

NOVEMBER 2024

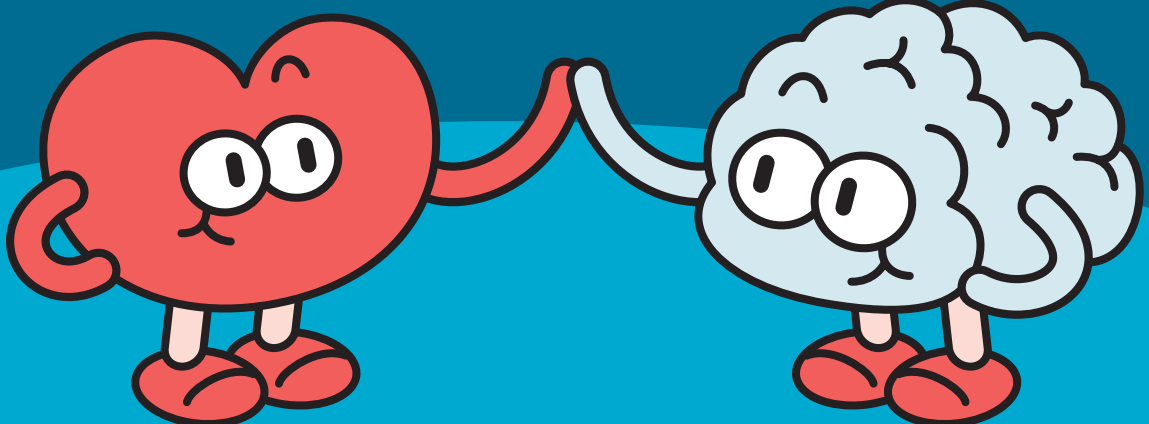
# UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA MEDICAL AND COUNSELLING STUDENT NEWSLETTER

Hi UC students,

Congratulations on making it to the end of the semester! We encourage everyone to take care of themselves throughout exams, end of semester assessments and results release.

In this edition we will cover:

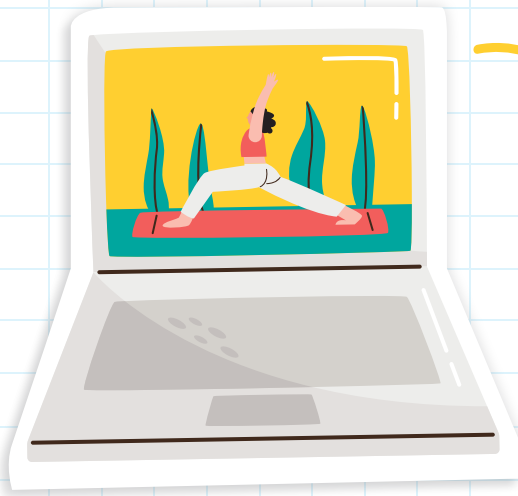
- **Tips to help you stress less**
- **Healthy foods to boost brain function**
- **Medical & Counselling's free group programs for students**



# TIPS TO STRESS LESS

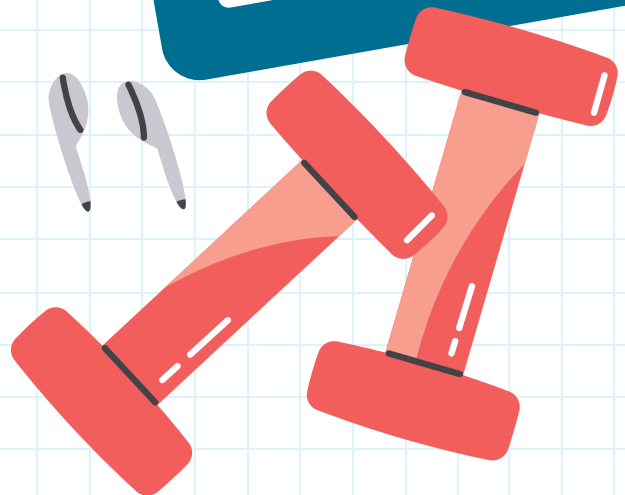
## EXERCISE:

When we're deep in study mode, we can lose track of our normal routines and priorities. It is important to remember that engaging in any kind of physical activity, whether it is a 5-minute walk or a gym workout, increases our heart rate and releases endorphins, reducing anxiety. Even spending 10 minutes stretching while focusing on your breathing can help with relaxation and concentration.<sup>1</sup>



## SLEEP:

Sleep is crucial for memory, concentration, and attention, as well as alertness and emotional regulation. On average, an adult should be sleeping between 7-9 hours per night, however we know that sleep is often sacrificed in peak study periods.<sup>2</sup> Improving your sleep starts with enhancing your sleep hygiene – remember to block out light, minimize noise, keep daytime naps short (approx. 20 minutes) and reduce the use of blue light devices like your phone or laptop 30 minutes prior to sleep. For more tips on improving your sleep hygiene, [visit this page](#).





