



Guide to Surviving Virtual School

What's inside

Creating a survival kit

Map it out: Academic Wellness

Prep for a storm: Mental health

Stop and smell the roses: Self-care

A warm shelter: Boundaries

Rest stop: Physical health

Creating memories: Social and Cultural Wellness

Resources

This package was created by Healthy U: Peer Health & Wellness at the University of Manitoba. We are a group of trained, non-judgmental, and confidential student health and wellness leaders on campus.

We provide outreach activities, workshops, and one-on-one support for our fellow students on a variety of health and well-being topics. Feel free to drop in to chat or pick up more information packages.

If you would like to request or attend one of our workshops or events, check out our website for details.



Creating a Survival Kit

Surviving online school

Online school can be challenging for a number of reasons. The structure of a day on campus is missing, it can be difficult to connect with peers, technology fatigue can set in. In addition to the difficulties of online school, every student has their own unique struggles and skills that impacts how they adapt to adversity. These unique differences can make online school even more difficult. There has been a lot of focus on thriving in an online environment without considering if someone is surviving. A tree cannot grow if the sapling does not sprout. This package focuses on some wellness basics that are helpful to support you on your online academic journey.

This package covers the following topics:

- Academic wellness
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Social and cultural wellness

This is an overview of common questions asked about wellness and online learning. We acknowledge that there are more aspects to learning virtually and that everyone has unique challenges that they are facing. Please refer to additional Healthy U health packages that address more topics on our [website](#).

Why a survival guide?

When going on a camping trip, we plan for the worse case scenarios. A first aid kit for sprains, boots for rain, and layers for cold nights. University can be compared to many things: a marathon, an uphill battle, a strange new world. Whatever educational adventure you find yourself on, you can use this as a guide to navigate some rough weather, isolation, or even a cloudy day.

There are also different times throughout an academic year and student's journey where they need more support. Wherever you are on your academic journey, you can use these skills to help your health and wellness during and after university.



Map it Out: Academic Wellness

S.M.A.R.T. goals

S.M.A.R.T. goals can be used for planning your week, breaking up large projects or setting goals

Specific

Be clear about what you wish to accomplish.

For example: "I have a test in 2 weeks that I need to study for"

Measurable

Ensure you are able to break your goal into measurable units.

For example: "I can study for 1 hour each day"

Achievable

Be realistic with the goals that you set.

For example: "I will review and re-write notes from one lecture"

Relevant

Spend time on activities that work towards your goals

For example: If writing out questions helps with studying, put aside time so that you can do that

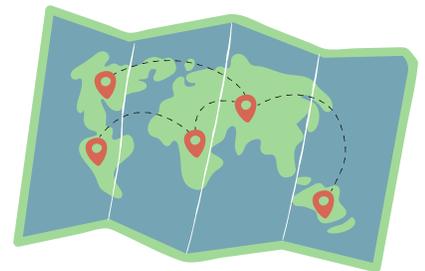
Time-bound

Create a schedule to have your task done by.

For example: "I have 2 weeks until my test"

Time management

It can be difficult to budget your time with online school and especially with asynchronous classes. Set aside time throughout the week to work on class material and for readings. Learn from yourself and set realistic goals. For example, if it usually takes 2 hours to read one chapter, then you most likely won't do as thorough of a job in half an hour.





Prep for a Storm: Mental health

Mental health vs mental illness

Mental health refers to your emotional and psychological well-being. Everyone has mental health. Good mental health allows you to adapt to and cope to stressors that might arise in life. Some influences on mental health include:

- life experiences (death, family dynamics)
- relationships (romantic, friends, family)
- environment (school, work, home)
- physical health (illness, substance use, sleep)

Mental illness is often characterized by a prolonged period of time where an individual has a reduced ability to function effectively. This can be caused by significant distress, isolation, loneliness, disconnection from others and changes in mood, behaviour or thinking. It is okay to ask for help if you are struggling.

Adapted from: [The Government of Canada](#)

Stress

What is stress?

Stress includes normal physical and psychological reactions to everyday events. This is a reaction that creates chemicals in our brain called hormones. This “fight-or-flight” system is our brain trying to protect us.

What causes stress?

Stressors are events, pressures or demands that cause stress reactions. These can be from a busy schedule: school, work, volunteering, family demands, a social, life, sleep. Negative events can cause stress: a bad grade, a pandemic, losing your job. Positive events can also create stress: starting school, getting a job, spending time with friends.

Can stress be helpful?

