

DECEMBER 2024

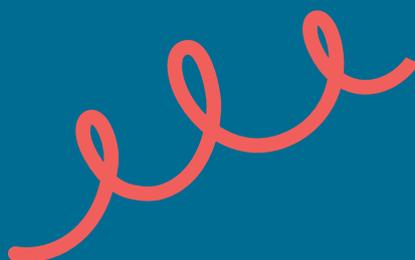
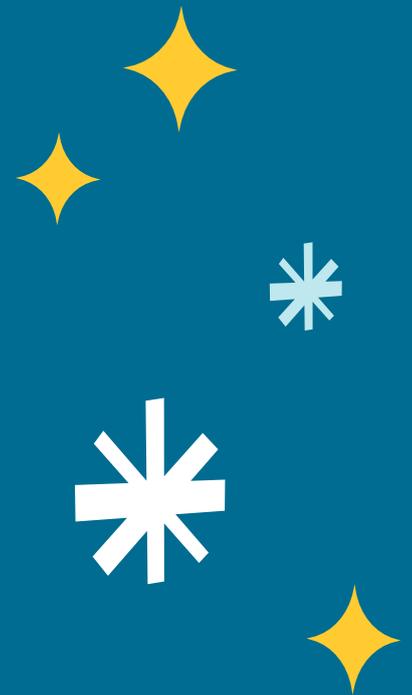
UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA MEDICAL AND COUNSELLING STUDENT NEWSLETTER

Hi UC students,

Congratulations on making it to the end of the semester! As we head into the holiday season, we encourage you to take some well-deserved time to relax and recharge.

In this edition, we'll cover some important topics that might be on your mind as the year wraps up:

- **Dealing with Loneliness**
- **Addressing Financial Stress**
- **Managing Family Tensions**
- **Summer Semester Activities on Campus**



Dealing with Loneliness

We understand that there are many reasons students may find themselves alone over the holidays—whether its cost-of-living pressures, not having a family that supports your choices, or being far from home.

Here are a few ways to cope with loneliness:

“

I now tried out a new hypothesis: It was possible that I was more in charge of my happiness than I was allowing myself to be.

- Michelle Obama, *Becoming*

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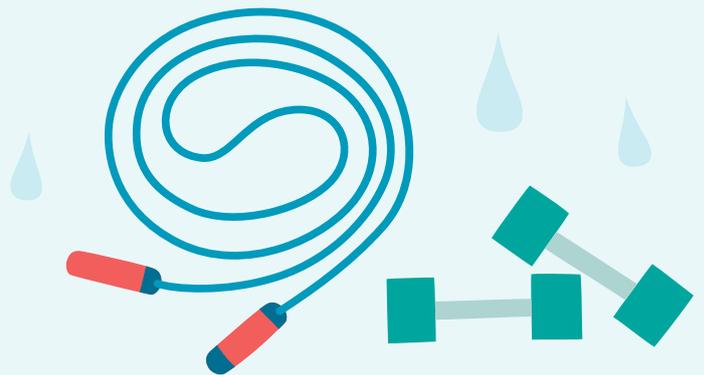


1. Meditation and mindfulness

Solitude provides space to reflect and process life's experiences. Meditation helps you connect with your thoughts and emotions, turning alone time into a moment for growth and inner peace.

2. Physical activity

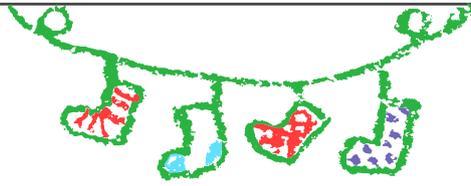
Exercise releases endorphins, improving your mood and reducing stress. Whether it's a walk outdoors or a more intense workout, physical activity can reframe your alone time as a chance to reconnect with yourself and enjoy the present moment.



3. Journaling

Writing allows you to reflect on memories, express your emotions, and shift your focus to gratitude. Journaling can bring calm and clarity, helping you appreciate the present moment. By integrating these practices, you can turn loneliness into an opportunity for personal growth, reflection, and self-connection!





