



Student life

Explains how you can look after your mental health as a student, giving practical suggestions for what you can do and where you can go for support. This information was authored by Student Minds, in collaboration with Mind.

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About student mental health

This information was authored by [Student Minds](#), in partnership with Mind.

Student Minds is the UK's student mental health charity, empowering students and members of the university community to look after their own mental health, support others and create change. They train students and higher education staff across the UK to deliver student-led peer support interventions as well as research-driven campaigns, resources and workshops.



This guide aims to support you during your time as a student and provides useful tips and guidance, whether you are experiencing mental health problems or have done in the past, or whether you would just like more information on how to keep yourself healthy and well in your new student life.

Studying is likely to bring a number of changes to your life. It can be enjoyable and interesting, but it can also be challenging.

You might face challenges such as:

- meeting and working with new people
- exams, deadlines for written work or presentations
- managing your own finances
- coping with homesickness
- balancing the demands of studying with other commitments, such as caring responsibilities or work
- maintaining relationships with family and old friends
- leaving home, finding new housing and living with new people.

"When I began university I'd been struggling with my mental health for years but had not got help, and starting university in a new city kick-started my path to diagnosis and recovery."

Coping with new challenges can have an impact on your mental health, but there are lots of things that you can do to make your time as a student easier and more enjoyable.

Students are at higher risk of developing mental health problems with research showing many people first experience mental health problems or first seek help when they are at university.

Some of the specific things that, as a student, make you more susceptible to mental health problems include:

- **Your age** – a large proportion of students are under 25 and around three-quarters of adults with a mental illness have their first episode before turning 25.
- **Stress** – becoming a student can be a stressful experience. Although stress isn't a mental health problem, it can lead to mental health problems like depression and anxiety. See our pages on [managing stress](#) for more information.
- **Lack of support** – you might have left home for the first time, or just don't have enough time to see your friends and family. Not having a good support network can make you vulnerable to developing a mental health problem.

You may already be living with an existing mental health problem and be receiving help and support for this. As you transition to life as a student you may find that your support changes location or you transition from [CAMHS \(Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services\)](#) to adult services.

It is important to continue your support if needed and become familiar with what this will look like for you as a student.

“The tutors who I chose to open up to were supportive. As a result of asking for help I realised that with a few adjustments I would be able to finish my course, and nobody thought any less of me.”

[Read Sophie's blog about learning to cope with anxiety and panic attacks at university.](#)

Common mental health problems for students

According to recent research, 1 in 5 students has a diagnosed mental health problem. The following mental health problems are the most common among students.

See also our [A-Z of mental health](#) where you can find out more about mental health problems, as well as a range of other relevant topics.

Anxiety

Anxiety disorders are one of the most commonly diagnosed mental health problems among students.

Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future. Anxiety can become a mental health problem if it impacts on your ability to live your life as fully as you want to.

See our pages on [anxiety](#) for more information.

Depression

Depression is the most commonly diagnosed mental health problem among students. Depression is a low mood that lasts for a long time, and affects your everyday life.

See our pages on [depression](#) for more information.

Suicidal feelings

Incidents of suicide at universities are more highly reported than in the general population. Suicide can have a significant impact on university communities.

Suicidal feelings can mean having abstract thoughts about ending your life, or feeling that people would be better off without you. Or it can mean thinking about methods of suicide or making clear plans to take your own life.

See our pages on [suicidal feelings](#) for more information.

If you feel unable to keep yourself safe, it's a mental health emergency.

[Get emergency advice](#)

How can I prepare?

Deciding to study is a fantastic opportunity for new experiences, however the demands of student life can be a challenge. This section covers some of the things you may be considering at the start of your student journey.

Deciding to become a student

There are many decisions to make before the studying begins that could have an impact on how enjoyable and worthwhile you find your course.

You are likely to face decisions such as: what subject to study, what type of course to take, and where? [UCAS](#) can help you explore some of your options.

It can also be worth attending open days to get a better insight into the subject, what teaching methods are used and to get a feel for the place of study. Open days tend to run throughout the year but it is worth checking the calendars of a few colleges or universities that you are interested in, as you may need to register for a place in advance.

Whether to study close to home, to commute or to move somewhere new is another decision that you are likely to face when thinking about starting a new course. Check out Student Minds' [Transitions guide](#) for some helpful advice on this.

It may be that you decide university is not the right option for you. For information on the alternatives that may be better suited to you, take a look at the [Not Going To Uni guide](#).

If you have a mental health condition you will also be considering how, when and if, to tell your place of study. Take a look at the University Mental Health Advisers Network for [guidance on disclosing difficulties](#).

