Help in Coping with Study Pressures

Psychologist Marja Valtari, FSHS
Welcome to Finland!

• Congratulations on your new place of study

• FSHS is here to support you in case you have any medical problems during your studies

  – Please remember that FSHS only provides basic health care services (general, mental and oral health) and does not e.g. perform extensive medical operations

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Content of this presentation

• Studying and living abroad
• What might cause you stress?
• Stress management and coping skills
• Reasons to contact mental health services
• Winter-SAD
• Small mindfulness exercises
Studying and living abroad – what to expect?

• A new life situation, mixed feelings: enthusiasm, excitement, fear, joy, sadness, uncertainty, tiredness
• Many new things to learn – give yourself time
• Look around curiously – a new country may give you new possibilities
• It doesn’t have to be easy all the time
• Keyword: acceptance!
What might cause you stress?

• You have temporarily more stress factors and less supporting/protective factors than normally
  – A lot to learn – your brain is overloaded (new language, new culture, new surroundings, new people…)
  – The things that normally support you are far away (familiar surroundings, people and routines…)

• It takes time to settle down, find the balance and build new routines
The most important things in stress management

• **Exercise** – but remember that ”enough is enough”

• **Eat** regularly

• Make sure you get enough **rest**
Utilize the Finnish nature

• How the nature affects our body...
  – Blood pressure comes down and heartbeat slows down
  – Less stress hormone (cortisol)
  – Less muscle pain and physical symptoms
  – You feel healthier

• ...and our mind?
  – Mood improves
  – Negative feelings decrease
  – Better self-esteem
  – Better ability to concentrate and solve problems
How to cope with study pressures?

• Be active, don’t stay alone
• Make sure you have enough spare time; don’t be too harsh on yourself!
• Learn stress management skills (e.g. relaxation techniques, planning and scheduling, prioritizing, separate work and pleasure, exercise, nature, friends…)
• Focus on the here and now (mindfulness)
• Remember that your mind and body are connected: What you do with your body, has an effect on your mind, and vice versa
How to cope with study pressures?

• Ask yourself: ”What’s most important? In which order should I do all the tasks?”

• Recognize the first symptoms of fatigue and act on them
  • Lack of motivation
  • Low mood
  • Negative thoughts about yourself
  • Need for solitude
  • Emotionality

• Don’t hesitate to get help when needed!
Reasons to contact mental health services

• Homesickness
• Being worried about someone/something back home
• Loneliness (difficulties to get to know new people or mix with a new culture, no one to talk to or spend leisure time with)
• Difficulties to cope with studies (planning, doing homework, writing thesis, contact teachers etc.)
• Long-lasting psychological symptoms or disorders: depression, anxiety, eating disorders, social phobias, fears etc.
• Somatic illnesses together with stress
• Sleeping deprivation or oversleeping
• SAD (seasonal affective disorder)
What is Winter-SAD (seasonal affective disorder)

• State similar to depression, which is caused by the lack of sunlight in the winter time
• Most significant effects from November to January
• Affects most people – only 10% have no symptoms
• Typical symptoms
  • Increased need for sleep and appetite
  • Feeling sad
  • Lack of energy
  • Irritability
  • Need for solitude
How to cope with winter-SAD

- Bright light therapy
- Stay outdoors during light hours
- Exercise
- Get sufficient amount of vitamin D
- Spend time with your friends and do things that you enjoy
- Accept the fact that you need more rest

- If symptoms become severe, contact health care services
Small mindfulness exercises to get back to the present moment

- Focus on your breathing
- Conscious walking, eating etc.
- Concentrate on your senses: What do you hear, feel, smell, see...?
THANK YOU!

“Take care of the minutes and the hours will take care of themselves.”

- Lord Chesterfield