Stress can be helpful in small amounts: it can help us study for a test, prep for a presentation, or allow us to get somewhere on time. However, stress can also be unhelpful when it gets in the way of everyday functioning: it can impair sleep, cause us to freeze during a test or feel so overwhelmed that we cannot study.

Adapted from: [CAMH](#)

Different signs of stress

Everyone is different in how they experience stress. These are some examples. The next time you are overwhelmed, notice where you are feeling it. Are your palms sweaty? Do you feel guilty? Is it difficult to keep up with school or life demands?



Cognitive

Decreased self-confidence

Difficulty thinking or
concentrating

Frequent worrying



Emotional

Moodiness

Hopelessness and helplessness

Irritability

Feelings of sadness



Physical

Physical pain, discomfort,
or tension

Increased heart rate

Stomach problems



Social

Social withdrawal

Increased substance use

Changes in sleeping or
eating patterns

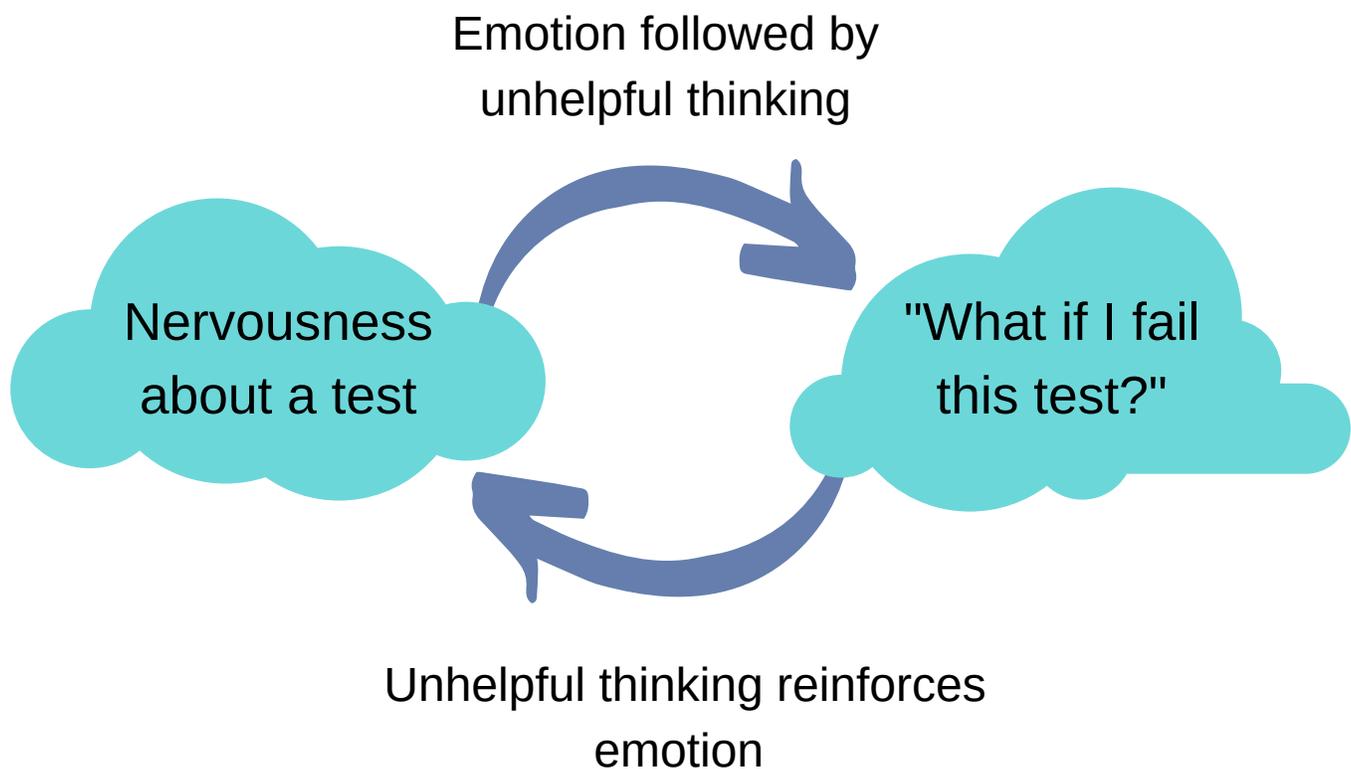
Coping with stress



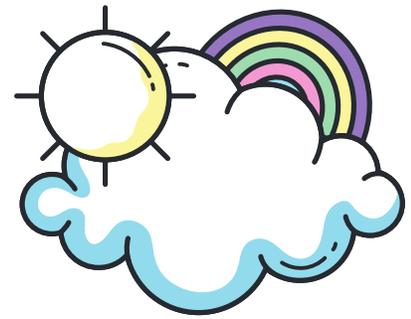
Similar to the different experiences of stress, there are many ways to cope with stress. A great place to begin is by identifying your stressors. In this section, we will discuss different cognitive techniques. You can also use the methods recommended for physical and social wellness.

