

# STUDENT HEALTH SERVICE

Tips on sustainable health strategies



Student Health Service at University West  
Annette Ryckenberg & Maria Blomqvist

## WELCOME TO UNIVERSITY WEST!

It can be a big change to start studying at a new university so we would like to help you feeling as good as possible during your studies.

At the Student Health Service we have gathered information and tips for sustainable health strategies on topics that we often discuss with students in individual counselling. It is about lifestyle, stress, diet, exercise, sleep, procrastination, speech anxiety and being kind and friendly towards yourself.

We offer support, courses, lectures and workshops linked to the above topics.



# STRESS

We start with two videos that take us back to our origin. The Stone Age still affects us today. The videos are about the fight and flight system that our body has learnt in ancient times and about which factors influence how we handle emotions and stress. Being stressed sometimes is a natural part of life. If you know how your body and mind work, stressful situations can become easier to handle.



[Film: Fight or Flight, Stress Responce, Youtube](#)



[Film: Managing Stress, Brainsmart, BBC, Youtube](#)

# STRESS

- The Stone Age man's most important mission was to survive so that the human species could continue living. This is why mind and body had all the senses on alert and they reacted to real threat with emotions like fear and anger to escape or fight. The heart beat faster and the body experienced what we today call stress, worry and anxiety. If your ancestors had not learnt all this, you would not have been here today.
- Even today we react strongly to the impressions from people around us and our surroundings. The old, emotionally controlled part of the brain sometimes misinterprets the situation and thinks that you are in danger. It activates the fight or flight system. The newer, logical part of our brain which helps us to see the difference between real and non-real threat, was first formed in recent years. By having good habits, these two parts can communicate better and you can make wiser decisions.

# MANAGE STRESS



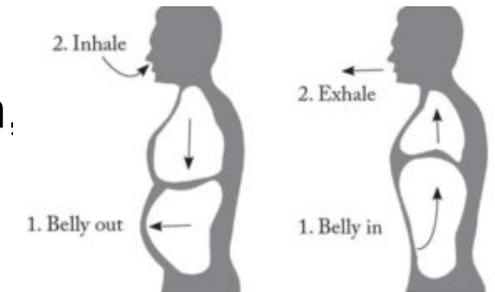
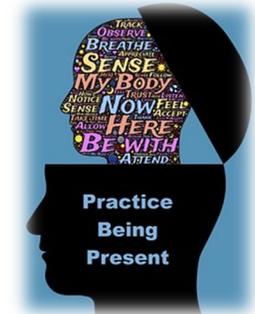
Do you breathe shallow and fast? - practice taking long, deep breaths

Do you move and walk fast? - slow down the tempo

## TIPS

Practice some yoga, mindfulness and relaxation when you are calm – so you can use it later when you feel stressed.

You can use the Silent room, F318 for a moment of silence, meditation, mindfulness or personal prayers.



*Deep breathing*

*Yoga  
Mindfulness  
Relaxation*



# MANAGE YOUR STRESS USING SOAL(A)



- **S: Stop** (sit down or stand still) and observe what happens around and inside you. Take some deep breaths and focus on breathing in and out.
  - **O: Observe** What is it happening? Is your heart rate increasing, muscles tightening and do you have stomachache? Which emotions are you feeling? Anger, stress, disappointment, irritation? What are you thinking?
  - **A: Accept** Ok, this is how it is. Accept the situation. You maybe don't like it but this has happened.
  - **L: Let go** Can you not affect the situation? Let it go, at least for a while. Stress consumes your energy so there is no point to stress over something that you can't affect.
- or:
- **A: Act** Can you affect the situation? If so, do that. You have now stopped, observed how you are feeling and thinking and accepted that it has happened. You can make a decision and answer to the situation.

# WHAT CAN I EAT AND DRINK TO FEEL BETTER?



continue...

...continue WHAT SHOULD I EAT AND DRINK TO FEEL BETTER?



By having good habits with what you eat and drink and how you take care of you and your body, you can feel better and therefore reduce the sensitivity to stress.