Planning your healthcare

If you're currently receiving treatment for a mental health problem and you register with a new GP, the support you get may change. You may have new assessments and your

new GP or Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) may advise on a new treatment plan. The NHS has more information about [registering with a new GP as a student](#).

To minimise the disruption, it can help to plan early - even as soon as you've chosen a course or accepted a place. Talk to your current GP or CMHT about:

- the move and the implications for your treatment
- how your medical notes will be transferred and what they can do to ensure that your new GP understands your medical needs
- reviewing any medication you are taking that may affect your studying
- write a summary letter about your medical history for your new GP.

The [University Mental Health Advisers Network \(UMHAN\)](#) are a network of mental health specialists working in the Higher/Further education sector and can provide more information on telling your institution about a diagnosed mental health problem, and what protection you have.

Managing your finances

Studying is likely to affect your personal finances. The money you receive and the way you get it may change. It is important to think about how you will pay for essentials like food, housing, tuition fees and course costs such as books and other equipment.

The change in financial situation can be particularly difficult if you are a mature student who is used to earning a full-time wage, or if you have children or dependents that you support financially. You can find information about extra financial support you may be entitled to [here](#).

"I try to be sensible with my spending where possible – I always ensure I can afford to eat well and leave enough to treat myself from time to time."

Money worries may feel like more of a challenge if you are a care-leaver or don't have financial support from your family. Take a look at [Stand Alone](#) for information about applying for student loans and support from your local authority.

Regardless of your situation, it can be useful to create a weekly or termly budget plan to help you keep track of your incomings and outgoings. Pick a method that you will find easy to use such as an app or spreadsheet - there are lots of templates online available for use.

Check out [The Money Charity's Student Money Manual](#) and the [Money Advice Service](#) for more advice on managing your finances.

If you are living with a mental health condition it would also be worth taking a look at our [money and mental health](#) pages for lots of useful information.

"I do part-time university with the Open University, so I have a full-time job alongside. It helps a lot."

Managing your studies

You may be returning to education after a break or continuing on from school or college. Whatever your situation, you may find that you have more responsibility for your own study than you have been used to. This can provide flexibility in how you structure your day, but getting used to planning your own schedule can be a challenge.

Many colleges and universities run study skills sessions for new students. These can be a great way of learning time management and effecting planning strategies as well understanding some of the possible requirements from your new course, such as how to write a research proposal or reference other studies correctly. Study skills tutors often work within the library setting, so consider visiting them when you start your course.

"I try to take a step back and assess my workload, write a list and take it one step at a time."

What if things don't go to plan?

Sometimes things don't go as you expected. This can be difficult, but it happens to everyone. You might find it helpful to:

- have a plan B, an alternate work schedule if your day or week's routine is disrupted
- proactively schedule in 'spare time' so that you can catch up if necessary
- talk to your tutor about extensions or flexible arrangements in advance, so that you feel comfortable talking to them if things are not going to plan.

"What I wish I'd known sooner is how adaptable university is. There is no right or wrong way to do it – because everyone is different."

[Read Lizzie's story](#)

How can I connect with other students?

For some people, studying is a time where they socialise with a wide range of people and have many new experiences. While this can be positive, it can also feel overwhelming.

Meeting new people

Being around so many other students creates a great opportunity to meet like-minded people. If you are finding it hard to meet new people, remember many other students will feel the same way. Here are some suggestions to help you get started:

- **Volunteering** can help you meet people who share an interest with you. Your institution may have students groups or a Students' Union who may be able to help you do this. Alternatively, [Do-it.org](#) has lots of helpful information, or [Student Minds](#) runs volunteering programmes you might be interested in. For more information, see our page on [student fundraising and volunteering](#).
- **Clubs or societies** can be a great way to get to know people and create a work-life balance. See what's on offer when you enrol or, check in with your student representative, committee or Students' Union at any time.

- **Course forums or email groups** can keep you connected if you're studying online. Getting to know people online can also make it easier if the course has events like study weekends where you will all meet.

Meeting new people can seem more of a challenge if you feel less like those around you.

- **If you have experienced time in care** prior to studying, you may feel like you have less in common with your classmates. In addition to the above tips, it can be useful to connect with groups outside of your place of study to help strengthen your support network. For example the [Your Prospects](#) peer network events are for care-leavers at all stages of their educational, academic and work lives.
- **If you are LGBTQ+** (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning) then take a look at these [Student Minds](#) pages for some advice on starting conversations and what to do if you experience discrimination. See our page on [LGBTIQ+ student mental health](#) for information on where to get support.

Take a look [here](#) as Paul talks about managing the highs and lows of his bipolar disorder during his degree, and how this impacted his relationships with others.

"Make plans to see classmates or friends during study breaks to ensure you don't become isolated or lonely. Also make plans each day to leave the house and get outside. Going for a walk is a useful way of relaxing and clearing your head."

