



# IMI Wellness Resources for Students



1. [Work From Home & Study From Home](#)
2. [Stress Management](#)
3. [Imposter Syndrome](#)
4. Tipsheets
  - [Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#)
  - [Deep Breathing](#)
  - [Stretching](#)
  - [Visualization](#)
  - [Stretching for Stress](#)
5. [Resources for More Support – Counselling and Wellness](#)

# Work From Home & Study From Home: Tips

Working From Home (WFH) and Studying From Home (SFH) sometimes sounds amazing, but sometimes it can be tremendously challenging, especially when it's not your first choice. Staying motivated, setting up a solid workspace, and creating community are three big challenges common to students who are studying and working.

## Scheduling & Staying Motivated



1. **Make a to-do list** first thing each morning: then you'll have a bit of a plan for the day, and it's a good way to get the day started in a calming way
2. **Schedule your day** the same way you would at work or at school. Block off chunks of time for different projects and tasks, so they do not all run together. This also stops you from becoming distracted trying to do too many things at once.
3. **Schedule proper breaks** for yourself. At the office, or on campus, you have many micro-interruptions during the day that give you a mental break. This does not happen at home: so help make it work for you by scheduling brief 10-minute breaks as the day goes along. During those breaks, walk away from your desk: stretch, go look out the window, or walk around the block.
4. **Save yourself from your social media** distractions. Move your apps to a separate page on your phone, or put restrictions on them to limit your use to non-working hours.
5. **Set a workday and stick to it:** if you work best from 10 – 6, then be responsible about that – be ready to start at 10, and at 6, shut your laptop down. It is hard not to let work or school bleed into home life, but in remote-study or remote-work environments, it's hard to shut off. So, stop working when you plan to: and don't feel guilty about it.

## The Physical Environment



1. **Treat each day** like a regular workday: get up, showered, dressed for work and study, make a coffee, and behave like you normally would in the office or if you were coming to campus.
2. **Create a "home office"** for yourself – even if you do not have an actual home office. Try to create a separate space at home for "work", and don't work or study from places that you would otherwise associate with relaxation. If you're in a small apartment, choose one chair at your table for working, and use the other chair for eating and living – it sounds like it won't make a difference, but it will. Put what you need there: a cup with pens in it, some sticky notes, your chosen coffee mug and a plant. If you can, consider investing in tools to help: comfortable noise cancelling headphones, a comfortable chair, a laptop riser, a second monitor, a phone stand – whatever you need to help feel more comfortable in your space.
3. **Use technology wisely:** different browsers let you set up different accounts, so you can use one for work and one for home and keep your online worlds separate, which makes using the same laptop for work and home, or school and home, a little easier.
4. **Create a spotlight system** for roommates or family members: put a red sign on your door when you can't be interrupted, and green when it's ok to come in. This will help avoid unnecessary interruptions to your workflow, or help lower your stress about being interrupted during a meeting.

## Creating Community & Battling Isolation



1. **Carve out time to connect** with your friends, colleagues or classmates during the day. Allow yourself a window of time that your WhatsApp or other chat mechanism is open and accessible as you work – not too long, but long enough to give you some sense of collegiality. But don't let it distract you so much that you procrastinate.
2. **Create 'colleagues'** when you need to. If you are working on a project in isolation, find a classmate who is too, and agree to bounce ideas off each other when you need to.
3. **Check in with actual colleagues** or project-mates or classmates frequently – maybe even more often than you think you need to, at least until you feel comfortable. These micro-check-ins would happen a lot in the classroom, or in the office, so try to mirror those at home.
4. **Set up a work-buddy system** in your classroom or in your office. Who would you normally tap on the shoulder and ask to go study in the library? Study at the same time as that person, with a chat or a video call open (even if you're not talking constantly!), so that you're mirroring the study-buddy experience. Block off a few hours to study 'together' on a schedule. Take a coffee break together, too.
5. **Ask for help** when you need it. Each student will experience isolation – or if not isolation, frustration or any number of other emotions – when working and studying away from the office or away from campus. We are all in this together, and keeping open lines of communication to those that can help is critical. Reach out to a friend, a family member, a classmate, your professors, your supervisors at work, or your Program Staff for help or a chat anytime.