Health advices often change and it is easy to be drawn to various trends and diets. However everyone needs to get carbohydrate, fat, proteins, vitamins and minerals, so you need to vary what you eat. We think that the word "lagom" in Swedish (=moderate) is a good guideline. You can eat everything (as you tolerate, of course) but not always.

Start the day with breakfast to stabilize blood sugar. One cup of coffee or tea in the morning "initiates" the metabolism. If it is difficult for you to eat something in the morning, try anyway to eat something small, for example yoghurt, one fruit or a piece of bread. Then eat as regularly as possible, preferably with the main meal at midday. If you have difficulties in sleeping, avoid coffee or tea (black) late in the afternoon or in the evening.

continue...

...continue

## PRODUCTS THAT TRIGGER STRESS SYMPTOMS IN THE BODY



- Processed food (contains preservatives for longer shelf-life), fast food and products that contain lots of sugar, white flour
- Coffee, snuff, cigarettes, soda, energy drink, alcohol
- Eating sweet, fat, heavy and fiber-rich food late in the evening makes the body confused-should I be awake now?



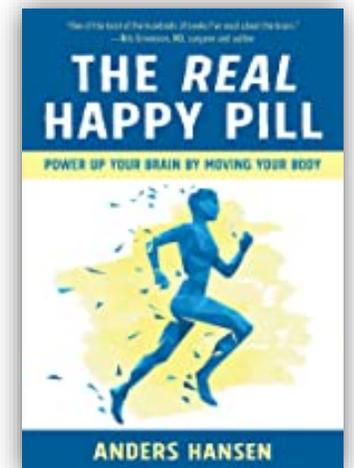
# WHY EXERCISE?

- Exercise makes you feel better, makes you more stress resistant, creative, intelligent, increases concentration ability and makes you sleep better
- Give it 30 minutes a day, preferable outdoor in daylight but any type of exercises and anywhere is better than nothing!
- Take a break from studying and replace it with some exercise - to coordinate movements and produce visual impressions from an outdoor environment strengthens the ability to plan and start activities, keep focus and resist
- Intensive running reduces stress and anxiety levels. Start in a calm pace and accelerate until you achieve real pulse, 2 to 3 times a week so your body will learn that you are in a safe situation
- To get better memory and creativity - exercise before or during the actual studying.
- Alternate between cardio training and weight training. Do not overtrain, a walk or easy running is enough.
- Exercise helps if you feel low
- Find the kind of exercise you think is fun!



A research study shows that students who took a short intensive walk minutes before the exam performed better than those who didn't take a walk. The walk increased the blood flow to the front of the brain which made it easier to think rationally, focus and handle the stress.

Reading tips:



