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reCAPS

Counseling & Psychological Services
University of California, Santa Cruz



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Mental Health and Wellness During Summer

Summer is coming soon and can be a great time to focus on improving your wellness and mental health. For those attending summer UCSC classes, CAPS provides limited individual and couples counseling, medication services, referrals, and crisis services. (We don't offer Let's Talk, groups, or workshops.) If you have already received individual, couples, or group counseling during this academic year; you are graduating; or you are not registered for classes this summer,

CAPS can help you find off-campus referrals.

If you are leaving Santa Cruz this summer, there are a few ways to find mental health services elsewhere. CAPS may be able to provide some suggestions. You can also call or stop by another UC counseling center near you. All of the UC counseling centers have an agreement to offer referrals (and sometimes other services) to any UC student—not just those attending that university. The staff at a UC counseling center in

your home area will be familiar with therapists and psychiatrists located near you.

Many students aren't aware that if they have paid for UC SHIP insurance in the spring quarter, it remains active over the summer, even after graduation. What's more, SHIP can be used in communities across California (and worldwide). Students can visit the [SHIP website](#) or call customer service to find a counselor and/or psychiatrist (a doctor specializing in mental health issues who can

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All About CAPS

Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) offers confidential mental health services to registered UCSC students all year 'round:

- Helpful workshops and trainings around campus
- A variety of therapy and support groups
- Brief individual and couples counseling
- Referrals to on- and off-campus resources
- Crisis services (in person Mon-Fri 8 am-5 pm; by phone 24/7 at 831-459-2628)

To make an appointment, call 831-459-2628 or stop by (Student Health Center, East Wing, 2nd floor) weekdays between 8 am and 5 pm. To learn more, visit our [website](#), check out the [CAPS blog](#), and like us on [Facebook](#)!

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provide medication) near home. For students who have private insurance, your provider can explain what mental health services your policy covers and recommend a clinician in your home area.

Maybe you are looking for other ways besides therapy and medication to improve your mental health and wellness. Consider stepping up your exercise routine by joining a gym, hiking a new trail, exercising

with friends, or trying a new sport or fitness class. Making healthy changes to your diet and sleep routine are also a part of wellness, and summer is a good time to focus on these areas. Self-help books, websites, and apps can be helpful to work on issues like relationships, self-esteem, and anxiety. For example, check out WellTrack's online wellness programs. You can register for free [online](#) using CAPS' access code (UCSCCAPS).

Some people find alternative health modalities like acupuncture, massage, yoga, and meditation to be helpful. Doing things you enjoy and being with people you care about are important to mental health as well!

Let us at CAPS know if you would like some help planning for good mental health this summer. Call the CAPS central office at 831-459-2628.

Wellness Tip: Exercise

Regular exercise is good for the body. But did you know that exercise is also one of the most effective ways to improve your mental health? It can have a profoundly positive impact on stress and many mental health conditions. It also can help improve memory and sleep and boost overall mood. Research indicates that even modest amounts of exercise can make a difference—you don't have to go all out to feel the effects.

There have been many studies on the impact of regular exercise on depression and anxiety. It is as effective as medication in reducing and preventing mild to moderate depression. There are several specific reasons exercise can help with depression and anxiety: Not only does it promote neural growth and reduce inflammation in the brain, it also releases endorphins—powerful brain chemicals that make you feel good. It can also boost

energy, relieve tension, and serve as a helpful distraction from worries and thoughts that feed depression and anxiety.



You may not be aware that exercise is also a great tool for managing ADHD. Because physical activity immediately boosts dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin in the brain, it can improve focus and attention. These effects work in a similar way to ADHD medications.

Starting or amping up an exercise routine can seem daunting. Begin with activity that is not too strenuous for just a few minutes a day a few

days a week and build up the intensity, frequency, and length of workouts gradually. Check with a medical professional before starting a new exercise routine if you have any injuries or health conditions.

Dear CAPS,

Why can't I focus on studying?

—*Scattered and Stressed*

Many things can cause a lack of focus. Some common reasons are Attention Deficit Disorder, a learning disability, depression, anxiety, or a lack of good study skills. Other reasons may include lack of sleep, unhealthy diet, or use of drugs and alcohol. More than one of these (and other) factors may be at play.

Unfortunately, it's hard to tell if a psychological problem or learning disability is to blame without an assessment by a professional. This can take some time, as often the process requires a few steps (such as getting reports from prior schools or records from a doctor or therapist; undergoing structured psychological and/or educational testing; and meeting one or more times with a psychologist or medical clinician). Getting assessed can be helpful, however, as it can lead to a clearer direction in how to approach problems with focus. Summer is a good time to pursue such an assessment to prepare you to return to school in the fall with a new game plan.

There are some things you can do on your own that may help. First,

take a look at the basics: If you are not eating well, make a change to your diet. If you can't sleep well, improve your sleep habits or seek help from a professional or self-help book or app (such as [CBT-i Coach](#)) for insomnia. Try to reduce or eliminate your use of drugs and alcohol if possible. Of course, these changes may not be easy, but sometimes a small change can make a big difference.

If poor study skills and lack of self-discipline are the main issues, try the following:

1. Create or find a quiet space for studying. Minimize distractions you can control by turning off your phone and not opening websites that allow you to waste time.
2. Take breaks. Many people find it gets harder to study if they keep going without a break. Plan a short break after each task (e.g., reading a chapter or doing a set of math problems) or at a set time interval (e.g., a 10-minute break every 90 minutes).
3. Keep a notepad handy so that if distractions cross your mind (e.g., "I need to do my laundry" or "I forget when that meeting

is happening tomorrow," you can write them down and address them later.

4. Use a variety of study tactics, such as re-reading and highlighting class materials and notes, writing down main points, making flashcards, working with a friend or study group, and reviewing important info verbally.
5. Give yourself a reward for finishing a task—just try not to let the reward interfere with the rest of your work. For example, if you finish your Econ homework but still have to start a paper for your writing class, don't make the reward a 2-hour movie! Try 15 minutes of YouTube videos, a short chat with a friend, or a yummy cookie instead.



A few of CAPS' Student Advisory Board (SAB) members and staff facilitators at an event to recognize the SAB's contributions to CAPS. Left to right: CAPS postdoctoral fellow Ashley Wickliffe, SAB member Julia Dunn, SAB member Jazmin Jauregui, SAB member Brandon Vasquez, and CAPS psychologist Blair Davis. In 2015-2016, the SAB provided student feedback and opinions, helped promote CAPS services, assisted with outreach, and conducted a survey to assess some of CAPS programs.

Pause for Paws Is Back!

Those awesome Pause for Paws pups are returning to UCSC to give you some doggy love. Come to the McHenry Library lawn on Sunday, June 5th, 5–6 pm, or Monday, June 6th, 6:30–7:30 pm to de-stress with adorable, lovable therapy dogs.

Therapy dogs are specially trained to enjoy interacting with a lot of new people. Research shows that by petting or just being around dogs, people feel happier and less stressed out—something that is especially important at exam time.

Pause for Paws, sponsored by the University Library, is one of the most popular events of the year at UCSC and is held just before finals every quarter. Like the [University Library's Facebook page](#) to get updates on this and other events!



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