



December 2013

# reCAPS

Counseling and Psychological Services  
University of California, Santa Cruz

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## Upcoming CAPS Events

- Let's Talk drop-in service, every Wed, Bay Tree Bldg., 3rd floor, 1-3 pm, and every Thurs, Baskin Bldg., 153B, 2:30-4:30 pm (last sessions of the quarter are 12/11 and 12/12). To read more about Let's Talk, see <http://caps.ucsc.edu/pdf/lets-talk-FAQs.pdf>.
- Pause for Paws. The dogs are back! Come by the library for a pre-finals stress break with furry friends. Sat, 12/7, 6-8 pm, McHenry Library, and Sun, 12/8, 6-8 pm, Science & Engineering Library. Sponsored by University Library & CAPS.

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



## Wilson's Workout Tips

by Wilson Lam

For most of us, working out is hard. It requires energy, time and effort and is often difficult to fit in to our busy schedules as full-time college students. This is especially prevalent around midterms and finals, when we have to step up our studying by sacrificing some of our "free time" (what little we have of it). But did you know that working out and having an active lifestyle benefit people not only physically but also

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## 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 always seem to be worrying and thinking the worst possible thoughts. How can I stop?*

*--Negative Nellie*

Negative thoughts are a common problem, but not all are "bad": A brief worry or constructive self-criticism can sometimes help in motivating you to plan ahead, prepare for a challenge or learn from a mistake. However, negative thoughts become unhelpful when they are unrealistic and harsh and when we allow them to keep building. While it takes practice to change negative thoughts, it is worth it because it can make a big difference in anxiety levels, mood and self-esteem.

Let's start with how realistic a thought is. For a thought to be helpful, it needs to be realistic. For example, if you failed a test because you blew off studying, it would probably not be realistic to think, "I am so stupid! I'm going to fail everything." It would also not be realistic to think, "The only reason I failed is that the test was too hard." A more realistic thought might be, "OK, I should have studied more. I wish I had, but it's too late to change that now. How can I help myself study more effectively next time?"

Next let's think about how harsh thoughts can be harmful. Imagine a sports coach who tries to motivate

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mentally? In a recent study documented by the journal *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review*, it was found that individuals who regularly participate in aerobic exercise "tend to optimize their potential for executive function activity." In other words, working out can help you perform better in school! Since I know that a brain can handle only so many consecutive hours of intense, effective studying, I find it important to periodically move around and get the blood flowing in my body so that when I return to my studies I feel both revitalized and refocused.

For those students who feel that they do not have enough time to make it to the gym and may only have a little bit of space, try one of these workouts in your dorm room or apartment, and let me know if you aren't sweating!



Photo from *Dorm Room Fitness 101* (<http://www.hercampus.com/school/psu/dorm-room-fitness-101>) by Ashia Tokponwey.

- **Workout 1:** 20 jumping jacks and 10 regular or modified push-ups (to learn different types of push-ups, check out [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaIpD\\_zfrII](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaIpD_zfrII)) (repeat 5x)

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## Meet Your CAPS Staff



Every couple of weeks, CAPS features a bio of a staff member or one of our fabulous Student Advisory Board members on our blog. 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



The holiday season brings many occasions when people are tempted to drink. Research shows that drinking is the top reason for damaging behavior during the holidays in the U.S. For some (including those under 21), not drinking can be the best option. For those who drink, it may be hard to know what is safe and how to have fun while being in control.

Problem drinking involves lack of control, bingeing (more than 4-5 drinks in a sitting), increased tolerance and continued drinking despite consequences (e.g., blackouts, academic issues). What can you do to maximize fun and minimize problems during holiday celebrations?

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the team by humiliating and yelling at the athletes. They are probably going to feel pretty bad and may even give up because they feel hopeless. Now, imagine a coach who gives encouragement and constructive criticism. The coach points out things the athletes do well and what they can improve. He or she inspires the team to try. You need to imagine yourself as that supportive coach encouraging and motivating your inner self, not the one who yells and berates.

Finally, consider how negative thoughts can build. It may be hard to prevent them from popping into your mind, but you can learn to control how long you entertain them and try to prevent the “snowball” of escalating negative thoughts. Here are some techniques to try:

1. Mentally tell yourself “STOP!” every time you catch yourself thinking unhelpfully.
2. Make a harsh thought more gentle and/or realistic (e.g., change “I failed--I am a loser!” to something like, “I’m upset I failed, but my worth is not based on one test.” Or, “I wish I’d studied, but I’ll try harder next time.”)
3. Distract your mind from unhelpful thoughts by calling or texting a friend, reading, watching a video, exercising or whatever works for you.
4. Avoid relying on alcohol or other drugs to zone out.

Change takes time and practice, but you can do it. If you need help, consider contacting CAPS or reading a self-help book like *Thoughts and Feelings: Taking Control of Your Moods and Your Life* by M. McKay.

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- **Workout 2:** 50 burpees (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZQA08SlJnM>)
- **Workout 3:** 10 regular or modified push-ups, 10 squats, 10 sit-ups and 10 burpees (repeat 3x)
- **Workout 4:** 100 jumping lunges (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7Iug7eC0dk>)
- **Workout 5:** 50 mountain climbers (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KI8u58hPam4>) and 10 push-ups (repeat 3x)

If you have any medical problems, including injuries, talk to a doctor before starting a new workout routine. And, feel free to modify or combine these workouts as needed. If you’re a beginner, start with fewer reps and/or easier exercises, and increase the reps and/or difficulty each time you work out. Remember, even though exercise isn’t easy, it can make a big difference in how you feel physically and mentally, and it may just help you get better grades!

*Wilson Pineda Lam is an Oakes College senior majoring in Cognitive Science and minoring in Biology.*

## Happy Holidays From CAPS!



## Wellness Tip, continued from pg. 2

Here are some things to try:

- Have an escape plan by bringing your own vehicle or knowing how to use public transportation if you need to leave because of temptation.
- Be the designated driver or make sure a trusted person has agreed to act in this role.
- Set a realistic drink limit before you arrive and stick to it. If you can’t stick to a limit, avoid drinking (or avoid going to the event).
- Let a friend at the event know you may need his or her help to avoid drinking or limit your drink intake.
- Get a tasty nonalcoholic drink (e.g., hot cider, cocoa, a virgin cocktail) to give you something to hold and prevent people from offering you an alcoholic drink.
- Rehearse a reason for not drinking that you can give at the event (e.g., “I’m on medication and can’t have alcohol,” “I’m the designated driver,” “I’m cutting back.”)
- Be choosy about the events you attend and learn to say “no” if you don’t want to attend something.
- Find new holiday activities and traditions that don’t involve alcohol (e.g., volunteer at a soup kitchen, have a gift exchange, see a movie, bake cookies with friends, have an alcohol-free dance party).
- If you’re in recovery, attend support meetings during the holiday season.