

UNSW MEDICAL SOCIETY AND PSYCHIATRY SOCIETY PRESENTS THE

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING GUIDE



**UNSW
PSYCHIATRY SOCIETY**

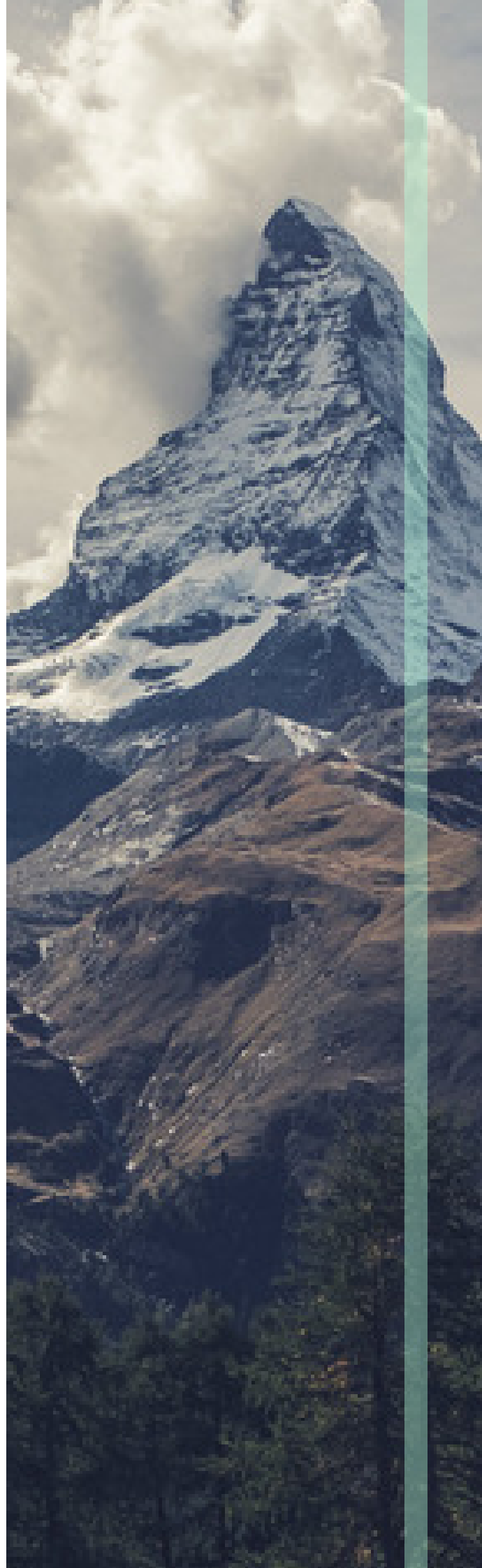
WHAT IS THIS?

The UNSW Medical Society and Psychiatry Society's Wellbeing Guide is created by medical students for medical students. This project combines the feedback and guidance provided by a variety of students, the UNSW MedSoc 2018 team and resources provided by the Faculty of Medicine.

Primarily, we have compiled the responses from a survey of 156 medical students, which asked about common causes of stress in the medical student population and advice they would give future students going through the various phases. Together, we want to provide you with the tools to help you deal with the ups and downs you may experience whilst studying medicine and maintain your wellbeing.

It is hoped that through this guide, students may come to see that they are not alone in their feelings and that there is no shame in reaching out. The ultimate aim is to reduce the stigma around mental health in the medical community.

Do note that this guide does not intend to replace professional help and it is recommended that if you are experiencing any difficulties that you seek help from a professional. The information provided is current as of July 2018 and UNSW Medical Society and the authors do not take responsibility for any outdated recommendations, advice or resources.





CONTENTS

General Advice ... 4-5

Burnout? Do I have it? ... 6

Phase-Specific Advice ... 7-10

phase one ... 8

phase two ... 9

phase three ... 10

Seeking Help ... 11

Contacts ... 12-15

on-campus ... 12

off-campus ... 13-15

Online Modules & Resources ... 16

Apps ... 17-18

GENERAL ADVICE

BY: RACHEL YANG, NADISHA JAYASINGHE, CASSIE DOW



MAINTAINING A BALANCED LIFESTYLE

Self Care

Although your six years within Medicine can be a stressful experience, maintaining proper mental and physical health is important, and can help you achieve stability not only in your studies, but other aspects of your life as well.

- Maintain a **balanced diet**, which may include trying to limit coffee and alcohol intake.
- Practise **mindfulness** to reduce rumination and worry, and to maintain a focus on your goals and intentions.
- **Physical activity**, which can be done either alone, in groups, or as part of larger social events. Remember that 2.5-5hrs of moderate physical activity/week is recommended, and that any physical activity is better than none!
- Develop and maintain **healthy sleep patterns**, which includes time for both quality and quantity of sleep.

