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reCAPS

Counseling and Psychological Services
University of California, Santa Cruz

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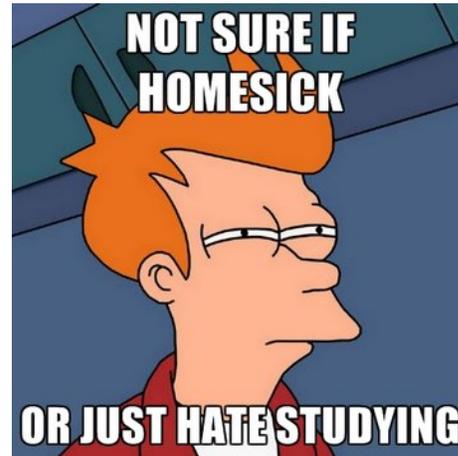
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Upcoming CAPS Events

- Tackle Twisted Thinking Workshop: Tuesday, January 21st, 4:15-5:15 pm, Cervantes & Velasquez Room (Bay Tree Building, 3rd floor). Free workshop on how ways you think affect how you feel & what you can accomplish. Sponsored by CAPS and Asian American/Pacific Islander Resource Center.
- Let's Talk is back! Drop in for a brief conversation with a counselor Wednesdays 1-3 pm on the 3rd floor of the Bay Tree Building and Thursdays 2:30-4:30 pm at Baskin Room 153B. Available every week school is in session, except first week in quarter and finals week.

For more info, call CAPS at 831-459-2628.



A Student's Perspective: Stress Following Winter Break

by Araceli Aviles

Winter break is a time for de-stressing after the first quarter of the year. After three weeks of downtime, it can be difficult jumping right back into a new quarter. A new term brings with it a mix of emotions and challenges that, while stressful, can be managed.

If it's your first year away from home, the sudden switch from spending time with family and friends to being back at school can be tough. But, homesickness can occur even if it isn't your first year.

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"Do you ever feel like you're part of something greater than yourself?"

All About CAPS

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers FREE, confidential mental health services to registered UCSC students.

- Brief individual, couples' and group counseling year-round
- Awesome workshops and trainings around campus
- 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 us at 831-459-2628 or stop by (Student Health Center, East Wing, 2nd floor) 8 am to 5 pm. Check out the [CAPS blog](#), visit our [website](#) and like us on [Facebook](#)!



Dear CAPS,

I've been feeling depressed and have thought about counseling, but I'm too busy. What else can I do?

--Busy and Blue

You're not alone in feeling this way. Studies show that a large percentage of college students feel depressed at times, but not all of them seek counseling--at least not right away.

It's important to ask yourself some questions before ruling out counseling. Have you been having serious thoughts about suicide or self-harm? Have you been doing dangerous or self-destructive things, like using drugs or drunk driving? Are you so depressed you can't function normally? Have you been feeling depressed every day, almost all day, for more than two or three weeks?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, we strongly urge you to come in to CAPS Crisis Services during business hours to talk to one of our therapists or call our 24-hour number (831-459-2628) to talk to a live therapist. But let's assume you answered "no" to all the questions: You're down, but you're not at risk of hurting yourself and you're still functioning OK--you'd just like to be happier and functioning better. What might help?

You could consider visiting Let's Talk, our weekly drop-in service, to have a brief conversation with a therapist to get another perspective and some advice. (See "Upcoming Events" on p. 1.) You could also try some of the following self-help tips.

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Here are some tips to alleviate this kind of stress.

- **Utilize technology**--Set up a time in your schedule with loved ones to talk on the phone or video chat. Staying in touch meets an internal need for connection.
- **Bring something comforting back to school**--This could be your favorite warm blanket (Santa Cruz winters can get chilly), home-baked goods, holiday photos or anything that reminds you of home.
- **Get active and connected**--If you find yourself dwelling on home a lot, consider getting involved in clubs, activities, seminars and other campus events--or even things going off campus. College is a time for exploration, and this gives you an opportunity to have stories to tell your loved ones the next time you talk to them. Getting involved also strengthens connections at UCSC so it feels more homey.
- **Talk to your peers**--Chances are, they have similar feelings. Sharing with them can be comforting and potentially build new relationships.