Living with other students

If you have moved away from home, it is likely that at some point you will have to organise your own housing. You may not always feel you have a lot of choice, especially during the first year when university halls are the main option for most students, but you could think about if you want to live:

- with people who you can talk to about your mental health
- with a smaller number of people, perhaps in a smaller house or block of halls
- closer to campus or somewhere with better transport links
- near shops and amenities to make it easier to be sociable
- somewhere quiet with more privacy.

Renting a house or flat for the first time is a big deal, but there is plenty of advice and support out there. Check with your place of study if they provide advice about accommodation, managing landlords and signing contracts. You can also contact [Citizens Advice](#), about student housing.

Loneliness

Lots of students feel lonely. Social media can give the impression that all of your friends are hanging out together and having the best time, all the time. This comparison can make you feel more lonely, and loneliness can have a big impact on your mental health.

- **Take social media with a pinch of salt.** People usually only post photos of the positive times on social media, giving a false impression of how great things are.

- **Consider how you could use social media** to have a positive effect on your mental health. Joining online groups such as [Elefriends](#), a supportive online space where you can share experiences and listen to others who have similar mental health issues, can help you feel part of a community. Take a look at the social media accounts of mental health charities such as those mentioned at the end of this guide as many have platforms to network and share experiences in a safe way.
- **Try peer support.** There might be groups at your institution specifically for students who are experiencing mental health problems. [Student Minds](#) run [peer support programmes](#) and mental health campaign groups at universities across the UK.
- **Many students feel lonely.** Even if you are shy, remember your peers are often in the same situation and appreciate you talking to them. Perhaps you could:
 - talk to someone, or just say hello, before and after each lecture or class
 - meet classmates in the library to plan a joint piece of work
 - chat to people you are living with while making food in a shared kitchen.

See our pages on [how to cope with loneliness](#) and on [social phobia](#) (also known as social anxiety) for more tips.

To hear about how Max confronted his social anxiety whilst at university [have a read of his blog](#). Want to add your story? [Find out more about blogging or vlogging for us](#).

How can I cope with the student lifestyle?

Student life is full of new and exciting experiences and there is often lots going on. It is important to take the time to look after yourself to help you cope with the changes in lifestyle. Some areas that you could focus on are:

- Managing stress
- Looking after your physical health
- Coping in an alcohol or drugs culture

For more ideas, check out Student Minds' [Transitions resource](#).

Managing stress

You might feel like there is a lot of pressure to do well academically, as well as pressure to be sociable. In particular, mature students often say that they feel particularly under stress if they are struggling financially and they have invested money in the course as part of a career change, which can create extra pressure to do well.

Try to build up strategies to manage stress before it gets too much, so it's easier to respond to additional pressure – for example, around exam times.

- **Try out some mindfulness exercises.** There is a lot of evidence to suggest these can be really helpful, especially for managing stress. Take a look at our [mindfulness](#) pages for more information.

- **Try using a planner.** This can help to keep track of deadlines and key commitments and organise your study.
- **Take time out to relax.** Getting away from your desk, even for short periods of time, can help keep you calm.
- **Keep an eye on social commitments** to avoid overloading your schedule around deadlines and exams.
- **Try online support and apps.** There are lots of apps and websites available that can help you to manage your stress levels, such as those offering a daily meditation or mindfulness practice. For more information on online support, including apps, have a look at our pages on [mental health online](#).

See our pages on [managing stress](#) for more information, or the [Student Minds blog](#), to hear how other students have managed stress.

Looking after your physical health

Looking after your physical health will help you stay healthy and maintain concentration to study well.

- **Get good sleep.** If you're tired, your worries can get blown out of proportion. Getting into a regular sleep routine can help you stay on top of university life. See our pages on [coping with sleep problems](#) for more information.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Eating a balanced and nutritious diet can help you feel well and think clearly. See our pages on [food and mood](#) for more tips.
- **Exercise regularly.** Keeping active can help you improve your mental health. Even gentle exercise, like yoga or swimming, can help you relax and manage stress. See our pages on [physical activity](#) for more information.

"Tiredness is one of the biggest problems with the student lifestyle and it can contribute significantly to my mood. I feel more emotional and less capable when I am tired."

You may face additional struggles looking after your diet and exercise if you have eating problems or a diagnosed [eating disorder](#).

Take a look [here](#) as Mary talks about common misconceptions around eating disorders and how to make the student lifestyle work for you.

Take a look at how Laura tackled the challenges she was facing at university in her blog post [here](#).

Coping in an alcohol or drugs culture

While alcohol is often associated with the student lifestyle, you don't have to drink if you don't want to. Students' Unions and student-led groups offer a range of social events and activities that are alcohol free. Remember:

- Alcohol can worsen depression and cause other health problems.
- Try to ensure you have some days without drinking.

