

**TRANSFORM  
4EUROPE  
CAMPUS LIFE  
MANUAL**





SAARLAND UNIVERSITY



Universitat d'Alacant  
Universidad de Alicante

EKA



UNIVERSIDADE  
CATOLICA  
PORTUGUESA



UNIVERSITÉ  
JEAN MONNET  
SAINT-ÉTIENNE



UNIVERSITY OF SILESIA  
IN KATOWICE

SOFIA  
UNIVERSITY



St. KLIMENT  
OHRIDSKI  
— 1888



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI  
DI TRIESTE



VYTAUTAS  
MAGNUS  
UNIVERSITY  
MCMXXII



Mariupol  
University



Prepared by the University of Primorska

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## BEING A TRANSFORM4EUROPE STUDENT

Eleven universities with a strong international focus have come together under the name **Transform4Europe**, aiming to create a shared path toward a unified vision of higher education in Europe - one that offers more opportunities for every student to realize their potential and become **a knowledge entrepreneur**.

### Who are knowledge entrepreneurs?

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Today's world faces a range of complex problems and challenges that will affect future generations. It is **knowledge entrepreneurs** who will be at the forefront of addressing these issues. Focused on fostering this, universities equip their students with broad set of skills and knowledge that empowers them to shape a better future with innovative and insightful solutions to pressing societal and environmental challenges.

## The Principles of a Knowledge Entrepreneur

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Shaping the future through curiosity, compassion, and creativity

### ■ They See Possibility in Every Problem

Knowledge entrepreneurs recognize the challenges of the modern world, framing the problem as a question and respond with innovative, creative solutions that make a real difference.

### ■ They Approach the Problem from Multiple Perspectives

They approach obstacles from diverse perspectives, discovering not just one answer, but many paths forward.

### ■ They Lead with Innovation

For them, innovation isn't just an idea, it's a strategic, ongoing force for change in society, science, business, and beyond that can be achieved with collaboration and teamwork.

### ■ They Act with Ethics and Empathy

Every step they take is guided by strong ethical principles and compassion for themselves, for others, and for the world they seek to improve.

**KNOWLEDGE  
ENTREPRENEURS DON'T  
WAIT FOR THE  
FUTURE—THEY CREATE IT.**

Knowledge and experience are the key resources that universities offer you throughout your studies, both inside and outside the classroom. The student experience is therefore not only about gaining knowledge and expertise, but also about preparing individuals to navigate future challenges with greater confidence and capability.

This guide is designed to support you in doing just that, it will help you navigate some of the common challenges of student life, such as balancing your academic responsibilities with your personal life, managing stress or emotional distress, making small changes for a healthier life and offer you advise about the time that follows your graduation.

While this guide is especially helpful for new students, it's also a valuable resource for those further along in their studies. It provides strategies that can help you enhance your academic performance and support your preparation for success after university while keeping your wellbeing as a priority and not an afterthought in the student experience.



Have you ever studied extensively before an exam, only to find your mind completely blank on the crucial day, unable to recall information you knew just hours before? Different learning techniques yield varying results in knowledge retention. Certain proven methods and strategies can support your ability to retain information and prevent it from fading shortly after the exam while helping you overcome anxiety.

Since different approaches work differently for everyone, it is important to discover what type of learning is most effective for you!

## DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE!

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It can be tempting to postpone studying until the week before an exam, but this often does more harm than good. In a study supported by the American Psychological Association researchers found that last-minute cramming leads to short-term results at best, you may pass the exam but will soon forget most of the material. **Long-term retention and subject mastery are best achieved through structured, consistent study habits.**

Resting enough and taking adequate breaks is just as crucial as studying itself. Your brain needs time to consolidate new information. Take regular breaks, as the brain can only absorb a limited amount of information at a time.

1

STUDY SMARTER  
NOT HARDER

## PLANNING: AN IMPORTANT STEP THAT IS OFTEN OVERLOOKED

**Setting up a study plan with smaller goals will help you stay focused and maintain a steady pace.** Having a clear vision of what you want to achieve and how to get there will also help you avoid procrastination. It's much harder to get distracted when you have a structured plan in place!

**The SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-specific) Method:**

- **Specific:** Set clear objectives such as "I will study for one hour in the library every day."
- **Measurable:** Define measurable goals, such as study duration, improved test scores, or completed assignments.
- **Achievable:** Set achievable goals to maintain motivation and avoid discouragement.
- **Relevant:** Make sure that your goal is not only achievable but also relevant for you and your studies.
- **Time-specific:** Align your goals with your educational and personal schedule.

**Don't underestimate the importance of sleep!** Studies have shown that quality sleep positively impacts academic performance. To help prevent sleep disturbances, opt for something caffeine-free while studying, particularly later in the day.

**Choose a suitable study environment.** Changing your location—such as moving from your desk to a library, café, or park—can enhance memory and focus. Additionally, removing distractions is essential for productive study sessions.

**Be mindful of your snacks.** While sweets and coffee provide short-term energy, they can lead to energy crashes. Nuts and fruit offer a more stable energy source and are healthier alternatives.

**Finally, don't overlook the value of your friends.** Studying with classmates allows you to share notes, exchange ideas, and discuss difficult concepts together.

## FINDING YOUR OWN STUDY STYLE

Identifying the best study method for yourself takes time. Trial and error are often the best way to discover what yields the best results. Over time, a number of effective study techniques have been developed.

Over time, many people have developed effective study techniques. Here are some of the most successful methods:

### FEYNMAN TECHNIQUE

Nobel Prize-winning physicist Richard Feynman developed a learning method that involves breaking down complex topics into simple components and explaining them in your own words. This technique helps you identify knowledge gaps and deepen your understanding, as explaining complex material in simple terms requires not only knowledge of the material but also a detailed understanding of it.

#### 1. Choose a topic

Select a subject you need to study.

#### 2. Write down what you know

Take a piece of paper or use your computer and summarise as easily as you can everything you know about it. Try to be as detailed as you can.

#### 3. Identify knowledge gaps

Compare your summary with notes and textbooks.

#### 4. Simplify further

Explain the material in a way that even a child could understand using comparisons, examples and metaphors.

## ■ POMODORO TECHNIQUE

Developed in the 1980s by Francesco Cirillo, this method enhances productivity through focused work intervals where you concentrate solely on learning. It is based on dividing work into “pomodoros”, interval sections (about 25 minutes) with short breaks between them.

1. **Select a topic.**
2. **Set a timer (25 minutes).**
3. **Work until the timer rings.**
4. **Take a short break (5 minutes).**
5. **After four sessions, take a longer break (15–30 minutes).**

## ■ LEITNER SYSTEM

This method uses smart repetition with flashcards to improve retention. To do so prepare question–and–answer flashcards and organize them into two categories: one for mastered questions and another for those requiring more practice. Prioritize reviewing the challenging ones more frequently. With just 30 minutes of daily study using this method, you can learn approximately 3,600 flashcards in four months and achieve an accuracy rate of 90–95%.

1. **Create flashcards** with questions on one side and answers on the other.
2. **Sort cards** into difficulty levels.
3. **Review regularly**, focusing on challenging cards.
4. **Increase difficulty gradually.**
5. **Repeat all questions periodically.**

## ■ SQ3R METHOD

This approach helps you read and retain textbook material more efficiently. Before, during and after reading, you will be able to go deeper into the content with individual guide lines. By asking questions, revising key points and reviewing more difficult material, you will find it easier to learn new skills.

1. **Survey** the material by reviewing headings and subheadings.
2. **Question** the content before reading.
3. **Read** actively while answering your questions.
4. **Recite** by summarizing in your own words.
5. **Review** and identify gaps in your knowledge.

## ■ INTERLEAVING

Instead of focusing on a single subject, switch between different topics to enhance cognitive flexibility. It can help you distinguish between the different fields and information, and has proved fruitful in science and maths in particular.

1. **Choose multiple subjects.**
2. **Alternate between them.**
3. **Take enough time to transition and don't rush.**

## ■ ELABORATION

In many cases, more really is better—especially when mastering a subject. Expanding your knowledge by adding relevant information and details can be highly beneficial. The elaboration method is based on the idea that true learning comes from actively engaging with the material and connecting it to personal experience and knowledge, rather than simply memorizing it.

1. **Select a topic.**
2. **Summarize the material.**
3. **Expand by adding details with more information.**
4. **Relate the information to personal experiences.**

## ■ MNEMONICS

Mnemonics are powerful techniques designed to enhance memory retention, helping you recall large amounts of information, such as names, dates, and facts. These methods use visualization, abbreviations, rhymes, poems, and other creative strategies to make learning more engaging and interactive.

1. **Visualization: Create mental images.**
2. **Acronyms: Form abbreviations.**
3. **Rhymes: Use catchy phrases.**
4. **Music: Associate information with tunes.**

## ■ MIND MAPS

Mind maps are one of the most well-known and widely used learning techniques. They are particularly effective for brainstorming ideas, taking notes, emphasizing key points, and organizing thoughts. Creating a mind map is simple: start with a central topic in the middle of a page or screen, then branch out by connecting related ideas, details, and concepts.

1. **Create a central topic bubble.**
2. **Add branches for related concepts.**



## USEFUL APPS AND DIGITAL TOOLS

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Entering the digital age have not only changed our daily lives and had a profound impact on the world around us, it has also brought many innovations in the field of learning. There are now many different apps and tools that can help you get better results in your work in a faster and easier way. Many of them you probably already use, others you can get to know better below, many of which will also help you to learn with the techniques described in the previous chapter.

