

# STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES

*Student Counselling Unit*



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Department of  
Student Affairs

Departemnt Studentesake  
Kgoro ya Merero ya Balithuti

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S T R E S S

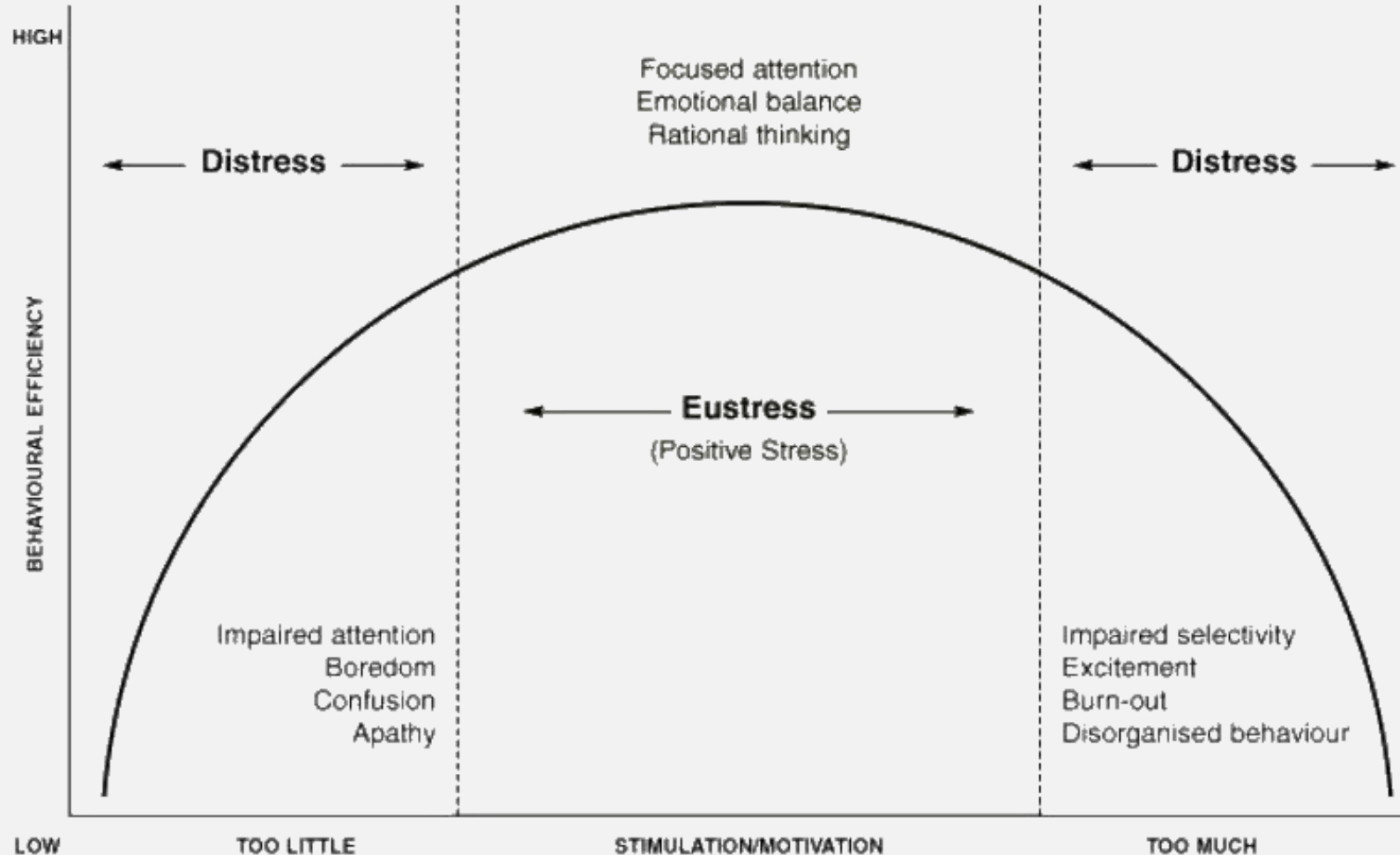
# WHAT IS STRESS?