### Additional Resources:



- [How To Work From Home: Tips from 20 People Who Do It Successfully](#)
- [LinkedIn Learning Courses on Working From Home](#)
- [Get More Done: 18 Tips for Telecommuters](#)
- [University of Waterloo – Tips for Remote Co-Op Students](#)
- [Tips for Studying Online and at Home for University Students](#)
- [Northeastern University – Tips for Taking Online Classes](#)

# Stress Management Support for Graduate Students

Stress is a common experience for graduate students, and in every other professional stream or research stream graduate program. Remember:

- **Every student experiences stress:** this fact will not remove your stress, but it should help to normalize it a little
- **Stress is generally temporary:** it does not define you, and you are not stuck with it forever. There are tools, strategies and tips below, as well as resources, that can help you effectively cope with stress both in the short and long term.

Acute stress is short term, and goes away fairly quickly. Chronic stress lasts for a longer period of time, for instance over weeks or months. Finding healthy ways to think about, and manage, both types of stress is important. The combination of school, work, families, deadlines, and compounding factors like COVID-19 is sure to cause acute or chronic stress in everyone's life at some point: so do not feel you are alone.

Below, there are some ideas on things you can do today to help your stress, and things you have in your toolbox for longer-term thinking. We have also included resources and tools for extra support, when and if you need it.

## Things To Do Today:

Have you eaten today?

### Eat, and Eat Properly

Make sure you have had enough for your meals, and that you have chosen healthy foods that will make you feel well. Drink enough water, drink less coffee and caffeine, and make sure you've had enough nutrients that your body needs.

Remember that the way your body is feeling will impact your stress levels: food is something you have complete control over, and eating properly will help, and help quickly.

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### Change Locations

Try moving. If you are studying, go set up and study somewhere else. If you're studying in a coffee shop, go somewhere quieter. If you're too quiet and feel lonely, go study in a busier place.

Sometimes you just need a different view. Move to a window, or if you're distracted by the window and that's stressing you out, move to somewhere less distracting.

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### Headspace, or other Meditation App

Headspace – and apps like it – have excellent short meditations that can help with immediate stress. Participating in a 3-5 minute or 10 minute guided meditation may be quite useful, and something you can do immediately.

This is a habit to get into for your longer term stress as well – you'll develop tools to help you cope on the regular, rather than needing to jump to this only when you have hit a moment of particular strain,

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### Muscle Relaxation

Take yourself through a progressive muscle relaxation. Sit in your chair, close your eyes, and take some deep breaths. Tighten your toes, and release them. Tighten your ankles, and release them. Tighten your calves, and release them. On and on throughout the body, all the way to the top of your head. Focus on how that feels.

This has a biological effect on the body that will contribute to your overall sense of calmness, and can help right away.

The immediate effect of properly-done deep-breathing is tremendous.

### Deep Breathing

- Breathe in through your nose. Let your belly fill with air.
- Breathe out through your nose.
- Place one hand on your belly. Place the other hand on your chest.
- As you breathe in, feel your belly rise. As you breathe out, feel your belly lower. The hand on your belly should move more than the one that's on your chest.
- Take three more full, deep breaths. Breathe fully into your belly as it rises and falls with your breath.

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### Stretch

Stretching has an immediate biological effect on your muscle tension, and will help with your immediate stress.

Stretch out your upper back, neck and legs using the instructions in the appendix below, or do a quick google search on stretching for stress to learn how to effectively relax your body.

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### Get Out of the Classroom: Phone a Friend (not text)

Sometimes you just need to unload. Call a friend or go for a coffee. Don't text: the human, face to face and voice interaction will go a long way toward reminding you that you have people to learn on and talk to.

Talking through your stress can also help you pinpoint some of the triggers. While this can be very useful with a counsellor, for today, and in this moment in time, a friend or classmate can be a great starting point.

Remember: friends and other students have all experienced this as well, so you're well positioned to help each other out.

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### Get Out of the Classroom: Go For A Walk or Exercise

Get up from your desk or out of your apartment or off campus and go for a walk, or get some exercise. Fresh air will help – take a walk, and pay attention to the world around you. Putter through some shops and window-browse, or wander through an art gallery for an hour. This will help not only physically, but will provide a distraction.

If you're someone who likes to exercise, go for a run, go to the gym, or whatever type of exercise works for you.

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### Get Out of the Classroom: Cook Something

Get up from your desk and find a recipe – something you like to cook, or something you've never cooked before. This is a great distraction – and something to do with your hands and mind.

The added benefit is you'll have something delicious to eat after you're done.

