

One definition of mental health is that it is a state of well-being in which every individual realizes their potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. Everyone has mental health and it can fluctuate over time so it needs checking and taking care of in the same way that we monitor and take care of our physical health. There are lots of things to try that can make you feel mentally healthier; please don't feel you just have to put up with poor mental health.

Early intervention if your mental health declines is important because it can prevent crises and aids recovery so seek help early if you or those around you notice changes in your own behaviour e.g. withdrawing from social contact, changes in your mood and/or sleep routine. It is a sign of strength to know when you need help. There should be no shame in seeking support for your mental health and seeking help will not be recorded on your academic transcripts or mentioned in references that staff write for you.

Here are some quotes from your peers who sought help when their mental health declined: 'Having a chat with someone who really understands was amazing.' 'It really helped knowing that I could turn to someone to talk to.' 'Mental health really is vital.' 'I felt safer'.

Talking things through with someone can really help put things in perspective, give you hope and signpost sources of help and support. Students have had chats with staff about all sorts of issues including: homesickness, worry that they are the only ones here 'not getting it', loneliness, anxiety, relationship difficulties, lack of motivation, low mood, parental pressures and worries about the future. There are many people you can talk to in College, these include: your personal tutor, women's tutor (if your Department has one), senior tutor or postgraduate senior tutor, undergraduate liaison/student experience officer, hall wardens and sub wardens, Mental Health First Aiders* and any other member of staff who you find approachable. Others include: [The disability advisory service](#) (for example, they can refer you for study mentoring support), [International student support](#), [the student union advice centre](#), [the chaplaincy](#) (for all faiths and those with no faith) and [Faculty Senior Tutors](#). [The student hub](#) in the Sherfield building can help with worries about accommodation and [student finance support](#) can offer advice and support over money worries. Please ask for advice and help early to reduce your distress and stop any problems getting worse. Use the mitigating circumstances process to let your Department know about any challenges you are facing.

*College has about 400 [mental health first aiders \(MHFAs\)](#) ([some of FoNS' MHFAs are shown here](#)) [who are trained to listen non-judgementally and guide you to sources of help and support](#). You can talk to any MHFA from anywhere in College (ask them for a chat in person or via an email). DoLS' MHFAs include: John Pinney, Linda Giorgi, Moira Sarsfield, Magda Charalambous, Anita Hall, Stephen Curry, Steve Connolly and Julia Schroeder (at Silwood).

We all know that it is not always easy having that first conversation about your feelings and mental health, Mind has some resources to help [here](#) including [this guide](#). Don't worry if you're not sure how to speak about what you're going through, we can help.

Be proactive about your mental health and equip yourself to live life well at Imperial and beyond by browsing [Imperial's student space](#), the [College's Health and Wellbeing pages](#) and our [library of self-help guides](#). Lots of the mental distress that we see in students could be reduced by students acknowledging and developing strategies to address their feelings of [unhealthy perfectionism](#) and [the damaging constant self-criticism it produces](#), [procrastination](#) and [imposter syndrome](#). Working at achieving a good study/rest of life balance (including timetabling fun relaxed time) is also very important for your health and quality of life including your studies. Only having one aspect to your life leaves you vulnerable if that aspect becomes upsetting. In advance, plan several positive things to do when you next feel stressed [e.g. 'phone a friend, go for a walk, listen to some music you love...](#)

When you're in mental distress, there is always hope and with support you will recover. Here's a short case study if you need convincing about a student who had struggled with intense anxiety for years. They asked for help from a mental health first aider and tried several types of support and found out that meditation worked for them. Recently, they were overjoyed to report that they had not had a panic attack in years and were enjoying life again. Many people are living well in recovery from a diagnosed mental illness because they have the appropriate supports and strategies in place.

The Student counselling service and the College Health Centre run workshops to help you develop strategies to support your own wellbeing e.g. with stress management, mindfulness and self-esteem; these will be posted [here](#) and [here](#) as they are organised. There are apps to help you practise meditation and/or mindfulness which many people find calming and useful to help them focus on the present moment e.g., [Headspace](#) and buddhify . Some people find the [Woebot app](#) based on cognitive behavioural therapy useful in managing depression and anxiety.