Calming the mind: Unhelpful thinking styles

Unhelpful thinking styles happen when we experience an emotion quickly followed by unhelpful thoughts. Eventually, we become unaware of the pattern created and this thinking becomes automatic. Bringing awareness to this way of thinking can help reduce this pattern and help alleviate some stress.



This example highlights the unhelpful thinking style, catastrophising. This occurs when we imagine the worst outcome after feeling emotions about a situation. Turning small problems into unsolvable ones can make life feel impossible. Reframing the situation can be helpful. Instead of picturing the worst outcome, think of all the possible outcomes.



Steps to Challenging Unhelpful Thinking Styles

1. Separate your thoughts from actual events

- What is the situation?
- What are your thoughts?
- What are your emotions?
- What are your behaviours?

2. Identify the type of thinking style

Look at your thoughts listed and see what thinking style they fall under (mental filter, personalization, catastrophizing, etc). You may be using more than one unhelpful thinking style at a time. Here is what these unhelpful styles might sounds like:

- **Mental filter:** Looking at the negative aspects of life and ignoring the positive aspects, saying "I did poorly on this test... I'm going to fail this class" while ignoring the previous tests and assignments you did well on
- **Jumping to conclusions:** Deciding the result of something before it happens, "I'm going to fail this test"
- **Personalization:** When you take responsibility for something out of your control, "My friend is upset because of me"
- **Black and white thinking:** Seeing one extreme or another "I got a B on this paper, I am a terrible student"
- **Shoulding and musting:** Putting unreasonable expectations on yourself, "I should study for eight hours today"
- **Overgeneralization:** Using an example of something that happened once and applying it to all similar future experiences, "My friend didn't check in on me when I was sad last week, they never check in to see how I am doing"
- **Labelling:** Making universal statements about ourselves or others based on behaviours in specific situations, "I missed my class today, I am so lazy"
- **Emotional reasoning:** Using the way you are feeling to justify your view on something, "I am scared about this test, so it will be difficult"
- **Magnification and minimization:** Increasing the positive aspects of others while decreasing the positive aspects of yourself, "My friend always does so well in school, I will never be as smart as them"

3. Challenge the thinking style

Two common approaches to challenging thinking styles include:

Check the Evidence: Is there any evidence to support this thought?

Double standard: Ask yourself, "Would I judge someone else if they did the same thing?"

4. Aim for a balance in your thoughts

Once you have challenged the thinking style, replace the unhelpful thinking style with a more balanced thought. "It's okay that I am worried about my test. I was worried during my last test as well and I managed to pass."

5. Be kind to yourself

It's okay if becoming aware of, recognizing, or challenging unhelpful thinking styles is difficult. Our brain creates thought patterns to protect us and from practice. These patterns might also be out of our control. If a parent constantly tells us to get an A+ and nothing less, it makes sense that black and white thinking might occur. There are also systemic influences that encourages certain behaviours, which would explain why we are so quick to label ourselves when we feel we are not living up to external expectations.

Be kind to yourself when addressing these thinking patterns.



Stop and Smell the Roses: Self-Care

Before you feel overwhelmed

In an ideal world, people would live balanced lives and take regular time to take care of themselves. This self-care might include mental, physical and emotional health. Unfortunately, we usually only realize we need to take care of ourselves when life gets difficult. If we learn to take care of our needs, we can change how we feel when we are overwhelmed. This also helps us build resiliency when future challenges arise.

What is self-care?

Self-care is engaging in activities that takes care of our bodies, mind and soul. By maintaining healthy relationships with ourselves we promote our well-being and reduce stress.

Examples of self-care

- Having a shower
- Going for a walk
- Petting your pet
- Engaging in a mindfulness activity
- Having your favourite tea



Self-care is unique for everyone

A Warm Shelter: Boundaries

Online school creates a different space than in-person classes do. This can both be the physical spaces we occupy and the relationships we have. It can be an important skill to establish new boundaries in these new spaces.

Types of Boundaries

Physical

Making a dedicated space for virtual learning. This can be important to create a separation between learning and relaxing.

For example: Using different music or lighting when you are studying versus relaxing.

