

Tips & Tricks to

# Stress Less



**RUSU COMPASS**  
RMIT UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNION DROP-IN CENTRE

Helping you through the assessment period

**RUSU acknowledges  
that we work and study  
on the stolen lands  
of the Woi wurrung  
and Boon wurrung  
language groups of the  
eastern Kulin Nations  
and we pay respects  
to Elders past and  
present.**

**Thanks to everyone  
who contributed to  
this booklet, including  
Fariha, Sam, Elspeth,  
Kash, Mel and Tia 💖**

# Welcome to Compass!

Studying can be stressful, so as you get stuck into your assignments and study for exams, we want you to remember to look after yourself.

In this booklet we will give you some tips and tricks to help you get through the assessment period. As well as encouraging you to try a digital detox when you are feeling stressed or cramming for assignments.

We have included a range of calming activities you may want to try, and information about on and off campus support services.

This book has been created by Compass staff, Compass Volunteers and RUSU Reps.

## What is Compass?

The Compass Drop-In Centre is a student friendly, welfare drop-in space where students can seek guidance without booking an appointment. The space is staffed by student volunteers and supervised by trained social workers.

University life can be stressful, and we're here to help you navigate these challenges with tailored peer to peer advice and access to the right support network.

Compass is open:  
**Monday to Thursday**  
**10am to 4pm**

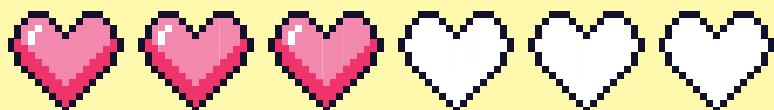
Contact us at:  
**[compass@rmit.edu.au](mailto:compass@rmit.edu.au)**

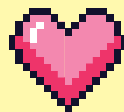
# DIGITAL DETOX

Take a break from your screens. Even small breaks from screens can help reset your mind, reduce anxiety, and improve sleep. It also helps to reduce distractions when you are trying to study.

It's not about going offline forever! It's about taking back control of your time, energy, and attention. Benefits:

- ♥ Gives us a chance to do something else to stimulate our brains, such as going for a walk, drawing, cooking, journalling, colouring, or spending time with friends.
- ♥ Gives us a break from reading about negative things going on in the world.
- ♥ Allows us to check-in with our bodies.
- ♥ Not looking at screens at least one hour before bed can help with sleep quality – including falling asleep faster and having better quality of sleep.
- ♥ Switching off phones for at least an hour before bed can also help to reduce feelings of anxiety and gives us more time to do other enjoyable activities such as reading or journalling.





## Top Tips:

- Delete one app that makes you feel more drained than inspired – even just for the week.
- Use *Do not Disturb* mode or *Focus* mode when studying, resting, or socialising.
- Set timers on apps to reduce mindless scrolling.
- Replace screen time with slow time: go for a walk, draw, write, cook, or just sit in the sun and touch grass.
- Start your day screen free: drink coffee, stretch, or play music instead of checking your phone first thing.
- Leave your phone in another room: you'll be surprised how much more present and peaceful you feel.

## Write your digital detox affirmation:

Here's an example to get you started: "My time and energy are valuable. I can choose what I give them to."

# STRESS LEVELS

Day to day our stress levels can change, and stress can be triggered by a whole range of life factors. The first step to understanding stress is to notice it and label what it feels like. Once we do this, we can cater our calming or de-stressing activity appropriately.

**To start, you can ask yourself some of the following questions...**

WHAT IS YOUR STRESS LIKE?

DOES IT HAVE A LOOK, A SMELL,  
A SOUND, A TEXTURE?

IS IT BIG, SMALL, FUZZY?

RIGHT NOW, ARE YOU HUNGRY?  
THIRSTY? COLD? TIRED? NO APPETITE?

IS YOUR MIND BUSY  
WITH THOUGHTS?

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR CURRENT MOOD?

It can be helpful to draw or write down your stress to help you detach from it.  
You are you. You are not your stress. This is not your permanent state.  
Stress passes through us all and it will pass through you soon.