### MARINARA TIMER

The Mariana Timer website is a grate option for reducing distractions when studying with the pomodoro technique.

### FOREST

The Forest app works almost like any timer, only better. Instead of boring numbers, you'll be working to plant harvest trees and then a forest.

### ANKI

AnkiApp can help you simply and easily prepare question and answer cards.

### NOTTA

The Notta app is designed to play back recordings and speech in written form.

### COGGLE

An attractive and easy to use mind map app with many features that will make your work better and easier.

### NOTABILITY

This app will allow you to create extremely clear notes with plenty of multimedia content, and the automatic save function will give you restful nights.

### EVERNOTE

Taking notes is one important thing, but so is good organisation and planning, and Evernote will help you do both.

### ACRONYMIFY

Making abbreviations can be a lot of work and takes a lot of thought, and this website can help you do just that - just type in the word and it will automatically do the rest.

The introduction of artificial intelligence has greatly transformed the modern world, increasing its role in everyday life as well. The field of education has by no means escaped this and AI quickly became one of the most significant innovations in academic settings since the introduction of computer technology. In particular, AI-powered chatbots, such as the widely-known ChatGPT, have become indispensable tools for every student. While these technologies provide countless advantages, they also pose some great risk.

Among these risks, the most crucial concern is responsible and ethical use of AI. Generative AI (GenAI) such as ChatGPT, DeepSeek and the similar tools create new content based on data they obtain from the web. However, they often fail to distinguish between credible and questionable information, making a critical approach in discerning the content of their outputs crucial.

Recognizing these challenges, it is important to remember that AI should serve as a tool to enhance independent learning rather than replace it. When used appropriately, AI can help overcome creative blocks, generate ideas, provide additional explanations, and improve writing skills. **AI must therefore always be an auxiliary tool, and students must always follow their professors' guidelines on its use.**

Below are some examples of how to use AI that can help you to improve your academic workflow. **But always first ask yourself when using AI for studying the following:**

- How can GenAI help me develop my knowledge and skills?
- How can GenAI help me develop my academic skills?
- How and when can I draw on AI resources and for what uses?
- How can you minimise the risk of misinformation?
- How can you ensure conscientious and ethical use of AI for study?

#### Some more tips for using AI

- Always be cautious with information from AI, and check it when in doubt.
- Add contextual information to your requests, and ask additional questions to get better and more relevant responses.
- Also add information about who this response generates for, such as "I am a first-year physiotherapy student and I need to prepare for an exams".
- Add examples of what kind of responses you want to receive.
- Most important of all, never share confidential and personal information! AI providers are quite secretive about how they use your data and do not inform users about what exactly will happen with their information.

# 2

## AI AND STUDYING

## USEFUL PROMPTS TO TRY

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You can save yourself an enormous amount of time by setting up an AI schedule that will help you meet your deadlines without being overwhelmed by large amounts of work. In the generative chat of your choice, enter the time you plan to spend on work (studying or writing term papers) and the deadlines for submission or exams dates.

For example:

*I'm a bachelor student of [...] and need to prepare for an exam on [...] that is scheduled for the 7th of June. As I have to learn about 50 pages of text and 3 PowerPoint presentation that is 30 slides each, what would be the most effective studying plan to prepare for all of this within three weeks?*

Artificial intelligence is a useful tool, not only for planning your learning and preparing your materials, but also for helping you with the learning itself. The ability to upload files and notes to chatbots such as ChatGPT is something that allows the AI to prepare some learning questions of its own to help you learn the material better before the exam.

For example:

*I'm studying for an exam on [...], for now we cover the following topics [...], notes of them are attached. Can you please go through the topics and prepare 30 questions that will allow me to better grasp the subject?*

The knowledge that ChatGPT has access to and draws on is extremely useful for gaining additional ideas and suggestions for your term papers and notes. Similarly, caution is also in order here, **as chatbots have a very narrow view of subject areas and work, which will make them less likely to understand certain methodologies.** Similarly, not all advice will necessarily be in line with the objectives of your course.

For example:

*I have written a paper on [...] covering topics from [...] to [...]. My goal was to better present [...] and to provide a detailed explanation of this. Could you please review the text and provide advice on how to make the text and provide suggestions on improving the clarity of the arguments, and overall readability of the text?*

Mindful use of AI can also help you to better understand texts, by explaining difficult concepts with posing questions to increase your engagement while reading. A use of AI is also to help you produce summaries and notes, ask the AI to produce a summary of the text and then compare this with your own. This will make it much easier to spot what you have missed while reading, or to get a different perspective on something you have not understood very well.

For example:

*For my classes I had to read a paper on [...] and have prepared my notes. Could you review my bullet points with the text and point out content that I may have missed?*

With AI offering students a myriad of different tools and benefits, it's not just important to consider its ethical dilemmas and validity when using it, but even more so its environmental impact. The computational power needed to generate any kind of content can demand staggering amounts of electricity, which lead to increased carbon dioxide emissions and strain on the environment. **It may be worth to ask yourself if you really need the help of AI for this particular task.**

Although alcohol and other substances are very common among young people, as research shows that three out of five students are current drinkers, presenting a significant health risk. Notably, the European region had the highest per-capita alcohol consumption in 2019, averaging 9.2 liters per person. The most frequently reported motivations for drinking include stress, boredom, and easy access to alcohol. However, excessive or problematic alcohol consumption is associated with serious health issues, including liver damage, cardiovascular disease, and mental health disorders. These conditions can cause significant discomfort and hinder participation in daily activities, ultimately diminishing overall quality of life.

University students often encounter various stressors, including academic pressure, social adjustment, and personal challenges. In the absence of constructive coping strategies, these stressors can increase the risk of substance use. Students experiencing depressive symptoms are more likely to rely on avoidant coping strategies, which can help them escape the problem rather than seek support or use problem-solving approaches, thereby reinforcing a cycle of stress and alcohol misuse. Research consistently links risky alcohol use with depression and anxiety, suggesting that students may turn to alcohol as an unconstructive problem-solving strategy, for example, to reduce tension, alleviate pain or symptoms associated with mental disorders. This pattern can lead to alcohol being used as a form of self-medication, often in place of seeking professional help.

Patterns of student drinking have also shifted over time. During the Covid-19 pandemic, studies have noted a decline in alcohol consumption among students. However, as the world was slowly returning to its new normal after the pandemic, alcohol consumption rose again. Despite broad awareness of alcohol's negative effects, many students continue to drink, often to navigate social situations or foster a sense of belonging. Social drinking can ease interactions but may alienate those who choose to abstain. Studies show that students who abstain tend to report higher levels of loneliness compared to their peers who consume alcohol. Those who abstain due to fear of consequences may experience heightened self-stigma, while individuals abstaining due to dispositional risk are more likely to internalize this stigma. As a result, both self-stigma and social pressure can fuel alcohol use, while abstinence may lead to social disconnection.

Alcohol use may also serve as a gateway to other psychoactive substances, such as cannabis, especially when driven by social motives. Beyond its social function, heavy drinking can result in emotional distress, financial strain, and damaged relationships. Students engaging in hazardous drinking report lower life satisfaction, more mental health complaints, and increased emotional and social loneliness. While they may report

# 3

## **SUBSTANCE USE AND ITS POTENTIAL HARMS: ENCOURAGING RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR**

having more close friends, this does not necessarily shield them from the psychological consequences of excessive alcohol use. Although some students recover from risky drinking without intervention, the long-term risks—particularly alcohol dependence—remain high, especially in early adulthood.

While alcohol is often seen as part of university culture, it's important to drink responsibly and support one another. Here are some practical tips for reducing alcohol use and staying safe:

### 1. Keep track of your drinking and plan ahead

Monitor how much alcohol you consume by converting it into standard alcohol units. Set a clear limit in advance; for example, no more than two units per occasion. This helps you stay in control and make informed decisions. Moreover, planning in advance what to drink helps you maintain functionality rather than leaving everything to chance in the moment. Consider opting for non-alcoholic alternatives; many options now closely resemble their alcoholic counterparts in taste and appearance.

### 2. Avoid risky situations

Pay attention to which situations or emotions make you want to drink. Try to avoid events where heavy drinking is the main focus, and don't let others refill your glass before it's empty. Instead, choose activities that don't revolve around alcohol. Research suggests that activities such as exercising or gardening could be suitable alternatives.

### 3. Reflect on why you drink

Are you drinking because everyone else is? Because you're anxious about an exam? Or because you're unhappy in a relationship? Instead of avoiding these feelings, take time to reflect. Facing issues head-on, by talking to someone or seeking support, is often more effective than resorting to drinking alcohol as a temporary escape.

### 4. It's okay to say "No"

You never have to explain yourself. A simple "No, thank you" or "I'm not drinking tonight" is enough. You're allowed to set your own boundaries.

### 5. Seek support from people you trust

Let friends or family know you're trying to cut back and ask for their support. Suggest spending time together without alcohol, and let them know not to offer you drinks. Building relationships on shared values—not just shared drinks—can lead to deeper, more lasting connections.

If a friend has had too much to drink, don't leave them alone. Intoxicated people are more vulnerable to accidents, aggression, self-harm and risky behavior like drunk driving.

