

Sara - Presentation

Sara Hook:

Hi, I'm Sara Hook. I am a first year sociology student at the Open University. When you're studying your OU degree you're most certainly going to be focusing on elements such as learning the module material, passing TMA's, projects and exams. However, in order to study successfully the most important element is yourself.

In this short film we're going to take a look at elements such as sleep, relaxation and asking for help in order to build this sense of wellbeing.

Hi Harleyjack, so outside of your academic studies what pressures do you think would affect your studies?

Harleyjack:

Well I think there's a lot of things that can effect my studies and give pressure. I think one of the main things is that my mother has a long term illness which means looking after her. And of course I have a sister who's a lot younger than me who I look after as well. But things that I enjoy could put pressure on finding time for those. For example, I've done volunteering with the Lions Club and I really enjoy it but finding time for things like that, you know, not being so entrenched with study can put pressure on as well.

Sara Hook:

Fantastic.

Hi Ami. So outside of your academic studies what pressures to you feel effect your studies?

Ami Harty:

Well all sorts of things. I'm quite busy because I've got quite a stressful job and I've got a child who's only two and a half as well so that's pretty busy. One of my parents is not very well as well so it's kind of, you know, all of these other aspects of my life, you know, can get in the way. Sometimes it can be quite difficult to try and prioritise OU stuff over all the other stressful things going on at different times.

Sara Hook:

Thanks very much.

A third of the population struggle with poor sleep. According to an Oxford University study over 45% of the people that have insomnia struggle to stay awake in the day. Over 95% of people who suffer insomnia have low energy and over 75% struggle with poor concentration.

It's easy to see how these issues will affect Open University students. And we're now going to take a further look in to how you can use some techniques to improve your quality of sleep.

The latest technique in relaxation is mindfulness. There are many mobile phone applications, websites and online videos that will help you understand the techniques as well as what benefit you'd get from them.

The Mental Health Foundation has an online stress test as well as a mindfulness course found at bemindful.co.uk But other techniques and sources will be just as useful.

If you find following your relaxation technique or having a sleep routine isn't helping seeking help and advice from your GP would be your next step.

One in four people suffer from some form of mental health issue. Recognising these in yourself is key. Mental health can take many forms such as stress, depression and anxiety. It may be worth asking yourself the following questions.

Depression can be hard to spot. There are many different symptoms, some emotional, some physical. These are some of the most common so if you've experienced four or more for most of the day nearly everyday for over two weeks it might be time to talk to someone and visit your GP for help. The symptoms are as follows: Tiredness and loss of energy; persistent sadness; loss of confidence and self-esteem; difficulty concentrating and making decisions; avoiding others and becoming lonely and isolated; not being able to enjoy things that are usually pleasurable or interesting; undue feelings of guilt or worthlessness; feelings of helplessness or hopelessness; sleeping problems – difficulty in getting off to sleep or waking much earlier than usual; finding it hard to function at work/college or school; change in appetite; Loss of sexual drive or sexual problems; physical aches and pains; thinking about suicide and death or self-harm.

I experienced these myself whilst studying at the Open University. I found that with the support of my tutor, my GP as well as my friends and family I was able to get my studies back on track and carry on with my Open University degree. However, speaking out can be scary.

Some of the top tips of how best to look after yourself while studying include: Eating well, avoiding high fat, high sugar and high caffeine foods and drinks. Be flexible and remember to prioritise what's important. Do you really need to do that bit of housework right now? Make sure you've got a study space where you feel calm and relaxed and comfortable. This can be anywhere from your dining table to a coffee shop. Talk to those around you. Discuss how you're feeling as often as possible. Make time for the activities you enjoy such as a trip to the pub or a day at the shops.

But one of the most positive steps you can take is to be true to yourself. Whilst your tutors are there to help you don't be afraid to speak up. Don't let doubt and anxiety get in your way. This is your degree, your journey. Just go for it.