## LEARN TO IDENTIFY AND MANAGE PERFECTIONISM:

When faced with multiple exams or assessments in a short period, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and put excessive pressure on ourselves. To manage this, consider which assessments you want to excel in and which ones you can submit when they are just satisfactory. The quality of your work can vary based on factors like your mental well-being and the time you have available. Keep in mind that academic results do not define your self-worth, and it's perfectly okay to make mistakes. Prioritize self-care when results come out, and don't hesitate to seek professional support if you're having trouble coping with your marks.<sup>3</sup>



## PRACTICE SELF-CARE:

Remember to listen to your body and recognise when you need to take a break from study. Taking short but regular breaks allows us to recharge and stay sharp. It is recommended to take a 15-minute break every 2 hours to help maintain concentration.<sup>4</sup> While on a break, do something you love! Get outside for some fresh air, have a shower or bath, listen to music, have a coffee or cup of tea, or give your pet some love.<sup>5</sup>

### Remember!

If you want to talk to someone about self-care strategies during stressful periods, you can book in for an appointment with one of the psychologists at Medical & Counselling. **This service is free for UC students.**



1. [psychcentral.com/anxiety/how-to-reduce-anxiety-quickly?slot\\_pos=article1&utm\\_source=Sailthru%20Email&utm\\_medium=Email&utm\\_campaign=pcweekly&utm\\_content=2024-10-16&apid=40690900&rvid=5f9967e8155651586bac3fe0121107f9f29ea594fe420e529032370c8a405aaf#naming](https://psychcentral.com/anxiety/how-to-reduce-anxiety-quickly?slot_pos=article1&utm_source=Sailthru%20Email&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=pcweekly&utm_content=2024-10-16&apid=40690900&rvid=5f9967e8155651586bac3fe0121107f9f29ea594fe420e529032370c8a405aaf#naming)
2. [canberra.edu.au/on-campus/health-and-support/medical-counselling/mental-health-information/sleep](https://canberra.edu.au/on-campus/health-and-support/medical-counselling/mental-health-information/sleep)
3. [students.unimelb.edu.au/academic-skills/resources/study-skills/exam-preparation/managing-stress/](https://students.unimelb.edu.au/academic-skills/resources/study-skills/exam-preparation/managing-stress/)
4. [300hours.com/ways-to-manage-stress/](https://300hours.com/ways-to-manage-stress/)
5. [toolkit.lifeline.org.au/articles/techniques/self-care-for-mental-health-and-wellbeing](https://toolkit.lifeline.org.au/articles/techniques/self-care-for-mental-health-and-wellbeing)

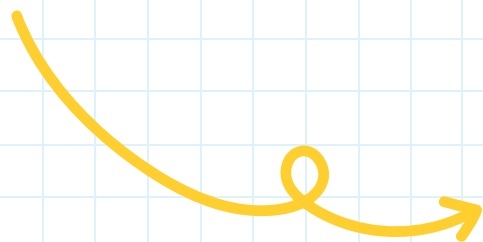
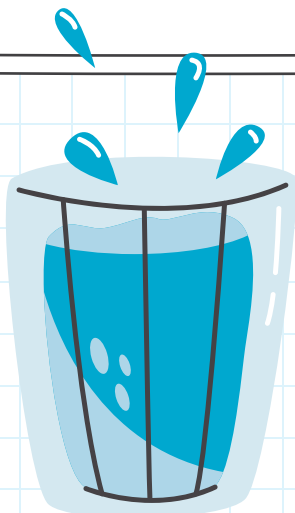
# HEALTHY FOODS TO BOOST BRAIN FUNCTION

## 1. BERRIES

Berries like blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries are high in anthocyanins, a subgroup of flavonoids. These compounds can increase blood flow to the brain, protect against inflammation, and enhance signaling pathways that support nerve cell production and improve memory and cognitive function. This is particularly helpful when you are feeling fatigued and managing a heavy workload.