Photo from Univ. of British Columbia website

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Meet Your CAPS Staff



Periodically, our blog features a bio of a staff member or one of our fabulous Student Advisory Board members. Go to <http://ucsccaps.wordpress.com> to get to know us better, and check back regularly for new bios and articles.

Wellness Tip of the Month



Photo by B. Davis, from dog therapy event at Science & Engineering Library, Dec. 2013

Lots of people love animals. Time with them can be a great stress reducer: Research has suggested that interacting with animals can increase oxytocin (a brain chemical related to bonding) and dopamine (a brain chemical related to happiness) while lowering cortisol (a steroid hormone released by the adrenal glands during stress). Petting an animal can lower feelings of stress and blood pressure and improve feelings of well-being.

However, since pets other than service animals aren't allowed on campus, how can a stressed student get some animal time? If you live off

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- **Stay social.** Even if you don't feel like hanging with friends, being social can help. Don't overdo it, but make sure you stay connected to at least a few people you can count on for support and fun.
- **Plan for the positive.** Schedule time for socializing, self-care (e.g., enough sleep, good meals, exercise) and pleasant activities, like watching your favorite show, going on a hike or playing guitar with a friend.
- **Laugh.** Humor is a great way to beat the blues. Joke with a friend or see a funny movie.
- **Exercise.** Regular exercise improves mood and reduces stress. You don't need to be an Olympic athlete--just do an activity that gets your heart rate up a few times a week.
- **Avoid relying on alcohol or other drugs to cope.** Substances provide temporary "solutions" that can cause bigger problems and make depression worse.
- **Find a creative way to explore your feelings,** like journaling or artwork.
- **Start a "gratitude practice."** Take a few minutes each day to focus on things in your life for which you feel grateful. Research shows this helps when done regularly.
- **Pick up a self-help book.** Two good ones are *The Depression Cure* by S. Ilardi and *Thoughts and Feelings* by M. McKay.

Another difficulty coming back to school is getting re-acclimated to the fast pace of the quarter system. It's important to keep up with school but also find your rhythm:

- Take some time to prepare before you get too busy. Plan time to buy any school supplies, food and other things you'll need.
- When you're making your winter schedule, pencil in study time and downtime, and try to stick to the plan throughout the quarter.
- Take a look at your practices and habits from the last quarter. Which ones worked for you? Were there any that got in the way of studying or impacted you emotionally? Try to rid yourself of bad habits and build good ones. A new quarter and new year bring a chance to improve on the past and start fresh.
- Talk to your friends, advisors and professors if you're feeling any stress or anxiety. People are usually receptive.

At times, stress can be overwhelming after a break. It's a great time to take advantage of CAPS resources. Asking for help or simply having someone to talk to can go a long way in building emotional health and can even improve academic success.

Araceli Aviles is a senior with a background in nonviolent communication. She is a member of the CAPS Student Advisory Board.

campus, maybe your landlord allows pets. However, if you live on campus or have a rental that does not permit animals, here are some other ways you can reap the rewards of time with animals.

1. Attend a campus dog therapy event. These events occur around finals most quarters (and possibly at other times). Check the library [\(<https://www.facebook.com/ucsclibrary>\)](https://www.facebook.com/ucsclibrary) and CAPS [\(<https://www.facebook.com/UCSCCAPS>\)](https://www.facebook.com/UCSCCAPS) Facebook pages for upcoming events. More than 200 students came to dog therapy nights in December at McHenry and the Sci & Engineering Library.
2. Plan Skype/FaceTime dates with family to see your pet back home.
3. Volunteer at an animal shelter. Try the Santa Cruz County shelter: <http://www.scanimalshelter.org/volunteer> or search online for other volunteer gigs.
4. Visit a dog park and befriend one of the pooch owners.
5. Watch cute animal videos.



Photo by B. Davis, from dog therapy event at Science & Engineering Library, Dec. 2013