# Body Scan

Noticing the sensations in your body can help you identify where your stress is physically. These are the steps to follow to do a body scan:

- 1 Sit or lie down comfortably.
- 2 Close your eyes or soften your focus.
- 3 Start by bringing all your attention to one of your feet.
- 4 Do you notice any sensations in your feet, temperature? Pain? Numbness? Tension?
- 5 Work your way slowly around the body bring all your attention to each part and noticing what it feels like.
- 6 Move from the foot to the ankle, ankle to calf, calf to knee etc. until you reach the top of your head and then head down the other side of your body until you reach the other foot.
- 7 If you find areas of pain or discomfort, pause there and take 3 deep breaths as you imagine the area softening, before moving on to the next body part.

## Common symptoms of stress:



*Did you notice any of these in your body scan?*

Check out the Free Smiling Mind app for heaps of guided mindfulness exercises

# Stress Tracker



## ***How are you feeling...***

♥ Happy

♥ Sad

♥ \_\_\_\_\_

♥ Calm/Content

♥ Worried/Anxious

♥ \_\_\_\_\_

♥ Energetic

♥ Tired

♥ \_\_\_\_\_

♥ Motivated

♥ Angry

♥ \_\_\_\_\_



## DE-STRESS SKILLS:

# Grounding

## 5-4-3-2-1 TECHNIQUE

Grounding is a term that is used to describe a particular calming strategy where we try to bring our busy or worried minds back to our bodies. Grounding techniques can really help if you find yourself feeling panicked or very stressed. Grounding techniques are simple, quick and can be used anywhere, whether you are in the library, in class or on the train, making them a wonderful resource.

### Try it out now! To start...

Sit down and use your 5 senses to observe your environment.  
Now fill in the blanks:

5 things you can see: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4 things you can hear: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3 things you can smell: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2 things you can touch: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1 thing you can taste: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DE-STRESS SKILLS:

# Negative THOUGHTS



Stress is normal and happens to everyone. Sometimes our stress can impact our thoughts. We can start to feel overwhelmed when our thoughts are stuck in a negative loop.

It can be uncomfortable to sit with our distressing emotions, but it is also important to feel and acknowledge them before we can find a way to work with/around them. That way we can reduce the impact of the thoughts even if we cannot remove them entirely.

It takes time and conscious effort to be able to redirect our mind/emotions when overwhelmed, but with practise we can learn different ways to manage negative thoughts and feelings.

It is not only helpful when encountering difficult situations but to shape our mindset entirely.

**Feelings are not facts.**  
**Facts are not feelings.**  
**Feelings are temporary.**

WRITE DOWN ONE ANXIOUS THOUGHT:

.....

.....

WRITE DOWN ONE WAY OF REFRAMING THAT THOUGHT:

.....

.....

.....

## DE-STRESS SKILLS:

# PEOPLE WATCHING BINGO!

Focusing on the world around us can help bring us back to the present instead of worrying about the future or the past. Find a spot inside or outside to sit and people watch. Tick off what you see...

 <p><b>SPOT SOMEONE WEARING RED GLASSES</b></p>	 <p><b>SPOT A KID EATING ICE CREAM</b></p>	 <p><b>SPOT SOMEONE IN ALL BLACK HEAD-TO-TOE</b></p>
 <p><b>SPOT A BIRD EATING HUMAN FOOD</b></p>	 <p><b>SPOT A CLOUD THAT LOOKS LIKE AN ANIMAL</b></p>	 <p><b>SPOT SOMEONE WHO IS WEARING A HAT</b></p>
 <p><b>SPOT SOMEONE JAY WALKING</b></p>	 <p><b>SPOT SOMEONE TALKING TOO LOUD ON THE PHONE</b></p>	 <p><b>SPOT SOMEONE WITH A LARGE COFFEE CUP</b></p>

## DE-STRESS SKILLS:

# My Wellbeing

## « TOOL BOX »

Make a wellbeing toolbox full of your strategies to manage stress. Add your strategies onto the tools.

Some examples of strategies include: Take a walk, Use sensory toys, Five minutes of fresh air, Call a friend, ask for help and so on...