- Stress can be defined as any type of change that causes **physical, emotional, or psychological** strain.
- Stress is your **body's response** to anything that requires attention or action.
- **Everyone experiences stress** to some degree. The way you respond to stress, however, makes a big difference to your overall well-being,

# INDICATORS OF STRESS

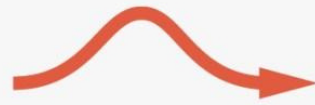


# POSITIVE VS NEGATIVE STRESS





# STRESS



**short term**

**in response to a  
recognized threat**

# ANXIETY

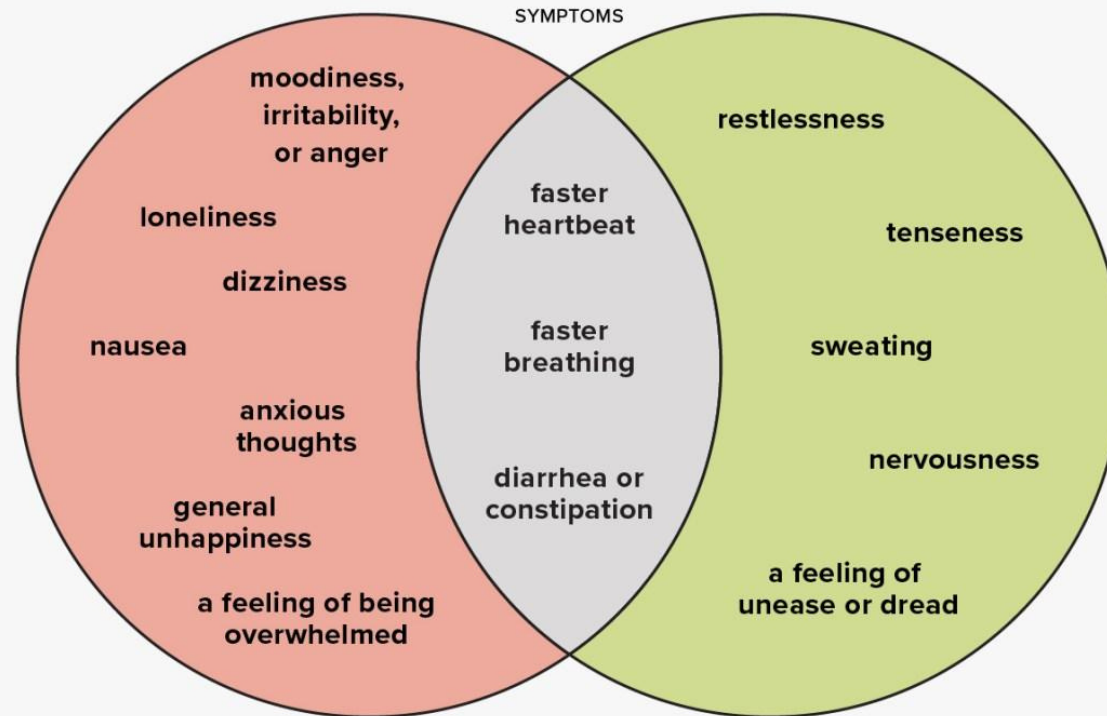


**can linger**

**may not have an  
identifiable trigger**

SPAN

CAUSE /  
ORIGIN



# HOW DO YOU MANAGE YOUR STRESS?






# STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES



## 🔧 **Keep in mind that stress isn't a bad thing.**

Stress motivates us to work toward solving our problems. Reframing thoughts to view stress as an acceptable emotion, or as a tool, has been found to reduce many of the negative symptoms associated with it. The goal is to *manage* stress, not to eliminate it.



 **Talk about your problems, even if they won't be solved.**

Talking about your stressors—even if you don't solve them—releases hormones in your body that reduce the negative feelings associated with stress. Time spent talking with friends and loved ones is valuable, even when you have a lot on your plate.