## Things In Your Longer-Term Toolbox:

<b>Ask for Help: early, and often</b>	Write down your support network and use it. Whether it's a family member, a friend, a faculty member, attending a workshop or speaking to a counsellor, there are many people and resources to help. Ask early, and ask often.
<b>Take Care of Your Body: Sleep</b>	Be patient with yourself and create a long-term commitment to sleeping well and often enough. It will take time to create healthy sleep habits, so don't expect too much too soon. But read up on good sleep habits, and stick to them.
<b>Take Care of Your Body: Eat Well: Menu Ideas</b>	Eating healthy food every day can seem like an enormous task when you're stressed. Keep a list of quick and easy dishes or meals that are easy to make, and from items that you have in your pantry every day. Examples are things like quick salads, bean wraps, or even a veggie sandwich.
<b>Regular Exercise</b>	Like creating good sleep habits, good exercise habits take a long time to put in place. Don't ask too much too fast of yourself: start with a walk once a week, and work your way up from there. Choose activities you truly enjoy.
<b>Meditate Regularly</b>	Regular meditation takes a long time to get used to, and to find time for in the day. Try using an app to remind you each day, or put it in your calendar.
<b>Plan Properly</b>	Schedule study time, schedule work time, and schedule personal time. When you're in school, sometimes the days, evenings and weekends can all blend together. Try treating your school life like a work day: and give yourself parsed-out time to be "on" school work, and "off" school work.
<b>Strategist</b>	U of T has many helpful services, including time management and learning strategists that you can work with. Visits the RGASC for more information.
<b>Counsellor</b>	You can access counselling services through a variety of offices at U of T, and in the local community. See the resource list for more ideas.
<b>Get Involved Outside the Program</b>	Extracurricular activities are an important way to stay connected to other people, and enjoy the non-academic sides of life. Find a club or group for a hobby you enjoy, or tag along with a friend to an event.
<b>Journal/Write an Agenda</b>	The ancient art of writing and doodling and organizing life with a pen and a paper can be incredibly therapeutic. Try a journal – not just to write down your thoughts, but to keep track of your activities, create a custom calendar, write your to-do lists, and enjoy the process of creating this place to put your thoughts and plans.
<b>Remind Yourself of your Long-Term Goals</b>	Working on something with no tangible results in the short term – like school work or studies – can be exhausting and create a lot of stress. Remind yourself why you're here, that your goals are a marathon (not a sprint), and that by putting one foot in front of the other, you're going to move closer and closer to your goals.
<b>Celebrate Milestones</b>	Sometimes you might get stuck in thinking that you have to do more and do it faster, and better than everyone else, or you may feel you are not doing as well as others, leading to something called imposter syndrome. Remind yourself regularly of your abilities, and set small, tangible, meaningful goals to remind you how strong you really are.
<b>Allow Yourself to Trust</b>	Trust yourself. You're here for a reason, you're moving in the right direction. Trust your support network: your friends, family, staff and faculty are all right there beside you.

# Imposter Syndrome

## What is Imposter Syndrome?

Imposter syndrome is the belief that you're actually inadequate and incompetent within your current role, despite there being evidence that indicates you're skillful and/or successful. Individuals with imposter syndrome are often unable to internalize their accomplishments, believe they do not deserve their success, and have a fear of being "exposed." Often these individuals only seek comfort from external validity, and do not feel successful or content within themselves or the work they've completed. Those with imposter syndrome are rarely satisfied with themselves, beat themselves up if they do not reach a certain standard, and can have difficulties delegating to others. Imposter syndrome is very common, as 70% of individuals experience it sometime within their life.

## The 5 Types of Imposter Syndrome:

- *Perfectionists*: Perfectionists set overly high goals for themselves, and when they fail to reach a goal, they experience doubt and fear they cannot measure up to their expectations
- *The Superwoman/man*: These are individuals who work extremely hard to measure up to the goals they set, however this often leads to insecurity and may harm their mental health
- *Natural Geniuses*: These individuals often have many natural abilities, and if they have to work hard at something then they assume they must be bad at it. They often set their bar very high, similar to perfectionists, and judge themselves if they do not succeed at something on the first try
- *Rugged Individualists*: Rugged individualists believe asking for help can reveal their "phoniness"
- *Experts*: Those in this category believe they tricked their employer/supervisor into hiring or accepting them and have a deep fear of being exposed

