

MENTAL HEALTH

The **coronavirus** no longer seems to be the biggest news and we have been able to resume our lives in society. Still, this virus has left its mark, both individually and socially. There was no real student-life during the corona period and now that this is possible again, you may experience difficulties in doing so. **Stress, uncertainty** or **fear** may persist or arise because the corona rules are no longer in place. Below are some **tips** for dealing with these feelings and staying **mentally healthy** after corona.



STAY CALM

The **corona crisis** caused a lot of **stress** and **anxiety**. These are **normal feelings**, but how do you deal with them when they persist?

- **Build in relaxation and breathing exercises.** Try to do these daily so that it becomes a habit (see infographics [Abdominal Breathing](#) and [Panic Attack](#)).
- **Search for balance and routine.** It is important that you find a balance between things that require energy (e.g.: talking classes on campus again) and things that give energy (e.g.: reading a book). Try to look at what this balance looks like and what can help to maintain or restore it (see infographic [Stress](#)).



CONNECTION

The **Corona measures** may have left a **feeling** of **isolation**. It is therefore important to **rebuild social connection** in normal life. It's best to do this **step by step**:

- **Reflection:**
 - What activities make me feel insecure? What do I want to try again?
 - What am I afraid of? What do I fear will happen?
 - How likely is it that this will actually happen? Rate it from 0% (very unlikely) to 100% (very likely).
- **Based on your reflection, make your 'social step-by-step plan' and implement it:**
 1. Start with the social activity that feels safest for you. E.g. walking outside with a close friend.
 2. Notice that this works? Then try to take the next step and enter into a new situation.
 3. Finish with the most challenging situation. E.g. an evening out with a large group of fellow students.
 4. It is important that you relax yourself between the steps. See how to do this at the top of this page.
- **Learning experience:**
 - After exposing yourself to a challenging social situation, pause for a moment to reflect on how it went. What was the outcome? Did all your worries come true? What did you learn from it? What is your take-away?

Important foundation for mental health: Resilience

What is resilience?

Resilience is the result of a process of **adapting** to a **new situation** and how you deal with it. It is about **learning** new things and **becoming stronger**. In this process, setbacks are inevitable and valuable. These will prompt you to develop new strategies to deal with them so that your resilience can **grow**. Learning to embrace REAL life is a gift to yourself.

HOW DO YOU BUILD RESILIENCE?



Dare to reflect on a difficult moment you have experienced in the past and try to answer the following questions:

- How did you deal with this situation?
- What did you do to make this situation a little more bearable? E.g. you encouraged yourself ("Cheer up! You can do it! It's okay! You'll be fine! This will also pass! This is human!"), asked someone for help, allowed yourself some relaxation, ...
- What did you learn from those situations? What could also help in the future?

We invite you to give yourself some kind words while doing this exercise. When doing so, it helps to think of how you would like to support a friend who is struggling.

EXTRA: Healthy diet and balanced exercise also contribute to good mental health and your resilience. Take a look at our [infographics](#) on this.

WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT? STUDY GUIDANCE IS HERE FOR YOU!



- Need a chat? Do you have big or small questions about our support offer? You can drop by the Study Guidance **Meeting Point** every working day or give us a call.
- **Study Counsellors, Student Psychologists, Study Path Counsellors and Job Coaches** are here for you! **Guidance remains possible** from a **distance** or **on campus**.
- You can find all our contact details on our website: www.vub.be