Check out

some FUN THINGS to do in Canberra over Christmas



- The Canberra Times Carols by Candlelight
- Christmas at Haig Park Village Markets
- CMAG Holiday Card Making
- Running for Resilience - Santa Run
- Ginninderra Parkrun



Connect with others:

Any form of connection, no matter how small, can help reduce feelings of loneliness.

Here are some tips:

1. Reach out

A quick call, text, or Zoom chat can make a big difference. Check in with family or friends and share how you're feeling. Try planning a virtual activity like charades or a Kahoot quiz to feel more included.

2. Make plans

Invite a friend for coffee, a meal, or a movie. Even brief interactions can help ease loneliness and strengthen your social bonds.

3. Meet new people

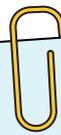
Join a local group or class that matches your interests—whether it's painting, sport, pottery or gardening.

It's a great way to meet like-minded individuals.

4. Volunteer

Volunteering is a great way to connect with others and make a positive impact. Look for opportunities to help those in need, especially during the holidays².

Don't forget to check out campus events or join the Weekly Psych Sessions, which offer online support and a chance to connect with others, even from afar. Taking small steps to reach out can help you combat loneliness and build meaningful connections.



If you need support or professional help, you can book in to see a psychologist at the Medical & Counselling Centre in person, or via telehealth.

02 6201 2351

Lifeline 13 11 14

HotDoc Booking App



1. www.mhfa.com.au/loneliness-and-isolation-over-the-holidays/
2. psychcentral.com/health/stop-feeling-lonely#practical-tips-to-overcome-loneliness

Addressing Financial Stress



The holidays can be a source of financial stress for students, especially with the high cost of living. Here are some practical tips to help you manage your money and enjoy the season without overspending:

1. Create a budget

Start by setting a realistic budget that covers gifts, decorations, travel, and other holiday expenses. Try to stick to your budget and prioritize what matters to you. Focus your spending on what aligns with your values and cut back on unnecessary extras.

2. Start early and set realistic boundaries

Plan ahead to avoid last-minute rushes and give yourself more time to make thoughtful purchases. Communicate openly with loved ones about your budget and set boundaries for gift exchanges or activities. Respecting each other's financial limits reduces pressure to overspend.

3. Rethink traditions

Focus on meaningful experiences instead of expensive gifts. Spend quality time together, swap gift-giving for shared activities, or swap restaurant meals for picnics. These changes can reduce financial stress while making the holidays more personal³.

4. Get creative with gifts or look for discounts

Homemade gifts or baked goods can be just as meaningful as expensive presents. Also, keep an eye out for cheaper deals and sale items, and consider tapping into loyalty programs to help keep costs down without sacrificing the festive spirit.

By planning ahead and making thoughtful choices, you can navigate the holiday season without the stress of financial strain.⁴

Managing Family Tensions

The holiday season often involves visiting family, and while this is exciting for some, many find navigating the tensions that arise from differing personalities, past conflicts, or unresolved issues challenging. However, with some preparation and self-care, you can navigate these tensions more easily.

Here are a few strategies to help you manage family interactions:

1. Set Boundaries

Establishing clear boundaries is essential. It's okay to limit time with certain relatives if it helps reduce stress. You don't have to attend every event or engage in every conversation.

Tip: Prioritize your emotional wellbeing—don't feel guilty about stepping away when needed.

2. Limit Alcohol Intake

Alcohol can amplify emotions and conflict, especially in stressful settings. Drink mindfully to stay calm and avoid unnecessary tensions.

Tip: Sip on non-alcoholic beverages or pace your alcohol consumption to maintain emotional balance.

3. Increase Self-Care

Prioritize self-care to manage the emotional weight of family gatherings. Take time to decompress before and after spending time with family.