#### What to look for:

Signs of intoxication include slurred speech, stumbling, loud or aggressive behavior, vomiting, dizziness, and drowsiness. These signs vary depending on the person's alcohol tolerance, overall health, and whether they've taken other substances or medications.

#### What to do:

- Stay calm and speak to them in a clear, respectful way.
- Speak about everyday things with them, in order to help them keep alert. Avoid teasing or confronting them about their drinking—it's not the right time for serious discussions.
- Ensure their safety: stay with them or find someone who can.
- Keep them away from danger (e.g., roads, stairs, sharp objects).
- If they try to drive, only intervene if it's safe for you; otherwise, call the police.

If your friend is conscious, keep them seated or standing. If they lose consciousness, place them in the recovery position (on their side). Never let someone lie on their back if there's a risk of vomiting as this could lead to choking. At this point you need to call emergency services immediately at 112<sup>1</sup>.

In some cases, alcohol use may be a way of managing overwhelming emotions. When alcohol becomes a coping mechanism, it can signal deeper struggles, such as stress, anxiety, or even suicidal thoughts.

When alcohol use becomes risky or excessive, professional support is especially important. Substance use—whether alcohol or other drugs—often requires specialized treatment. However, you don't need to wait until things get worse. Many universities offer free or low-cost counselling services where you can talk openly, get guidance, and access support before it reaches a crisis point. You can easily find your universities office in the [T4EU Campus Life Catalogue](#). There is no shame in seeking help.

Additionally, most countries in Europe have dedicated emergency and help hotlines, you can find them mentioned at the end of this manual.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from The National Institute for Public Health (NIJZ). (2020). *Smernice za psihološko prvo pomoč v Primeru tveganega in škodljivega pitja alkohola* [Guidelines for psychological first aid in cases of risky and harmful alcohol use].



# 4

## MANAGING SCREEN TIME: RISKS OF OVERUSE AND STRATEGIES FOR BALANCE

### 4/ MANAGING SCREEN TIME: RISKS OF OVERUSE AND STRATEGIES FOR BALANCE



Digital tools and technology have become an essential part of student life, supporting both academic and personal needs. It's hard to imagine studying today without screens, but this reliance can sometimes lead to behavior that negatively affects mental health, overall well-being, and academic life—ultimately contributing to excessive screen use. While it's true that modern technologies are indispensable for studying, it's important to recognize the risks and potential negative consequences that come with excessive use.

Digital screen time refers to the amount of time spent while using electronic devices, such as smartphones, tablets, and computers. When screen use exceeds healthy limits, it has been associated with various psychological challenges, particularly with suicidal ideation, depression, higher levels of anxiety and psychological distress, and reduced self-esteem. While screen use can increase the levels of well-being after intense use, suggesting that smartphone use can provide emotional and social rewards, these effects may be temporary. Prolonged use, especially through social media, often leads to unhealthy comparisons and emotional distress, as it can also be a form of coping strategy. Constant notifications (e.g., messages, likes on social media) can foster short-term gratification and heighten anxiety. Research indicates that excessive screen use can reduce the depth and quality of real-life interactions, leading to experiencing increased feelings of loneliness. Additionally, excessive screen time is strongly linked to poor sleep quality, which further affects mental and academic functioning.

Research shows that university students typically spend 4 to 6 hours a day on smartphones, and less than 4 hours on tablets or computers. However, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, when online learning became the norm, total screen time rose significantly—sometimes reaching up to 14 hours per day. While the screens are used for study-related activities as well, a large portion of this time is dedicated to social media and entertainment.

While digital screens are an essential part of our daily lives—for studying, socializing, and relaxing—excessive screen time can negatively impact our mental and physical well-being. There are, however, practical strategies to reduce screen overuse and build healthier habits. Here are some tips to help you regain balance:

### 1. Monitor your screen use

Becoming aware of your screen habits is the first step. Most smartphones offer built-in tools (like iOS Screen Time or Android’s Digital Wellbeing) that track how much time you spend on different apps. You can also download apps that provide deeper insights and reminders.

**Monitoring helps you spot patterns and identify which apps or activities are consuming the most time, often without you realizing it.**

### 2. Find alternative ways to spend time

Often, we turn to screens out of boredom or habit. Replacing passive scrolling with more engaging, offline activities can help break this cycle. **Try exploring new hobbies, like drawing or writing, socializing face-to-face, or learning a skill unrelated to screens.** For example, art-making has been shown to reduce stress and experience more positive emotions. These activities not only reduce screen time but also boost your mood and sense of accomplishment.

### 3. Stay physically active

Excessive screen use is closely tied to sedentary lifestyle, which can lead to both physical and psychological health issues. Regular physical activity, ideally about 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous movement per day, has been shown to protect against symptoms of anxiety, depression, and distress. It also supports better sleep quality and is associated with improved mood. Whether it’s walking, dancing, yoga, or team sports, movement can help improve your overall well-being.

### 4. Avoid screens for better sleep

Sleep is often disrupted by late-night screen use, especially when checking notifications or streaming content in bed. While some students use music or podcasts to fall asleep, research shows that screen exposure before bedtime can reduce sleep quality. If you use your phone to listen to music or calming audio, consider setting a timer so it automatically turns off after a set period—this can prevent you from reaching for your phone again and disrupting your rest. To support better sleep, it’s best to avoid screens for at least an hour before bedtime, increases the risk of insomnia symptoms by 59%, and instead engage in relaxing offline activities like reading, journaling, or meditation. For example, reading books has been shown to reduce stress, improve concentration, and lower anxiety.

### 5. Incorporate nature in your daily routine

Spending time outdoors has proven benefits for mental health. Nature exposure has been linked to reduced stress, improved mood, and decreased symptoms of depression. Even short daily walks in a park, sitting in green spaces, or studying outside can have restorative effects and offer a screen-free mental break.

**While these tips can help you create a healthier balance between screen use and offline life, it’s important to note that they are not designed to address digital addiction.** If you feel restless, anxious, or irritable when you’re not using your phone, struggle to focus on daily tasks unless they involve screens or frequently find yourself in conflict with family or friends over your screen habits, these could be signs of something more serious. Such patterns may indicate digital addiction—a condition that can significantly disrupt your emotional well-being, relationships, and daily functioning. If these symptoms sound familiar, it’s important to seek professional support. Addiction is a mental health issue that requires more than just willpower; timely help can make a real difference in regaining control and improving your quality of life.

Student life often brings new freedoms and opportunities for self-discovery, including sexuality. This period of exploration is a normal and healthy part of growing up. At the same time, it may involve confusion, or pressure to conform to perceived norms about sex and relationships.

Sexual health is a key component of overall well-being. A positive approach to sexuality means having experiences that are safe, respectful, consensual, and free from coercion, discrimination, or violence. Whether you are sexually active, exploring your identity, or choosing to wait, your decisions should reflect your values and support your emotional and physical health. For sexual minority young adults, perceived rejection or non-acceptance of their sexual orientation can negatively affect self-esteem and increase psychological distress. This may also lead them to set higher standards before opening up about their sexuality to their partner or to become more self-critical when facing uncertainty about their sexual attractions. Additionally, research shows that individuals from sexually minority groups are more likely to experience loneliness and social isolation.

Risky sexual behaviors—such as unprotected sex, multiple partners, or sex while intoxicated—can increase the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, and unplanned pregnancies. Although most students are aware of contraception, research indicates that around 25% rarely or never used condoms throughout their sexual history. Alcohol often plays a significant role by lowering inhibitions and impairing judgment, which may lead to unsafe or unwanted encounters (e.g., sexual coercion, assault). One study found that up to 27% of students had participated in sexual intercourse after consuming alcohol. Environments like parties or nightlife venues, such as clubs, where alcohol is involved, can also increase the likelihood of these risks. That's why clear, sober communication and informed decision-making are essential.

Despite the importance of sexual and reproductive health, many students face barriers when seeking care. Common obstacles include embarrassment, not knowing where to go, concerns about the gender of the doctor, or fear of being judged. As a result, many students turn to peers, online content, or pornography for information. While some sources can be helpful, others may promote unrealistic or harmful ideas about sex, relationships, and consent. Consent is the foundation of any healthy sexual relationship. It must be mutual, freely given, and ongoing—not a one-time “yes,” but a continuous, open conversation. Everyone has the right to change their mind at any point. Sober, honest communication is essential for ensuring both partners feel safe and respected.

Raising your awareness about sexual health is one of the most effective ways to protect yourself. Research shows that individuals with a sufficient to excellent ability to apply sexual health information are 52% less likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors compared to those with limited knowledge. This is because sexual health literacy isn't just about having access to information—it's about understanding, evaluating, and applying it effectively through good communication and decision-making.

# 5

## SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL WELLBEING



Safe sex is a shared responsibility. Both partners play an important role in protecting each other from unwanted outcomes such as STIs and unplanned pregnancies. Here are three key considerations for safe and healthy sexual practices:

### 1. Protection

Ensuring safe sex begins with the correct use of reliable protection. Condoms are a highly effective method for preventing both STIs and pregnancy. Other contraceptive methods—like birth control pills, hormonal injections, or other barrier methods—can be effective for preventing pregnancy but do not protect against STIs. Some hormonal methods may also affect your body's natural balance, so it's important to discuss options with a healthcare professional and choose the best option for you.