- Be careful if you are taking medication, as it's usually recommended not to drink or to limit the amount you do drink, while taking it.
- Having a friend around when you are out, or establishing a buddy system, can help to keep you safe when you are drinking or engaged in drug use. Student Minds have [further tips on staying safe here](#).
- Don't accept drinks from someone you don't know and always keep your drinks with you to help avoid your drink being spiked (with drugs or alcohol). Take a look [here](#) for further information about drink spiking and what to do if you think your drink has been spiked.

For information on where to get help, see our page on [useful contacts for drugs and alcohol support](#).

Illegal drugs can also have a serious impact on your mental health. See our pages on [recreational drugs](#) for more information, or see [Frank](#) for confidential information and advice.

[Read Emma's story](#) about surviving freshers and managing her mental health at university. Emma uses her own experiences to give tips about dealing with peer pressure and depression at uni.

Want to add your story? [Find out more about blogging for us](#).

What if I become unwell?

If you become unwell, there are lots of options you can consider.

See our pages on [support for students](#) and [seeking help for your mental health](#), for more information about getting help for your mental health.

Who can I talk to about my options?

It may be helpful to have a chat with someone impartial about your options, even if just to help get it clear in your own mind about what you think would help.

- Your **academic supervisor or tutor** should be able to help you to understand your university or college's policy for taking time out and to consider how you could take a more flexible approach to your studies.
- Your **Students' Union advice service or welfare office** can provide impartial advice.
- Your university or college's **disability service** can support you to think about taking time out or taking a more flexible approach to your studies.

Support if you are in a crisis

A crisis is any situation in which you feel you need urgent help. For example, you might feel in crisis if:

- you are having suicidal thoughts and feelings
- you are having thoughts about harming yourself or someone else
- you have seriously hurt yourself.

Everyone experiences a crisis in their own way. You might feel that your mental health has been steadily deteriorating for some time, or perhaps something's happened in your life that's shaken your stability.

You might have a good idea what's likely to trigger a crisis for you, or you might not know what's causing your feelings. But whatever your situation, if you start to feel unable to cope, or to keep yourself safe, it's important to ask for help.

Take a look at our pages on crisis services for information on [how to get help in a crisis](#).

[And have a read here of Karl's experience of crisis care and his time in a psychiatric hospital.](#)

Suicidal feelings

Suicidal feelings can range from being preoccupied by abstract thoughts about ending your life, or feeling that people would be better off without you, to thinking about methods of suicide, or making clear plans to take your own life.

If you are feeling suicidal, you might be scared or confused by these feelings. But you are not alone. Many people think about suicide at some point in their lifetime.

There are steps you can take right now to stop yourself from acting on your suicidal thoughts. Everyone is different, so it's about finding what works best for you.

Take a look at our pages on [suicidal feelings](#) for practical tips that others have found helpful in managing suicidal feelings.

If you are worried about someone else you may find it useful to take a look at our pages on [supporting someone who feels suicidal](#).

Support on your course

If you do become unwell, it's important for you (or someone you trust) to explain the situation to your academic supervisor, tutor, or a welfare staff member, as soon as possible. Even if you have previously explained that you have a mental health problem, they may not be aware that you're feeling worse. The sooner you let them know, the easier it is for them to help you get support with your academic work.

You may be able to:

- receive special dispensation when your work is marked
- extend deadlines
- re-sit exams.

There are also informal adjustments that can be made to support you in staying well. For example requesting that meetings are at a particular time of day that suits when your energy levels are at their highest, or in a particular location where you feel most able to concentrate.

For more ideas about the kinds of adjustments other students have found useful, take a look at the [Student Minds blog](#).

Take time out from your course

Each course is different in the way it approaches taking time off from studying. It may be possible to:

- defer the course for a time
- repeat a term or year.

Your university or college may need a letter from your doctor to explain how your mental health is affecting your studies. The process can sometimes be daunting so having support from a friend or family member can really help during this time.

“A few weeks after starting uni, I realised that my course wasn’t for right me. I hated the city, felt like a failure and struggled with my mental health. I decided to drop out and transfer to a different one. When I started at the right uni and course everything changed. My mental health improved, I made friends, and now I’m in a career linked to the degree I loved.”

Take a look [here](#) to hear what Andrew learnt from taking leave from his studies.

Taking a flexible approach to studying

Your university might be able to make adjustments to how you study. For example, you may be able to:

- complete your degree part-time
- have longer deadlines for coursework
- get more time in exams.

It may help to start by thinking about what you would need to make it easier to continue your studies.