# CALM SPOTS

**If you are feeling overwhelmed on campus there are plenty of calm spaces to go and chill out:**

## **City Campus:**

- Snooze Lounge 80.03.013
- Sensory Friendly Rooms 56.04.091
- Women's Room 10.05.062
- Women's Room (Carlton) 56.04.092
- Queer Space 05.01.017

## **Brunswick:**

- Women's Room 514.02.003
- Queer Space 514.02.03A

## **Bundoora East:**

- Women's Room 254.01

## **Bundoora West:**

- Snooze Lounge 202.02.019
- Women's Room 202.02.025
- Queer Space 202.04.024
- The Lake! Go sit by it.

## **Or get off campus and try green spaces for study or breaks:**

- Princes Hill Gardens
- Carlton Gardens
- Bundoora Football Oval
- Fitzroy Gardens
- Lincoln Square

# FOOD!

It's easy to forget to eat when you're stressed. But eating and drinking water can help to calm us down! So the first thing to do if you notice feeling stressed, is to take a big drink of water and grab yourself something to eat.

RUSU provides free meals most days on campus. Check out what's available on your campus at [rusu.rmit.edu.au/freefood](https://rusu.rmit.edu.au/freefood)



## Cheap Eats in the City:

- **Crossways Melbourne.** All you can eat vegan and vege meals, \$7.50 with student card. *147 Swanston Street.*
- **From Us 2 You.** Free meals Monday & Wednesday. Free BBQ Sundays. Other items such as blankets, toiletries, household items available. Search *From us 2 You*.
- **Salvation Army Magpie Nest Cafe.** Offers free breakfast and lunch (Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm) and dinner (Mon–Fri, 5–7pm). *Ground Floor, 69 Bourke Street Melbourne*

## Cheap supermarkets:

- Aldi
- Cheaper Buy Miles
- Apps: Too Good to Go, Eat Club

If you are struggling to afford food, please seek advise at the Compass Drop In Centre on your campus or email [compass@rmit.edu.au](mailto:compass@rmit.edu.au)

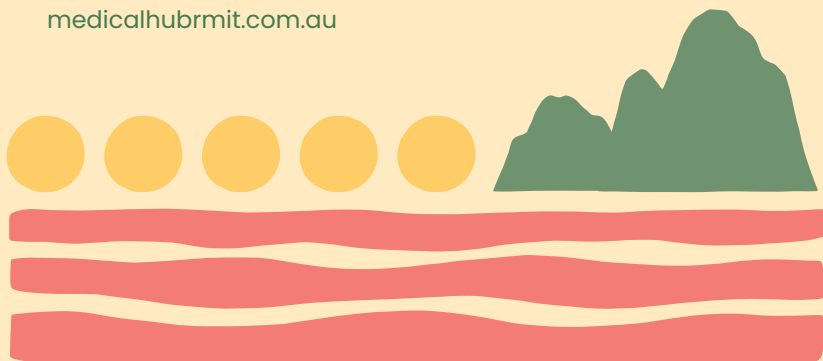
# Support & Help

There are loads of services on campus at RMIT where you can get help, so if you feel like you need a hand reach out to the below:

- **RUSU Compass:**  
[rusu.rmit.edu.au/compass](https://rusu.rmit.edu.au/compass)
- **RMIT Counselling:**  
🔍 RMIT Counselling
- **RUSU Student Rights:**  
[rusu.rmit.edu.au/studentrights](https://rusu.rmit.edu.au/studentrights)
- **RMIT Student Welfare:**  
🔍 RMIT Financial Welfare
- **RMIT Medical Hub:**  
[medicalhubrmit.com.au](https://medicalhubrmit.com.au)

If you need urgent mental health support please use the numbers below. If it its an emergency, contact 000.

- **RMIT 24/7 Mental Health support:**  
Phone: 1300 305 737  
Text: 0488 884 162
- **Lifeline:** 13 11 14
- **13YARN:** 13 92 76
- **QLife:** 1800 184 527
- **Butterfly National Helpline:**  
1800 33 4673
- **FriendLine:** 1800 424 287



**When you finish this book...  
Show it to RUSU front counter or  
Compass to get a sweet treat!**

*"You are a child of the universe,  
no less than the trees and the  
stars; you have a right to be here."*

**- MAX EHRMANN, DESIDERATA**

**RUSU**  
**COMPASS**  
DROP-IN CENTRE

**[rusu.rmit.edu.au/compass](https://rusu.rmit.edu.au/compass)**