Feeling Good & Doing Well

1. **Losing focus?**
   Studying at University can be very stressful and at times you may find it hard to concentrate on your work. This happens to many students, especially before the exams or when facing multiple deadlines, and is part of learning how to cope with pressure. Here are some tips on what you can do to stay healthy – physically and mentally - and improve your overall performance.

2. **Get enough sleep**
   Try to establish regular sleeping habits by going to bed at a similar time each night and getting up at a similar time every morning. Ideally try to maintain these at the weekends so that you are able to concentrate during early Monday morning lectures. Soothing bedtime rituals such as music, reading or a cup of herbal tea can be very helpful.

   **Insomnia?**
   If you find it particularly hard to fall asleep or sleep badly for a longer period this may be due to specific worries, anxiety or a period of depression. In this case ask for help. You can approach your tutor, Academic Adviser, Student Support Officer or another member of staff in your school, a Learning Advisor in SLAS, a counsellor or your GP.

3. **Eat and drink well**
   Make an effort to take your meals regularly and keep snacking to a minimum. Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and drink lots of water. Living on convenience and junk food will not only lead to weight gain but also make you less resistant to colds and viruses. Drink plenty of water, especially when you are feeling sluggish.

4. **Work on your concentration**
   Concentration does not come naturally. Biologically we are programmed to stay alert to what is going on around us (in order to survive). So, trying to shut out our environment and focus on one thing only is not easy – but it can be learnt. Poor concentration is usually caused by distractions or worries. Try to identify and deal with them. Very often students’ physical study environment is cluttered with distractions (also known as electronic gadgets). So, unless you need to use the internet, try to work off line. If your thoughts and feelings interrupt you, see if you can do something about them; e.g. talk about issues concerning you with a friend or seek professional help (nursing service, counselling, your tutors etc.).

   Once you are ready to study, choose a quiet location with good light and
ventilation. Break your work down into smaller chunks; e.g. writing a paragraph is more manageable than writing an essay. In order to keep your mind from wandering, vary your activities: reading, note taking, asking yourself questions, comparing new material with old material, converting a text into flow chart, etc. Review each task for a minute before moving on to the next one. At the end of each study session, try to recap the main point. The feeling that you have achieved something will help to motivate you, which in turn will help with your concentration.

5. **Take breaks**

Even at crunch times before the exams or at the end of term when deadlines pile up, plan-in some ‘down time’. You need to relax and recharge, depending on what you need to do; this could be an afternoon off or just half an hour away from your desk between study sessions. Ideally do something quite different during your ‘break’ that will help you take your mind off your studies.

6. **Exercise**

Doing some form of exercise is a great way to recharge and boost your energy levels. You may not be a great fan of sports or exercise but see if you can find some activities that you find enjoyable from those on offer at the sport centre and via the Kent Union. Give it a try – you may like it!

If exercise is really not your thing, try to go for a walk each day. Walking in a peaceful environment for 20 minutes or so will help you to improve your circulation, clear your head and even improve your cognitive ability. It is a great stress buster and energy booster. You can always encourage your friends along.

7. **Have fun**

Make sure that you have some time to enjoy yourself, be with your friends and/or pursue an interest or hobby. The Kent Union supports over 150 different societies catering for a variety of interests (for details see the Kent Union website). By joining one or two of them you also have a chance to meet students from other disciplines thus taking your mind off your studies for a while.

We hope that your time at the University of Kent will be both enjoyable and successful. Should you feel, at any point, that things are not going well, seek help. You can always drop in to the Student Learning Advisory Service for a chat.

**Student Learning Advisory Service (Canterbury):** in the Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching, between Grimond and Campus Watch. 01227 - 824016

**Student Learning Advisory Service (Medway):** in the Gillingham Building, ground floor, room G0-06. 01634 - 888884

www.kent.ac.uk/learning