Strategy	Description
<b>Recognize it</b>	You will never be able to overcome your feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness until you are willing to confront your imposter feelings head-on.
<b>Break the silence &amp; Talk it Out</b>	Speak out about your feelings. Knowing there is a name for these feelings and that other people suffer from them can be very reassuring.
<b>Separate feelings from fact</b>	Believe it or not, you are not the only person experiencing these feelings. Confide in a friend, colleague, or faculty member that you trust. Giving voice to your feelings allows you to release the pressure building up on the inside. It also gives you the opportunity to learn from others' experiences and how you might cope with similar experiences in the future.
<b>Recognize when it's normal to feel fraudulent</b>	When something is new to you, you may feel like you don't fit in. These feelings are a natural response for any novice.
<b>Accentuate the positive</b>	Don't obsess over everything. Do a great job when it is important, don't persevere over routine tasks.
<b>Develop a new response to failure and mistakes</b>	Learn from your mistakes and move on. Don't dwell on what has happened in the past.

Don't feel like you always need to know the correct answer. Recognize that you have just as much right as the next person to make a mistake or ask for help.

**Right the rules &  
Acknowledge You Level  
of Experience and  
Expertise**

It is perfectly acceptable to not know the answer to everything. Furthermore, no one expects you to. Don't be afraid to acknowledge your weaknesses and ask for help. Conversely, take pride in your current level of experience and expertise. Graduate school is a training ground where you can practice, experiment, and grow. Treat this time as a learning experience, seizing upon every opportunity to develop, perfect your craft, and hone your skills.

**Develop a new script**

Rewrite your mental script from "I am an impostor" to "I may not know all the answers but I am smart enough to figure it out."

**Visualize success**

Instead of thinking of worst case scenarios, imagine yourself conducting an excellent presentation or answering questions with the correct reply.

**Reward yourself &  
Speak Life to Yourself**

Learn to pat yourself on the back when you deserve it. Don't hide from validation!

Beating yourself up is no way to overcome your imposter feelings. Instead, speak positively about yourself, your success, and your abilities. You are a smart, capable, competent, and successful individual that will complete their graduate degree. You worthy of success and all recognitions.

**Accept Yourself**

While we may strive to be perfect, the truth is that even on our best days the idea of perfection is still an illusion. Hence, instead of striving for unrealistic expectations or ideals, acknowledge and accept that your best is the best. When you begin to embrace your greatness the pressures to compete with yourself and others starts to fade. Besides, when you are not accepting of yourself what you do to appease others will never be good enough resulting in further anxiety, depression, and discouragement.

\*resources above borrowed from the links below

**Further Reading on Imposter Syndrome:**

- We Are Not Imposters: <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2015/04/13/essay-how-graduate-students-can-fight-impostor-syndrome>
- Imposter Syndrome: Recognizing and Overcoming Feelings of Inadequacy and Self-Doubt as a Graduate Student: <http://www.ucea.org/2017/01/25/impostor-syndrome-recognizing-overcoming-feelings-inadequacy-self-doubt-graduate-student/>
- Feel Like a Fraud?: <http://www.apa.org/gradpsych/2013/11/fraud.aspx>
- Clance, P.R., & Imes, S.A. (1978). The imposter phenomenon in high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, Vol 15(3), 241-247. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0086006>
- Gravois, J. (2007). You're not fooling anyone. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 54(11), A1. Retrieved from <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Youre-Not-Fooling-Anyone/28069>
- The Five Types of Imposter Syndrome and How To Beat Them: <https://www.fastcompany.com/40421352/the-five-types-of-impostor-syndrome-and-how-to-beat-them>

## Tipsheet: Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This exercise asks you to tense and release various muscles. If you have a special problem with any muscle group, you can either skip that part or do it gently. You can keep your eyes open or closed, whichever is more comfortable. Take a moment to get comfortable. If you are in a chair, you may wish to uncross your arms and legs and ensure your back and neck are comfortable.

### Feet & legs

Begin by lifting the feet slightly off the floor. Point your feet and curl the toes inward until the toes are scrunched into a little ball. Curl as far as you need to feel the tension without strain. Concentrate on the toes and count to 5. Now uncurl your toes and gently drop your feet to the floor. Feel the blood rushing into the feet, thighs and calves. Can you feel the difference between tension and relaxation?

