

Student Hub: Stress, Structure, Sanity and the Importance of a Little Self-Care

A recent NUS survey found that 87% of students experienced stress, 77% anxiety and 48% feelings of panic. We know – bleak, but researchers have also looked into what makes a successful, happy student and the thing that came out on top: **future orientation** (i.e. an idea of where you want to end up and some notion of how you intend to get there). And that's where we can help.

But first, we called on the best resource around, our Student members, to find out their top tips on how to keep it together in the face of deadlines, debt and depression. And these aren't just any students; these are the ones that you look at and think, how has your head not exploded with everything you're juggling? These are the ones with three jobs, their own business and a whole suite of extra curriculars that they're somehow excelling at on top of everything else. You know the ones. These guys have got it down and they're here to help.

If you need help with the 'future orientation' part of things, why not attend a local Geographic Section event to meet other members or sign up to our new mentoring platform that will match you with a mentor who can provide guidance, support and a wealth of experience? No one got where they are all on their own; they all had a bit of a boost from someone in their network, which is exactly what we want to do for you. If you need help, then ask for it, from a CIEEM member who's been in your shoes and come out the other side. In the meantime, download a mindfulness app, make a date to catch up with friends, get some fresh air, exercise, and remember: you have got this.

Andrew Barrett

Andrew is currently in Sweden (one of the most expensive countries in Europe), studying for his Masters, works two part time jobs and is also in the process of starting his own business. Phew!

1. Work the mind *and* the body.

My way of earning money, running around a bar and cycling for deliveries, gives me set times (my shifts) away from my laptop, where I can burn off all the calories I gained eating biscuits while writing. It helps the finance side of things *and* my sanity.

2. Plan your diary meticulously.

I put everything in my diary, even the hour block I gave myself to write these tips! Of course, the plan needs to be flexible and things do move, or take longer/shorter than anticipated, but it means I know when I have an event to look forward to, how many hours work I put in and how much play time I have as a result. It helps me feel balanced.

3. Surround yourself with understanding friends.

I am surrounded by people and we all have work to do, deadlines and financial strains. On my course there are people who understand my work, within the university I have friends to be social with and in my church, I have quieter friends to have dinner with. Then, at the end of the day, I can go back to my room and have time for me. I try to look at myself through my friends' eyes to get some objectivity, which helps me see things more positively, especially when I'm being hard on myself.

Peter Walker

Peter is in his third year at the University of Southampton and is Student Representative for CIEEM's South East Committee, where he helps organise events to increase student involvement and awareness.

1. Keep track of deadlines.

One of the biggest causes of preventable stress is not keeping an eye on deadlines for assignments. By actively keeping track of these, you can better organise your time and prioritise certain tasks over others, preventing the stress from creeping up on you.

2. Give yourself regular breaks.

Give yourself time away from the books, especially in periods of high stress. Even if you have multiple deadlines and assignments due in, try to take even just five minutes off to go for a quick walk or make yourself a drink. By giving yourself breaks, you allow yourself to de-stress and focus more on the task at hand. Once you return, you may even find you work more effectively for having taken a break.

3. Try Mindfulness.

Unfortunately, periods of stress are inevitable. The key is to create coping strategies to deal with it. Mindfulness has been shown to improve both mental health and academic achievement and, if you need some guidance, check out the apps 'Headspace' or 'Calm', that provide directed meditation exercises.

If you *do* need some extra help, please don't suffer in silence. There are loads of organisations you can contact who can offer help and support. A good place to start is with www.mind.org.uk.