Know yourself to lead yourself!
- Self-management and wellbeing

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First step of self-management: Check yourself

On a scale of art – how are you feeling about your studies in Aalto?
There are a lot of changes and new elements this fall

- New studies
- Teachers and classmates
- Returning to on campus studies after a long period of remote studies/life – hybrid lectures, new policies, accommodating to face-to-face happenings and large crowds again

And maybe also....

- Country and culture
- Language
- Home
Self management

• Self-management calls for knowing yourself
• Being aware of your **body, mind, feelings & values** helps to guide your behavior and thoughts and move in the right direction for you
  – Feeling a bit off? -> SOB
    • **Stop** for a moment, **Observe** emotional & physical state, modify **Behaviour** accordingly

• Self-management contains the abilities to find:
  – 1. Ways to **manage your time** that work for YOU
  – 2. **Useful attitudes & mindsets** that guide you towards your goals
  – 3. The **direction** where you are headed
Reading tip!

Great column for Aalto students by Frank Martela on values, directions in life & health and happiness:


➢ **Take-home-message:** you’ll probably get what you aim for in life, so make sure you’re aiming for things that will benefit your wellbeing, sense of meaning and overall happiness.

➢ **Check your plans** if need be, **align them with your values** & develop your self management skills!
How can you know if you are managing yourself well?

1. Feeling of having energy and getting things done
   - You have the right state of mind & body for learning – you're able to pay attention, learn, remember and apply to practice what you've learnt
   - What is the state of your physical, psychological and social recovery?
   - There is a good balance between studies and free time in your life

2. Motivation and goals – you are moving towards your values
   - You (mostly) have interest and motivation in your studies
   - You (mostly) find your studies meaningful
   - Your studies help you move towards the kind of life you want to experience

3. Self-efficacy: belief that you can manage with your studies
   - Correlates strongly with study performance and study wellbeing
     - "Whether you believe you will be able to graduate or not, you are probably right"
1. Finding the optimal state for performance

➢ High arousal level
  • Difficulties to stop, skipping breaks
  • Superficial breathing, faster heart beat
  • Restless mind and difficulties to concentrate
  • Difficulties to sleep

➢ Low arousal level
  • Energy saving mode on
  • Difficulties to be present, isolation
  • ‘Autopilot’ on
  • Feeling apathetic and tired, low mood
  • Difficulties to feel motivated
Optimal arousal level

- High performance, ability to concentrate
- Mainly stable mood
- Feeling awake but calm

To increase arousal:
- Engage in physical activity, move your body
- Socialize with friends
- Try something new / exciting
- Listen to uplifting music

To lower arousal:
- Enjoy a relaxing activity / hobby
- Spend time in nature
- Read a book
- Take a warm shower
- Take a nap

The Yerkes-Dodson Law
How anxiety affects performance.
How can you recognize stress?

How do you notice your stress level rising too high? What are the signs for you?

**Red light:** Stop & assess what's going on, change what you can to decrease stress

**Yellow light:** Moderate stress is alright in short periods, try to shorten the length if possible

**Green light:** You're doing great, prolong this if possible -> What have you done right? Keep it up!

What can you do to lower your stress level? What works short term and long term for you? -> Modify daily habits accordingly
**THE 4 A’S OF STRESS MANAGEMENT**

**AVOID**
unnecessary stress

- Say "NO" to objects and situation that prevent you from doing your task
- Organize and manage your tasks

**ALTER**
the situation

- Make it positive
- Communicate your feelings openly
- Manage time better
- State limits in advance

**ADAPT**
to the stressor

- Adjust your standards
- Reframe the issue
- Look at the big picture

**ACCEPT**
the unchangeable

- Talk with someone
- Forgive
- Practice positive self-talk
- Learn from your mistakes
Is something stressing you out ATM?