### Buttocks/low back

Next, slowly draw your knees together and imagine placing a penny between them. Explore the sensation of your knees pressing into the coin. Can you feel its edges? Its smooth, flat face? While you press, breathe in and out, slowly and evenly. Now hold for 5. And release. Study the difference between the tension and the relaxation in the buttock, low back, and pelvis.

### Stomach

Imagine your navel. Take a deep breath in and watch the navel push outwards. Exhale evenly and pull the navel towards the spine till you have squeezed all the air from your lungs. Hold for 5. Release and let the navel settle into its normal resting place. Now let the breathing go back to its natural rhythm and the stomach totally relax. Relax into the heaviness of your stomach.

### Shoulders

Shrug both shoulders up to the sky as high as they will go without straining. While you hold, listen to the tension. What is it saying to you? Hold for 5. Drop your shoulders back to their normal resting place and enjoy the calming breath. Allow the warmth and heaviness of the relaxation to suffuse this area.

### Arms/Hands

Clench your fists and bend your elbows, bringing your fists towards your chest. While you hold be aware of the tension in your hands, forearms and biceps. Breathe in and out while you hold for 5. Now, open the hands slowly and feel the blood racing back into each finger. Study the warmth created by the fresh surge of blood or any other sensations you experience.

### Facial muscles

Playfully make a big frown. Feel the corners of your mouth pull down till you look like a sad clown. At the same time, you may squint your eyes, clench your jaw and wrinkle up your nose. Whichever feels right for you. Enjoy imagining what you look like at this moment as you hold for 5. Let go and return to a relaxed expression. Be amazed by the softness of the face.

### Conclusion

We are now finished relaxing the muscles of your body. You are now feeling completely relaxed and at peace. Let all residual tension leach out of your body slowly. If you find that there are places of tension, just note them. Then if you wish, breathe into those areas and let the breath help you loosen the tension.

Borrowed From: [Queen's University – Student Academic Success Centre](#)

## Tipsheet: Deep Breathing

While babies breathe from the belly, adults tend to breathe from the chest causing shallower breathing. Consequently, less oxygen is taken in with each inhalation and the blood is forced to move through our system very quickly so that enough oxygen gets to the brain and organs. Deep breathing can reverse these effects.

Calming breath exercise: 5 in – 5 hold – 5 out

This breath exercise will help you achieve a deep state of relaxation quickly. Use it when you feel anxiety coming on. It will also reduce panic reactions such as hyperventilation. A note of caution: avoid taking excessively deep breaths repeatedly and stop the exercise if you feel faint.

1. Sit, stand, or lie down — up to you. If sitting, ensure both feet are planted on the floor. Wear loose, comfortable clothing.
  2. Breathing from the abdomen, inhale slowly through the nose to the count of 5. 1...2...3...4...5 as you inhale. Imagine a balloon in your belly beginning to fill slowly with air. You may wish to put a hand on your belly to feel this sensation.
- Pause and hold your breath for 5 breaths.
4. Exhale slowly, through the nose or mouth, to a count of 5. Feel the 'balloon' in your belly deflating slowly. Exhale fully.

Do this for about 2 minutes or more each time. As you relax more and more, you may increase the counting to 6, 7, or more.

### Added options

- Use words
  - Use words on the inhalation and exhalation. E.G. Inhale say 'in' and exhale say 'out'. Try the word RELAX: Inhale say 're'; exhale say 'lax'.
- Use imagery
  - Adding a peaceful, safe scene to your breathing will increase the effect.
  - Imagine breathing in ocean air, the scent of the forest, a flower.

### Effects of breathing for relaxation

Because it releases the body's own painkillers (endorphins), deep breathing can relieve muscular-skeletal tension, headaches, stomach aches, and sleeplessness. It allows blood pressure to return to normal, which is good for your heart. Practice daily. By extending your practice to a month or longer, you will begin to retrain yourself to breathe from the abdomen.

Your breath goes with you wherever you go so you can use it anytime, anywhere.

Borrowed from: <https://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-relief-breathing-techniques#1> and Queen's University Student Academic Success Centre

## Tipsheet: Do-anywhere stretching exercises

These exercises take only a few moments, and can help melt away mental and muscle tension. For exercises in your chair, sit up straight, pelvis in neutral position, and feet flat on the floor.

**Rag-Doll Dangle:** Stand or sit, legs apart, and bend at the waist. Shake your arms and hands loosely. Let your head hang and sway. Slowly straighten, one vertebrae at a time.