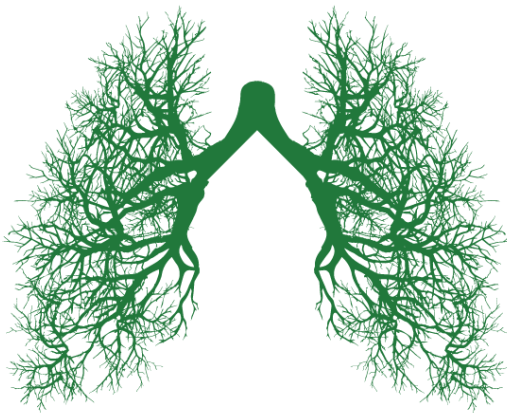


- Set regular sleeping and waking times, even on the weekends
- Find a relaxing bedtime ritual which reduces excitement and/or anxiety
- Evaluate aspects of your environment (e.g.: temperature, darkness, sources of noise)

Managing Individual Stressors

An important point to consider is that everyone has their own journey through Medicine. As we navigate the course and begin our careers, it becomes essential to recognise your own limits, and find your own sense of balance amongst the various aspects of your life. This may include:

- **Planning your “study” hours** based on your habits. Do you work better independently or in a group? Do you work better at home or in a public space (e.g.: library, café)? Do you study in short “bursts” or prefer to sit down for an extended period of time?
- Setting aside a number of hours per week, or a specific day of the week, where you **don’t do anything “med-related”** – this is purely for recreation, which may include sports, food adventures, volunteering, reading, or any other hobby.
- **Knowing your own stressors and triggers**, which may help you prioritise time and attention for different activities.
- Developing a **personalised “mental health plan”**. This does not need to be a formal plan, but if you are struggling and/or need to take a break, these ideas will be waiting and ready to go. Your plan may include:



- Things to do – e.g.: breathing exercises, cooking, going for a walk. Try to have some activities that you can do alone, and some you can do with other people, such as friends or family. You may find the recommendations in the Apps section useful.
- People to talk to – see the Support Network, Seeking Help and Contacts section below.

Support Network

All individuals should have a group of people who can be relied on when times become difficult. In particular, it may be useful to develop and maintain friendships both within Medicine and outside the course, to help you maintain perspective in all aspects of your life. Additionally, during more socially-isolating aspects of the course (e.g.: 4th year), it may also be useful to **check-in regularly** with these friends. We do recognise that each person’s support network will vary in size, depending on your own level of comfort. That’s completely ok – a successful support network does not have to be a large one, but one that can bring you happiness through engagement, mutual understanding and time spent together.

BURNOUT? DO I HAVE IT?

by Catriona Shen and Saad Shaheen

Although feeling tired and exhausted are normal responses to stress, one must determine how to distinguish these sensations from 'burning out'. Certain amounts of stress can be beneficial to performance and motivation, however, extended exposure results in harm to the individual's physical health and emotional wellbeing. Burnout is thought to be a feeling that arises due to extended exposure to stress. 'REACHOUT' describes it as a state of complete mental, physical and emotional exhaustion.

Burnout can manifest through emotional and physical responses.