Events at Imperial linked to national mental health campaigns such as Time to talk day will be advertised in announcements on Blackboard and/or around College.

Note: If you are worried that someone is in immediate danger, please call College security on 4444 (42444 Silwood Park) or 020 7589 1000 from a mobile (020 759 42444 at Silwood Park) and they can help you and guide emergency services to you. It's a good idea to put these numbers in your 'phone now. If you are outside College, please call 999.

Non-emergency mental health support within College includes:

The [Student counselling service](#) ([alternative sources of counselling help are listed on their site too](#)), the [College Health Centre](#), [Nightline](#), [your Doctor, 'GP'](#) (who you can change if you find them unhelpful)

You can help each other too, see for example, [Supporting your friends through University](#) [A Student Minds resource](#) and [5 simple ways to support a mate with a MH problem](#) . Let a member of student-supporting staff know if you have concerns about a classmate.

And outside College:

[The Samaritans](#) are always there to listen non-judgementally about any worries, you don't have to be feeling suicidal to call them. There is a 9am – 9pm walk in Samaritans centre at 46 Marshall Street London, W1F 9BF

Talking to someone who has been through similar experiences and feelings can be very useful; you can rant, rage, learn and even laugh about what you have all been through, for example:

[student minds](#) [The UK's student mental health charity](#) e.g. [for advice on reducing exam stress](#)

[Anxiety UK](#) see their [Student guide to anxiety.pdf](#)

see also [No Panic](#) and [Mind's Self Care for Anxiety](#)

and [Panic Attacks online course](#)

[Students against Depression](#) [I think this is a very good animation about what depression feels like and how to recover](#) and [this is good on how to care for someone with depression](#)
[Mind's guide to self-care when depressed](#)

[Mind](#) e.g. see their [advice about raising self-esteem](#) [The NHS has advice on this too](#)

[The mental health foundation](#) e.g. see their advice on [self-harm](#)

[Campaign against living miserably \('CALM'\) for men with depression or who are in crisis](#), very good to talk to about masculinity and the pressures men can struggle with as is [Andys Man Club](#)

[Bipolar UK](#)

[Alcoholics anonymous](#)

If you have been affected by someone else's drinking, there is [Al-Anon](#)

[Narcotics anonymous](#)

[Beat, The UK's eating disorder charity](#)

[Seed, UK eating disorder support service](#)

[Cruse can provide support after bereavement](#)

If you are having suicidal thoughts or if you want advice about how to support someone who is

you can talk to someone at [Maytree](#) or [Papyrus](#) or [HOPELine UK](#) [Stay Alive, is a suicide prevention app](#) with links to support, strategies for staying alive and the ability to assemble a 'LifeBox' of your own photos

[Support after suicide](#) can help those affected by suicide

There can be cultural aspects to mental health e.g. the interpretation of symptoms and/or the level of stigma people face. There are specialist organisations that will be aware of these cultural aspects; for example, there is the [Chinese Mental Health Association](#) in London.

If you have caring responsibilities, there is advice and support available e.g. from [The Carers Trust](#) and [Hope/Student Minds](#)

If you are undergoing gender transition, there is support available from e.g. [IQ \(Imperial College Union LGBT+\)](#) and [GIREs](#)

If you want to support a friend who is going through gender transition, there are useful tips and links [here](#)

If you are in a damaging relationship, there is support available e.g. from [Women's Aid](#) and [ManKind Initiative](#). We can also help get and keep yourself safe.

Several members of College staff are trained to support students who've been sexually assaulted see [here](#). There is also support available from e.g. [The Havens Paddington](#) and [The Survivors Trust](#).

If you have suffered a crime and would like some support and guidance on what to do next, College has a completely independent crime and investigations officer, Nigel Ward who can be contacted on 020 7594 8176. You can also contact [Victim support](#); they have a free 24/7 support helpline on 08 08 16 89 111.

Any questions about mental health and wellbeing or resources that you have found helpful? Please let me know, thanks.

Best wishes,

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