**Head Roll:** Drop your chin to your chest. Rotate your head to the right and turn your chin to your shoulder. Repeat in the opposite direction.

**Head Tilt:** Keeping the shoulders down, tilt the left ear to the left shoulder. Place your left hand on the right side of the head and allow the weight to pull your head GENTLY to the side. Extend your right arm down and flex your right hand. Hold for 10. Repeat on the opposite side.

**Head Nod:** Let your head fall forward so your chin almost touches your chest. Link your hands and place them at the back of your head. Apply GENTLE pressure.

**Head Lift:** Curl your fingers around the sides of your neck, fingers meeting in the back. Lift straight upward and forward as though you were trying to lift your head off your shoulders. Turn your head slightly from right to left while you continue to lift.

**Full Body:** Extend your right arm straight up and reach as high as you can. Spread your fingers. Feel your right side stretching. Lower the arms and repeat with your left arm.

**The Butterfly:** Lace your fingers around the back of your head. Wing your arms wide and hold in place. Slowly bend forward until your chin is close to your chest. Hold. Come up slowly.

**Pelvis Tilt:** Tilt your pelvis forward so your lower back rounds, and then tip your pelvis backward so your lower back arches and your belly protrudes a little. Keep your neck, shoulders and stomach relaxed. Repeat several times slowly.

**Basic Twist:** Sit up straight on the edge of the chair. Slowly twist to the right side, turning your head in the same direction while keeping your shoulders relaxed. Observe how other muscles besides the twisting muscles near the spine jump into action. The right shoulder may rise up toward the ear or move backward. Relax more each time. Do the other side.

**Basic Twist with Variation:** Do the same slow twist to the right while turning the head to the left. This is impossible to do with hunched shoulders. An excessive arch in the lower back will also make it a struggle. Sit tall yet relaxed. Observe how muscles around the shoulders and chest may want to force the motion. Try to resist this, and activate only the twisting muscles.

Borrowed From: [Queen's University – Student Academic Success Services](#)

## Tipsheet: Visualization - Springtime in the Forest

You are walking in the forest in early spring. Allow yourself to feel the soft, moist ground of the earth under your feet. Drink in the dark, earthly colours grounding you with Nature. You see fresh young green shoots springing up from the moist earth after their winter hibernation. Allow yourself to be drawn closer to one of these shoots near to the earth's floor. Be interested in every detail of this little creation. Your hand reaches out to touch the leaves of a young plant. Perhaps a droplet of moisture clings to your finger like an infant to its mother. You draw your finger to your mouth and touch the droplet to your tongue. Allow your tongue to come alive with the replenishing liquid. Allow its hydrating properties to refresh your mouth as well as your spirit. You sense the warm sun touching the top of your head and it is time to continue on.

You might wish to stand up and stretch your body up to the sky, where the tops of the tall trees meet the vastness of the universe. Notice how the dark greens and browns of the trees contrast the oceanic blue of the sky. You hear the songs of birds flying overhead. Allow yourself to be one with Nature as you listen to what the birds are saying to you. Surrender to the stillness and quiet in the forest now.

Scan the soundscape for other noises and be amazed that there is life everywhere around you. Come alive with the feeling of being part of Nature's rebirth. You walk deeper into the forest's mysteries now and take deep invigorating breaths of the damp, cooling air. Your nostrils fill with Nature's springtime delights. Focus closely on subtle smells of what a new season brings— perhaps the sweet aroma of wildflowers or mossy peat. The heady smell makes you feel slightly giddy and fully alive.

Now it is time to leave the forest. You might wish to walk more briskly now. Notice how alive you feel with all the oxygen coursing through your veins. Even though it is time to leave this place, trust that you can hold onto the lessons of spring. Everything has a fresh new perspective. Allow the many possibilities in life to dance around you.

Borrowed From: [Queen's University – Student Academic Success Centre](#)

## Tipsheet: Stretching for Stress Release

Most of us experience a good deal of stress in our daily lives. There just never seems to be enough time in the day. And that stress builds up without our realizing it, creating physical and mental stiffness. "Stretching is an effective strategy to aid in the relief of stress. It lengthens the muscles to relieve tension," says Jaime Longval, M.S., a certified strength and conditioning specialist at Brown University and The Miriam Hospital Centers for Behavioral and Preventive Medicine in Providence, RI.