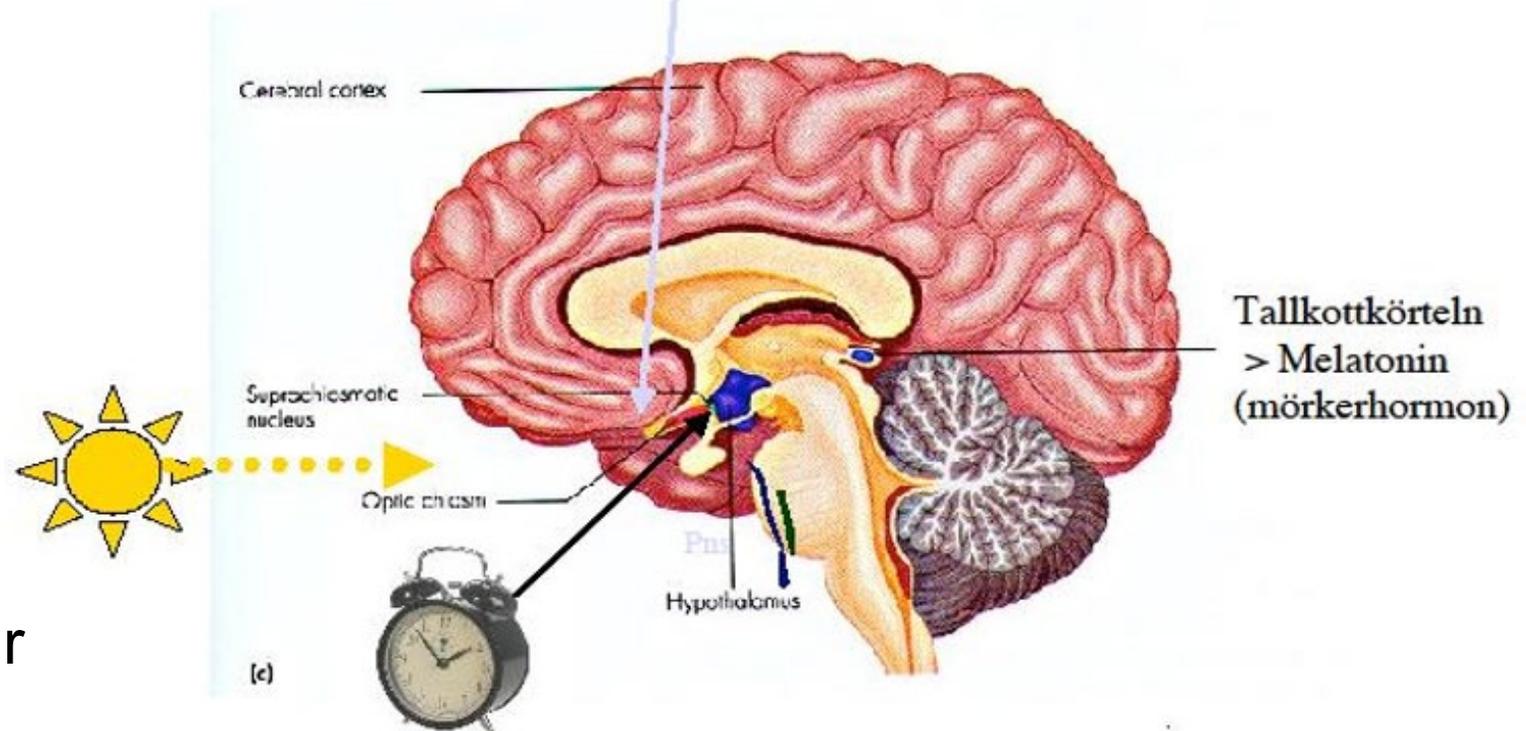
*Tips on free Outdoor activities in Trollhättan – see the Student Health Service PowerPoint "Utomhusaktiviteter": [hv.se/studenthealth](http://hv.se/studenthealth)*

# SLEEP

THREE FACTORS THAT CONTROL AND DECIDE HOW SLEEP BECOMES:

- 1 The biological circadian rhythm and the internal clock
- 2 The balance between wakefulness and sleep
- 3 The level of activation in our physical, mental and emotional systems

## Den biologiska klockan



...continue

# SLEEP



Good routines make our body calm and secure. Waking up at roughly the same time every morning and going to bed at the same time every night is often helpful for our sleep.

**1** The body has a biological clock. When we go out in the morning and the daylight reaches the eye, the sleep hormone Melatonin turns itself off. When the dark comes in the evening, the Melatonin is activated again. The Melatonin's effect is to make us tired but it doesn't improve our sleep's quality.

**2** You need to be active both physically and mentally during 16 hours to be able to sleep well for 8 hours. This means that you should alternate different activities such as study, exercise, cooking and social interaction. Take some breaks and relax from time to time.

**3** The temperature in the body drops during the day and becomes the coolest in the middle of the night to make it easier to sleep well. Certain type of food, drinks and activities (see previous text) can increase stress, temperature and can affect how alert we become.

*Learn more about sleep – see the Student Health Service PowerPoint "Sleep tight" and the worksheets "Identificate your sleep habits": [hv.se/studenthealth](http://hv.se/studenthealth)*