Thinking about alternatives

You might feel that continuing your course isn't right for you, and that's okay. It could be useful to think about some alternatives:

- trying a different course or location
- studying a vocational course or apprenticeship
- taking a gap year

- starting work or re-starting work.

[Not Going To Uni](#) has advice and information about alternatives to university.

"If you find yourself in a situation where you have to choose between university and your mental health treatment, my advice would be to choose mental health treatment. It's more important. You can always pick up where you left off with studying, but you can't really do that with your health because the longer you leave it, the harder it becomes to treat."

What support could I get?

There are many different individuals and organisations who can offer you support. If possible, it is helpful to put this support in place when things are going well, so that it is easy for you to ask for help if you start to find things more difficult. Try thinking about who you feel comfortable talking to. You might want support from:

- [Your place of study](#)
- [Outside of your place of study](#)
- [Friends and family](#)
- [Online mental health support](#)

Whether you have an existing mental health condition or are starting to find things difficult to manage, considering your options for support can be really helpful.

Support can vary in terms of how easy it is to access and the quality, so it can be useful to consider a variety of places and people that you can seek support from, as well as using self-help techniques such as [mindfulness](#) or [physical activity](#), as part of keeping yourself well.

"However difficult it may feel, it is important to be open with your university if you are suffering with mental health problems. You will be unable to receive the support you need and that is available without doing so."

Support from your place of study

The college or university disability service

Your university or college may have a disability support service who can support you to manage any health problem that affects your studies. This includes both physical and mental health problems.

You can arrange a meeting with this service to discuss any challenges that you might have with your studies, and look at what support the service can provide. The service may be able to arrange:

- **mentoring** – this might be with another student or a disability specialist
- **study skills training** – such as courses in coping with stress or planning work
- **specific arrangements** – for your assessments or exams

- you may also be eligible for **financial support** through the [Disabled Students Allowance](#).

The [University Mental Health Advisers Network \(UMHAN\)](#) is a good source of information about the support you could be entitled to.

Your university may also be a partner with a Local Mind as part of our Mentally Healthy Universities programme. Get more information and find out which places of study are involved in [Mentally Healthy Universities](#).

Your college or university counselling service

Most universities and colleges have a counselling service providing support to students for free. They can offer advice about your circumstances independently of your academic tutors or your GP.

You can usually self-refer to a university or college counselling service, so you don't need to see your GP first or have a medical diagnosis.

"I would say that none of the places I went to, whether that was the wellbeing team, the support service for Psychology, or my GP, immediately changed my mental health as soon as I left the building."

[Read this student's story](#)

Student led support

Your place of study may have a Students' Union with a welfare officer or a Student Advice Service offering free and independent advice or support. They can also refer you to external support.

Student Advice Services are staffed by elected student representatives who have received additional training, or Students' Union staff members who may have experience or training in specific areas such as law or mental health. Students' Unions and the staff they employ are independent of the university or college, although usually based in the same buildings.

An academic contact

Your university or college should assign you an academic supervisor or tutor to provide support and advice about your studies. If your tutor knows about your mental health, they may be able to support you in your studies, and help you access further academic support.

- Some tutors will be pro-active about meeting their students but **with others, you may have to contact them to arrange a meeting**. Remember, they are there to support you, so don't feel shy about taking the first step.
- **Talking to your tutor early** can help ensure that the right support is in place so that if things do get tricky, they understand how they can support you.
- **Your department may have a welfare or disability liaison** who you can talk to about your mental health, if you don't feel comfortable talking to your tutor.

Each place of study will offer slightly different support so it is always worth taking a look at their website to see what is available to you.

If your place of study is in England or Wales, you can use the support service finder from Student Space.

Find out if you can access services such as:

- mental health and counselling support teams
- student advice services
- support networks.

Visit Student Space to use the [support finder tool](#).

"The tutors who I chose to open up to were supportive. As a result of asking for help I realised that with a few adjustments I would be able to finish my course, and nobody thought any less of me."

Support outside your place of study

Your GP

Your GP can support you by:

- referring you to local services
- prescribing medication where necessary
- helping you access treatment for your mental health.

If you don't have a diagnosis but are concerned about your mental health, you can always speak to your GP about this. See our pages on [seeking help for a mental health problem](#) for more information on support from your GP.

You can also find more advice from the NHS on student health on [NHS Choices Live Well](#).

For **international students** who are unfamiliar with the National Health Service (NHS) and how to access support, the [UK Council for International Student Affairs \(UKCISA\)](#) has some useful information on looking after yourself and how to get medical treatment should you need it.

"I found having someone in healthcare validate how I was feeling extremely positive. Knowing that what I was experiencing wasn't just normal sadness, but that it also had a name, helped me understand myself and support myself better for the rest of the term."