Social

Creating: Establish expectations with the people you live with to create harmonious living environment.

For example: Asking your sibling to use headphones while watching their show during your lecture

Maintaining: Remind people when your boundaries have been crossed. Additionally, it is okay to reach out when you need help.

For example: "Hey I have been having a tough week at school, could I please use the living room to study tonight?"

Learning to say "No"

Identifying situations that can cause distress and understanding it's okay to politely decline an offer.

For example: Telling your group members that you cannot make an online meeting because of a prior commitment

Adapted from: [How to Say "No" Assertively](#)





Rest Stop: Physical Health

Sleep

The Government of Canada recommends that adults aged 18-64 obtain between seven to nine hours of sleep each night. A consistent sleep pattern promotes a healthy routine and provides the best chance for cognitive function during online coursework. Everyone requires a different amount of sleep, so what works for someone else might not work for you. Here are some tips that can help you start a sleep routine.

Technology use

Try to limit screen time before bedtime. Most electronic devices have a blue light filter that can reduce the disruption of your sleep-wake cycle. Consider including a screen-free activity to your sleep routine. For example, reading a (fun) book or listening to relaxing music.

Caffeine intake

Having caffeine close to your bedtime can negatively impact your sleep. Try to limit caffeine intake to six hours before your bedtime routine. If you like the flavour of coffee or tea, try a decaf version in the afternoon and at night.

Relaxation

Winding down before your bedtime tells your body it's time to get tired. This means creating time to relax after studying at night or exercising. At times it can be difficult to fall asleep or fall back asleep. Deep breathing or relaxation exercises are some ways to lower your heart rate to help you sleep.

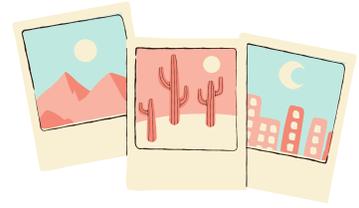
Adapted from: Sleep.org

Movement

Physical activity is a tool that can help improve sleep, reduce stress, and increase energy levels. You do not need to participate in an intense workout to experience these benefits! Incorporating movement within a study schedule can make positive impact on mental health while increasing blood-flow circulation to help you focus. Potential outlets of physical activity may include a short trip around the neighbourhood, stretching between classes or a workout routine at home.

Adapted from: Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

Creating Memories: Social and Cultural Wellness



Friends

Friendship has many positive benefits like reducing stress and helping with a sense of belonging. University provides a great opportunity to meet new people, but this can be difficult online. Stay connected with your current friends and reach out to classmates to start new friendships. University student clubs and volunteering are also great ways to meet new people!

You are not alone

Virtual learning has impacted everyone. It is okay to feel how you are feeling. It is likely that someone in your class feels the same way. For example, they might feel equally isolated and lonely during these uncertain times.

Get creative

Have virtual paint nights over zoom, cook the same meal together, attend a virtual university event, or watch a movie online together. Take time to try out new hobbies!

Make a routine

It can be easy to isolate ourselves when opportunities to spend together do not arise organically. For example, it is not as easy to spontaneously grab coffee with a friend after class anymore. Take time out of your month to schedule friend time. This can be to chat, play a virtual game, or to go for a walk.

Spirituality

Spirituality looks different for everyone. This could include mindfulness, a connection to a greater power or the earth, organized religion, or a thought process. Your definition and understanding of spirituality can change throughout life based on experiences and relationships with others.

During times of uncertainty it can feel reassuring to connect with your spirituality. Take time throughout your day to connect with yourself or reach out to others to chat.

UM Resources

Academic Wellness

Academic Learning Centre*

Academic resources for graduate and undergraduate, full and part-time students at UM. Make an appointment with a writing or study-skills tutor or sign up for one of our many workshops, all at no charge.

201 Tier

204-480-1481

Career Services*

Career support for undergraduate and graduate students with their career planning and job search, offering a wide range of help throughout a student's career journey. They also support recent alumni in their job search, and help employers with their recruitment needs.

474 UMSU University Centre

204-474-9456

University 1 First Year Centre*

Academic advisors for all first year students in any faculty.

205 Tier

204-474-6209

Academic Advisors*

Talk to your faculty-specific academic advisors about your path as a student.

UM Libraries*

There are various libraries across UM campuses. You can receive information about materials, subject guides, research and instruction support.

25 Chancellors Circle

Libraries.GeneralEnquiries@umanitoba.ca

204-474-9881

Elizabeth Dafoe Library*

Access computers, books, or online study rooms.