# PROCRASTINATION

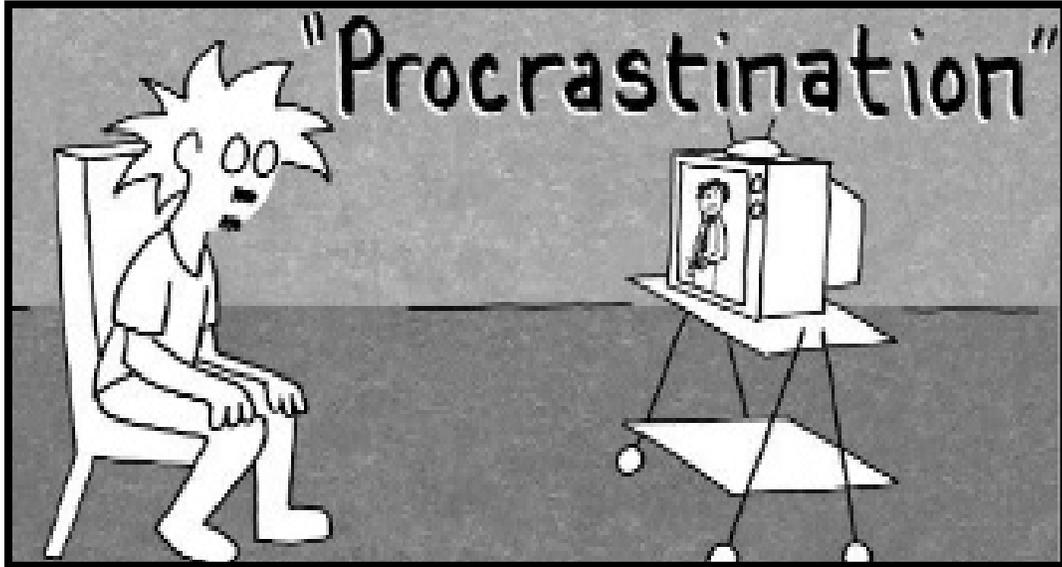


Procrastination is when you actively and consciously postpone or don't finish a task and instead engage in something else, less important, despite the knowledge of negative consequences for you.

For this to be called procrastination there must be a need/interest in finishing the task and a deadline. You postpone the task – but you don't cancel it completely.

Procrastination is a learned pattern to react to unpleasant feelings, like for example restlessness, boredom, anxiety or depression – by avoiding or escaping.

# PROCRASTINATION



[Film: Procrastination, Tales of mere existence](#)



[Film: How to stop procrastinating](#)

# WHAT IS REQUIRED OF YOU AS A STUDENT?

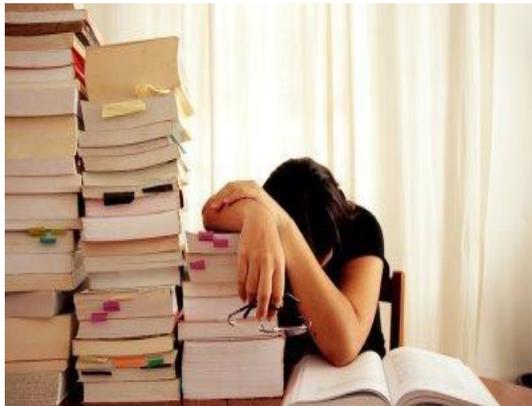
- Be able to have self-discipline
- Structure your everyday life (which is full of distractions)
- Be your own "boss" – push it, but also give support and encouragement along the way
- Endure short-term discomfort to achieve long-term goals

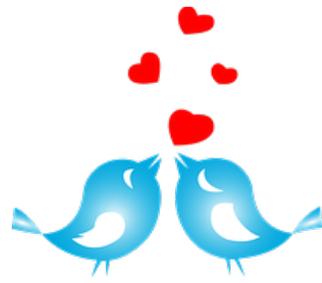


# WHY DO YOU POSTPONE?



Procrastination is letting the short-term benefits of avoiding something taking control - instead of the long-term benefits of dealing with it. The reward is too far in the future and the distractions are many and close. *We want (quite naturally) to avoid something unpleasant!*





## HOW DO YOU POSTPONE?

When you postpone, you replace an important task that needs to be done with a less important one.