### Preparation ideas - throw some berries:

- In a smoothie
- On top of your breakfast or dessert
- In a fruit salad
- In yoghurt – dip them and pop them on a tray in the freezer overnight<sup>6</sup>



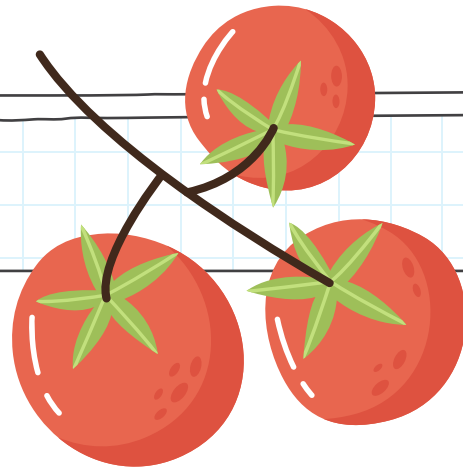


## 2. NUTS

Nuts are rich in vitamin E and zinc, both beneficial for brain health. They also provide a concentrated source of healthy fats, protein, and fibre, helping to keep you feeling full and energized during study sessions.<sup>7</sup>

### Preparation ideas:

- Make a nutty pesto – puree pine nuts, almonds, or walnuts with basil and spinach, and enjoy some pesto with pasta or pizza
- Add to your breakfast as a topping – add some almonds or walnuts to your porridge, cereal, pancakes or eggs
- Garnish your meals – lightly toast pumpkin seeds or almonds in the oven and throw on top of a salad, soup or pasta
- Make a snack – chuck a mix in a bowl with some chocolate chips or dried fruit

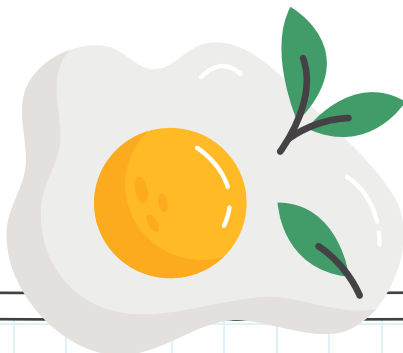


## 3. RED, GREEN AND ORANGE VEGGIES

Red, orange, and green vegetables, like capsicum, carrots, and spinach, contain a variety of beneficial plant compounds, including carotenoid pigments, that have been shown to benefit mental performance including memory, attention and processing speed.<sup>8</sup>

### Preparation ideas:

- Add carrots and spinach to a smoothie
- Make a dip – spinach, carrot or roasted capsicum are delicious and easy to make
- Cut veggies into sticks and dip into your homemade dip!
- Add a handful of spinach to your breakfast (eggs, avocado toast)



6. [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6893475/#sec5-nutrients-11-02685](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6893475/#sec5-nutrients-11-02685)

7. [ingentaconnect.com/content/ben/cpd/2020/00000026/00000037/art00005](https://ingentaconnect.com/content/ben/cpd/2020/00000026/00000037/art00005)

8. [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5852769/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5852769/)

# MEDICAL & COUNSELLING'S FREE GROUP PROGRAMS for UC Students

At UC Medical & Counselling, our psychologists offer free group programs for UC students. These groups provide support for a range of common issues in a group setting, bringing together students who share similar experiences. These groups are an opportunity to meet with a psychologist weekly, connect with new people, learn from others and develop coping and communication skills.

## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM GROUP SESSIONS

Participation during the groups is voluntary and the facilitators encourage respectful and supportive engagement by participants. Skills are introduced to the group for you to practice in the group and/or in your own time.

Over time, as the group gets to know one another, it is likely you will meet people with similar concerns and feel more comfortable engaging with the group. However, if you prefer to keep to yourself, that is readily accepted and supported.

Appointments with the Medical & Counselling Service team can be booked if additional support is needed.



## MEET OUR PSYCHS



**Meet Michelle!**

Michelle facilitates the Weekly Psych Session and co-facilitates the ACT for Anxiety and Emotion Skills groups. She is a registered psychologist with over 20 years of experience providing counselling and support groups for individuals in university settings.

Michelle is experienced in assisting with stress management, identity issues, motivation, grief, trauma, sexuality, and relationship issues, as well as anxiety and depression.