Stretching can be done almost anywhere. Longval suggests these quick ways to relax your body and spirit:

### Upper Back Stretch:

- Stand with your knees slightly bent or sit up straight.
- Clasp your hands in front of you, arms parallel to floor.
- Keep your head relaxed.
- Round your upper back. Push hands forward, palms away from body.
- Hold for 20 to 30 seconds, breathing steadily. Repeat 2-5 times.

### Neck Stretch:

- Stand with your knees slightly bent or sit up straight.
- Drop chin to your chest.
- Place hands on back of head. Gently push down until you feel slight stretch.
- Hold for 20 to 30 seconds, breathing steadily. Repeat 2-5 times.

### Towel Stretch for Legs:

- Dish or hand towels can help you stretch.
- Lay on your back, abdominal muscles tightened, knees bent, feet on floor.
- Extend one leg toward ceiling. Keep knee slightly bent.
- Place towel behind back of leg or ankle (not behind knee), holding both ends.
- Pull towel toward your chest until you feel stretch.
- Hold for 20 to 30 seconds, breathing steadily. Repeat 2-5 times.

Borrowed from: <https://www.healthywomen.org/content/article/stretching-relieve-stress>

# Counselling & Wellness Support for Students

## On Campus Counselling

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### UTM – Health and Counselling Centre

Room 1123A – Davis Building (in the hallway before the tunnel from Davis to IMI)  
905-828-5255

- Same-day and booked appointments available
- <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/health/health-counselling-centre/>

### UTSG (Downtown) – Graduate Wellness Counsellors

If you're a registered full- or part-time graduate student, call 416-978-8030 (and select **option 5**) to schedule a **Monday to Friday appointment**. Beginning August 20, later appointments will be available on Tuesday evenings.

Appointments with Graduate Wellness Counsellors will be held in Room 207 a/b at [SGS Student Academic Services, 63 St. George Street](#).

- <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/resources-supports/graduate-wellness-services-at-sgs/>

### International Students – 24/7 Phone Counselling

- <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/international/keepmesafe>

## Campus-Based Resources

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- **U of T's Mental Health Wayfinder Tool**: coming this fall
- **U of T's My Student Support Program (MySSP)**: 1-844-451-9700 or download the App. More information: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/service/myssp/>

## U OF T MY STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAM

### NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE?

You can access **U of T My Student Support Program (U of T My SSP) 24/7** by calling **1-844-451-9700**. Outside of North America, call **001-416-380-6578**. (See instructions for accessing My SSP outside of Canada or the U.S. under *Service Delivery*.)

U of T My SSP provides students with real-time and/or appointment-based confidential, 24-hour support for any school, health, or general life concern at no cost to you. You can call or chat with a counsellor directly from your phone whenever, wherever you are.

Ongoing support is available over the **phone** in 146 languages. Immediate support is available over the **phone** in 35 languages and over **chat** in simplified Chinese, English, French and Spanish.

- Graduate Counselling Services at SGS
  - [uoft.me/GradCounselling](https://uoft.me/GradCounselling)
  - [uoft.me/WellnessWorkshops](https://uoft.me/WellnessWorkshops)

- UTM Health & Counselling Centre:
  - 905-828-5255
  - Monday (9-5), Tuesday (9-5), Wednesday (9-7:30), Thursday (9-7:30), Friday (9-5) (Sept to March)
  - Counselling (Personal), Mindfulness Meditation, Nutritional Counselling, Psychiatric Care and Medical Care

## Off Campus Counselling

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### Accessing Off Campus Counsellors

If you'd like to go off-campus for counselling services, as graduate students, you are covered under the UTGSU Health & Dental Plan for up to \$500/year in counselling services. This can be paid directly (vs. you having to pay and be reimbursed) – you just need to provide the UTGSU Card. Visit:

[http://studentcare.ca/rte/en/IHaveAPlan\\_UniversityofTorontoGraduateStudentsUnionUTGSU\\_Home](http://studentcare.ca/rte/en/IHaveAPlan_UniversityofTorontoGraduateStudentsUnionUTGSU_Home) - you can find [this card](#) there.

Additionally, if you are a TA, you have access to an additional \$2500/year of counselling funding through your CUPE plan.

You can also call the UTGSU Health and Dental office directly; they have all kinds of information: <https://utgsu.ca/health-and-dental/>. If they don't answer, leave them a message – someone will call you back.

