

# IMPERIAL

Student Counselling & Mental Health Advice Department

## Understanding our setbacks

A set back is an unexpected challenge or obstacle that disrupts progress.

Expecting setbacks and preparing for potential challenges can help us to adapt and bounce back.

Disappointment after a setback can lead to renewed motivation and determination.

Risking failure can be an important part of innovation and creativity.

Our sense of belonging feel under threat in a setback. We might experience shame.

Thoughts, memories and emotions around a setback can activate the stress response.

Setbacks can help us recognise that a change is needed.

## Calming ourselves in a setback

Engage in deep breathing, sooth yourself by put your hand on your chest.

Notice the sensations in your body, consciously relax your muscles.

Identify and greet your emotions with warmth, compassion and validity.

Self compassion.  
Speak to yourself as though you are someone else.

Journal. What is the story you're telling yourself about the setback? What is another perspective?

Move your body, go outside, find a green space, notice your senses.

## Building resilience in a setback

- Calm your nervous system
- Acknowledge uncomfortable feelings
- Speak to yourself with the warmth you would show a loved one
- Look after yourself
- Ask for help

- Intentionally choose where to place your attention
- Break down problems
- Focus on positives
- Build a support network
- Make a realistic plan and stick to it
- Apply a growth mindset