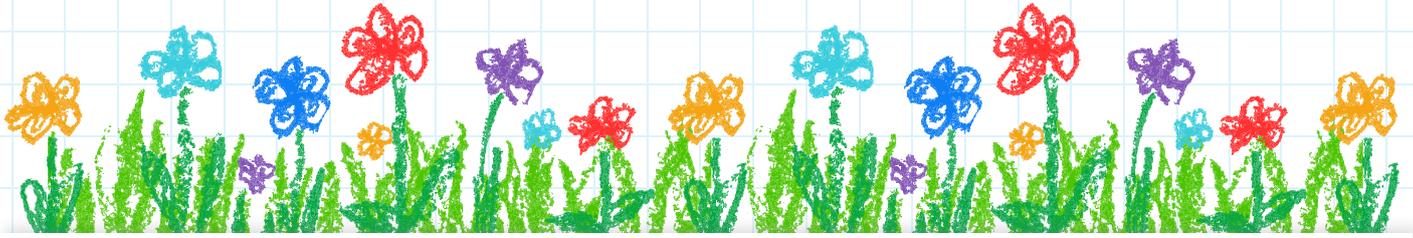
Tip: If direct interaction feels overwhelming, consider alternatives like sending a holiday card or making a phone call.⁵

3. mhfa.com.au/loneliness-and-isolation-over-the-holidays/

4. kearneygroup.com.au/article/tips-for-reducing-financial-stress-during-the-holiday-season/

5. mhfa.com.au/loneliness-and-isolation-over-the-holidays/





Managing Conflict and Calming Your Nervous System

Family conflicts can trigger the body's fight-or-flight response, making emotions more intense. Here's how to stay calm and manage your nervous system.



1. Recognize Stress Signs

Notice early signs of stress, like a racing heart or shallow breathing. Identifying these cues helps you take action before emotions escalate.

2. Deep Breathing

Slow, deep breathing can counteract stress. It helps lower heart rate and activate the calming part of your nervous system. Try inhaling for four seconds, holding for four, and exhaling for four. Repeat for a few minutes to ease stress.⁶



3. Grounding Techniques

Grounding exercises help you stay present during tense moments. One method is to focus on sensory details—name five things you see, hear, and feel. Holding a warm drink or rubbing your hands together are other ways to stay grounded.⁷





Understanding Family Behaviour

Another way to handle family tensions is by trying to understand the root causes of certain behaviours. While not all behaviours can be excused, recognizing where they come from can help reduce your stress and take the emotion out of the situation, allowing you to respond with patience and empathy.

1. Unresolved Trauma

Past experiences can influence how people react. Recognizing that a family member's behavior may stem from unresolved issues can help you respond with understanding. Remind yourself that their behavior may reflect their internal struggles, not something personal against you.

2. Lack of Self-Awareness

When people are out of touch with their own emotions, they may unintentionally hurt others. Responding with patience and communicating calmly can prevent escalation.⁸

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) can assist with identifying unhelpful thought patterns, and changing them to be more effective. **Chapter 6 of this free, online CBT workbook** looks at cognitive restructuring, which might help you if you are struggling with negative emotions.



Forgiveness and Setting Boundaries

Holidays can bring up old wounds, but holding onto grudges only harms your wellbeing. Forgiveness, alongside healthy boundaries, can help you maintain peace and emotional health.

1. The Power of Forgiveness

Forgiveness isn't about excusing harmful behaviour but about releasing yourself from anger. It improves mental health, sleep, and even heart health so remember that forgiving can be for your peace of mind, not for their sake.