**Social Support** \_\_\_\_\_

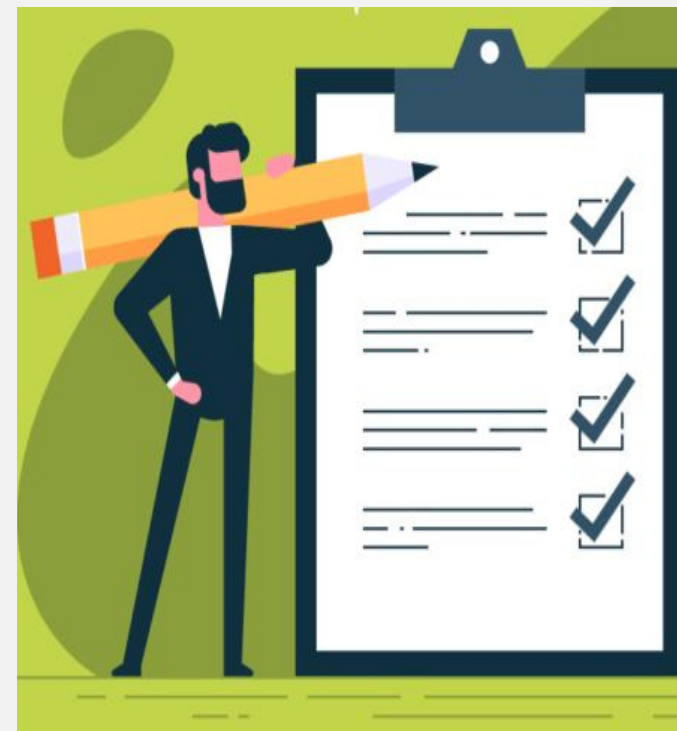
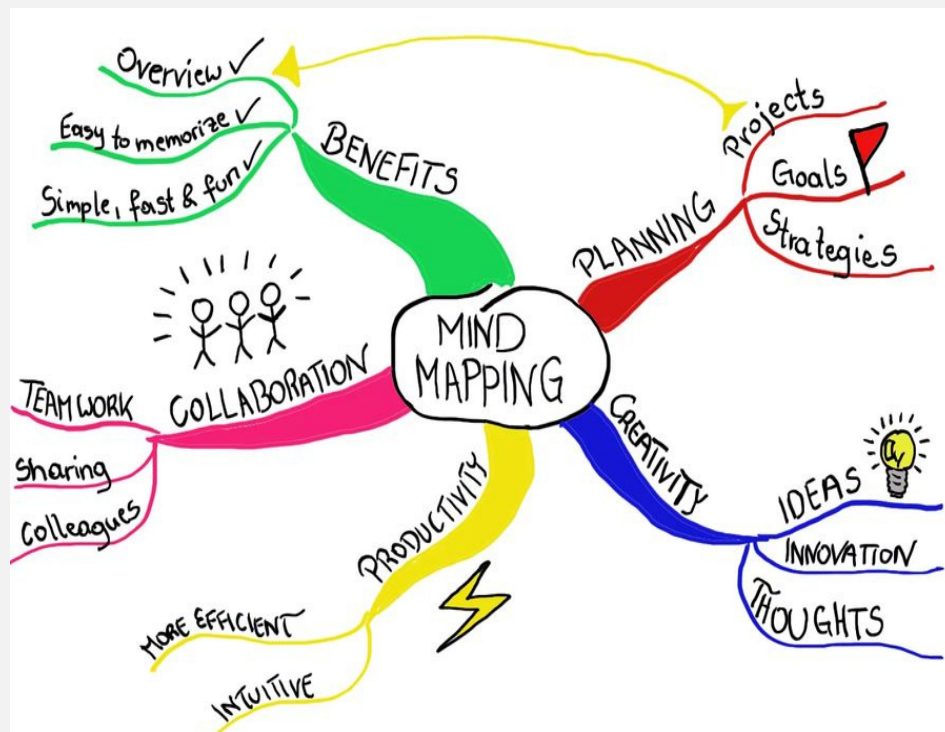
Even when your social support cannot solve a problem, just talking can sometimes be enough. When we talk about our problems, hormones are released inside our brains that ease the undesirable symptoms of stress.