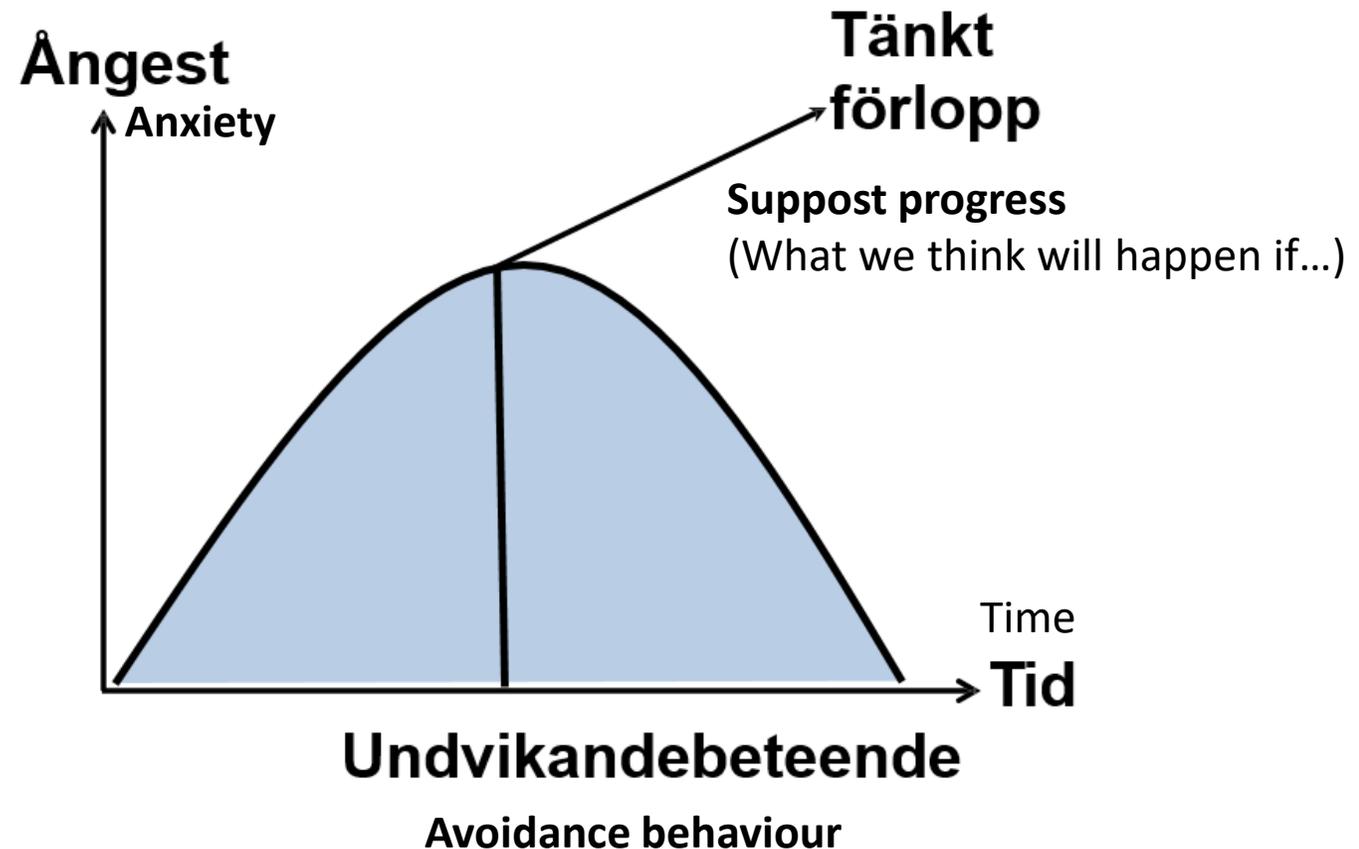
Keep in mind that these things are not wrong themselves - they are wrong only if you do them to avoid something else that you have to deal with. Do these things as rewards instead.



# FUNCTIONAL ANALYSE

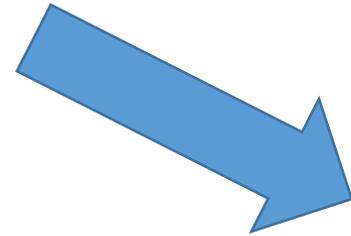
- **Situation:** Sitting at home and writing a home exam.
- **Thought:** It's not possible! I can not!
- **Feeling:** Anxious, restless, anxiety on.
- **Body symptoms:** palpitations, creeps in the body.
- **Behavior:** Goes into Facebook, computer games, blogs, housework, exercising...
- **Short-term consequences:** Temporary relief of hard thoughts and emotions, the anxiety relieves.
- **Long-term consequences:** Guilt, more self-accusations, the exam/the task persists.