Discuss with a pair or in groups of three:

- Is something currently causing you stress?
- How could you Avoid / Alter / Adapt / Accept the stressor?
- 3 minutes

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Procrastinating often? - cause and consequence of stress & anxiety

Situations which induce procrastination:
• Task seems (too) difficult
• Task requires a lot of time
• Unclear assignment
• Lack of knowledge or skills needed for the task

There might be deeper reasons behind procrastination:
• Fear of failure
• Lack of confidence
• Self-criticism
• Your state of health and wellbeing – are you able to study?
• Motivation – internal or external?
2. Motivation

- We can affect motivation - it is not an on/off thing
- Don’t wait for motivation to start working on a task that is important to accomplish
  - Often motivation is created by doing and proceeding with the task
- Setting small, attainable, concrete goals and getting things done helps to boost motivation
  - Make a list and check things off of it
- Have I recovered enough? Do I feel tired? Is my life in balance?
- Consider your values related to studying
  - Why am I studying? Why are studies important for me? What will I achieve through these studies?
- Study together – it is productive, efficient and builds motivation!
How it all may add up

What is a healthy combination for you, regarding:

• Internal vs. external motivation
• Mixture of flow vs. “non-flow”
• Orderliness vs. spontaneity
• Grit & Perseverance vs. self-compassion & chilling out
• Studying together vs. autonomous studying

• The result?
  • Feeling of meaningfulness in studies – finding your goldilocks zone
3. Inner voice and beliefs affect study wellbeing

Sometimes our own thoughts are the worst enemies:

• "I can’t manage with my studies”
• "I can’t stand if I fail in exam!”
• "I am sure that all the others are coping better than I do”
• "I am not smart enough”

Many of us have an inner critical voice – we easily listen to the voice and let it influence our behaviour. **Start noticing this inner critic and challenging it!**

• Remind yourself of your strenghts and accomplishments
• Talk to your peers about your thoughts - self-criticism and self-doubts are highly common amongst higher education students – knowing you’re not alone can make it a lot easier to shift your mindset
Fixed or growth mindset? (Dweck, 2006).

- Growth mindset = learning, growing, and hard work despite setbacks.
- Students with growth mindset view failures as chances for feedback and are more likely to learn from mistakes.
- A growth mindset is viewed as changeable and can be developed through work ethic and perseverance.
- When students have a growth mindset, in which they believe that intelligence can be developed (for example through effort and instruction) they seek more learning goals and challenges, see effort as a positive behavior, are more resilient in the face of failure, and achieve higher academic outcomes.
What are your expectations of success in your studies?

Optimistic
• High outcome expectations and positive past experiences
• Straightforward striving

Defensive pessimistic
• Defensively low expectations
• Motivated and successful but stressed

Self-handicapping
• Fear of failure, concentrate on task-irrelevant behaviour in order to create an excuse for it
• Academic underachievement
Self-compassion

- Self-compassion means being warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate
- Self-compassion consist of three elements:
  ✓ Self-kindness
  ✓ Shared humanity
  ✓ Mindfulness
- Self-compassion is strongly associated with psychological well-being among young adults (Neff & McGehee, 2010)
- Self-compassion helps to cope with academic failures (Neff & al. 2005)
- A skill to practice: Self-Compassion Exercises by Dr. Kristin Neff
Aalto psychologist services fall 2022

- Starting Point of Wellbeing:
  Starting Point of Wellbeing - Student life - Into (aalto.fi)
  
- Individual appointments (remotely or face-to-face) with Aalto psychologist,
  Study- and career planning psychologists - Student life - Into (aalto.fi)

- Courses and self-study materials (e.g. time management, self-compassion)
  https://into.aalto.fi/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=328008

- Podcast The Best Thing Today:
  The Best Thing Today podcast series | Aalto University
How are you? – Chat by Aalto Psychologists


Aalto study psychologists guide you also via chat without a booked appointment!

Our chat may be a suitable option for you if you want to have a **one-on-one conversation** with a study psychologist about some challenge related to your studies or studying wellbeing, such as loneliness, performance anxiety, coming to campus after remote studies, study-related workload or a life situation that makes it difficult for you to study. You don’t need to get through it on your own, come to our chat to have a confidential and individual conversation with a study psychologist!

One conversation will take for about **30-45 minutes**. You can enter the chat via the link below by entering the link and then pressing the “Info chat” icon in the bottom right corner of the screen. The service is part of the Starting Point of Wellbeing project.

Thank you!