### 2. Regular testing

Even when using protection, no method is 100% effective. If you're sexually active, regular testing is crucial. Pregnancy tests are widely available and affordable in most pharmacies. STI testing, however, should be done by a qualified doctor or sexual health clinic. Testing helps you take responsibility for your health and your partner's, and it reduces anxiety by giving you clear information.

### 3. Sexual well-being

Sexual health isn't only about avoiding risks—it's also about feeling good about yourself and your choices. Healthy sexual experiences are built on mutual respect, comfort, and open communication. Conversations about sex, consent, and preferences contribute to stronger relationships and help individuals feel more confident and in control. Encouraging honest discussions about sexuality fosters a safer, more inclusive environment for everyone. While it's not always easy to talk about sex and desires with a partner, research shows that sexual self-disclosure can lead to greater sexual, relationship, and overall life satisfaction. Compassionate communication, in particular, encourages deeper self-reflection and strengthens emotional intimacy, thus fostering a better relationship with a partner. When partners respond with acceptance, forgiveness, gratitude, they create a sense of safety. This emotional safety helps partners become more attuned to the sexual experience, reducing self-judgment. Being aware of and be interested in each other's thoughts, feelings and desires creates a sense of recognition and connection. Expressions of admiration and appreciation can further enhance feelings of being valued. A stable and functional relationship is characterized by the ability to listen non-defensively and reach mutual understanding to respond to each other's needs. When a problem arises, the focus is on resolving the issue together.

Students who have a positive relationship with their general practitioner or healthcare provider are more likely to seek help when necessary. Feeling reassured that these services are confidential, non-judgmental, inclusive, and supportive makes a significant difference—especially for international students or anyone who feels hesitant about discussing sexual health.

It's important to know that you can always turn to your doctor for help. If you ever feel unsafe or scared, make sure to tell someone you trust about what is happening or what has happened. **There are helplines available to support you,** and if you are in immediate danger, don't hesitate to call the police or emergency medical services. Professional and psychological support is also available for those in need.

Student life is full of challenges—some push us to grow, while others can leave us feeling overwhelmed, stuck, or uncertain about our abilities. These ups and downs are a natural part of life, and how we respond to them greatly shapes our self-confidence and motivation.

A helpful mindset shift is to view your abilities as flexible, not fixed. Accepting failures as part of the learning process reduces the fear of making mistakes and helps build a strong sense of self-worth. Having a healthy self-esteem means recognizing your strengths and maintaining a positive attitude toward yourself, regardless of success or failure. On the other hand, low self-esteem can lead to self-doubt, avoidance of new experiences, and an intense fear of making mistakes.

As a student, it's completely normal to feel stressed by deadlines, exams, and the pressure to succeed. You're also likely adjusting to many changes—new people, a different environment, and possibly living far from home. On top of that, ongoing global challenges, financial worries, and the lingering effects of the pandemic<sup>2</sup> can intensify feelings of vulnerability and loneliness, which many students face. Loneliness is the experience when your social connections don't quite match what you need, and it can affect both your mental and physical well-being. Research shows that social loneliness is constantly quite prominent, while emotional loneliness<sup>3</sup> has peaked during the pandemic, but subsequently has not been as high. Thus, students may feel more dissatisfied with their social network, which they perceive as unsatisfactory. While technology and social media help you stay in touch, they can also make it harder to engage with the world around you. Spending too much time online can make you feel more isolated and disconnected from the people and environment in your daily life.

Loneliness doesn't just affect how we feel—it also shapes how we respond to life's challenges. Loneliness can intensify how we experience stress and prolong our emotional reactions to difficult situations. At the same time, stress is a natural response to pressure or uncertainty. It keeps us alert and prepared, but too much stress, especially over long periods, can negatively impact our mental and physical health. However, how we perceive stress matters a lot in how we experience it – what feels like an exciting challenge to one person may be overwhelming to another.

<sup>2</sup>Part of the project: Individual in the grip of Covid-19: Psychological consequences of the epidemic and protective measures to contain the spread of infection, ID: J5-3113.

<sup>3</sup>Part of the project: Lonely? Mix method study of general and vulnerable populations to understand the link between loneliness and mental health, ID: J3-50126.

# 6

## SUPPORTING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

In addition to stress management strategies, nurturing a good self-esteem has been found to be one of protective factors in dealing with social rejection, an important aspect of loneliness. A high sense of self-worth supports emotional resilience, particularly in situations involving social rejection or exclusion, which are key elements of loneliness. The following strategies can support both with stress management and development of greater self-confidence, while fostering supportive and secure personal relationships:

### 1. Set realistic goals

Although we may strive to be as efficient as possible, we can sometimes take on too many tasks, which can in turn lead to burnout. It's important to set goals that are actually achievable. When you're feeling stressed, ask yourself if you have enough time and resources to reach your goal. If you don't, try breaking the goal into smaller, more manageable steps.

### 2. Practice assertive communication

Teamwork can sometimes be stressful, especially when we struggle to set boundaries or communicate our needs. Feeling invisible or unheard can amplify both loneliness and stress. Assertive communication means expressing your thoughts and opinions clearly and directly while staying respectful. Use "I-statements" to express your feelings, like: "I feel overwhelmed with the workload. Can we share the tasks more evenly?"

### 3. Reframe negative self-talk

Negative thoughts are beliefs about oneself, others, or the world, often shaped by pessimistic perceptions, expectations, and attributions. Reframing negative thoughts can be tricky, but shifting your focus to the situation instead of blaming yourself makes a difference. Low self-esteem often shows up as a critical inner voice. When you catch yourself being overly self-critical, ask yourself: "What would I say to a friend in this situation?"

For example, if something didn't go as planned, instead of saying, "I'm such a failure," try "I gave it my best shot, and I'm proud of my effort."

### 4. Recognize and celebrate your progress

One of the best ways to build good self-esteem is by regularly acknowledging your own efforts and growth. Take a moment to think about your best qualities and past achievements—big or small. Write them down in a list starting with "I am..." (e.g., "I am resilient.", "I am a good friend.").

Keep this list somewhere visible, such as your desk or phone, and read it whenever you're feeling down.

### 5. Prioritize self-care without guilt

Low self-esteem often comes with the feeling of not doing "enough". But self-care isn't a luxury—it's a necessity for your well-being. Small habits like taking walks, meditating, or journaling can really help improve your mood and build resilience against stress. Even tiny lifestyle changes can make a big difference in your mental well-being. Make sure to prioritize activities that bring you joy; whether it's spending time with friends, exercising, or taking part in a hobby, these moments of self-care help prevent burnout – without feeling guilty about it.

### 6. Build and maintain meaningful relationships

While it is important to have a broad circle of friends, the quality of your relationships is as important as the quantity. Strong social connections involve frequent contact, a variety of social roles, and a sense of reciprocity, mutual trust, openness, intimacy and support. However, it's important to have at least one person you can confide in – someone who accepts you as you are and whom you trust, especially during the university years. Research suggests that although this role may initially be filled by a parent, over time it often shifts to a close friend or romantic partner. Therefore, actively building and maintaining such meaningful, in-person relationships can serve as a protective factor against feeling lonely.

## Small Changes, Big Impact

University life can be overwhelming, but you don't have to let stress take over. The key is to explore different strategies and find what works best for you.

Experiencing distress and facing challenges is a normal part of life. Stress often becomes more intense during major life events, especially those involving change—such as the end of a relationship, family conflict, job loss or change, relocation, illness, accidents, or the death of a loved one. Everyone responds to stress differently, but it's important to address problems as they arise. If left unresolved, some issues may fade on their own, but others can persist or even worsen over time. Long-term difficulties may begin to feel unsolvable, contributing to deeper emotional struggles such as sadness, despair, anger, uncertainty, or apathy.

In some cases, prolonged distress can lead to suicidal thoughts or behavior, which is also present among university students. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among people aged 15–29 years. However, suicide is not a single act—it is the final stage in a process known as suicidal behavior. This process can include suicidal thoughts (ideation), intent, making plans, attempts using methods of varying lethality, and, in some cases, death by suicide. The suicidal process typically stems from a profound sense of hopelessness or emotional pain. It may begin with thoughts like “I don't want to live anymore,” and escalate if no support or relief is found.

Signs of serious suicidal thoughts or intent may appear in both behavior and speech. Behavioral indicators can include risky or self-destructive actions, withdrawing from social life, saying goodbye to loved ones, giving away cherished belongings, putting affairs in order, showing sudden interest in religion or funerals, or obtaining means to self-harm. Sometimes, a sudden and seemingly positive change in mood may also signal risk, as the person may have resolved to go through with their plan.

Verbal cues may be indirect, such as:

- “I'm tired of life.”
- “My family would be better off without me.”
- “Nobody would notice if I disappeared.”
- “Soon you won't have to worry about me.”

Or direct, including:

- “I want to die.”
- “I've decided to kill myself.”
- “I'm going to end everything.”

Recognizing these signs early and seeking support can make a critical difference.

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Poštuvan, V. (2023). *Pogovor o samomoru: Praktični priročnik za pogovor o najtežjih življenjskih vprašanjih* [Talking about suicide: A practical guide for discussing life's most difficult issues] (2nd ed., revised.). Založba Univerze na Primorskem.

## ADDRESSING SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR



It's not always easy to recognize when someone is in deep distress. As observers, we can never be completely sure of what another person is thinking or feeling, which is why we shouldn't rely solely on what they say. Their behavior, especially if it changes suddenly or differs from how they usually act, can give us important clues.

Everyone faces struggles, and life changes are a normal part of our experience. But distress affects people differently, and sometimes, problems can feel so overwhelming that suicide seems like the only way out. Because we can never be entirely sure of what someone is thinking, it's essential to pay attention and take action when something seems off. These steps can help:

### 1. Preparing

If you suspect someone is going through a difficult time, a compassionate and honest conversation can help. Choose a quiet, private place, and allow plenty of time. Sometimes it's easier to talk while doing an activity together, like walking or playing a game. Before the conversation, think about what you want to say and how you might manage your own emotions—fear, sadness, anger, or even relief are all normal responses

### 2. Asking

Begin in a calm, non-judgmental way. Questions like "How do you see the situation?" or "What's been the hardest part for you?" can help open the conversation.

When exploring possible suicidal thoughts, use the present tense:

- "Are you thinking about suicide?"
- "Do you ever wish you could fall asleep and not wake up?"

Always ask clearly and kindly, however, you can ask more directly ("You seem unhappy. Are you thinking about suicide?") or more indirectly ("Do you wish you would fall asleep and never wake up?"). During the talk we are researching the suicidal process and we always have to remember that it is preventable.

Using the word "suicide" does not increase risk—it shows the person you're prepared to listen to them. Avoid vague or judgmental phrasing like "You're not thinking about suicide, are you?"

### 3. Talking

If the person says that they wish to die, we need to explore their position and try to understand it. The following phrases can help you:

- "How often do you think about death? Is this every day/week/month/here and there?"
- "What is the intent of your thinking about suicide? Do you have a concrete plan of where/when/how you would commit suicide? Have you already picked a method?"
- "Have you self-harmed recently/in the past weeks? Did you try to commit suicide?"

Let the person share their reasons for wanting to die without offering immediate solutions. You can ask the person to help you understand what is so distressing that has led them to think about suicide. These conversations can be especially difficult as we are often not used to discussing such deeply personal topics. One such phrase can be: "What are all the reasons for why you wish to die?" Try to acknowledge their pain and the difficulty of their experience: "It sounds like you're going through something incredibly difficult."

#### Also explore reasons for living:

- "Who would miss you?"
- "What is something you still enjoy?"
- "What are you proud of in yourself?"

Sometimes, breaking the future into smaller pieces helps, for example: "What might help you get through today?"

When talking, use open ended questions. Deep distress often causes tunnel vision, where suicide feels like the only solution. By listening, you help them begin to see other possibilities. Show that they're not a burden and that you're there for them.

### 4. Building trust

As you better understand their situation, explore the next steps. Ask how they feel now, and whether the intensity of their suicidal thoughts has changed. If they feel even slightly better, talk about their plan for the day. You can ask them to make a "promise of life"—a commitment to stay safe until you talk again.

### 5. Creating a support network

It's often hard for people in crisis to reach out. Encourage them to talk to others and identify someone they trust. You can ask: "Is there someone we can call together?" Help them start building a support system, and guide them toward professional help, which is essential for recovery.

If the person is at acute risk—for example, if they are thinking about suicide constantly, expressing a clear intent to end their life, or have a specific plan—**do not leave them alone**. Stay with them and remain calm and supportive. Encourage them to seek professional help immediately, and if possible, help them take the first step by making the call together.

In situations where urgent medical or psychological assistance is needed, emergency services should be contacted right away. Within the European Union, the single emergency number is **112**. This number is free of charge from any phone and is available 24/7, connecting you directly to the appropriate emergency service—police, ambulance, or fire brigade—in any EU country.

Anxiety is a natural emotional and physiological response to stress. It activates the sympathetic nervous system—commonly referred to as the “fight or flight” response—which prepares the body to confront or escape perceived threats. This activation can trigger a range of physical symptoms, such as a racing heart, sweaty palms, tense muscles, shaky hands, and shallow breathing. While this response can help us prepare for challenges (like exams or job interviews), it can become overwhelming when anxiety is present even when there’s no real danger. Anxiety is prevalent also among university students, as studies show that approximately one third of undergraduate students experience elevated levels of anxiety, and more prominent among undergraduates than graduate students. As an undergraduate, a student may face multiple new experiences all at once – relocation to a new place, adapting to unfamiliar surroundings, meeting new people, adjusting to increased academic pressure, or maybe even studying in a foreign country far from their support system.

Academic pressure is another important aspect of student life. The drive to perform well, fear of failure, and competition among peers can create a constant sense of worry. Students can also struggle with beliefs of not truly belonging or being incapable of following with the tempo of the studies. A particularly common form of anxiety among students is the fear of public speaking. Whether it’s giving a presentation, speaking up in seminar, or participating in group discussions, the fear of being judged or making mistakes in front of others can trigger intense anxiety responses. Thus, many undergraduates can feel higher levels of anxiety and feel overwhelmed.

Nevertheless, techniques such as breathing exercises, grounding strategies, mindfulness practices, and effective time management can all help regulate anxious feelings. While calming oneself is important, gradual exposure to the source of anxiety is also essential. Although it may feel uncomfortable, confronting anxiety-provoking situations in a controlled way can help reduce anxiety levels over time. Equally important are cognitive strategies, such as objective explanations and reframing how we interpret stressful situations. Reaching out for social or professional support is also essential—whether it’s talking to friends, joining peer support groups, or accessing university counseling services.



## MANAGING ANXIETY

One of the most common situations that triggers anxiety is public speaking. While some anxiety is expected as a part of the experience, good preparation can significantly reduce its intensity. Here are five practical tips to help you feel more confident and in control when preparing for an oral presentation:

### 1. Preparing your content in advance

Effective presentations begin with comprehensive preparation. Allocate sufficient time to research your topic, verify sources, and distill the core message you intend to communicate.

Start by defining the main goal of your speech and structure your content to ensure a coherent flow. Instead of memorizing full sentences, use bullet points or keywords to reduce the risk of lapses and facilitate a more conversational delivery.

### 2. Practicing

Rehearsing your presentation aloud is critical to identify potential difficulties and improve delivery.

This practice helps you to identify problematic sections, adjust your pace, tone and articulation, and reduce filler words and nervous habits. Start by practicing on your own, then progress to rehearsing in front of friends or family to simulate audience presence. Request constructive feedback focused on clarity, engagement, and pacing.

### 3. Managing your body language

Non-verbal communication is also important. Your gestures, posture, and facial expressions can either enhance your message or make you look nervous. It's important to avoid closed postures (e.g., crossed arms) and excessive fidgeting, which may signal nervousness. Instead, use open gestures and facial expressions that convey confidence and approachability. Maintaining appropriate eye contact helps build a strong connection with the audience. If you're unsure about your body language, try recording yourself and taking note of any habits you'd like to improve.

### 4. Pre-presentation confidence building

Building confidence can be supported by additional strategies, before the presentation. Wearing clothes that make you feel comfortable and confident can positively influence your self-perception. Practicing slow, deep breathing exercises helps to calm physiological symptoms of anxiety. Additionally, grounding techniques—such as lightly tapping your leg or holding a small object—can help maintain your focus and composure as you prepare to speak.

### 5. Getting comfortable with the environment

Arriving early to familiarize yourself with the environment can prevent last-minute panic. Take time to assess the room layout and seating arrangements, allowing you to choose a preferred position for your delivery that maximizes both your comfort and audience engagement. It's also important to test audiovisual equipment and any presentation aids to avoid technical disruptions during your speech. Knowing your surroundings provides a greater sense of control, helping you feel more at ease before you begin. One of the ways is also to visualize yourself presenting, imagining that you are already standing confidently in front of the audience in that specific setting.

Public speaking often provokes anxiety, but with careful preparation and consistent practice, it is possible to deliver a confident and engaging presentation. While these strategies may not eliminate anxiety entirely, they can help you manage its intensity and improve your sense of readiness. It's also important to recognize that a moderate level of nervousness is entirely normal—and can even enhance performance by keeping you alert and focused. However, if anxiety becomes overwhelming or begins to interfere with your daily functioning, seeking support from a qualified mental health professional is strongly recommended.

Your mental health is deeply connected to your daily habits and overall lifestyle. Regular physical activity not only benefits just your body but also helps alleviate anxiety and depression by releasing endorphins, often called “happiness hormones.” However, maintaining mental well-being goes beyond exercise – getting enough quality sleep, eating a balanced diet, and maintaining social connections all play a big role in feeling good.

### Dealing with Mental Health Issues as a Student

University life can be tough—deadlines, exams, and social pressures. It’s completely normal to feel stressed from time to time. You’re also likely going through a lot of new experiences—meeting new people, adjusting to a different environment, and maybe living far from home. With a time of constant changes like rising costs, the lasting effects of the pandemic, and other uncertainties, it’s understandable to feel even more vulnerable.<sup>3</sup> These changes can, among other things, lead to feelings of loneliness, which many students face. Loneliness is the experience when your social connections don’t quite match what you need, and it can affect both your mental and physical well-being. While technology and social media help you stay in touch, they can also make it harder to engage with the world around you. Spending too much time online can make you feel more isolated and disconnected from the people and environment in your daily life.<sup>4</sup> If you’re struggling with anxiety, feeling burnt out or lonely, or just need someone to talk to, **help is available.**

Speaking with a professional can help you understand your thoughts and emotions better while equipping you with practical coping strategies. **Seeking help is not a sign of weakness.** If anything, it’s a sign of strength and self-awareness.

<sup>3</sup>The authors acknowledge the project (Human-19 – The Human in the Grip of COVID-19: Psychological Consequences of the Epidemic and Preventive Protective Measures to Contain the Spread of Infections, ID: J5-3113) was financially supported by the Slovenian Research Agency.

<sup>4</sup>The authors acknowledge the project (Lonely? A Mixed-Methods Study in the General and Vulnerable Populations to Understand the Link Between Loneliness and Mental Health, ID: J3-50126) was financially supported by the Slovenian Research Agency.



## PROFESSIONAL HELP AT UNIVERSITIES





If you're studying at one of the T4EU universities, here are some resources that offer psychological support:

#### UNIVERSITY PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING SERVICES

##### University of Primorska

UP Student Counselling Service – Free psychological support for students  
[karierno-svetovanje/psiholoska-svetovalnica-up](http://karierno-svetovanje/psiholoska-svetovalnica-up)

Posvet (Portorož) – Free counselling services available for anyone in need  
[posvet.org](http://posvet.org)

##### Universidade Católica Portuguesa

UCP Mental Health Appointments – Psychological support for UCP students, where the initial appointment is free  
[ucp.pt](http://ucp.pt)

MinCast – Podcast dedicated to promoting the mental health of university students  
[open.spotify.com](http://open.spotify.com)

##### Estonian Academy of Arts

Psychological Counselling Service – Free psychological support for students  
[artun.ee](http://artun.ee)

##### Jean Monnet University

Health Service for Students – Alongside offering medical and health support, the service also offers free students mental health counselling  
[univ-st-etienne.fr](http://univ-st-etienne.fr)

##### Sofia University of St. Kliment Ohridski

Centre for Psychological Counselling and Research – Psychological support for all students of SU, where the first three sessions are free  
[uni-sofia.bg](http://uni-sofia.bg)



##### University of Alicante

Psychological and Psychopedagogical Counselling – Psychological support for all students studying at UA  
[web.ua.es](http://web.ua.es)

##### Saarland University

Ambulance Service – Alongside offering medical and health support, the service also offers free psychotherapeutic services to students and the broader public  
[uni-saarland.de](http://uni-saarland.de)

##### University of Silesia in Katowice

Psychological Support – Free psychological support for students  
[us.edu.pl](http://us.edu.pl)

##### University of Trieste

Mental Health Counselling – Free psychological support for students and staff  
[portale.units.it](http://portale.units.it)

##### Vytautas Magnus University

Psychology Clinic – Free psychological support for students  
[psichologijosklinika.vdu.lt](http://psichologijosklinika.vdu.lt)

## EMERGENCY AND CRISIS SUPPORT CONTACTS

If you or someone you know needs immediate support, here are important helplines:

- **Alive? Alive!** – website of the Slovene Centre for Suicide Research with helpful materials for anyone in distress ([zivziv.si](http://zivziv.si))

### How to help a friend

If you've noticed that your friend seems down, sad, or isn't getting out much, it's a good idea to check in with them. **Take a moment** to ask how they're feeling, how they're coping with everything, and if there's anything you can do to support them. You could suggest doing something fun together, like going for a walk, catching a movie, or even starting a study group. Sometimes, simply asking about their day, listening carefully, and speaking kindly can make a huge difference in lifting their spirits. If they're struggling but feel nervous about seeking professional help, offer to go with them. Knowing they're not alone can make it easier for them to take that step and can really **help them feel less alone**.

Taking care of your mental health is just as important as taking care of your physical health. Building **healthy habits, staying connected with friends and family, and seeking support when needed** can make a world of difference. Remember, you're never alone—help is always within reach.

# 10

## WHY REGULAR MOVEMENT MATTERS

### 10/ WHY REGULAR MOVEMENT MATTERS



Physical activity has long been recognized for its many positive effects on both psychological and physical well-being, and it's often seen as complimentary to other kinds to medication. In recent decades, studies have shown, that exercise offers significant benefits for cognitive abilities, particularly learning and memory.

Physical activity triggers a series of biological and structural changes in the brain, helping brain cells form new connections, reflecting the brain's ability to adapt to different cognitive challenges. Movement is thought to accelerate neural development, increase the concentration of synapses between nerves, and boost blood circulation in the cerebral cortex.

In the context of a healthy lifestyle, the term "24-hour physical activity" is becoming more common. This refers to how we spend our time over 24 hours, including sleep, sedentary behavior (SB), low-intensity physical activity (LITA), and moderate-to-high-intensity physical activity (MHA). The balance of these activities is crucial for maintaining and improving health, ultimately reducing the risk of premature death.

Students often struggle to maintain regular physical activity as balancing educational responsibilities and personal life demands a lot of energy and time. However, even simple and brief exercises can make a difference for the better. Below are a few examples of quick exercises that can be done by everyone right next to your desk:

#### 1. Stretching routines

- Prolonged periods of sitting and a general sedentary life causes heightened tension in muscles leading to limited mobility and a general feeling of tightness. Different kinds of stretching, whether static, dynamic or combined can help you improve your range of motion, reduce stress and support your general fitness. Two simple stretches to try out are:
- **Hamstring stretch:** Sit on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you and gently reach for your toes.
- **Quad stretch:** Stand and lift one leg up behind you, and gently grab and hold your ankle, pulling your heel toward your body.

For those who feel a bit more comfortable remaining at the desk, below are some additional exercises created to help with issues associated with prolonged desk work:

- **Seated leg raises:** Extend one leg at a time and hold it in the air for a few seconds before switching. This exercise targets the quadriceps and can be performed discreetly without attracting much attention.
- **Shoulder shrugs:** This movement helps alleviate tension in the neck and shoulder area after prolonged sitting. Simply raise both shoulders toward your ears, hold for a few seconds, and relax. Repeat this motion several times as an effective way to reduce muscle stiffness and promote better upper-body posture.
- **Seated forward bend:** Begin by sitting tall on the edge of your chair with your feet flat on the floor. Take a deep breath, and as you exhale, slowly fold forward from your hips, reaching your hands toward the floor. Allow your head and neck to relax. Hold this stretch for 30 seconds while breathing deeply. This will stretch the lower back, hamstrings, and shoulders.

## 2. Bodyweight exercises

Improving one's own fitness doesn't need to be expensive and everyone already has an excellent tool to start exercising – your body! A simple way to stay fit during university time is to do simple bodyweight exercises, as they don't demand special expensive equipment and can be tailored for complete beginners or athletes. Some that are good options for starting out are:

- **Squats:** To help strengthen your legs and glutes, stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and bend your knees until your thighs are parallel to the floor. Return to the starting position and repeat for 10–15 reps.
- **Push-ups:** Work your chest, shoulders, and triceps with some basic push-ups. Make sure to practice good form and repeat only as long as is comfortable for you.
- **Lunges:** These will strengthen your legs and glutes while improving balance. Stand with your feet hip-width apart and step forward with one foot until both knees are bent at a 90-degree angle. Step back and alternate through 15 reps for each leg.
- **Planks:** Planking works the entire core, including your abs and lower back. Begin in a push-up position and lower your body until your forearms are resting on the floor, then hold your body in a straight line for however long is comfortable to you, building up to 30–60 seconds.
- **Mountain climbers:** This is a full-body exercise that works the legs, core, and upper body. Begin in a plank position, bring one knee toward your chest, then quickly switch legs. Keep alternating legs as fast as you can for 30–60 second

Of course, it's important to follow these guidelines, but it's also essential to remember that there is no one-size-fits-all combination of physical behaviors. Even reallocating a small amount of time from one activity to another can have a significant impact on reducing or increasing the risk of early mortality. There are also numerous recreational options that universities offer their students for free, additionally some of them have excellent sports infrastructures, from swimming pools, running tracks, gyms and more. There are also countless free examples of exercise videos on YouTube that can help get you started.

## 11

**EACH DAY A BIT  
MORE SUSTAINABLE**

Sustainability is a pressing issue in global society, especially today, more than ever before, with rapid climate change and the problem of mass waste posing a major threat to the environment. Many countries are seeking solutions at a higher level through new sustainable development guidelines, investment in renewable resources and the promotion of sustainable innovation, but each person can do their part to reduce their own environmental impact.

We can do a lot of good in the area of sustainability by making small changes in our daily lives, which add up to a huge difference and a smaller burden on the environment in the long run. Many habits already became popular, including using canvas bags instead of plastic ones, and having reusable bottles instead of single-use plastic ones. However, these actions are just the tip of the iceberg and there are many other things that you can easily introduce into your daily life.

### 1. Be mindful of your spending

Modern consumer society tends to follow trends that may only last a few months but often leave environmental consequences. Manufacturing in general has adapted to this and started to produce lower quality products designed for short-term use, in line with its period of relevance. This is particularly noticeable in the fashion industry. For this reason, it is worth checking, thinking and asking yourself some questions before deciding on the purchase:

- *Do I really need this, or is it just something I want at the moment?*
- *Will I be able to use it in the future or will I be able to pass it on?*
- *Is the material of the product of good quality and will I be able to use it for a long time?*
- *Is there a more durable alternative to this product?*

### 2. Managing your e-waste

The rapid advancement of technology means that shiny new electronic gadgets are always months away. Many of them are so impressive with their breakthrough features, sleek looks and high performance compared to their older versions, but often these are the ones that end up in the rubbish bins. E-waste, as it is called, amounts to around 50 million tonnes annually, and only 20% of it is recycled, often under very hazardous and harmful conditions. With a little attention and thoughtfulness, you can help minimize this:

- *Think carefully about whether your old phone, tablet, computer or other device really needs to be replaced with a new model.*
- *Beware of devices whose battery cannot be replaced, as these will end up in the trash after a few years.*

- *Before you throw away any of your electronic devices, find out where they can be safely disposed of and where they can be recycled in an environmentally friendly way.*

### **3. Three words for greater sustainability – recycle, reuse, reduce**

The three main guiding words for greater sustainability – recycle, reuse, reduce – are the easiest to implement in your daily life. A lot of waste can be reduced with these simple guides; here are some tips on how to better do it yourself:

- *Instead of throwing something away, take a moment to consider whether there is any use for it.*
- *Before you throw something away that is broken, check whether it can be repaired. Many repair instructions and tips can be found quickly online and many of them do not require a mountain of tools.*
- *Avoid anything that is designed to be used only once.*

### **4. Think about how you will travel**

Students today are more mobile than at any time in history. Cheap flights and accommodation, opportunities to participate in summer schools and other study exchanges have encouraged many to go abroad. Few, however, consider this decision in terms of their carbon footprint and the environmental burden that this travel will create. By taking the time to consider this as well, you can further contribute to protecting the environment and go green at the next T4EU event.

- *There are many websites and apps that can help you get a better idea of the environmental impact of your trip.*
- *Travel together! Instead of travelling on your own, check with your peers who are going to the same destination and plan a trip together.*
- *Be aware of the impact of your means of transport in everyday life. Use public transport instead of the car, and if your destination is close enough, cycle or walk to stay healthy.*

There is much more that can be done to strengthen personal sustainability, many of which are explained in detail online. Make the most of what you can and remember that even small changes in your daily life can lead to big environmental benefits on an annual basis.



# 12

## DIVERSE COMMUNITIES OF UNIVERSITIES



Building the European spirit among all the people involved in T4EU requires adopting an approach that goes beyond prejudice and defends equality for all. The values of the Alliance extend beyond a single group, university or country, encompassing everyone. The aim is to create a shared sense of belonging to an inclusive and diverse international campus composed of individuals from different beliefs, backgrounds and nationalities. It is only through open, unbiased communication that we can overcome not only national borders, but also personal prejudices, thereby paving the way towards a better society.

Universities attract people from diverse backgrounds and serve as hubs for intercultural and intergenerational exchange. Therefore, it is important for everyone within the university community to cultivate an open and uninhibited outlook. Such a mindset not only helps to broaden one's horizons but also helps in making new acquaintances and friends.

To foster an inclusive spirit within the university environment, it is important to follow some principles that both encourage maintaining an open mind and promote greater awareness of one's own potential prejudices.

#### **1. Keep an open mind and be respectful**

Implicit beliefs are unconscious and automatic mental representations that shape how individuals perceive and interact with others, particularly those from different social groups. These beliefs can refer to characteristics such as gender, race, age, or disability, and often influence one's behaviour.

A recent study found that women in STEM exhibited slower reaction times when completing stereotype-inconsistent tasks (e.g., pairing female with engineering), suggesting that internalized biases may hinder motivation and academic performance. More important than anything else in building an open society is starting with oneself and recognizing the value of engaging with other people, their customs and cultures. Meaningful conversations, where we actively listen to our interlocutors, greatly help us in broadening our own perspectives and fostering greater tolerance, even when our opinions differ. It is always important to stay mindful and respectful toward the other person.

#### **2. Words have weight**

Verbal communication is a central way in which people exchange ideas, and just as we can encourage someone, we can also hurt someone deeply when saying something carelessly. Inappropriate jokes, sexist remarks, or disrespectful comments may seem minor, but they can have a lasting negative impact and should not be dismissed or overlooked. It is important to be aware that within individual cultures and nationalities, some topics are very sensitive. Disrespectful comments can cause serious distress. Therefore, it is important to communicate with sensitivity, staying considerate of feelings and experiences of others.

### 3. Self-reflection is important

Growing up, we may have internalized certain unconscious prejudices. Taking a moment to self-reflect is important to help you realise your own biases and make a conscious effort to try to overcome them. Although unconscious biases can be deeply ingrained and not easily changed, maintaining awareness and treating others with empathy is of the utmost importance.

Our actions and words can have an impact on those around us, which is why it's important to remain mindful and supportive of others. If a fellow student is struggling, offering help can make a meaningful difference to them. This is especially important for students who may face additional challenges – for example students with physical or other disabilities – as they may encounter more barriers in navigating everyday student life.

If you are one of those who need help, there are many T4EU University Centres dedicated to you. You can find the right one for you and your university in the [T4EU Green Campus Life, Inclusion and wellbeing Catalogue](#).



# 13

## SO, YOU GRADUATED, WHAT NOW?

### 13/ SO, YOU GRADUATED, WHAT NOW?



Graduating brings a mixture of feelings: pride, excitement and some uncertainty. After years of student life, you are entering a new era, one where paths, schedules and deadlines are no longer so clear-cut. This transition can be exciting but also challenging. This chapter is here to help you make the transition from university to working life and to remind you that you are not alone.

#### **TRANSITION: WHAT CHANGES?**

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Student life is often structured – lectures, exams, socialising. But in the professional world, you'll face more defined and longer working hours, new expectations, different dynamics. You may be truly independent for the first time – financially, time-wise, personally. And that's perfectly normal.

#### **PREPARING FOR THE CAREER WORLD**

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Before you start sending out job applications, take a moment to think about some of the key factors when planning your career. In particular, consider the following:

**MY INTERESTS** | Think about what you like to do in life, what you enjoy. Also, what are your hobbies and leisure activities. It is not uncommon for individuals to derive successful careers and careers from their hobbies.

**WHAT ARE MY GOALS FOR THE FUTURE** | Let's think about where we see ourselves in the near future? Let's try to imagine what our ideal day would look like in five years? Do you want to do our work in an office or do we prefer to be in the field? Do I see myself in a job somewhere abroad or in my hometown? Would I like to have flexible working hours that will allow me to combine work and private life, or would I like to work on a set schedule that is strictly separate from my private life? Would I like to have a family in a few years or would I like to build a professional career first? Answering these questions honestly will help us choose the job that will give us the life story we want for ourselves.

**MY COMPETENCES AND EDUCATION** | Of course, the career path you choose is also influenced by the skills we have already acquired, as well as any additional skills we have acquired. Everyone probably wants to build a career within the profession for which they have been trained. However, it is not advisable to limit yourself too much, as our professions today usually offer a very wide range of potential jobs. So, think about all your skills and where they could be useful.

**POTENTIAL JOBS** | As mentioned above, the labour market today offers a wide range of jobs that can be filled with your education. In addition, jobs tend to require people with different competences and who are able to do several different jobs. Before entering the labour market, it is therefore advisable to look at the range of potential jobs that interest you and compare their requirements with your skills and knowledge, and if necessary, look for additional training opportunities that will make you more competitive for the jobs you have chosen.

**CAREER PLAN** | The current labour market is flexible and it could be difficult to set a clear career path. We need to be prepared to change jobs and often career paths. However, it is important for everyone to have at least a loose career plan to follow. You can also consult the staff at the University Careers Centre when drawing up your career plan. Thinking about your career and aspirations will help you to choose a job and work that excites, motivates and gives you purpose. This is also the most important thing, as we spend a lot of time at work in our lives.

- **What skills have you learnt (communication, collaboration, problem solving)?**
- **What kind of environment suits you?**
- **What really interests you and gives you a sense of purpose?**

## TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

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- Prepare a quality CV and LinkedIn profile.
- Practice interviewing and research the job market.
- Check in with the alumni community or mentors – they often like to help.

The transition to the job market can sometimes be quite stressful. But you can save yourself a lot of worry if you prepare properly.

Before starting a job search, the most important thing is to prepare a good CV (curriculum vitae). As it is important to tailor your CV to each vacancy and its specifics, it is advisable to use one of the online CV preparation options, which will allow you to adapt your CV quickly and efficiently to each vacancy and its requirements. You can use EUROPASS, Canva, CVMaker or many other online options.

LinkedIn can also be very helpful in finding a suitable job, where it is important to prepare an interesting profile to attract potential employers.

Our social contacts and networks can also help us take the first steps in our job search. That is why it is important to get involved in your university's alumni and through alumni meetings and events to expand your network and increase your job opportunities. The connections we have made during our studies are also important and useful, as mentors we have worked with during our studies, individuals from our extracurricular activities and hobbies, etc. can help us in our job search.

**Remember:** rejection is not personal and it's not a reflection of your worth or abilities. It's a necessary part of your career journey. Each rejection provides a valuable lesson which you can apply when preparing for your next job application or interview.

## **NEW RESPONSIBILITIES = NEW SKILLS**

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### ■ Life after college means learning outside work too:

- Money management (budget, savings, taxes)
- Coordinating time without professors and deadlines
- Professional communication – emails, meetings, talking to superiors

You don't have to master everything immediately. It's perfectly normal to struggle in the beginning, so try to be kind to yourself as you are facing new challenges. What truly matters is your willingness to learn and grow on the job over time.

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## **A CAREER IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION**

Your first job does not determine your destiny. Be open to exploration, change, learning. Every experience teaches you something – even the less than ideal ones.