Organisations and charities

There are some charities and organisations who specifically work with students, and could offer you support:

- [Student Minds](#) offer support for students and run peer support groups across the country.
- [Students against depression](#) offer information and advice for students experiencing depression.
- [Nightline](#) confidential telephone support offered overnight at universities across the country.
- [Young Minds](#) offer information and support to young people experiencing mental health problems.
- [Propel](#) provide support, help and advice to young care leavers around moving into higher education.

Voluntary organisations and charities also provide support to students and specific groups, as well as members of public. For example, you might want support from:

- [Citizens Advice](#) – gives support on practical issues like housing, debt and benefits.
- [The Samaritans](#) – available 24 hours a day by telephone or email, to talk about anything that's upsetting you.
- [Local Mind](#) – local Minds offer a range of support services in local areas. Get in touch with one to find out more.

Many charities also run telephone or online support services. See our pages on [telephone support](#) and [online support](#) for more information.

Peer support

When you experience a mental health problem it can feel as if no-one understands. Peer support brings together people who've had similar experiences to support each other. Many students find that meeting others with experience of mental health difficulties helps them feel less alone and makes it easier to talk about their own mental health.

- Your place of study might run peer support groups on campus, in your halls or on your course.
- You can usually self-refer to peer support programmes, so you don't need to see a GP first or have a diagnosis.
- You can also access online peer support through communities like [Elefriends](#) (see our pages on [staying safe online](#) for more information).

Check out your college or university's counselling service, Students' Union or [Student Minds peer support programmes](#) for more information about peer support near you.

Friends and family

University friends and housemates

If your friends or housemates have been worried about how you are doing, talking to them might be a relief for all of you. If you are worried about how they will react, talk to

them about this – they may appreciate your advice on how they can help and what they can do to be supportive.

Student Minds provides [advice and support for students supporting friends](#).

Telling people around me that I'm struggling will help, as they can help me feel happy.

Friends or family back home

If you have moved away from home, it can be difficult to keep in contact with friends and family, particularly if you are an international student. Even if you have not moved, you may not spend as much time with your family and friends as you used to – you may just have less time than before, are discovering new friends, or may just want to be more independent while studying.

However it can be useful, especially if you're feeling low or experiencing poor mental health, to get support from old friends and your family.

Some ways to ensure you can keep in contact while also having an independent or new lifestyle are:

- **using email or social media** – even quick forms of contact, like forwarding jokes, allow you to keep in touch
- **writing a letter or card** – these can feel more personal and be nice to receive
- **taking time to talk** – set aside a time each week to chat to a close friend or family
- **inviting friends to stay so you can show them around** - they may then do the same for you
- **keeping people up to date with what you are doing** – so they feel they are still part of your life – you don't have to tell them everything, just let them know what's going on.

Online mental health support

Below you can find a range of general online mental health support services, as well as those for specific mental health problems.

The Mix

The Mix is the UK's leading support service for young people. It supports anyone under 25 with a range of problems such as:

- mental health
- money
- homelessness
- finding a job
- going through a break-up.

They have a free, confidential helpline, a counselling service, and an online community.

Visit [The Mix](#) to find out more.

Side by Side

Side by Side, formerly known as Elefriends, is Mind's online mental health community. Please note that the community is for over 18s only.

Side by Side is a 24/7 community that allows users to help support each other. This is also moderated by Mind staff. Among other things, using Side by Side allows you to:

- post publicly
- send private messages
- leave comments on post.

Visit [Side by Side](#) to find out more and sign up.

Samaritans

Samaritans is a free helpline available 24/7. You can contact them by email or through their app if you want to stay online

Or you can contact them by phone, letter or by visiting one of their branches.

Advisers are here to listen if you're having a difficult time, or struggling to cope and you need someone to talk to.

Visit [Samaritans](#) to find out more.

SANE support forum

SANE is a mental health charity. Its support forum is available for anyone aged 18 or over. It's a safe space and community offering support, ideas, and sharing experiences.

SANE is moderated and available 24 hours a day. Anyone is able to view posts, but to share you need an account.

Visit the [SANE support forum](#) page to find out more.

Togetherall

Togetherall is an online service providing access for support with anxiety, depression and other common mental health problems. It was formerly known as Big White Wall.

Its website includes:

- clinically-managed online forums where people help each other
- a wide range of self-guided group and individual courses on mental health
- a library of resources.

Visit [Togetherall](#) to find out more.

The online support options below are for specific mental health problems of [eating problems](#) and [bipolar disorder](#).

Beat message boards

Beat's Message Boards are there for anyone, whether you're concerned about yourself or a someone close to you.

The boards focus on eating disorders, for any stage of your eating disorder journey.

There are different types of messaging boards depending on what you require. All boards are moderated.

Beat also has a dedicated [student support email](#) and online peer support groups.