**List three people who you can turn to for support.**

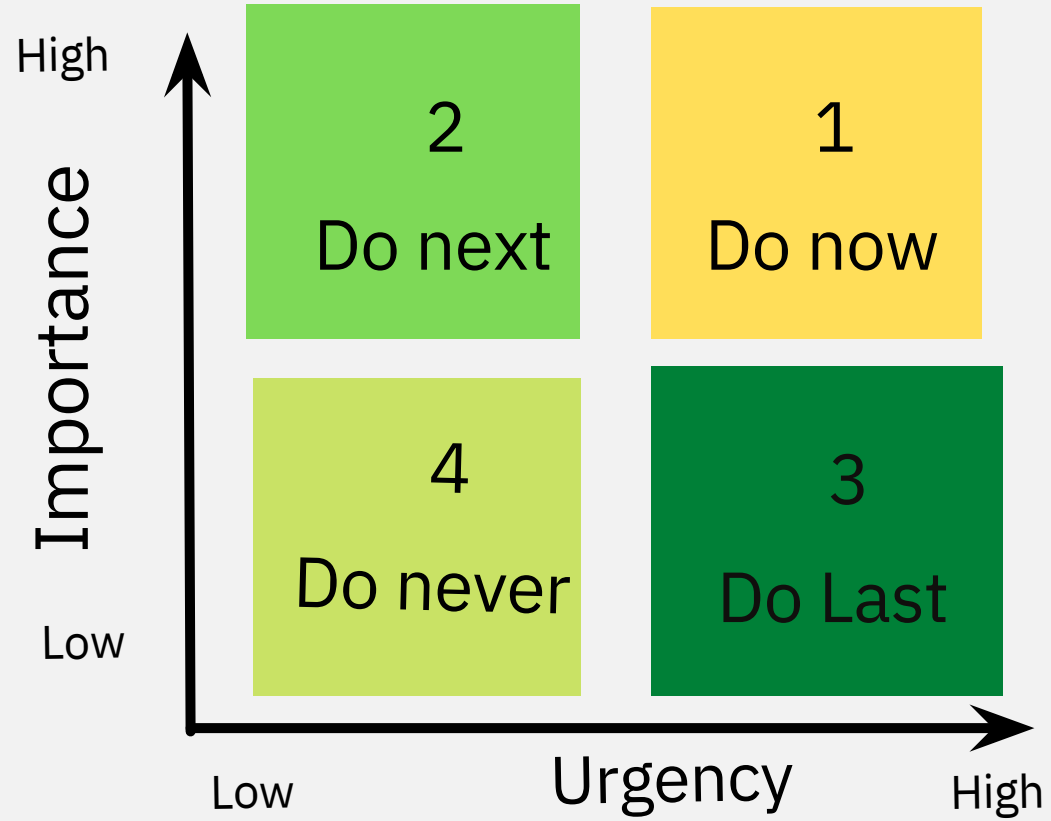
Name:	How they can help:

## ☰ Prioritize your responsibilities.

Focus on completing quick tasks first. Having too many “to-dos” can be stressful, even if none of them are very big. Quickly knocking out the small tasks will clear up your mind to focus on larger responsibilities.



# MANAGE YOUR PRIORITIES








 **Focus on the basics.**

Stress can start a harmful cycle where basic needs are neglected, which leads to more stress. Make a point to focus on your basic needs, such as eating well, keeping a healthy sleep schedule, exercising, and other forms of self-care.