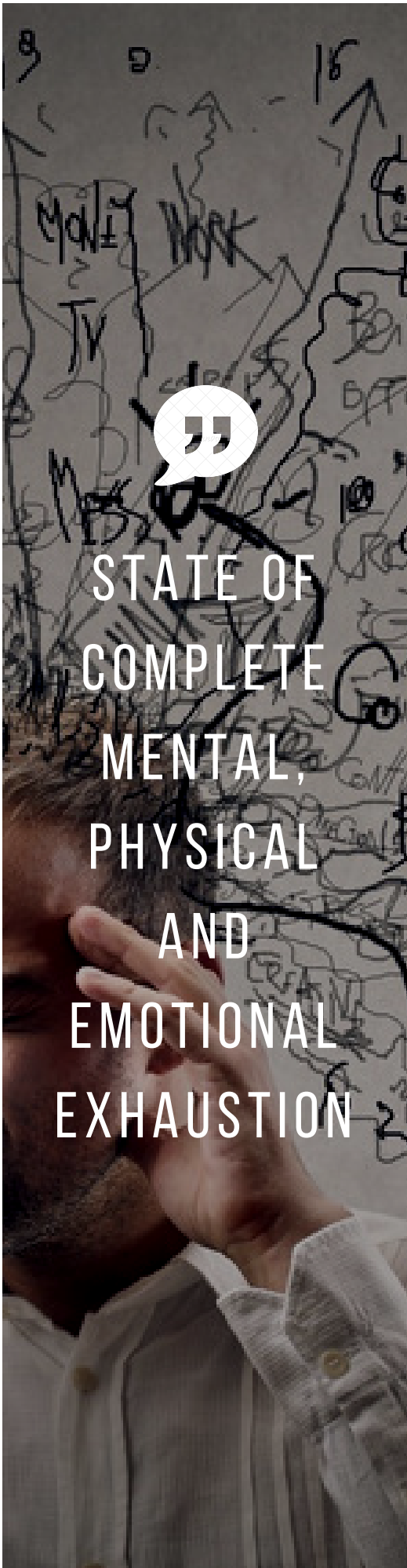
E m o t i o n a l

- Being unable to perform basic tasks
- Losing motivation in multiple aspects of life
- Feeling empty inside, irritable, cynical
- Low mood, typified by feeling useless
- Loss of concentration and passion
- Experiencing increased conflict with others
- Withdrawing from activities and friends/family

P h y s i c a l

- Headaches
- Myalgia/Fatigued
- Insomnia
- Changes in appetite, indigestion
- Decreased immunity - you may notice you get sick more often
- Abdominal and muscle pain

Burnout is not an issue that will just disappear. Changes to an unhealthy or overly demanding study environment with improved support services can reduce feelings of burning out.



phase-specific advice

FROM OUR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SURVEY, COMPILED BY NADISHA JAYASINGHE & RACHEL YANG

all phases

Students surveyed were also asked to provide suggestions regarding how to approach the medical course itself. Aside from Phase-specific advice, we believe that this information is relevant to all students:

- Assignments and exams – consistency is key.
 - Rather than producing a rushed piece of work right before the deadline, break up the work into smaller sections and set spaced-out, reasonable goals. Not only does this avoid increased stress, but you may also be more pleased with the quality of your work at the end.
 - Similarly, begin your revision early, so that as exams approach, you won't need to sacrifice time that you would usually spend on hobbies and relationships.
- Keep an eye on your functioning (physical and social as well as academic) and take the required time off for recovery and self-care, if you begin recognising signs of decline. Also look out for your friends – remember that each person's stressors are different, and raise your concerns with them if you think they are struggling.
- Seek help from older students (or former students), who can give advice based on their own experiences regarding how to manage your lifestyle in the context of the course.
- Resources – thanks to the student culture within Medicine, there are lots available! Aside from faculty-provided resources and recommended textbooks, there are multiple student notes, memorandums, assignment examples and course guides for each section of the course. Most of them are on the Medconnex platform (<https://www.medconnex.com.au/resources/>), and others can be found within the various Facebook study groups.



phase one

- This stage of the course is a good time to develop a routine that you can stick to not only for the year, but (with small modifications) will also accommodate you in later years.
 - Prioritise sleep and seeing friends – it is likely that you won't be given as much time and freedom to do these over the next few years. This may also help ease your transition from high school/gap year/other degrees into Medicine.
 - Similarly, get involved in a diverse set of activities outside of the course. If you don't have a hobby, find one now. If the stress increases in later Phases, you will have something you genuinely enjoy to fall back on and take your mind off Medicine.
- Foundies – please don't be too overwhelmed! The change in expectations when entering a new environment and course is always sudden, and will take time to get used to. Remember that everyone is in the same boat, and use this course to figure out what study habits are most suited to you.
- Course content – there is a lot of rote-learning in Phase 1, which can sometimes feel tedious. It can help to think more broadly (e.g.: in patient scenarios instead of individual disciplines) and identify the bigger concepts each lecture/tutorial tries to address. This may then make the rote-learning feel more rewarding in terms of increasing understanding and becoming a good practitioner.
- Study – now is a good time to start forming study buddies
 - Working with others within the course can reduce the workload, and you may also appreciate the various ways people interpret or “solve” difficult concepts and clinical cases.
 - If you prefer not to study with your peers, finding a friend outside the course may be useful in terms of assignment review and clinical practice. Additionally, even if you are working on separate subjects, sitting down with a friend to study can make you feel more socially-connected during periods that may otherwise be isolating.