## CLARKS ÅNGESTKURVA Anxiety Curve



# THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

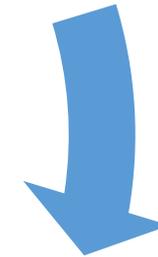
**Tough task**



Unsure

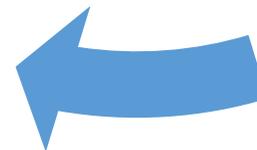


Avoid the situation



Feeling of failure

continue...



Confirmation  
of my  
inability



...continue

# HOW CAN YOU BREAK THE CIRCLE?



Analyze the consequences:

Self-awareness— do you know how it works?

Where are you going?

What do you want to prioritize and why?

What is important in life for you?

What are the consequences of your behavior? For you? For others?

In short term? In long term?

Does your behavior and actions lead you on the path to what you want to achieve - or away from it?



# CREATE STRUCTURE



*What works for **you**?*

Suggestions:

- Get organized, make a schedule for the whole week.
- Divide the work in smaller parts, prioritize and specify the tasks. "To study" is too unspecific. Calculate the time for each task.
- Study 9-16 – then you are free!
- Plan your breaks and time for lunch, snack, fresh air and relax.
- Set goals, smaller goals and also minimum goals; for example just pick up your homework on the computer/from your bag or turn off your phone for a while.

# SCHEDULE

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8-9	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
9-11	Lecture	Lecture	Search articles in the library	Groupwork	Lab	Work	Work
11-13	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
13-15	Read chap. 1-2 in the book	Lecture	Groupwork	Read chap. 3-4 in the book	Lecture		
15-17	Exercise		Lecture	Exercise	Groupwork		Work
17-19	Start writing on the home exam	Fika	Exercise	Fika	Work		
19-21		Walk		Cinema			
21-23	Unwind	Unwind	Unwind	Unwind	Unwind		



# GET STARTED!



- Make the tasks successful by preparing yourself well.
- Do not wait for the right opportunity/mood/motivation or excuse not to start.
- As soon as you think: I should start my task but first I should do this... *START IMMEDIATELY!*...even if you may not finish!
- Increase your flexibility – ignore the rules and requirements on how things should be for you to get started, such as: "I must finish today", "It must be perfect, otherwise there is no point", "I work better under time pressure" and so on.
- Learn to deal with the discomfort that can occur– observe which feelings and thoughts that can activate the impulse to postpone. Practice changing the thought pattern that is not helpful to you. When you notice that concentration and attention are disappearing, write down your thoughts and feelings and what impulse you get to do.
- **Accept** – even if the conditions are not perfect, maybe you can work toward your goal anyway. What can you start with?

# POMODORO- OR 25-MINUTES METHOD

the basic idea is simple – these steps included:

1. Go through what to do – convert into smaller tasks.
2. Select a task.
3. Set your timer for 25 minutes.
4. Work concentrated, uninterrupted until the timer rings
5. Take a short break of 5 min (even if you are not finished with the task) and reward yourself with something you usually do to distract your self with.
6. Select a new task (or continue with the old one) for another 25 min.
7. After four intervals, take a longer break. Then start again from the beginning if you have time.

Remember to prepare well and bring out everything you need to get started. Minimize interferences near you and turn off your phone.

Apps: <https://pomofocus.io/> and <https://tomato-timer.com/>



# SPEECH ANXIETY – what is that?

- A specific social anxiety
- By far the most common social fear and difficulty in speaking in front of a group
- It is an obstacle in studies or life in general
- Difficulties before, during and after a speech situation:
  - Speaking
  - Presentations
  - Answer to questions and be active in seminars, lectures or groupwork



Physical reactions: palpitations, sweating, panic disorder, shallow breathing, dry mouth, redness, muscle tension, dizziness, knee weakness, fainting, chest pain...