Visit the [Beat Message Boards](#) to find out more.

Bipolar UK eCommunity

The Bipolar UK eCommunity is a community with over 5,000 members providing support for anyone experiencing Bipolar.

It is a space for discussion and for members to share their experiences. Once registered, you will have 24/7 access.

Visit the [Bipolar UK eCommunity](#) page to find out more.

What happens when I finish my course?

Preparing for graduation and moving on after studying can be both exciting and daunting. You may be thinking about your future career or about the support you will want after completing your course. It's a good idea to think about the steps you can take to help you manage the move out of studying and look after your mental health.

[Save the Graduate](#) also has a helpful list of things to consider as you prepare to leave university.

Preparing for life after your course

It is completely normal to have no idea what you want to do after your course finishes. This can feel stressful, or affect how you feel about yourself, but it's important to remember that many people take months or even years to work out their next steps.

How do I decide what to do next?

- If you are studying a course that could lead onto a specific career, relevant societies will provide information about career options in your field.

- Make use of your university or college careers service. This is a great place to help you start thinking about what you might like to do when you finish studying.
- The [National Careers Service](#) has advice and information on planning a career.

Remember: lots of graduates describe the process of finding a career as trial and error. Most students don't have a road map planned out – you don't need one!

Maintaining your support network

When you graduate, it is likely that the support networks you have may no longer be as easily available. If you are moving away from the city where you studied, it might be worth thinking about the support that is available in the new place you will be living.

- **Stay in touch with coursemates** – everyone finds this transition tricky, and hearing from an old friend is reassuring.
- **Try online support** – you can access this wherever you move to. See our pages on [online mental health support](#) for more information.
- **Speak your local Mind** to find out more about the [support in your new area](#).

Arranging your healthcare

If you are moving away from where you have been studying and are currently receiving support from your GP or an NHS service, you will need to plan how the move might affect the support you receive.

- Visit your current GP and think about the process of transferring your care to a new GP.
- Find out where you can register with a new GP.
- If you're in touch with your community mental health team (CMHT) or crisis team, make sure you let them know that you're moving and find out how you can access the support you want in your new home.

Transitioning into working life

If you're starting work or returning to a job after your course, it's important to think about how you'll manage your mental health in this new environment.

- [Time to Change](#) looks at the pros and cons of talking to your manager about your mental health.
- Read about other people's experiences of making the transition out of university and into work on the [Student Minds blog](#).
- See our pages on [being mentally healthy at work](#) for more information too.

Work, just like studying can take different forms; part-time, full-time, freelance, there are many options to find something that works for you.

Workplace support for students and new graduates

Find ways to help manage your mental health and wellbeing, and get support:

- **Check out Mental Health at Work.** Get information, resources, tools and training to promote good mental health in the workplace. Visit the [Mental Health at Work website](#).
- **Create a Wellness Action Plan.** Wellness Actions Plans can help you support your own mental health at work. They can help you identify what keeps you well, and what impacts your mental health. See our [guide to Wellness Action Plans](#).
- **Find out if you're protected by the Equality Act.** Some people with mental health problems have a legal right to ask their employer for reasonable adjustments. See our legal information on the [Equality Act 2010](#) and [disability discrimination](#).

See our pages on [how to be mentally healthy at work](#) for more information.

[Take a look at Mike's story](#) about how he is in a job that makes him feel good about himself, whilst living with schizophrenia.

For friends and family

This section is for friends and family who want to help someone they know with a mental health problem who is studying or considering becoming a student.

Lots of students seek help from friends and family. Indeed a recent study of LGBTQ+ students found that nearly all respondents sought help or advice from friends for emotional problems.

"I have bipolar disorder, and when I experience manic episodes it can be difficult for people to understand what I am experiencing. For me, it was very important to let my friends know how they expressed themselves, what it meant for me, and what they could do to support me day-to-day or in crisis."

Becoming a student involves many changes for friends and family. There are lots of things you can do to help manage these changes.

- **Keep in touch** – make the effort to be the one who stays in contact. Even if they appear very busy, they are likely to appreciate the effort.
- **Make time to be together** – visiting them where they are studying can give you the opportunity to understand more about their new life and feel more engaged. For some, student life can be busy, so finding dates that work might require patience and flexibility.
- **Accept that things may change** – they are likely to have made new friends, or have new commitments that take up their time.
- **Ask them how they are doing** – it doesn't have to be a serious conversation about mental health, but most people will appreciate being asked. If you are worried about how they are doing, creating time and space for an honest answer (go for a walk or do a joint activity such as crafting or even washing up) can help.

“From the second my parents found out about my illness, everything was about supporting me but also trying to get things back to normal for me, and never about holding me back. They gave me endless support.”

