



# TUS Midlands Student Counselling Service Newsletter

## Newsletter Content

- Q & A with Student Counsellor
- Navigating Stress, Gentle reminders to support you in managing stress, Grounding techniques



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## Navigating Stress Q & A with Student Counsellor Olivia Feehan

### What are some common reasons why students tend to feel stressed during exam periods?

There can be several influences on why students feel stressed during the exam period.

- Academic expectations
- Social comparison
- Health Issues
- Perfectionism
- Fear of failure
- Lack of control
- Expectations from others
- Performance anxiety

### How can students develop the skill of normalising stress and leveraging it to their advantage?

In the hustle and bustle of university life, where exams can feel like looming mountains, it becomes important for students to not only navigate stress but to normalise it as a natural part of their academic journey. Rather than viewing stress as an enemy, you can transform it into an ally. Learning to normalise stress involves a shift in perception, recognising that periods of tension can be catalysts for growth and resilience.

You can not only embrace stress but also harness its energy to enhance your overall well-being and academic performance. Understanding that stress is a common human experience, especially in challenging situations like exams. Normalising helps reduce the stigma around stress. Stressful times can be an opportunity for growth and learning, instead of viewing stress as wholly negative, consider it as a signal that something important is happening. It is helpful to reflect on past stressful situations - identify what strategies worked for you and apply them to future challenges.

### How does adopting a broader perspective assist students in dealing with stress during exams?

In the chaotic world of exams, we often find some relief by zooming out and looking at the bigger picture. It's like stepping back to see the whole painting rather than obsessing over every brushstroke. This wider view helps us deal with stress during exams. It's not just about the test at hand; it's about the entire journey. Imagine it like having a Google Earth view of your academic life, where exams are just one part of the landscape.

When you can have a bigger picture you are less likely to catastrophize, thinking about worst-case scenarios. A big-picture view helps minimising these catastrophic thoughts by placing current challenges in a broader context.

A broader perspective helps in letting go of perfectionism. You can appreciate that no single exam defines your abilities or future success.

The big picture includes personal growth and development. Experiencing stress during exams can be reframed as a natural part of the learning process, contributing to personal and intellectual growth.

## Navigating Stress

Exam time can be a challenging period for university students, as the pressure to perform well academically can lead to increased stress and anxiety. However, it is essential to prioritise not only academic success but overall well-being at this time. Managing stress effectively can contribute to better performance and overall satisfaction with your university experience.

### Gentle reminders to support you managing stress

- **Remember to Breathe:** Taking intentional, deep breaths can help calm the nervous system, reduce anxiety, and enhance focus. Integrating short breathing exercises into study routines provides students with a valuable tool to manage stress and approach exams with a clearer, more composed mindset.
- **Basic Needs:** To effectively navigate the challenges of exams, you must prioritise your basic needs. Ensuring quality sleep, maintaining a balanced diet, and engaging in regular physical movement are fundamental for cognitive function and emotional well-being.
- **Set Realistic Goals:** Setting realistic goals is a key strategy for stress management during exams. Instead of overwhelming yourself with an unrealistic workload, it is more helpful to break down your study sessions into manageable tasks. Establishing achievable milestones not only boosts confidence but also prevents burnout.
- **Avoid comparison:** It's easy to compare yourself to other students during exam time, but remember that everyone has different strengths and approaches to studying. Focus on your own progress and avoid negative self-talk.
- **Maintain a positive mindset:** Cultivate a positive mindset by reframing negative thoughts. Replace self-doubt and anxiety with positive affirmations and remind yourself of your capabilities and past achievements.
- **Practice self-compassion:** Be kind to yourself and understand that you are doing your best. Avoid negative self-talk and self-criticism. Treat yourself with the same empathy and understanding you would extend to a friend.
- **Practice stress-reducing techniques:** Learn and incorporate stress reduction techniques into your routine. Deep breathing exercises, guided imagery, or journaling can help reduce stress and promote emotional well-being.

### Grounding Techniques

#### Breathing Technique



Take a deep breath feeling your belly inflate with air.  
Hold your breath for 3 seconds.  
Exhale and concentrate on releasing the breath as slowly as possible.  
Repeat 3 times.

#### Engaging Your Senses



Name five things you can see,  
Four things you can touch,  
Three things you can hear,  
Two things you can smell,  
One thing you can taste.

