

Going to University



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Congratulations, you worked hard, put the study time in, and are now preparing for a new chapter in your life. After having enjoyed the summer holidays, let your hair down, and celebrated your success, there are many practical things to get sorted out, it is important that we don't neglect our mental well-being. This can at times end up taking a back seat when you are caught up in all that comes with this transition, which can be detrimental. Here, we are going to take time to look at how this transition can impact not only your mental well-being but also your relationships.

How could starting Uni/Higher education affect your mental health?

Physical health – looking after your physical health can help your mental health. When we have had too many drinks or excessively eating unhealthy foods, this takes its toll. While it is perfectly OK to let your hair down and/or have the odd Chinese or takeaway, it's also important to get into the habit of healthier meals and drinking plenty of water. When we do this, we are fuelling our bodies the right way which aids our cognitive functions, helps us feel better, and in turn aids our mental health.

Self-Care – As much as we are busy in our daily lives, we must prioritize self-care. This can be as simple as going for a walk for 15mins, reading a book, drawing, or whatever helps you to unwind. The reason we need self-care is to help us de-stress, help us feel free from the worries of the day, and helps ensure we have perspective on our situations.

Emotions – It's OK and perfectly normal to feel mixed emotions about this change. There could be excitement for starting your new course and becoming more independent but scared of being away from your family and friends, learning how to navigate around a new building, and finding classes. It is also OK to feel overwhelmed by your situation as it's all new and strange.

Mental Health – Although this will be a very busy time, it is important to keep a check on your mental health. We tend to not think about this and ignore it. Focusing on getting organised and things arranged for the upcoming new term start time. The problem is that if we keep ignoring poor/low mental health, it could get worse. It is important to check in with yourself to see how you are doing.

Transition – this is a big change for you, potentially moving far away from home, organising where you are going to live, buying essentials needed, etc. Acknowledge this, chat with someone, consider how this transition has impacted you!

How could starting Uni/Higher education affect your relationships?

Relationships – It is understandable that you may be feeling sad or even low due to the separation of your friendship group. Some of your friends may be going to different universities or schools of higher education and you won't see them daily. This can be a difficult time for everyone involved and as expected you may find your emotions on overdrive. This is perfectly normal. Your relationships help you; they are a supportive factor in your life and help you stay strong mentally. Let's not forget you will gain new relationships in your new school, and, as technology is so advanced, it is easy to stay connected. Why not ask your friends to meet once a week on Zoom for a catch-up?

Peer Pressure – This is something that can impact your mental health. Certainly when in the company of new friendship groups, and trying to fit in, it can quickly be the case that you feel pressure. While friendships can be strong support for us it is healthy relationships that do this for us, healthy relationships are those whereby they will respect your decision to keep your boundaries in place. Unhealthy or toxic relationships are those who push our boundaries or know what they are and do not keep them. It is wise to surround yourself with people who respect you and who you can trust, they help you to stay true to your own morals and helps you keep your self-worth and value.

Have belief in your ability – This links in with your relationship with yourself, your self-worth, and your value. You got into university, you got accepted based on your capability, so you are deserving of your place. We can doubt our ability and intellect at times, especially in a situation where we note others have more knowledge on certain topics or got a higher grade than you. Remember that you are unique and an individual, so shifting your focus back onto what you are capable of achieving is a better way to go through uni. When we are comparing ourselves to others, we constantly think of what we don't have instead of what we do have. This leads us down a negative thought pattern.