



TUS Midlands Student Counselling Service Newsletter

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Administrator Profile



Mairead Devaney

I'm Mairead. I joined the TUS Student Counselling team in September 2022 so I'm a newbie. I love being part of such an amazing team. I was a student here for 3 years part time and graduated with MBA in 2021 so I'm empathic to the struggle's students have at present. That's why I feel so proud to be part of such a supportive service for students because I've been there and wore the tee shirt. The student counselling service is really invaluable to all our students here on the Athlone campus.

I'm the administration behind the counsellors, often I will be your first point of contact. I always put our students first, this comes from years of working in retail and delivering excellent customer service and I try to bring that to this role. I'm a real people person and love interacting with all our students. I'm warm and caring and will always try my best to help in whatever way I can.

Home is where the heart is with my 10-month-old little lady Ava and my partner Steven. I love animals and have 3 rescue cats, all with very interesting names. The two male cats are called Junk (He had Junk in the Trunk) and Tim Healy (after Tiny Tim because of his sad eyes when he's looking for food and Cian Healy because of his build and I love rugby) and the female cat is called chicken nugget (after my favourite food). I also love nothing more than a good laugh as you can see from my cats' names.

My moto is to always treat people the way you would like to be treated because you never touch anyone so lightly that you don't leave a trace.

Stress Regulation

When our early ancestors came across a lion and believed that their life was in danger, how did their bodies respond? They either ran for their life or climbed a tree, or had super-human strength to fight the lion, or - in some cases - drop and 'play dead'.

Today, we may not have to face the lion, however we experience our own versions of 'the lion' every single day in the form of email and social media notifications, personal pressure to do well, social anxieties and heavy workloads. These all trigger the same response that told your distant ancestor that they were in danger.

The good news is that stress is not the problem. The problem is that the strategies that deal with stressors have almost no relationship to the strategies that deal with the physiological reactions our bodies have to those stressors. To be "well" is not to live in a state of perpetual safety and calm, but to move fluidly from a state of adversity, risk, adventure, or excitement, back to safety and calm, and out again. Stress is not bad for you; being stuck is bad for you.

(Nagoski & Nagoski, 2020, Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle)

Ways to help stress move through your body

1. Get your body moving

When you're being chased by a lion, what do you do? You run. Physical activity is what tells your brain you have successfully survived the stress threat and now your body is a safe place to live. So, physical activity is the single most efficient strategy for completing the stress response cycle.



2. Breathe deeply and slowly

Deep, slow breaths down-regulate the stress response - especially when the exhalation is long and slow and goes all the way to the end of the breath, so that your belly contracts.



3. Laugh more

When we laugh, says neuroscientist Sophie Scott, we use 'an ancient evolutionary system that mammals have evolved to make and maintain social bonds and regulate emotions'. Laughing together - or simply reminiscing about the times we've laughed together - increases relationship satisfaction.



4. Have a hug

When you're too stressed out for laughter, deeper connection with a loving presence is called for. This should come from someone who likes, respects and trusts you, and whom you like, respect and trust. Try maintaining a hug for 20 seconds. Stroking a pet can help too - for example, petting your cat for several minutes can lower your blood pressure.



5. Let yourself have a good cry



It's important to cry in order to feel relief from the weight of whatever made you cry. This happens when you laugh so hard you cry also, your body is regulating from strong emotions.

6. Find some positive social interaction

Casual but friendly social interaction is the first external sign that the world is a safe place. So reassure your brain that the world is a safe, sane place by having a polite, casual chat with your friends or housemates.



7. Don't ignore your stress

You'll probably find that different strategies work better on different days, and sometimes the strategy that works best isn't practical day to day, so make sure you also have a back-up strategy.

Activity to help bring down your stress and reset your nervous system.

You can do this anytime and anywhere to bring calm to your body, relax the mind and help your heart slow down.

1. Place your hand on your lower belly.
2. Take a deep breath feeling your belly inflate with air.
3. Hold your breath for 3 seconds.
4. Exhale and concentrate on releasing the breath as slowly as possible.
5. Repeat 3 times.