# SPEECH ANXIETY – our thoughts and behavior

## Thoughts

Fears/concerns about a future social disaster:

- Inner focus: "I am fainting", "My heart will stop", "I can't breathe"
- External focus: "They are going to think that I am embarrassed and weird", "They are going to laugh at me behind my back"

## Behavior

Stay at home, try to get an individual task, postpone the preparation, rewrite the script, worry/ponder on scenarios over and over again, put on a lot of make-up so that it is not visible if I blush or hide face/neck with clothes, only take care of the PP presentation, talk too fast, talk too slow and unclearly, no eye contact with those who are listening, read beforehand...

# SPEECH ANXIETY – why face the fear?

- What is important to you?
- Who do you want to be?
- What do you value?
- What direction in life do you want to take?
- Reaction- or will-driven behavior?



## Tips and suggestions

- Stop and observe
- Learn your reactions (body, feelings, thoughts, behavior)
- Experiment – dare to try something new and exercise it everyday
- Prepare yourself “moderately” and dare to take breaks when you talk
- Meet the public and take support from those who are listening and are interested

# YOU ARE IMPORTANT AND VALUABLE

Be permissive towards yourself



Sorry,  
I have been unfair and stupid  
towards you, talked badly  
about you and looked down  
on you.  
But you are amazing and  
good enough as you are.  
Never forget that!

# HOW CAN I BE PERMISSIVE TOWARDS MYSELF?



- To feel good you need to think kindly of yourself.
  - Make reasonable demands on yourself.
  - Compare yourself only with yourself.
  - Accept that you can't be great everyday. Life is like a roller coaster - and you feel best if you are able to ride in it's peaks and valleys.
  - Dare to be in what feels difficult and maybe talk with someone you trust..
- continue...

...continue

## HOW CAN I BE PERMISSIVE TOWARDS MYSELF?



- If you do something less good— do not put energy on self-blame and bad conscience but see it as an experience. Allow yourself to feel sorry for yourself for a moment. Say something kind to yourself and focus forward.
- Accept and manage both your strengths and your less good qualities.
- A better relation to yourself helps to have a better relationship with other people.

# STUDENT HEALTH SERVICE



For individual support about these or other issues,  
you are welcome to contact us counsellors at the Student Health Service

Our website:

[hv.se/studenthealth](https://hv.se/studenthealth)

Contact us via email. Write your name and phone number and we will contact you.

[studenthalsan@hv.se](mailto:studenthalsan@hv.se)

[annette.ryckenberg@hv.se](mailto:annette.ryckenberg@hv.se)



[maria.blomqvist@hv.se](mailto:maria.blomqvist@hv.se)



# OTHER SUPPORT SERVICE FOR YOU AS STUDENT



**Study counselling** for study plans and study techniques

**FUNKA** for students with disabilities

**Language resource center** for help in the academic writing

**Math help center**

**University West's Library**



# REFERENCES AND LINKS:



## **Manage stress:**

AntiStress, App: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=se.antistress&hl=en>

## **Exercise:**

Anders Hansen, book ,The real happy pill; power up your brain by moving your body, 2017

Anders Hansen, lecture, Why the Brain is Built for Movement: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9p3Z7L0f0U>

## **Sleep:**

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/healthy-sleep-tips>

<http://colossalsleep.com/sleeping-tips-for-college-students/>

## **Procrastination:**

App: <https://pomofocus.io/> and <https://tomato-timer.com/>

## **Speech Anxiety, Selfesteem, Selfcompassion:**

For individual support please contact: [hv.se/studenthealth](http://hv.se/studenthealth)

## **General tips:**

Life habit tests, on Student Health Service, University West webpage: [www.hv.se/studenthealth](http://www.hv.se/studenthealth)

Lund University, Self-help brochures: <https://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/current-students/health-care/student-health-counselling>.

NHS, United Kingdom Health site, tips about healthy living: <https://www.nhs.uk>

Malmö University Student Health Service, films and information: <https://mau.app.box.com/s/b4fvt3w9hsztilbuim19fddy71czlpq2>

1177 Vårdguiden, swedish health site with some pages in english (especially about physical issues): <https://www.1177.se/en/Vastra-Gotaland/other-languages/other-languages/>