- **Take an interest** – try asking them about what they're working on at the moment or about their course.
- **Give them space** – if they have left home for the first time, remember that being a student is part of a process of gaining independence and growing up. It is natural that they don't want to tell you everything.
- **Offer practical help** – offer help with a routine task, such as preparing or cooking food. This sort of thing will really be appreciated, and save them time and stress.
- **Remember that studying can feel like a job** – while they may not be going to a full time job, studying can take up a lot of time, involve long hours in lectures or busy work placements. Try to understand that they can feel under a lot of pressure, and offer them support.

“Understand that student life isn't a walk in the park for everyone and it isn't necessarily the 'time of your life'.”

- **Look after yourself** - supporting someone else can have an impact on your own mental health. For more information see:
 - our pages on [how to cope when supporting someone else](#)
 - Student Minds' resource [Look After Your Mate](#)
 - [Carers UK](#) also offers information, advice and support for people caring for someone with a disability.

Useful contacts

Mind's services

- **Helplines** – all our helplines provide information and support by phone and email. Our Blue Light Infoline is just for emergency service staff, volunteers and their families.
 - Mind's Infoline – 0300 123 3393, info@mind
 - Mind's Legal Line – 0300 466 6463, legal@mind
 - Blue Light Infoline – 0300 303 5999, bluelightinfo@mind
- **Local Minds** – there are over 140 local Minds across England and Wales which provide services such as [talking treatments](#), [peer support](#), and [advocacy](#). [Find your local Mind here](#), and contact them directly to see how they can help.
- **Elefriends** is a supportive online community for anyone experiencing a mental health problem. See our [Elefriends page](#) for details.

Who else could help?

Alcohol & Drugs

Frank

talktofrank.com

Information and advice about drugs.

Charities

Carers UK

0808 808 7777

advice@carersuk.org

carersuk.org

Independent information and support for carers.

Do-it

do-it.org

Volunteering opportunities across the UK.

Nightline

nightline.ac.uk

Lists contact information for support and listening services run in universities and colleges across the UK.

Papyrus

HOPELINEUK: 0800 068 41 41 (weekdays 10am-10pm, weekends 2pm-10pm, bank holidays 2pm-10pm)

07786 209697 (text message service)

pat@papyrus-uk.org

papyrus-uk.org

Provides information and support for anyone under 35 who is struggling with suicidal feelings, or anyone concerned about a young person who might be struggling.

Samaritans

116 123 (freephone, available 24 hours)

jo@samaritans.org

samaritans.org

Emotional support for anyone in distress.

Student Minds

hello@studentminds.org.uk

studentminds.org.uk

Information about student mental health and local peer support programmes.

Students Against Depression

studentsagainstdepression.org

Information and support for students experiencing depression.

University Mental Health Advisors Network (UMHAN)

umhan.com

National network of University Mental Health Advisors.

YoungMinds

0808 802 5544

youngminds.org.uk

Information for both parents and young people.

Finance

Money Advice Service

0300 500 5000

moneyadviceservice.org.uk

Free, impartial advice about money matters.

The Money Charity

themoneycharity.org.uk

hello@themoneycharity.org.uk

National charity offering information and advice about managing your money.

YourDSA

www.yourdsa.com

YourDSA aims to promote and simplify the process of applying for the Disabled Students' Allowances

Health services

NHS Choices - Student Health

nhs.uk/Livewell/studenthealth

Advice on student health issues.

NHS Service Finder

nhs.uk/service-search

Search facility which allows you to look for a health service, including a GP, in your area.

Student advice

Citizens Advice

03444 111 444 (England)

0344 477 2020 (Wales)

TextRelay service: 03444 111 445

citizensadvice.org.uk

Confidential advice on a range of issues.

National Careers Service

nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk

Information and advice on planning your career.

National Union of Students

0845 5210 262

nus.org.uk

Promoting and defending the rights of students.

Not Going To Uni

notgoingtouni.co.uk

Information and advice about alternatives to university.

Office for Students

[officeforstudents.org.uk](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk)

Information and guidance for students from the independent regulator of higher education in England.

Open University

open.ac.uk/skillsforstudy

Information on study skills.

Save the Graduate

savethegraduate.org

Information and advice about graduating from university.

The Student Room

[thestudentroom.co.uk](https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk)

Information for students and the UK's largest online student community.

UCAS

[ucas.com](https://www.ucas.com)

University and colleges admission service.

UKCISA

[ukcisa.org.uk](https://www.ukcisa.org.uk)

International student advice and guidance

Support for care leavers

Propel

[propel.org.uk](https://www.propel.org.uk)

Support for children in care and young care leavers.

Rees Foundation

[reesfoundation.org](https://www.reesfoundation.org)

Support for care leavers.