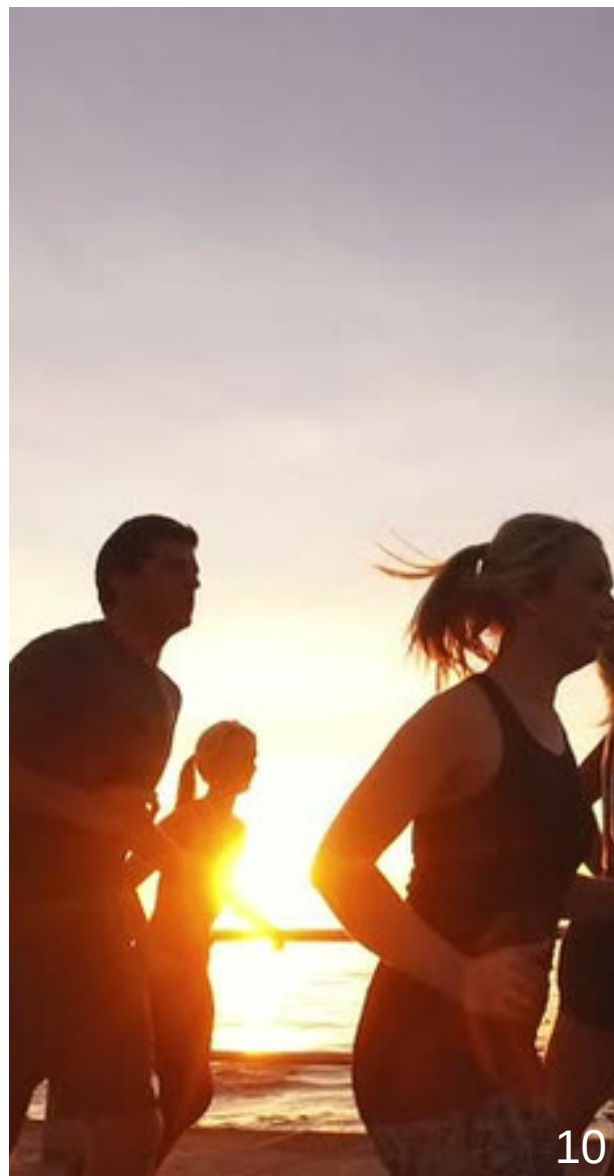


phase two

- Phase 2 is when people may begin to feel increasingly separated from their peers, due to students being spread out across hospitals and ILP locations. If you haven't already done so, it is important to start thinking about the personal connections in your "mental health plan" – see the Managing Individual Stressors section of this guide – and to continue including them in your interests and activities.
- ICE can cause a lot of stress for students, but it is important to remember that these are just two exams that you encounter in your six years of Medicine. It is definitely helpful to accumulate knowledge gradually, and practise through the year, both on the wards and outside of hospital. This can be done with friends, who can act as patients for histories/exams, provide insight into difficult cases, and lighten the mood during study breaks!
- Co-curriculars and interests – continue those hobbies from Phase 1! Alternatively, now is also a good time to pursue new interests and accumulate a variety of "life experiences". Some students have also recommended that you keep a casual job, so that it gives you perspective and purpose during the middle years of Medicine, which may sometimes feel pointless and never-ending
 - Note – as we develop more concrete ideas about medical specialties and our careers, it may be tempting to just switch to activities and hobbies that help with "CV building". Aside from this, we also encourage you to think about how these align with your personal qualities and goals – pick something you genuinely love and look forward to doing every week, not something you will later come to view as an obligation

phase three

- This can be a tough period, but please know that you are almost there! Sometimes Medicine may feel like the only important thing in your life, but try to maintain a routine (including regular meal times, regular break times, and setting specific times for sleep). It is also important to accept that some uncertainties and insecurities that arise during these two years are out of your control, and not to allow them to overtake your life. If you haven't already done so, make sure you have a "mental health plan" in place, as well as both a personal and external support network – see the Support Network, Seeking Help and Contacts section of this guide. Seek external help early if the need arises.
- Study – many students reported that being organised and sticking to a study plan is extremely useful during Phase 3. Having a regular study group and working outside of your own home may also help you maintain your social connections during this time.
 - Note – this works for many people, but at the same time, it is important to recognise your own signs of burnout, and when you need to push back deadlines and/or adjust your expectations. Don't feel guilty about taking time off, and speak to your friends and study group. Discussing your progress, and your concerns, with others allows them to provide you with support.
- Exercise – is one lifestyle aspect that has been brought up multiple times by students surveyed. Along with other interests/hobbies that can help maintain mental health, regular exercise is especially important during Phase 3, when other priorities often take precedence. Try to make some time for physical activity every day, even if it is as simple as running in the mornings, or going for a walk after hospital ends. Exercise and sports may also provide you with opportunities to catch up with friends and family!



SEEKING HELP



PLEASE, REACH OUT.

by Nadisha Jayasinghe & Rachel Yang

Following on from a personal support network, learning to seek external help is also an important skill to develop. As medical students, it may be difficult to do this initially due to fears around professional consequences or “being viewed as a burden”. However, it is important to resolve problems when they arise and to prevent the recurrence of concerns that stop you from maintaining a balanced, happy lifestyle. This may include help-seeking for mental health concerns from a GP, counsellor or psychologist, either in person or via websites or phone hotlines. For issues specific to your studies, Course or Phase convenors and clinical school supervisors are also available for contact, who may be able to arrange extended deadlines, tutoring, and so on. Working together, plans can be made to help you overcome obstacles and get you back on track.

CONTACTS

Compiled by Cassie Dow

ON CAMPUS

Ute Vollmer-Conna

Ute is the Student Wellbeing Advisor appointed by MedFac for medical students across all 6 years. She helps in aspects of personal, psychological/psychiatric and medical difficulties and can give you confidential advice, coordinate appropriate help and advocate on your behalf to the faculty if needed (time off uni, special considerations etc.)

Contact: ute@unsw.edu.au (please make all appointments by email)
Phone: 9385 2945

UNSW Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

CAPS provides free and confidential service to all UNSW students. They offer individual counselling, specific workshops and seminars to develop self-care skills (stress management, anxiety and mood management, motivational support etc.) and self-help resources and information to improve wellbeing.

<https://student.unsw.edu.au/counselling>

Level 2, East Wing, Quadrangle Building, University of New South
Wales, Kensington Telephone: 9385 5418
Email: counselling@unsw.edu.au
Office Hours: Monday to Friday, 9AM – 5PM

CONTACTS

OFF-CAMPUS

(for more information please go to:
<https://moodle.telt.unsw.edu.au/mod/page/view.php?id=1358486>)

AMA

The Australian Medical Association has a database containing contact information for General Practitioners (G.P.s) who have expressed an interest in taking on doctors in training as patients and are keen to help with your wellbeing. The database can be found here:

<https://www.amansw.com.au/member-benefits/gps-for-doctors-in-training/>

NSW Health

NSW Health requires all hospitals to provide an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which is also open to medical students. Below is some information, however, if you would like more guidance please talk to your clinical school.

SWSLHD (Liverpool, Bankstown, Fairfield)

You can access the free and confidential services at any facility in the SWSLHD during business hours. They can help with managing Acute, cumulative or traumatic stress reactions, personal relationship challenges, bullying, alcohol, personal or professional grief and, anxiety and depression.

They also provide services promoting self-care, stress management, and relaxation/mindfulness strategies and techniques.

Liverpool: 8738 4552 or Bankstown: 9722 8230 or Fairfield: 8738 4552

SWSLHD Pamphlet:
https://moodle.telt.unsw.edu.au/pluginfile.php/2676170/mod_page/content/2/EAP%20SWSLHD%20Brochure%202017-5.pdf

CONTACTS

OFF-CAMPUS (CONT.)

SESLHD (POWH, St George + Sutherland)

SESLHD partners with Converge International to provide their EAP. They provide free and confidential help with not only personal and environmental wellbeing matters but can also provide career, financial and lifestyle counselling as well. You may access up to 4 sessions of EACH of the 'Assist' programs per year.

Make a booking via <https://www.convergeinternational.com.au/> or call 1300 687 327

Employee Assist	Money Assist	Lifestyle Assist	Career Assist
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interpersonal conflict and tension• Work-related stress• Changes in your work environment• Harassment and grievances• Relationship or family matters• Personal and emotional stress• Grief and bereavement• Alcohol and drug related problems• Crisis intervention and trauma counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resolving financial habits that are causing conflict• Eliminating stress caused by financial challenges• Learning new financial skills and be confident with controlling your finances• Providing practical information on how to negotiate with creditors to obtain achievable payment arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building emotional resilience• Increasing your capacity for stress management• Better managing mental health issues including anxiety and depression• Overcoming drug and alcohol issues• Managing addictive behaviours including smoking and gambling• Increasing your physical wellbeing, including nutrition and fitness• Weight management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You are confused about your next career step and would like to identify options or opportunities• You are experiencing major change, either personal or professional, which may cause you to rethink your goals and priorities• Seeking an independent perspective on your current or future career plans

There is also an EAP portal on the Converge International Website, which is an online hub of resources designed to provide you with information on work-related and personal issues such as newsletter inserts on various topics, research papers and tip sheets.

Logging in

To log in to the Converge International client portal, go to www.convergeinternational.com.au and click the 'Client Portal Login' link, followed by the 'EAP Portal Login' link. Use the below information to gain access.

Username: **SESLHD**

Password: **SESLHD**

CONTACTS

OFF-CAMPUS (CONT.)

Rural Campuses

Contact your head of campus, who will be able to arrange for appropriate help and can give you advice or guidance

Port Macquarie: A/Prof Sandy McColl - 6580 7544

Wagga Wagga: A/Prof John Preddy - 6933 5171

Albury: A/Prof Neil Bright - 6042 1311

Coffs Harbour: Dr Alison Seccull - 6652 0444

Griffith: Dr Damien Limberger - 6964 4823

OTHER SERVICES

Headspace: <https://headspace.org.au/> (Bondi Jnc: 9366 8000)

Beyond Blue: <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/> (1300 22 4636)

Black Dog Institute: <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/>

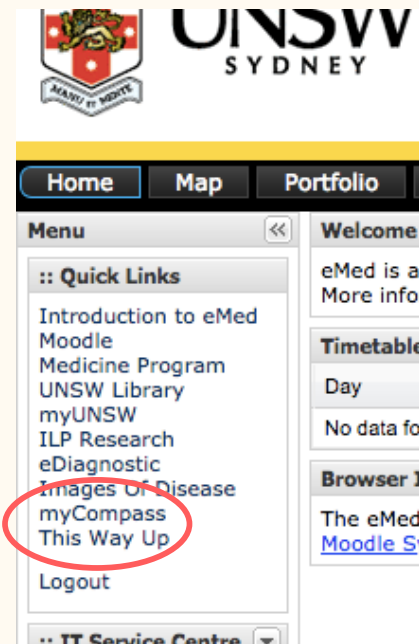
Reachout: <https://au.reachout.com/>

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Suicide Call-back Service: 1300 659 467

Lifeline: 13 11 14

The NSW Mental Health Access Line: 1800 011 511



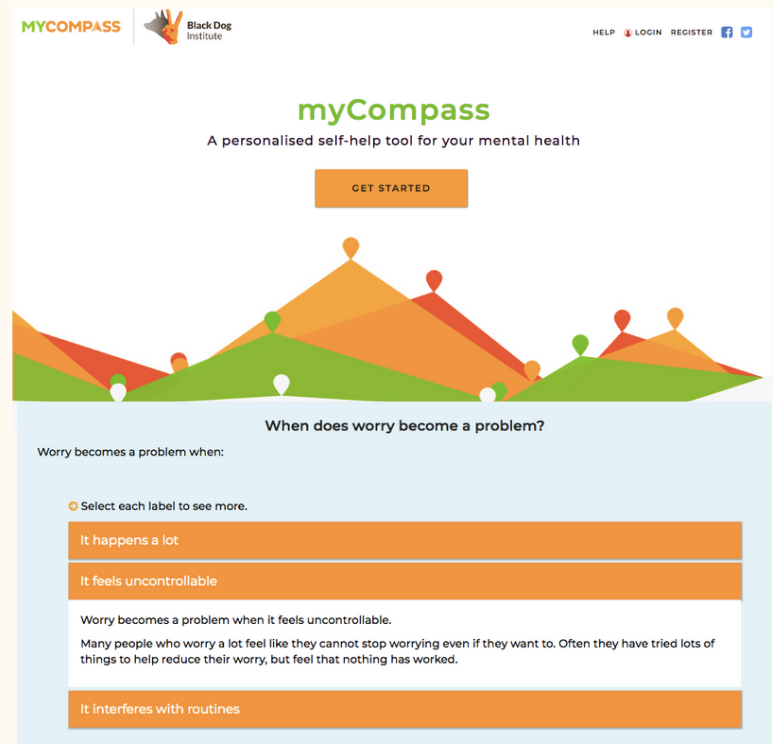
WHY USE THEM?

Online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) can be accessed from your homepage of eMed. On the left-hand panel, there is a panel of 'Quick Links' and you can access two completely free programs by making an account through there. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy is an evidence-based method to improve your way of thinking to de-stress, change perspectives and equip yourself with the tools to overcome difficult situations or mindsets. Working through these resources online is a great way to fit some mindfulness around your busy schedule and can be the first step if you are struggling to talk to someone or want to do self-help in the privacy of your own home.

MYCOMPASS

myCompass is an online program created by the Black Dog Institute. It contains interactive learning activities, a toolkit of resources, a self-assessment tool and a tracker to track your mood and lifestyle.

<https://unswmed.mycompass.org.au/>



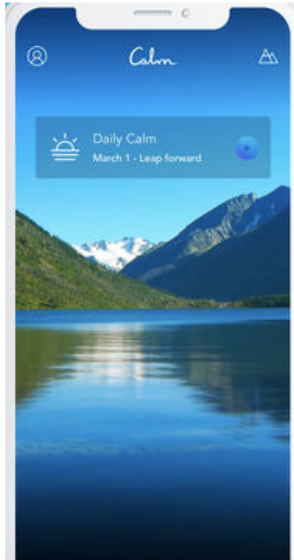
THIS WAY UP

This Way Up is an online CBT program. It contains scenarios which show how changing your pattern of thinking or daily activities can help improve your mental health and wellbeing, as well as giving some helpful lesson summaries.

<https://med.thiswayupclinic.com/users/login>

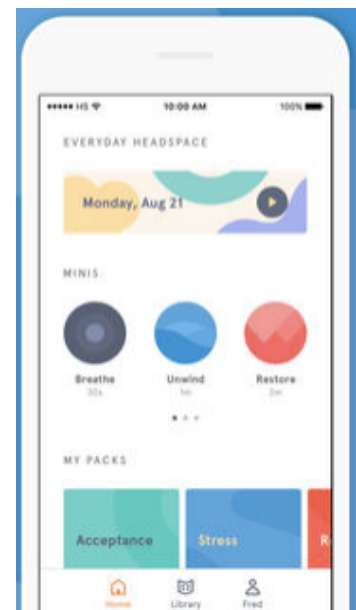
apps

compiled by: Cassie Dow | please note that these apps have no affiliations with UNSW MedSoc or UNSW MedFac, descriptions are from the app's listing.



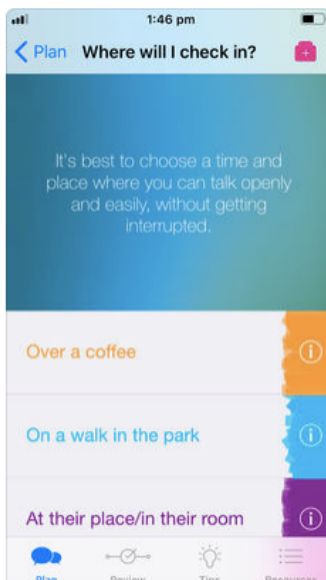
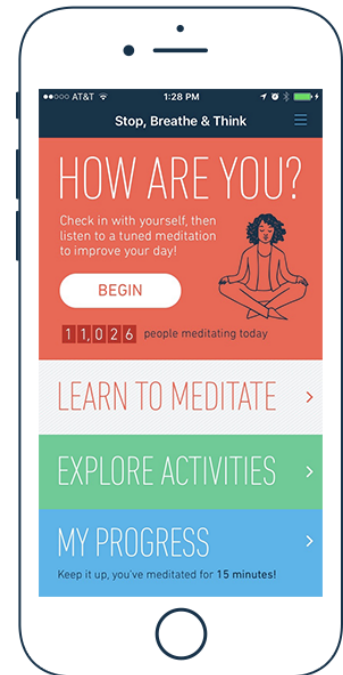
- Daily Calm: a new 10-minute program added daily to help ease you into the day or unwind with before bed
- Sleep Stories: adult bedtime stories guaranteed to lull you to sleep
- 7 day and 21 programs for both beginner and advanced users
- Breathing exercises to relax
- Unguided timed meditation
- Open-ended meditation
- 25+ soothing nature sounds and scenes to use during meditation, yoga or to help you sleep
- www.calm.com

- Everyday Headspace: daily meditations on a new topic each day
- “Mindful Moments” to keep you present throughout the day
- 2-3 minute “mini meditations” for a quick mental reset
- SOS” sessions for moments of panic, anxiety and stress
- Sleep Sounds to help you drift off
- Headspace animations to teach you new skills and answer your mindfulness questions
- Track your progress and time spent meditating
- www.headspace.com/headspace-meditation-app



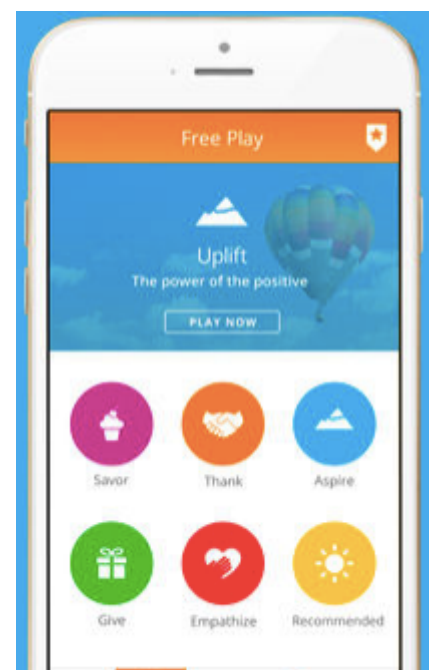
- Smiling Mind is modern meditation, a unique web and app-based program developed by psychologists and educators to help bring balance to people's lives.
- Smiling Mind is a not-for-profit organisation that works to make mindfulness meditation accessible to all.
- Their mission is to provide accessible, life-long tools based in mindfulness meditation.
- Their programs are designed to assist people in dealing with the pressure, stress and challenges of daily life.
- www.smilingmind.com.au

- Stop, Breathe, Think allows you to check in with your emotions, and recommends short guided meditations, yoga and acupressure videos, tuned to how you feel.
- Over 30 free activities and 70 premium activities including meditation, breathing, yoga and acupressure
- Customizable meditation timer with choices of chimes and soundscapes
- Customizable breathing timer to focus and find calm
- A daily feed with tips, inspiration and a recommended practice
- Meditate to start and end your day
- Tracker for your emotions pre and post-meditation
- Sharing for friends
- www.stopbreathethink.com



- Designed by beyondblue the Check-in app helps take the fear out of having a conversation with a friend who might be struggling.
- By following four simple steps, you can easily plan how you will approach the person you care about, what you will say, and how you will offer your support.
- The app provides young people with the chance to rate how their conversation went and get ideas about the next steps forward to support a friend.
- There are also tips about looking after your own mental health, links to online forums and a range of online and phone services available for young Australians.
- www.youthbeyondblue.com/help-someone-you-know/thecheckin

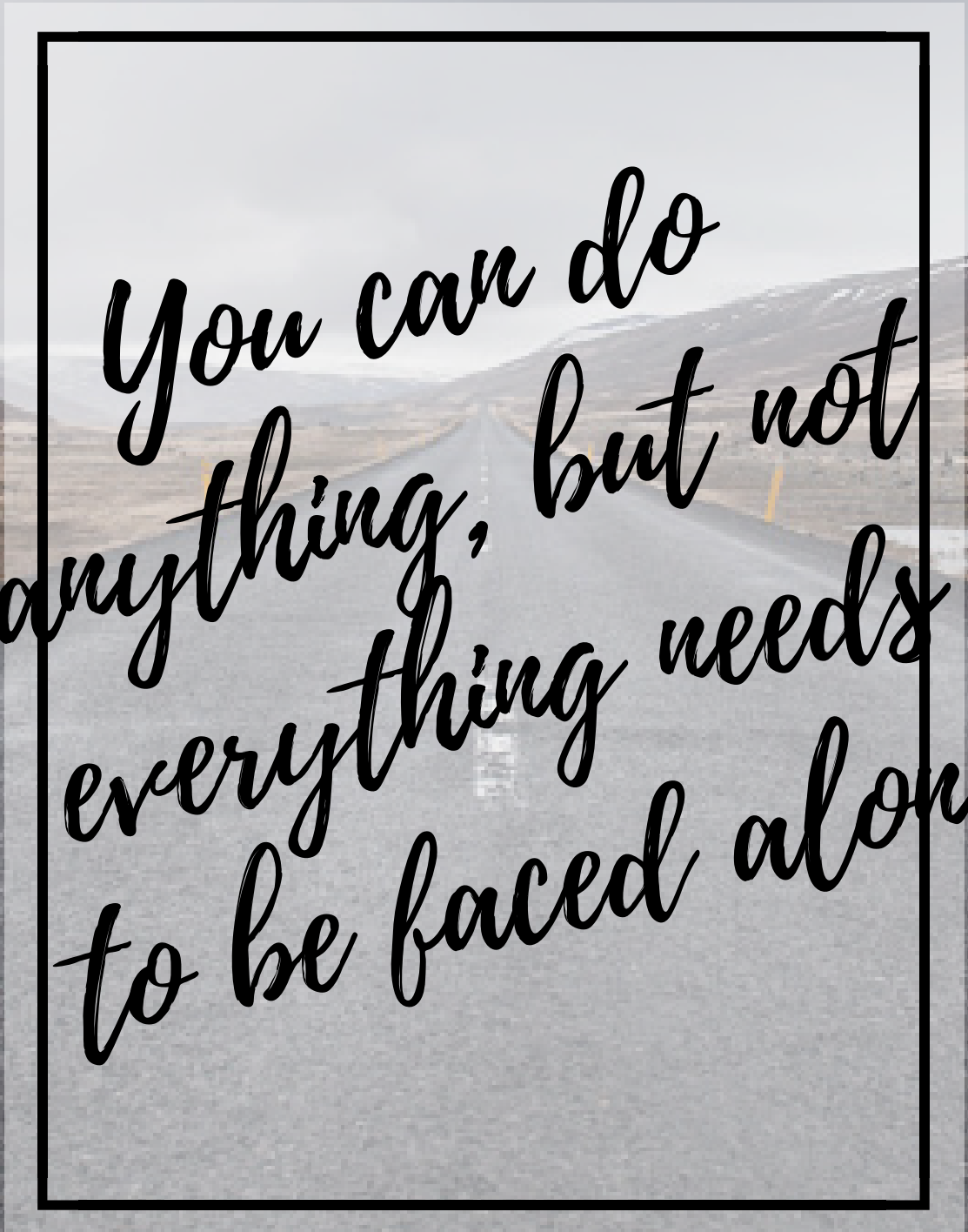
- How you feel matters. Whether you're feeling stressed, anxious, depressed, or you're dealing with constant negative thoughts, Happify brings you effective tools and programs to take control of your emotional wellbeing.
- Their techniques are developed by leading scientists and experts who've been studying evidence-based interventions in the fields of positive psychology, mindfulness and cognitive behavioural therapy.
- www.happify.com/



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Thank you to every student who filled out our mental health and wellbeing survey, allowing us to put this guide together.

Thank you to all the contributors and editors of this guide.



You can do
anything, but not
everything needs
to be faced alone