the ways that you know help you to feel less stressed, so that you can refer to it when you're feeling too stressed to remember them.

Some examples might be:

Deep breathing

Taking a walk

A hot shower

Talking to a friend or family member



## Sources of Academic Help

Make a list of the people that you can contact if you're having trouble with your studies.

Some examples might be

My lecturer

The students' union

Academic support services on campus

My tutor

## Sources of Mental Health Help

Make a list of the places you can get help or the people you can talk to if you're struggling with your mental health during this time.

We have a list of sources of help at <https://mentalhealth.usi.ie/sources-of-support-for-mental-health/>



**HSE**

[yourmentalhealth.ie](https://yourmentalhealth.ie)

**Bodywhys**

01 201 7906 | [bodywhys.ie](https://bodywhys.ie)

**Samaritans**

116 123

[jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie)

**LGBT Ireland Helpline**

1890 929 539 | Online chat at [lgbt.ie](https://lgbt.ie)

[info@lgbt.ie](mailto:info@lgbt.ie)

**Rape Crisis Helpline**

180 77 8888 | [counselling@rcc.ie](mailto:counselling@rcc.ie)

Other examples might include:

My students' union

Campus counselling services

My friends and family

# Self Care

## **What is self-care?**

Self-care is how you take care of yourself – your diet, exercise, daily routine, relationships, and how you are feeling. It can be hard to do self-care, however, self-care is essential – a vital act of self-kindness – allowing us to take care of ourselves. Instead of using it relative to how we are feeling, we should view it as the fuel to keep up going.

Self-care includes essential acts of care, but it also includes things that nourish, comfort, calm and make us feel good. Self-care can vary from person to person, and it's important to find out what it looks like for you. Sometimes self-care acts aren't things we enjoy doing – this is known as boring self-care and can include things like taking medication or paying a bill. It doesn't really matter what self-care is, what matters is how it makes us feel.

Self-care doesn't need to cost a lot (or any) money. It can be hard sometimes to keep all of our acts of self-care going. It's important to remember that trying, or doing a bit of something, still counts – we aren't striving for perfection. When we engage in self-care, it signals to ourselves and others what our standards are for ourselves.

## **Why is self-care important?**

Self-care is important because a lot of the acts are aimed at keeping ourselves either mentally or physically healthy, or both. It can help us to learn when we are becoming unwell (either because we feel unwell despite doing our self-care, or because we notice our self-care is getting harder), and it can help us to identify any triggers for becoming unwell. Some acts of self-care can have direct impacts on our health. Self-care can help to reduce burnout, and increase resilience, too. Some acts of self-care can directly impact our mental health by boosting our self-esteem and sense of worth. Even really small tasks can make us feel like we are making progress and achieving something (have you ever noticed how much better you sometimes feel after taking a shower, or even brushing your teeth?) – because we are achieving something.

Mental illness can make us believe that we don't matter, and self-care counters that because it involves taking time to do something just for our own good. This shows us that we are worthy of attention and care (which everyone is).

## Self-Care Plan

Daily self-care non negotiables:

Boring self-care:

Fun self-care:

Self-care for when I'm starting to struggle:

Self-care action for tough times:





**Union of Students in Ireland**  
*Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn*