



**Empowering students
with Mental Health tips
and resources for a
successful University life.**



STUDENT EBOOK LEADS

2024



WELCOME

Welcome and all the best on your Student journey!

Moving away to Uni has probably been your biggest life step so far and it is more than likely going to be a roller coaster with highs and lows, pitfalls and minefields all of which anyone would require help to navigate.

When it gets difficult along the way, and it will, don't fall into the trap of believing everyone, except you, is having the time of their life, they're not, everyone will need help at some point along the student Journey. Don't buy into the marketing that it's time to cut the 'apron strings' and stand on your own two feet, there is no such time, we thrive when we recognise that we are interdependent so stay connected with your support network back home and if you do start to struggle let them know, let your new friends at Uni know. Contact the Wellbeing team at your University and take advantage of the Apps and services that are available, we have listed some at the back of the booklet. Together you will ensure that your university experience is the best that it can be and before you know it you will be hugging each other in cap and gown.

In the meantime we have put together some information that we hope you find useful such as easy to access local beauty spots that you might not be aware of if you are new to the City. There is also a section of tips from student to student that you may find interesting.





CHANGE YOUR MOOD

How you want to feel

	Motivated	Calm	Happy
15 min	TED Talk	Meditate and Breathwork	Cardio
30 min	Read a Book	Be in Nature	Inner child activity
45 min	Call a Friend	Journal	Comfort TV Show
1 hour	Podcast	Yoga	Passion Project



THE POWER OF EXERCISE

Walking is a simple yet powerful exercise that has numerous benefits, particularly for mental health and wellbeing. It is a low-impact, easy-to-perform physical activity that requires no equipment or special skills. Walking can be done almost anywhere and at any time, making it an accessible and convenient exercise option for any fitness level.

One of the most significant benefits of walking is its positive impact on mental health. Walking is an effective way to improve mood, relieve stress and anxiety, and boost self-esteem. Studies have shown that regular walking can lead to significant improvements in symptoms of depression and anxiety. It is also known to promote feelings of calmness and relaxation, which can help reduce stress levels and improve overall wellbeing.

With these benefits in mind, it is no wonder that walking has become a popular form of exercise and stress relief. And what better way to incorporate walking into your routine than by trying out different walks and exploring new places? Not only does it help you stay physically active, but it also encourages you to get outdoors and appreciate the beauty of nature.

To make the most of your walking experience, it is a good idea to rate your mood before and after each walk. This will help you track your progress and see the positive effects of walking on your mental and emotional wellbeing. You may even find that walking becomes a regular part of your routine and something you look forward to every week.



FEATURED BEAUTY SPOTS NEAR LEEDS



Meanwood Valley Trail

The Meanwood Valley is the 'green artery' of Leeds, bringing rural countryside into the heart of the city. Running from Meanwood up through Adel Woods and finishing at Golden Acre Park, where it connects to the Leeds Country Way.



Fulneck Loop Circular

A relatively easy-going route which is suitable to most abilities, so a wonderful opportunity to get outdoors. Some parts can get rather muddy during wetter months, so best to come prepared with appropriate footwear and layers for full enjoyment.



Hawksworth Wood

Hawksworth Wood is a airy wood with some great trails and Oil Mill Beck running through it. The wood sits alongside a piece of parkland that has lots of recreational activities to enjoy.



Please visit discoverleeds.co.uk for more outdoor activities.



itsourday.org.uk



NOURISHING YOUR MIND

THE IMPACT OF FOOD ON MENTAL HEALTH

The food we eat has a significant impact on our mental health. Some food categories can even negatively affect our mental well-being. Foods that temporarily alter our mood, such as caffeine and chocolate, and foods that prevent the conversion of other foods into the nutrients our brain requires, such as saturated fats, are examples. It's important to enjoy what you eat, but it's also crucial to be mindful of how certain food groups can affect your mood. The Mediterranean style of eating is recommended for boosting mood, which is rich in vegetables, cereals, grains, garlic, and oils.

Coming home to a warm, healthy meal after a day out walking is one of life's simple pleasures. If you're someone who likes to be super organized, using a slow cooker to prepare your meal can be a game-changer. Slow cookers can be bought for as little as £10, but before investing in one, it's worth checking with family members as they may have one gathering dust in the back of their cupboards. For students looking to use a slow cooker, the BBC Food website has a collection of recipes specifically designed for them.

Finally, for students who need to eat well on a budget, taking a multivitamin can help ensure they get the extra nutrition they need. However, it's important to note that this is not a substitute for a healthy diet, the BBC Food website has a collection of easy student recipes that include videos, meal prep ideas, and money-saving tips.



TIPS FROM STUDENT TO STUDENT

We asked students what they would say to their 18 year old self just starting out. Here is a sample of what they told us with relevant topics.

GENERAL TIPS



"Ask for Student Discount everywhere!"

"Don't put off assignments, do them straight away so you have free time!"

"Don't waste the day being hungover, get up, shower, socialise, go to lectures, alcohol is a depressant, so be productive"

MENTAL WELLBEING

"Be honest with people about feeling nervous. Work isn't the end of the world, the university doesn't want you to fail. Call your mum. Make sure you do things other than your degree."

"Student support in the Uni are really nice and helpful. It's the best time of your life but also the hardest. Don't feel pressured to have an amazing time. You can get extensions for mental health reasons. If you don't get on with your flat, its ok and you will meet other people."

"Social media is addictive- it is designed to be addictive, in the same way as gambling. This is something that should be talked about more."

"Don't stay in your room too much. If your feeling lonely find a society you enjoy and get involved"



SOCIAL MEDIA AND MENTAL HEALTH

Social media is a ubiquitous part of modern life. However, it can also be a source of stress and anxiety, particularly if you're exposed to negative content. To use social media in a way that boosts your mental health, you can follow accounts that promote positivity, self-care, and mental health.

Following such accounts creates a social media feed that is uplifting, informative, and supportive. For example, Student Minds is a UK-based charity that provides resources and support for students struggling with mental health issues. Other helpful accounts include Joanna Konstantopoulou, a trained health psychologist who offers practical advice on how to boost your mental health, Hannah Daisy, an artist and mental health advocate who focuses on the non-binary experience, and Man Up!, which provides mental health support specifically directed at men. You can find more accounts on the back page with appropriate links.

It's also important to be mindful of how much time you spend on social media and how it affects your mood. Try setting specific times for browsing and engagement, and limit your exposure to negative or triggering content.

If an account is bringing you down, don't be afraid to unfollow them and curate your feed to include only content that promotes positivity and wellbeing. Finally, if social media is significantly impacting your mental health, it may be necessary to take a break or even delete your accounts entirely. Remember, social media can be a powerful tool for connecting with others and promoting positive change, but it's important to use it mindfully.



THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

AND THE EFFECTS ON MENTAL HEALTH

Menstruation can have a significant impact on mental well-being, which is often not discussed enough. We can categorize these effects into two groups: lower-level impact and higher-level impact. Lower-level impact symptoms are experienced by many women and include mood swings, discomfort, and feeling low. If you are experiencing these symptoms, it's important to confide in your loved ones, go for a walk, and take it easy. Remember that these feelings will pass, and it's okay to take some time for yourself.

Higher-level impact symptoms can be more debilitating and should not be overlooked or dismissed as normal. If you experience serious symptoms such as bipolar-like symptoms, suicidal thoughts, depression, or fatigue, it could be a sign of Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PDD). This condition affects 3-8% of women, and it's essential to seek medical attention to help you work through your symptoms and determine the best treatment for you.

It's crucial to recognize how your menstrual cycle affects your mental health, not blame yourself, and seek advice and help when needed. If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, please call 999, the Samaritans (116 123), or go to A&E. It's essential to be informed about this issue, as it could be you, your friend, or your partner who needs support. Keep an eye out for signs, be aware of the symptoms, and take steps to keep yourself and those around you safe.

We have included this page as it is something everyone should be aware of. It could be you, your friend or your partner that needs you to be better informed about this. If this relates to you watch for the signs, be aware and take steps to keep yourself safe, if it relates to a friend or partner watch for the signs be aware and support them to keep safe.



THANK YOU!

Life is tough, and being a young person in today's world can feel like an uphill battle. Everything is changing so fast, and the challenges we face are vastly different from what our parents and grandparents had to deal with. We appreciate that our parents dealt with their own struggles and challenges, but we can't ignore the fact that the world has changed beyond recognition in the last two decades. At It's Our Day, we recognize that the pressures and difficulties young people encounter today are real and complex. We're dedicated to tackling this and help create a better future for all young people, regardless of their background or circumstances.

So the next time someone from an earlier time dismisses your concerns and labels you a snowflake, remind them that it's 2023, not 1973. The world has moved on, and we need to recognize that the struggles young people face today are vastly different from those experienced by previous generations. It's not about living in the past - it's about embracing the present and building a brighter tomorrow.

At It's Our Day, we can build a brighter future for you and for generations to come. Because it's not their day anymore - it's our day.