### ■ Build skills like:

- Flexibility
- Self-initiative
- Ability to learn from mistakes

### ■ Final tips to ease the transition

- Continue learning (courses, workshops, reading)
- Don't compare yourself with others – everyone has their own path
- Celebrate small successes as they are important: first interview, first pay day, first day at work

# 14

**FOR ALL SERIOUS ISSUES OR  
PROFESSIONAL HELP**

**14/ FOR ALL SERIOUS ISSUES OR  
PROFESSIONAL HELP**



Across all countries in Europe, the standard emergency number is 112.

## **SLOVENIA**

### **Emergency Numbers**

- Samarijan & Sopotnik (Confidential Support, 24/7): **116 123**
- TOM Helpline for Children & Youth (12 PM – 8 PM daily): **116 111**
- Women's Counseling Crisis : **031 546 098**

### **Mental Health**

- SOS Helpline (24/7): **080 11 55**
- Mental Health Crisis Line (7 PM – 7 AM daily): **01 520 99 00**
- Posvet (Portorož) – Free counseling services available for anyone in need [posvet.org](http://posvet.org)
- Samarijan & Sopotnik (Confidential Support, 24/7): **116 123**

## **GERMANY**

### **Emergency Numbers**

- [Hilfe-Portal Sexueller Missbrauch](#): online portal offering directory of local help services for victims of sexual abuse. The [Hilfetelefon](#) helpline is available by calling 08000 116 016 and also online.

### **Mental Health**

- [German Network for Mental Health](#): directory of mental health professionals available online.
- [TelefonSeelsorge](#): counseling and advice available online and also by telephone on 0800 111 0111, 0800 111 022, or 116 123.

### **Substance Abuse**

- [Guttempler](#): support for alcohol, medication, and drug problems, available online and also by telephone on 0180 365 2407. Most consultants only speak German, however.

### **LGBTQ+ Support**

- **Lesbian and Gay Association in Germany** ([Lesben- und Schwulenverband](#) or LSVD): membership organization supporting the interests of LGBTQ+ people in Germany



ITALY

Emergency Numbers

- Domestic violence helpline: **800 22 0000**
- Hotline for children and teenagers ([Telefono Azzuro](#)): **19696** or online (Italian)
- Support for women / Domestic violence ([Telefono Rosso](#)): **15 22** or chat online (including in English)

Mental Health

- Italian suicide hotline: **800 86 00 22**
- Mental health hotline ([Telefono Amico Italia](#)): **02 2327 2327** or WhatsApp: **+39 324 011 7252**
- [Samaritans Onlus](#) (Italian and English): **800 86 00 22** or **06 77208977** (mobile) and online
- Suicide prevention hotline (for emergencies and those who have lost loved ones to suicide): **06 337756575**

Substance Abuse

- [Alcoholics Anonymous](#) (AA): find meetings (in English)
- Alcohol helpline: **800 632000**
- Drug helpline: **800 186070**
- Poison control center: **06 490663**
- Smoking helpline: **800 554088**

LGBTQ+ Support

- [ArciLesbica](#): A lesbian association with groups in several Italian towns.
- [MigraBo LGBTQI](#): Aims to help immigrants of the LGBTQI community from any country to integrate easier into Italy and the LGBTQI community.



FRANCE

Emergency Numbers

- Red Cross helpline (Croix Rouge Écoute): **0800 858 858**
- Rape and sexual assault support line: **0800 059 595**
- French Movement for Family Planning (MFPF): **0800 08 11 11** (e.g., if you're refused access to contraceptives)
- Women's advocacy line: **0820 20 34 28**

Mental Health

- Samaritans France: **116 123**
- [SOS Help](#): **01 46 21 46 46** (for English speakers)
- Red Cross Helpline: **0800 858 858**
- SOS Amitié: **09 72 39 40 50**

Substance Abuse

- SOS Alcohol/Drug Addiction helpline: **113**
- [Alcoholics Anonymous Europe](#)
- [AA France](#): **08 20 32 68 83**
- [Alcohol hotline](#): **0980 980 930**
- [Drug abuse helpline](#): **0800 23 13 13**
- [Cannabis hotline](#): **0980 980 940**
- [Narcotics Anonymous](#): **01 43 72 12 72**



PORTUGAL

Mental Health

- [SOS Voz Amiga](#) is available from 15:30 to 00:30: 213 544 545

Substance Abuse

- [Alcoholics Anonymous](#)
- Anti-Alcoholic Portuguese Society: 213 571 483 or 929 193 507
- Drug abuse helpline: 1414
- Narcotics Anonymous: 219 477 970

LGBTQ+ Support

- [Ex-Aequo Network](#): 968 781 841 (for people aged 16–30)
- [Clubo Safo \(for lesbians\)](#): 960 046 617
- [ILGA Portugal](#): 218 873 918
- [Opus Diversidades](#): 213 151 396



SPAIN

Emergency Numbers

- Support for single parents: call 622 795 542 or go [online](#).
- Report gender violence: call 016 or 900 116 016.
- Support for women: 900 580 888
- Domestic violence and abuse (*Mujeres Maltratadas*): 900 100 009
- Mum Abroad: information for English-speaking parents living in Spain available [online](#).

Mental Health

- Samaritans in Spain: English-language helpline offering free support – available by calling 900 525 100 or [online](#).
- Suicide, crisis, and support line (*El Teléfono de la Esperanza*): call 902 500 002 or go [online](#) (Spanish only, however).

Substance Abuse

- Anti-poison and drugs helpline: 915 620 420
- Drug addiction support (*Fundación de Ayuda contra la Drogadicción*): 900 161 515 or [online](#).
- Alcoholics Anonymous: find English-speaking meetings in your area [online](#).
- Al-Anon: find English-speaking meetings [online](#).
- Narcotics Anonymous: call 952 858 522 or go [online](#) (Spanish only, however).

LGBTQ+ Support

- FELGTB: umbrella group for more than 50 LGBTQ+ organizations in Spain. Find out even more [online](#).
- LGBT in Spain: [website](#) providing list of LGBTQ+ organizations in Spain.
- Casal Lambda: gay and lesbian association offering information, meetings, and counseling. Find out even more [online](#).



**POLAND**

**Mental Health**

- The Polish Psychological Association maintains a toll-free hotline for adults in a mental crisis. The hotline is available 14:00 – 22:00 at 116 123 (a number that other European Union countries share) and is also available [on the website](#).
- A mental crisis hotline is maintained by the ITAKA Foundation, available 24/7 at 800 70 2222 (toll-free). [Centrum Wsparcia](#): Adult support center offering various kinds of mental support.

**LGBTQ+ Support**

- Grupa Stonewall: an association providing different opportunities for engagement in the Polish LGBTQ+ community and provides free legal and psychological help. Find out more [online](#).
- Rainbow Tarnow: It was initiated to create a safe space for LGBTQAI+ people from Tarnów and the surrounding area. Find out more [online](#).



**BULGARIA**

**Mental Health**

- [Bulgarian Red Cross](#) provides free consultations related to psycho-social issues and difficulties such as substance addiction, suicide prevention, depression and for people living with HIV/AIDS.
- Sofia RHI – Phone of Trust. Tel.: 02/ 813 04 75 (for the weather 8.30 – 10.00 and 15.00 – 17.00)
- [Bulgarian Psychotherapy Association](#)

**Chat lines – in English**

- Lifeline – [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](#)
- [7cups.com](#)
- [prevent-suicide.org.uk](#)

**Substance Abuse**

- Solidarnost Association: a nonprofit organization focusing on rehabilitation, to provide support and advice to the parents and the relatives of addicted people. Find out more [online](#).

**LGBTQ+ Support**

- GLAS strives to bring forth a positive change to the lives of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Bulgaria. Find out more [online](#).



## LITHUANIA

### Mental Health

- [Vilties Linija \(Hope Line\)](#): Free and anonymous prevention of suicide and psychological crises for adults by phone. Phone 116 123, 24/7
- [Pagalbos Moterims Linija](#) (Women's Helpline): Free and confidential emotional support 24/7. Phone 8 800 66366, [email](#) or [chat online](#)
- [Vaiky linija \(Child Line\)](#): Free and anonymous help to the children and teenagers by phone and online. Phone 116 111 11:00 to 23:00 or chat online [here](#) (Monday to Friday, 6:00 – 21:00)
- [Jaunimo linija \(Youth Line\)](#): Free, confidential and anonymous emotional support line for those struggling with daily issues, emotional distress or at risk of suicide. Help is being provided by Phone 8 800 28888 (24/7), email or chat online [here](#) (Monday to Saturday, 6:00 – 22:00)

## LITHUANIA

### Emergency Numbers

- Eluliin - [eluliin.ee](#) (Free, every day from 19:00 to 07:00): 655 8088 in Estonian, 655 5688 in Russian
- Palunabi - [palunabi.ee](#) (Free, 24/7): 116 006. When calling from abroad: +372 614 7393
- Hingehoiutelefon - [hingehoid.ee](#) (Free, every day from 16:00 to 00:00): 116 123
- Lasteabi - [asteabi.ee](#) (Free, 24/7, for children, teens, young adults and parents): 116 111. When calling from abroad: +372 600 4434. Also possible to text via website.





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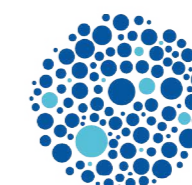
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Slovene  
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Research



**TRANSFORM  
4EUROPE  
CAMPUS LIFE  
MANUAL**

