

# 12 ways to look after your wellbeing during senior assessment

**It's been a big year!** You've demonstrated your resilience – not only are you the first cohort of Queensland students to go through the new QCE system, but COVID-19 has brought with it some unique challenges. Remember to take time to look after your wellbeing.

Below are 12 tips (because 12 is always better than 11!) for maintaining your wellbeing. Looking after yourself will help you make the most of Year 12. So how can you keep your stress levels in check, and get your adrenaline working for you, instead of wearing you out?

## 1. Establish a routine

Having a routine can help you feel prepared, stay on top of your study and reduce stress levels. Start with planning your weekly study schedule, making time for all-important breaks. Try to start and finish at the same time each day – having some consistency will help you feel more in control.

## 2. Set realistic goals

Stay focused and reduce your stress by setting goals that are clear and realistic. Create small, practical 'mini goals' that you can comfortably achieve on your way to reaching your ultimate goal – whatever it may be!

## 3. Eat right

When you're busy studying it can be difficult to fuel your body and mind with the right food. If you find yourself snacking while you study, try swapping out things like chips, chocolate and soft drink for some fresh fruit, vegie sticks, or raw unsalted nuts ... and drink plenty of water.

### Did you know?

Energy drinks may seem like a good idea to keep you awake and alert, but the effects of caffeine can last up to six hours and can reduce your total sleep time by one hour!<sup>1</sup>

## 4. Catch those Zzzzzzzs

You need good quality sleep to function properly, but getting enough sleep can be easier said than done at exam and assessment time. Try sticking to a sleep schedule by going to bed and waking up at the same time each day. Remember to try to get the recommended 8-10 hours of sleep each night! Most smart phones can be set for regular sleep and wake times to assist you to keep a bedtime routine.



### Did you know?

Blue light from your smart phone impedes melatonin production, the hormone influencing your sleep-wake cycle. Turn your phone to sleep mode (and put it away!) so the blue light doesn't mess with your sleep cycle!

### Did you know?

Not getting enough sleep decreases your ability to focus and learn properly, and stops your brain from being able to consolidate what you have learned during the day.<sup>2</sup>



## 5. Stay active

Regular exercise can help take your mind off anxious thoughts, improve sleep, increase your energy levels and fire up those ‘feel-good’ chemicals in your brain. You don’t have to run a marathon – doing a small amount of physical activity every day can make a big impact.

## 6. Stay social

You might think that avoiding distractions like family and friends during exam and assessment time is the right move, but maintaining some life balance is very important to prevent burnout. Call a friend, have dinner with mates and regularly check in with family. Staying in touch with people who care about you can motivate you and keep you on track.

## 7. Treat yourself

After a hard day of study or when you reach a study goal, reward yourself with something you enjoy! Spend time outside, treat yourself to your favourite meal or hang out with mates.

## 8. Be prepared to problem-solve

If you start to feel overwhelmed by how much content you have to get through, or you’re stuck on a particular subject, unhelpful thoughts may creep in. Use your problem-solving skills to identify what problems are getting in your way and come up with solutions that will work for you. Then create a plan and put it in place.

### For example

If you’re stuck on a subject consider: studying that subject at a time of day when you’re most alert; presenting the information in a different way (like a diagram or flow chart); or organising a study group so you can talk problems through with your mates.

## 9. Try to stay positive

Negative thinking can decrease your chances of success before you even get started! Focus on your strengths and be kind to yourself when you make mistakes.

### For example

Use reframing techniques to turn negative thoughts into helpful thoughts to create a [growth mindset](#). Flip, ‘I’ve failed so I should give up’, into, ‘mistakes help me to learn and improve’, or, ‘I don’t understand this’, to, ‘I don’t understand this yet but I will draw on my resources to figure out how to understand’.



## 10. Set daily affirmations

It may sound simple but starting your day with a positive affirmation can be really helpful when you’re stressed. Start your day by saying something to yourself like ‘I will smash my study this afternoon so I can hang out with my friends tonight’ – it will help keep you focused and positive, whatever happens throughout the day.

## 11. Practice mindfulness

Mindfulness can help focus your thoughts and shift your attention from the pressures of ‘doing’ to the joy of ‘being’ in the moment. Find a mindfulness app or try some of the activities in the department’s [wellbeing activities for students’ booklet](#).

## 12. Ask for help

We all need some extra help and support at times and knowing when and how to ask for help is a good thing. It’s better to ask for help early on than try to struggle through on your own. Chat with your friends or family about how you’re feeling, speak to your teachers if you need help with your studies, or talk to your school’s guidance officer if you feel like you need extra support. Support is also available through Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 or by visiting the [Kids Helpline website](#).

### Tip:

As part of your original study plan, make a list of people you can go to for support. Stress can impair your ability to think logically and make decisions, so having a list will make reaching out for support much easier.

<sup>1</sup> Drake, Roehrs, Shambroom & Roth (2013). Caffeine effects on sleep taken 0, 3, or 6 hours before going to bed. *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine*, (9)11.

<sup>2</sup> Ellenbogen JM, Payne JD, Stickgold R. The role of sleep in declarative memory consolidation: passive, permissive, active or none? *Curr Opin Neurobiol*. 2006 Dec;16(6):716-22. Epub 2006 Nov 7.