

COOLMINDS

TALK IT OUT!

A GUIDE FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE

Returning to School Part 2

we
will

ACADEMIC STRESS, ANXIETY,
AND YOUTH SHARING

4 TIPS FOR ACADEMIC STRESS



01 Create accountability

- Finding an accountability partner means finding a friend who can make sure you follow through with your goals (and you return the same favour to them too!)
- This can be useful for tasks that you are working on independently, and is very simple.
- Just tell your accountability partner what you're working on, and when you hope to achieve those tasks by.
- Then ask him or her to remind you about it from time to time and give you balanced, objective feedback.
- The knowledge that someone else is supporting you with your plans may boost your motivation and commitment.

Imagine that you're facing a mountain that's too steep and tall to climb. Splitting up one big task into many little ones is like finding an alternative path up with lots of stairs, with each stair slowly bringing you closer to the top of the mountain.

02 Set mini deadlines and make to-do lists

- If you have a big project or exam coming up it can be hard to know where to even start, but breaking it up can make it seem less daunting and more approachable.
- Instead of just writing "Biology exam" in your calendar, you can split your revision by book chapter or topic and spread this out in the weeks before the exam - setting one chapter of revision every two days, for example.



03 Know when to ask for help and move on

- It's important to be very honest with ourselves that we can't do it all.
- We may have skills and talents in certain areas but need help in others.
- When setting goals, make sure they are realistic and achievable for you - and try to avoid imagining what those goals would look like for your peers, because they are not you and vice versa!
- If you come across a task that you know you won't be able to approach, and it's causing you a great deal of stress, it's important to share this with someone straight away so you can work through it together.
- However, once you've moved on to other tasks, you shouldn't spend hours looking back and beating yourself up about not having completed it - spending lots of time and emotional energy on something you no longer have to do will slow you down and hinder the completion of other, more pressing tasks!

If it's tricky to make an honest and thorough reflection of yourself, you can ask your parents or a teacher who knows you well.



04 Prioritise your health

- It's been said to us soooooo often but do we truly believe that we need to prioritise our health over our studies - and put this into action?
- Without a balanced diet, sufficient rest, and good physical and mental health, we won't be able to concentrate or have the energy to study to the best of our abilities.
- Even if staying up a few hours later or swapping a meal for snacks throughout the day seems like it could give us an immediate productivity boost, its effects would only be short term - in the long run, our health would catch up and we would need to spend even more efforts to make up for the lack of rest and nutrition later on.
- Remember that we also need strong immune systems to be able to fight off infection and disease, especially given the current situation!



let's talk about stress!

It is normal for us to experience some form of stress in our lifetime. In fact, a healthy dosage of stress can be good for our personal growth. A reasonable amount of stress can aid us to stay focused and accomplish tasks better. However, when stress begins to take over our daily functioning, it may be a sign that you are experiencing too much stress which is very unhealthy for our mind and body.

Let's quickly go over how stress can play a part in our body shall we? **Stress involves an emotional, physical or mental response to events, during which our body may experience physiological and psychological changes.** Physiologically, our bodies go into 'fight or flight' mode. Our nervous system is activated and hormones are released that enable us to react quickly.

Do you remember the last time when you were stressed? **Your heart rate and breathing rate may have increased, your muscles may have tensed up, you might also notice changes in mood or emotions.** These changes enable you to deal with the situation. But imagine if your body was undergoing this level of physical change all the time. Can you imagine how it might impact your life?

What to do if you're stressed:

Everyone has a limit to how much stress they can handle. Find out how to manage your stress at our Coolminds Webpage [here](#)

anxiety



We all experience anxiety at some point in our lives. It's normal to feel anxious in high pressure situations and it can help us stay focused and alert.

However, when we're very anxious, instead of assisting us to accomplish our tasks, we have intense feelings of worry or distress that are not easy to control. Anxiety at extreme levels can interfere with how we go about our everyday lives making it hard to cope with 'normal' challenges. The next time you feel anxious, check the following:

Am I feeling:

- Very worried or afraid most of the time
- Tense and on edge
- Nervous or scared
- Panicky
- Irritable, agitated

Am I thinking:

- 'Everything' is going to go wrong'
- 'I might die'
- 'I can't handle the way I feel'
- 'I can't focus on anything but my worries'



Am I experiencing:

- Sleep problems (can't get to sleep, wake often)
- Pounding heart
- Sweating
- 'Pins and needles'
- Tummy aches
- Churning stomach
- Lightheadedness
- Dizziness
- Twitches
- Trembling
- Problems concentrating
- Excessive thirst

What to do if you're anxious:

Take a deep breath. Remind yourself that it's normal to feel anxious sometimes, but if the symptoms above are interfering with your daily life, then it's time to seek help.

Remember, it's always okay to ask for help and it is one of the bravest things we can do for ourselves.

If you'd like to learn more about anxiety, visit webpage [here](#).

You can also complete an online Anxiety Self-test here from our partner Black Dog Institute: <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/clinical-resources/anxiety/anxiety-self-test>



voices of youth



Excerpts from an interview with current secondary school students in HK

What are some of your thoughts about returning to school that you want your teachers/parents/peers to know?