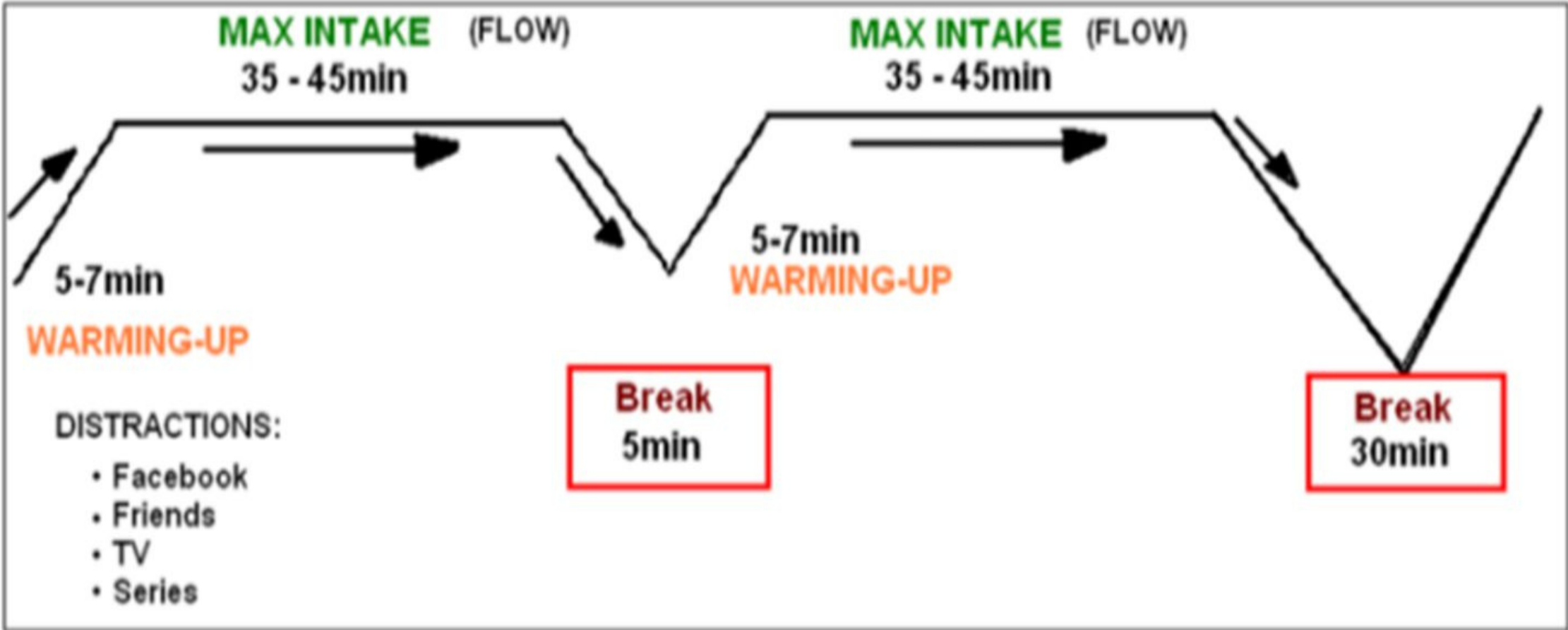


 **Keep things in perspective.**

In the heat of the moment, little problems can feel bigger than they are. Take a step back, and think about how important your stressors are in a broader context. Will they matter in a week? In a year? Writing about your stressors will help you develop a healthier perspective.



# CONCENTRATION CYCLE



: Repeat :

## COPING WITH ACADEMIC STRESS

be kind

- Be kind to yourself. The university environment can be difficult as it comes with changes that require multiple and complex transitions.
- Give yourself time to adjust to the academic demands.
- Try to identify issues hindering your academic success.
- Identify why you are struggling e.g. are you feeling overwhelmed, don't knowing how to study independently, have other life stressors?



- Reach out to others, you may find there are others who are struggling with similar experiences.
- Take advantage of your institutions support services. Engage with student tutors, academic mentors.
- Stay connected with home and personal support: set a time daily to video call or text to help you feel connected, emotionally supported

# JOIN A STUDY/SUPPORT GROUP



Join a group.

For the session to be productive, **plan** what to cover before meeting.

Try to **stick to** the planned topic.

Share useful **tips** and **strategies**.

Use any available and accessible technology platform, e.g.  
WhatsApp / Zoom / Google Meet.



# Faculty student advisors (FSAs)



## VISION

Academic Advising at UP is a dynamic relationship between an advisor and a student, aimed at assisting students clarify personal career goals and a holistic university experience.