25 Chancellors Cir

204-474-9881

*Please check websites for remote services

UM Resources

Mental Health

[Student Counselling Centre \(SCC\)*](#)

Provides both crisis support and trauma counseling to students and is free and confidential. Workshops and groups are also provided.

474 UMSU University Centre

204-474-8592

[Health & Wellness*](#)

The Health & Wellness Educator is a Registered Nurse and available to talk about health and wellness topics.

469 UMSU University Centre (within the SCC)

204-295-9032

healthandwellness@umanitoba.ca

[Sexual Violence Resource Centre \(SVRC\)*](#)

Provides support, resources, information and referral services for any student, faculty or staff member who has been affected by sexual violence

537 UMSU University Centre

svrc@umanitoba.ca

204-474-6562

[Healthy U*](#)

Check out our website to learn about health and wellness topics!

474 UMSU University Centre

[UMSU health coverage](#)

If you have UMSU health coverage, you have access to EmpowerMe and coverage for a social worker, clinical psychologist, and certain medications.

*Please check websites for remote services

UM Resources

Physical health

University Health Services (UHS)

Doctors, nurses and support staff provide a range of medical services including

- treatment of chronic and short-term health concerns,
- regular check-ups,
- pregnancy care,
- travel health counselling and immunizations,
- diagnosis and treatment of mental health concerns and
- health promotion programming

B-Lot temporary Trailer

204-474-8411

University Pharmacy

The University Pharmacy is a full service pharmacy. Health care products, cosmetics, dorm essentials, healthy snacks, prescription items, and immunizations.

Room 111 University Centre

204-474-9323

Recreation Services*

Membership and recreational programming for both UM students and the general public.

Check out their [virtual health and fitness programming!](#)

146 Frank Kennedy Centre

rec_services@umanitoba.ca

204-474-7279

*Please check websites for remote services

UM Resources

Social and Cultural Wellness

Spirituality Services*

One-on-one emotional and spiritual support. Recognize, affirm and work with your existing values and beliefs.

339B UMSU University Centre (Temporary location)

204-298-2467

edgar.french@umanitoba.ca

Indigenous Student Centre*

The Indigenous Student Centre helps welcome and support Indigenous students, as well as provide opportunities for students to learn about First Nations, Inuit and Métis culture.

Migizii Agamik - Bald Eagle Lodge

204-474-8850

isc@umanitoba.ca

UMSU Student Clubs*

There are countless clubs on campus for students with common interests ranging from a hobby or social cause, to religion or culture, and more.

Student Life*

Get involved with your campus community. Find out how to volunteer, different learning modes, and about CCR.

225 University Centre

204-474-9093

*Please check websites for remote services

UM Resources

Additional Student Supports

Student Support Case Management*

Provides free resource information, practical supports and safety planning in a confidential manner. Assistance with academic needs such as authorized withdrawals, deferred assignments/exams.

520 UMSU University Centre

204-474-7423

stadv@umanitoba.ca

Student Accessibility Services (SAS)*

SAS provides supports for students with disabilities and to foster success for your academic future.

520 UMSU University Centre

204-474-7423 (Fort Garry campus) 204-272-3190 (Bannatyne campus)

student_accessibility@umanitoba.ca

Student Advocacy*

Confidential support to help you understand your rights as a student including assistance with making academic requests (e.g., deferrals or withdrawals), filing a complaint, or accessing resources.

520 UMSU University Centre

204-474-7423

stadv@umanitoba.ca

*Please check websites for remote services

Apps

Click on the app image to learn more about each app!

Academic Wellness



Quizlet



AnkiDroid
Flashcards



Pomodoro



NoxOcean



Pulse (UMLearn)
[Apple](#) [Google](#)



UManitoba
(Aurora)

Mental Health



How We Feel



Managing your
stress & anxiety



Happify

Physical Health



My Water



Couch to 5k (C25K)



UM Recreational
Services

Social and Cultural Wellness



Teleparty



UM Safe

Online Resources

Academic Wellness

[International Students Reflect on How They Manage Virtual School](#)

[168 Hour Week](#)

[Purdue Online Writing Guide](#)

Mental Health

[Manitoba Care for your Mental Health](#)

[Wellness Together Canada](#)

[Self Compassion](#)

[ADAM](#)

Physical Health

[UM Virtual Health and Fitness](#)

[Canada's Food Guide](#)

[Sleep Foundation](#)

Social and Cultural Wellness

[Community Engaged Learning](#)

[The Trevor Project](#)

[Volunteer Manitoba](#)