### Additional Resources

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[Good2Talk](#) – Ontario's Post-Secondary Student Helpline 1-866-925-5454

A free, completely confidential and anonymous services that offers students professional counselling, mental health information and connections to local resources. The service is available 24/7 in English and French.

[What's Up Walk In](http://www.whatsupwalkin.ca/service-providers/) - <http://www.whatsupwalkin.ca/service-providers/>

Services at five locations, for students up to age 29 and under (check location for age ranges eligible)

[Peel](#) Crisis Services & COAST 905-278-9036

Offers 24-hour crisis intervention services (phone and outreach) to people with mental illness who are in crisis. Phones are staffed by mental health workers. Outreach in response to a crisis in the community is done by a mental health worker and a specially trained police officer

[Spectra Helpline](#)

- 905-459-7777 English, Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi, Spanish & Portuguese (Mississauga & Brampton)
- 905-459-7770 English (Caledon)
- 416-920-0497 Mandarin & Cantonese 905-278-4890 TTY

Serving Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon. Offers 24-hour, anonymous, confidential distress and emotional support lines for anyone who needs a caring, compassionate, and non-judgmental listening ear.

[Distress Centres of Toronto](#) 416-408-4357

Confidential support and referrals provided by volunteers 24 hours a day. Interpreters for callers in crisis are available in 151 languages. TTY service available for the hearing impaired.

[Distress Centre Oakville](#) 905-849-4541

Confidential support and referrals provided by volunteers 24 hours a day.

[Telecare Burlington](#) 905-681-1488

Confidential support and referrals provided by volunteers 24 hours a day.

[Victim Services of Peel](#) 905-568-1068

Offers 24-hour immediate crisis intervention to persons victimized by crime or tragic circumstances in the Peel community.

[Kid's Help Phone](#) 1-800-668-6868

Offers, anonymous and confidential professional counselling, referrals and information through technologically-based communications media to youth under the age of 20.

[Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line](#) 416-962-9688

Offers a toll-free Ontario-wide peer-support phone line (and TTY) for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, 2-spirited, queer and questioning young people. Sunday-Friday 4pm - 9:30pm

[Trillium Hospital – Mississauga Crisis Team](#) 905-848-7495

Offers assessments and counselling to adults who are experiencing a mental health crisis. This can include people suffering from depression, anxiety, relationship difficulties, stress, and family crisis as well as those who are suicidal, or who are family members of trauma victims.

[Gerstein Centre](#) 416-929-5200

Provides crisis intervention to adults living in the City of Toronto who experience mental health problems.

[Assaulted Women's Helpline](#)

416-863-0511; TTY - 1-866-863-7868; #SAFE (#7233) on your mobile phone (Bell, Rogers, Telus and Fido) Offers 24-hour telephone and TTY (teletypewriter) crisis line to all women who have experienced abuse.

Counselling, emotional support, information and referrals to are provided to women who have experienced abuse as well as their friends and family members.

[Interim](#) Place

905-676-8515; 905-403-0864; TTY - 905-676-0284 or 905-403-0453

Provides free, confidential crisis support for women who have experienced violence. Services also include emergency shelter, counselling for women and children, safety planning, and support and advocacy.

**Hope 24/7**

1-800-810-0180

Offers 24-hour crisis line, online chat, and in-person counseling and support, referrals, information about sexual abuse and assault.

**UTM Office of Student Affairs & Services**

[www.utm.utoronto.ca/sas](http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/sas) - 905-828-3872

Offers support and guidance to students on a wide range of personal and academic issues. The Office also provides case management, support and leadership for specific situations where students are facing personal difficulty and/or crisis. Support and guidance is also available for staff/faculty who are in helping roles with students.

[AccessAbility Resource Centre](#)

[www.utm.utoronto.ca/access](http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/access) - 905-569-4699

Offers services and academic accommodations to students who have a documented learning, physical, sensory, mental health disability or medical condition.

[Campus Police](#)

[www.utm.utoronto.ca/police](http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/police) - 905-828-5200

Dedicated to creating and maintaining a safe and secure environment for students, staff and visitors.

[Community Safety Office](#)

[www.communitysafety.utoronto.ca](http://www.communitysafety.utoronto.ca) - 416-978-1485

Offers support, advice and information about intervention options for individuals who have had their personal safety compromised. They will assist in the development of a safety plan and provide referrals to appropriate resources on/off campus. Weekly office hours are held on the UTM campus.