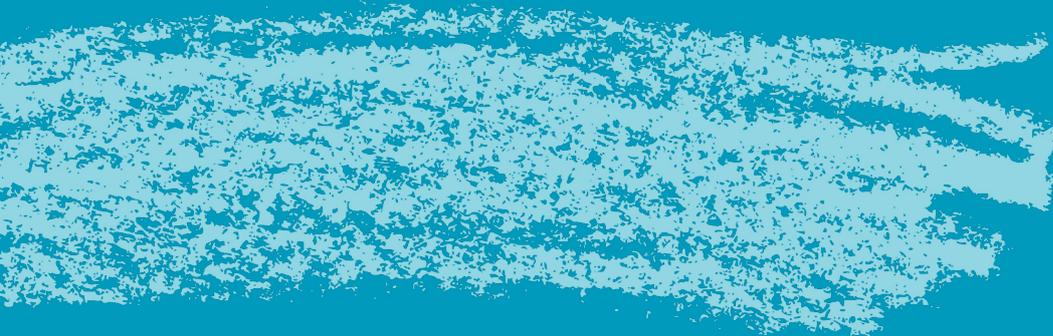
2. Setting Healthy Boundaries

Setting boundaries protects your emotional health. This can involve limiting contact, saying no to unreasonable demands, or expressing your needs clearly. Be firm yet respectful in setting boundaries, remembering your emotional wellbeing matters most.

6. neurodivergentinsights.com/blog/how-to-calm-down-fight-flight-response

7. lawsonpsychology.com.au/how-to-calm-your-fight-or-flight-response/

8. psychcentral.com/health/reasons-why-good-people-do-bad-things#takeaway



A
LITTLE
SOMETHING
FUN!

Try an online puzzle **HERE**

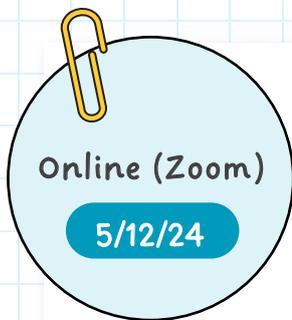


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Summer Semester Activities on Campus

While a lot of our community will be heading home, overseas, or bunkering down for the summer, we want to remind you of the activities that will still be happening on campus over the summer semester if you're looking for connection.

THE WEEKLY PSYCH SESSION



Taking things for granted: Today we will explore hedonic adaption and how to tweak what we do to heighten pleasure and reduce discomfort.



Self Esteem: Today we will discuss sources of self-esteem and ways of building it in our lives.



Changing our thinking: Today we will learn a thought monitoring practice to help us dispute unhelpful thoughts and retrain ourselves to think in ways that serve us better.

Register via [Humanitix](#)

ADHD MANAGEMENT

This weekly group is designed for students who have been diagnosed with or think they might have ADHD. It focuses on developing strategies to manage concentration, attention, and time more effectively, and understand the importance of routine and structure in daily life.

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

CONNECT UP 2617

Are you a student aged 18 to 30 living in Belconnen or Bruce? Connect Up 2617 is here to help you get involved, meet new people, and build a sense of community!

Created by the Medical Research Future Fund and the Health Research Institute, Connect Up 2617 offers a variety of fun and social activities, including badminton, community gardening, social lunches, and walks with free coffee.

The program is led by eight Community Connectors, friendly locals who are here to introduce you to these activities and help you connect with others. They come from different backgrounds and have a wide range of interests, so you're sure to find someone with common interests.

Get involved, create new friendships, and feel more connected to your community. Check out what's on and join in today!

FIND OUT MORE



The UC Medical & Counselling Centre will be closed from **Friday 20 December 2024** to **Monday 6 January 2025**.

If you need medical or psychological care during this time, the below resources are available.

CALMS - Canberra After-hours Locum Medical Service | **1300 422 567**

National Home Doctor Service | **13SICK**

Call Medical & Counselling Reception and listen to the recorded message for instructions | **02 6201 2351**

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Ambulance (life-threatening emergencies only)
 - **1300 721 790 | 0488 884 227**
University of Canberra Crisis Line
 - **1300 422 567 CALMS**
Canberra After-hours Locum Medical Service
 - **13SICK**
National Home Doctor Service
 - **13 11 14**
Lifeline (Counselling service)
 - **1800 022 222**
After-hours GP Helpline - (Healthdirect Australia)
 - **1800 629 354**
Access Mental Health
 - **6201 2222**
Campus security

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**

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**

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**

Multi-faith support

- Multi-faith and Chaplaincy

Contact: **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** 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!**