Jess, along with Michelle, facilitates the ACT for Anxiety Group and Emotion Skills groups. Jess is a clinical psychologist with extensive experience working in mental health settings. She recognises the importance of a person-centred approach, works collaboratively with clients to better understand their difficulties, and draws on existing strengths and develop strategies to cope effectively with ongoing challenges.



**Meet Jess!**



**Meet Cobus!**

Alongside Michelle, Cobus will be facilitating the ACT for Anxiety group over the Summer Semester. Cobus holds a Master of Arts degree in Clinical Psychology, which he obtained in 2021. He has experience working with a multitude of disorders, including depression, trauma, substance abuse, specific phobias, anxiety, OCD, ADHD, and ASD.



**Meet Ross!**

Ross will be co-facilitating the ACT for Anxiety group in Semester 1, 2025. Ross is committed to inclusion in the education space and is neurodiversity affirming – working with people to discover their strengths, show self-compassion, and build great lives.

Ross can help with procrastination and goal setting, anxiety and depression, family and friendship difficulties, managing stress, and many other difficulties.



Emily will be co-facilitating the Emotion Skills Group in Semester 1, 2025. She earned her Master of Clinical Psychology from the University of New South Wales and has 20 years of experience as a clinical psychologist in public health and private practice.

She provides assessment and therapy for issues like depression, anxiety, PTSD, grief, and relationship problems. Emily tailors her methods to each client's needs and fosters a warm, compassionate, and non-judgmental environment.



**Meet Emily!**



**Meet Vicki!**

Vicki facilitates the ADHD Management Group. She specializes in performance excellence in demanding environments, using her expertise in coaching psychology and clinical experience to help clients optimize performance and wellbeing.

She is well-equipped to help her clients address issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, relationships, confidence building, and self-actualization. Vicki aims to be innovative and inspirational, fostering wellness and resilience so individuals can pursue their goals with happiness and health.





## GROUPS

### ACT FOR ANXIETY

The 'ACT for Anxiety' program aims to provide skills and strategies to better manage anxiety and improve day-to-day life.

It is based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), which aims to help people to accept what is out of their control and commit to actions that improve and enrich their lives. ACT does this by teaching skills to effectively manage painful thoughts and feelings, helping you clarify what matters most and use that insight to motivate positive change.

This group meets for a 1-hour session each week for a total of 6 weeks.

### EMOTION SKILLS

The Emotion Skills group is designed to provide students with the skills and strategies to manage emotions and communicate effectively. The content is informed by resources from Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and will include mindfulness and strategies to manage and tolerate distress, understand and manage emotions, and develop interpersonal skills. This 8-week program is not a formal DBT treatment but will act as an introduction to some of these valuable skills.

This group meets for a 1.5-hour session each week for a total of 8 weeks.

#### How do I become involved?



To participate in the ACT for Anxiety and Emotion Skills groups, you need a referral from a UC psychologist or GP. If you already see a psychologist or GP at Medical & Counselling, you can ask them to refer you.

If you haven't seen a GP or psych at Medical & Counselling before, you can book an intake appointment by contacting UC Medical and Counselling reception on **6201 2351** or book via **HotDoc**.

### ADHD MANAGEMENT

The ADHD Management Group is a free, weekly group for UC students who have been diagnosed with or think they may have ADHD.

This group will look at understanding and developing strategies to manage concentration, attention, and time more effectively, plus the importance of routine and structure in our day-to-day lives.

**No formal ADHD diagnosis required.**  
Register via [Humanitix](#)

### THE WEEKLY PSYCH SESSION

The Weekly Psych Session is a weekly workshop that helps participants develop new skills and tools to address common challenges encountered by students. Each session, you are guided in tackling issues such as goal setting, building connections, managing stress, and overcoming procrastination.

The Weekly Psych Session is presented both on-campus and online, alternating weekly.

**To find out more, please  
check out the next page**



## THE WEEKLY PSYCH SESSION UPCOMING TOPICS



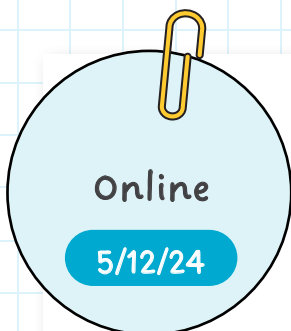
**Enhancing Resilience:** today's session will invite reflection on a time you overcame a setback and how you managed this. We will discuss personal resources that help us be more resilient.