"Although teachers and parents will no doubt be anxious for students to catch up with the academic curriculum, I hope that there can be a common understanding that students will require time to adjust. With all the social unrest, division, and the spread of Covid-19 in Hong Kong, this academic year has already been a huge challenge for all students. Parents and teachers may not realize the full impact of these events, but the truth is that our worlds have been turned upside down, and the Hong Kong we knew and loved has changed. The mental impact is intangible but certainly not negligible - if teachers and parents can offer patience and support during this challenging period, it will inevitably be most beneficial for students, both academically and mentally."

-- Kristie Wong

"Returning back to school might be a good sign that things are getting back to normal, yet it is another transition since most of us are already getting used to a slower pace lifestyle and learning at home, which might also be challenging. With home learning, we may not have been able to study as productively, but we were in a comfortable environment at home and weren't bound by a strict timetable. Personally, I spent a lot more time to develop my passions such as cooking and arts and crafts during the extra free time at home, these activities have allowed me to relax and reduce stress. Returning back to school means that I no longer have as much free time to relax and be with my family, and we will again have to pick up the academic and learning momentum which I find very stressful."

-- Audrey Yung

"Returning to school is going to be a hectic time for everyone, students and teachers included. It's important to take some extra time a couple days before school starts to get back into the mindset of regularly attending classes in person. We'll all be really excited to see our friends again, but we should value these last few days of on-campus learning (at least for international schools) before break starts. Additionally, teachers have worked incredibly hard these past few months to make online school possible for us -- we should show them our appreciation!"

-- Nicole Tan

"Personally, I'm really excited to return to school and see everyone, but I can also understand if some people might be feeling a little overwhelmed at the prospect of suddenly being around so many people after having been home for so long. I think it would be really helpful for everybody if we can stay patient and compassionate with each other-- it will be an adjustment for all of us, but we're all in the same boat."

-- Yaerin Wallenberger

What are you doing to get ready for school?

"I am making sure that I'm caught up and on track with the material being taught during online lessons. During the extra free time I had because of school suspension, I caught up with friends and pursued hobbies that I wouldn't otherwise have had time to enjoy. Although academics are important and studying hard is the most obvious way to prepare for school, I recognize that mental well-being is equally, if not more, important. By allowing myself to relax and enjoy my hobbies, I am preparing myself in the best way possible, so that I am well-rested and can immediately start working hard again when school resumes."

-- Kristie Wong

"I am trying to connect with the teachers in school and voice out my concerns to let them know how I feel about both returning to school as well as the challenges I face to stay productive. Having discussions with teachers allows me to have a better idea of how the next few weeks will look like. Creating a calendar to lay out the due dates important tasks or exams is also helpful for me to visualise my month ahead instead of having all the stressful tasks and assignments stuck in my brain."

-- Audrey Yung

"Personally, I've been following a schedule similar to my normal school timetable in order to maintain a sense of normalcy and productivity. The biggest thing for me will be to re-adjust my sleep schedule, starting with waking up earlier during the week before on-campus learning starts."

-- Nicole Tan

"Even though there's two weeks until I start school, I've already packed my bag, and it's sitting by the doorway for me to grab when I'm headed for the school bus for my first day!"

-- Yaerin Wallenberger



I feel like everyone else is coping well and I'm scared to tell people that I'm not okay, because everyone went through this together but it seems like I'm the only one making a big deal out of it.



We all have different personalities and life experiences, and that means the things that cause each of us stress are different too. It doesn't mean that one person is "better" or "weaker" than another if they handle challenges differently.

In addition, we rarely know what is going on with another person. We might feel alone, but we never really are - we all carry our emotions differently and not everyone is able to speak openly about them. But just because we can't see it, doesn't mean that someone else isn't struggling with similar issues too.

It's also never "making a big deal" to talk about what's going on or how you're doing - and is especially understandable with the uncertainty right now, and the amount of change that's happened in the past few months. Most people are happy to help and listen, and feel valued and honoured when you share or open up with them. Your teachers would have lots of advice and suggestions. You don't have to work everything out by yourself - sometimes the best thing we can do for ourselves is admitting we need help and reaching out to trusted individuals who can support us as we tackle unpleasant feelings and thoughts.



EMERGENCY SUPPORT

If you are experiencing strong levels of distress or trauma which are interfering with your life, remember that you do not have to face it alone, and that **help is available**.

For emergency support, please contact the hotlines below:

Emergency hotline: 999

The Samaritans 24-hour hotline (Multilingual): (852) 2896 0000

Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong 24-hour hotline (Cantonese only): (852) 2389 2222

Suicide Prevention Services 24-hour hotline (Cantonese only): (852) 2382 0000

OpenUp 24/7 online emotional support service (English/Chinese): www.openup.hk

More support services can be found [here](https://www.coolmindshk.com/en/emergency-hotlines/): <https://www.coolmindshk.com/en/emergency-hotlines/>

More non-urgent support services can be found [here](https://www.coolmindshk.com/en/communitydirectory/): <https://www.coolmindshk.com/en/communitydirectory/>



RESOURCES

www.coolmindshk.com

IG: [@coolminds.hk](https://www.instagram.com/coolminds.hk)

FB: [@coolmindshongkong](https://www.facebook.com/coolmindshongkong)

For more youth mental health information and resources, check out our Coolminds website. You can learn more about our upcoming events and trainings for parents, teachers and students, and read blog articles and stories written by young people in Hong Kong.



CONTACT US

Got a question?

Write to us [here](#) or email hello@coolmindshk.com

Want to learn more? Visit our [FAQ page here](#)



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