This clarification process assists students to develop educational goals and achieve their vision. Academic Advising is a joint-decision making process where student and advisor discusses the appropriate support services and resources available at UP, to pursue specific goals in the interest of the student.

The student then takes responsibility for his/her own learning and subsequent success by utilizing these support services and resources.



## MISSION

- To empower students to succeed by using early intervention and databased decision making to identify and reach out to students who may need support.
- To be present and available for students who then seek assistance and support and to empower them as they explore and develop their academic and personal goals
- To share skills, advice, training and support with students, as they explore their career ambitions, which will enable them to set goals for their future and work towards achieving those goals.
- To positively impact on students' academic and professional development so that they are equipped to finish their degrees in the minimum time, reach their optimal level of functioning beyond student life and become fully functioning members of society.



## SERVICES

Individual consultations and workshops on:

- Academic support;
- Goal setting & motivation;
- Adjustment to university life;
- Time management;
- Study methods;
- Test / Exam preparation;
- Stress Management and;
- Career exploration.



## ROLE OF PEER ADVISER

Peer advisors are senior students. This gives them the opportunity to assist other students from a first-hand perspective.

The primary role of Peer Advisors will be to assist students with basic advising questions. Peer advisors will also serve as a resource to connect students with the Faculty Student Advisors (FSAs) (where applicable) and/or with general campus resources.

In so-doing, the peer advisor shall assist in the decision-making process when determining which support services available at UP will best help students in pursuing their specific goals.



# Mental Wellbeing Toolkit & Resources

Some practical self-help tools that can help you improve your mental (and physical) wellbeing!



If you are on your student portal, please pay a visit to our friendly chatbot SCU-B, who will try to answer your mental health and wellness enquiries in a helpful way.

Other Mental Health Services and Products offered by the SCU:

- "Self-help material for students" tab on the website for other useful resources, such as the podcasts and posters developed specifically for our students.
- Follow our monthly Mental Health Awareness events by clicking on the Mental Health Awareness tab on the website.



Talk to a counsellor today:

- Call 0800 747 747 (for free!)
- Send an SMS to 31393 for a call back
  - Ask to join a peer support groups
- This 24-hour service

To access therapeutic support or find out about individual therapy:



# Useful Links

## **Managing Anxiety and Stress**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAqG6a6aScA>

**Managing Anxiety and Stress in the face of Covid-19** (Mental Health Tips)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-qctBOMMBA>

**Staying Healthy During Covid-19: Maintaining Health During A Difficult Stressful**

**Time** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbxh3fFP7Jg>

**Staying Connected While Social Distancing**

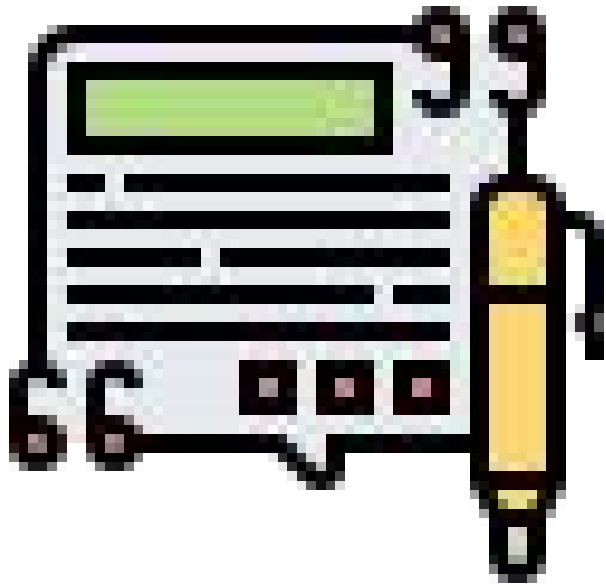
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtikXudr1F0>

**How Stress Affects Your Body (Illustrated Video)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-t1Z5-oPtU>



# References



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Il-haam, P., Johann, L., Kitty, D. (2009) Adjustment to university and academiperformance among disadvantaged students in South Africa, *Educational Psychology*, 29:1, 99-115, DOI: 10.1080/01443410802521066

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