**Behind the Scenes of Self-Compassion:** this session will explore three systems in our brain that help us manage emotions and motivate behaviour - the Drive, Soothe and Threat systems: we will find out how self-compassion can assist us in regulating and balancing out these systems.



**Feelings:** how to understand our emotions, use them as information, and self-soothe when overwhelmed.



**Taking Things for Granted:** explore hedonic adaption and how to tweak what we do to heighten pleasure and reduce discomfort.

Register via [Humanitix](#)

# STUDENT HEALTH AT THE UC MEDICAL AND COUNSELLING CENTRE

The UC Medical and Counselling Centre is committed to ensuring student physical and mental health remains a priority area throughout the year.

With a professional team of psychologists available from 9am–5pm Monday–Friday, Medical and Counselling is well equipped to assist any students requiring mental health support. Whether you are struggling with relationship breakups, workload, traumatic incidents or depression, our psychologists are here to help. Psychology services are confidential, FREE and available exclusively to all currently enrolled UC students with no referral required.

**As well as psychologists, the Medical and Counselling team is made up of:**

- Medical Practitioners
- Visiting Psychiatrist
- Registered Nurses

Appointments can be made by calling **02 6201 2351**, by booking through **HotDoc**, or visiting the centre and speaking to our reception staff.

Do you require more information about how to deal with specific mental or physical health concerns?

**Click here** to access specific resources from the Medical and Counselling Centre.

**Emergency Contacts for mental health include:**

- Lifeline Phone: **131 114**
- Mental Health Crisis Service Phone: **1800 629 354**
- University of Canberra 24-hour Crisis Line Phone: **1300 271 790** or Text: **0488 884 227**

## 24-hour contacts to keep in mind:

- **6201 2222**  
UC Security
- **131 444**  
Police assistance
- **1800 737 732**  
National Sexual Assault Family and Domestic Violence Counselling Service
- **02 6280 0900**  
Domestic Violence Crisis Service
- **02 5124 2185**  
Forensic and Medical Sexual Assault Care
- **1300 224 636**  
Beyond Blue
- **1300 78 99 78**  
MensLine Australia
- **1800 184 527**  
QLife
- **1800 629 354**  
Access Mental Health



# OTHER SUPPORTS

## Citizen Centred Justice Clinic

Provides free legal advice on a variety of issues including:

- Housing
- Financial matters
- Addressing scams
- Dealing with domestic violence
- Handling divorce cases
- Addressing citizenship issues
- Managing employment situations within the community, such as addressing pay parity for international students.

Appointments are available every Wednesday and can be booked through the UC Medical and Counselling Centre: Building 1, Level B. Phone: 02 6201 2351.

## Student Wellbeing and Support

Can assist with:

- Transition and first year support
- Accommodation and safe housing
- Financial Support
- Navigating Study

Contact: [wellbeing@canberra.edu.au](mailto:wellbeing@canberra.edu.au)

## International Student Support

Can assist with:

- Settling into life at UC and Canberra
- Programs that aim to enhance your study experience
- Understanding your student visa requirements and what is expected of you
- Tailored support for Australia Awards students
- Under-18 student welfare and accommodation needs
- Connections to other key services at UC and within the community
- Additional support for students

Contact: [InternationalStudent@canberra.edu.au](mailto:InternationalStudent@canberra.edu.au)

## UC Thrive and Student Mentor Program

Provides targeted and individualised peer-led support for commencing students through a scaffolded 8-week transition program.

Contact: [ucthrive@canberra.edu.au](mailto:ucthrive@canberra.edu.au)

## Multi-faith support

- Multi-faith and Chaplaincy

Contact: [Chaplaincy@canberra.edu.au](mailto:Chaplaincy@canberra.edu.au)

## Study Skills

Provides a range of face-to-face and online study help programs for UC students to assist with academic goals. These include:

- Drop in Study Help session
- Peer-Assisted Learning Sessions (PALS)
- The Maths and Stats Help Centre
- The ASK Advisors
- Study Skills English Language Support
- EndNote and Mahara support
- Referrals for Study Skills individual consultations etc.

Contact: [studyskills@canberra.edu.au](mailto:studyskills@canberra.edu.au) or by phone on 02 6201 2205.

For self-paced online resources and further information about Study Skills programs and services, visit the Study Help UCLearn (Canvas) site (log-in required).



Keep an eye out for our next issue.

On behalf of the UC Medical & Counselling Centre, **stay safe everyone!**