



reCAPS

Counseling & Psychological Services
University of California, Santa Cruz

CAPS Staff Share About How We Follow Our Own Self-Care Advice

There are lots of ways that we at CAPS try to help students. One is by sharing ideas and guidance around coping, wellness, and self-care.

Have you ever wondered whether we take our own advice? I asked some of our staff to share their thoughts on “practicing what they preach.” (And I also answered the question).

First, the way I (Blair Davis, a CAPS counselor and also the editor of

reCAPS) would answer the question: I often talk to students about finding balance. It’s one of my go-to phrases! It is something I try to do for myself—to put time and energy into my work but also into my hobbies and the things that help me relax and revive.

Erica Lopez, another of our counselors, told me that she often says to students, “Think of balancing self-care as having a bank ac-

count. You need to make sure to make deposits (engage in self-care activities) to be able to withdraw (endure difficult moments with distress) and not suffer the penalties of having insufficient funds (e.g., burnout, deteriorating functioning).”

According to Lain Lease, one of our case managers, “I discuss and encourage connecting with the living, breathing elements of the outdoors for

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All About CAPS

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

- Helpful workshops, trainings, and self-help tools
- A variety of therapy and support groups
- Let’s Talk drop-in consultations
- Brief individual, couples, and family counseling
- Medication services
- Referrals to on- and off-campus resources
- Crisis services in person Mon–Fri 8 am–5 pm and 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](#)!



CAPS staff, September 2018.

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grounding and a sense of connection. During my lunch and when walking between buildings, or when I'm feeling overwhelmed, I try to make a conscious effort to observe visually and through touch and smell the magnificent natural surroundings. My favorite aspect of nature here is the redwood trees."

Counselor Amy Mandell says, "I encourage students to always do their best but to recognize that 'your best' varies from day to day. If you're sick, or maybe you received bad news one week, you can't expect yourself to perform as well as you would have otherwise. Allow yourself flexibility and recognize that nobody is perfect! Personally, I value my own well-being as much as I

do my productivity and accomplishments."

We hope it's been helpful to read about the ways we at CAPS try to follow our own advice. For more self-care ideas, contact us or visit our website's [self-help library](#).

Dear CAPS,

How do I know if my alcohol use is a problem?

—*Social Drinker*

This is a great question, and there is no one answer. However, there are some general guidelines that may help answer the question.

First, alcohol use is associated with several short-term (e.g., car crashes, violence) and long-term risks (e.g., cancer, liver disease). Thus, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommend that for those who drink, male-bodied people should have no more than 14 drinks a week and no more than 2 drinks per day. For female-bodied people, 7 drinks a week is the max, with no more than 1 drink per day. The CDC also notes that people who don't currently drink should not start drinking (i.e., alcohol does not improve your health compared with not drinking).

For people with or at high risk of certain health conditions, such as cancer, or for women who are pregnant, the use of *any* alcohol can increase risk. It's also not recom-

mended that those under 21 drink (it's against the law, and the younger someone starts drinking, the higher the risk of problems).

In addition to the amount you drink, it is also helpful to look at how and why you drink. "Binge drink-



ing" (for males, having more than 5 drinks in a sitting, and for females, more than 4 drinks) increases health and safety risks compared with moderate or no drinking. Drinking faster (e.g., doing shots, pounding beers) also increases the chance that something will go wrong.

Do you drink to escape from your feelings or problems instead of trying to resolve or find healthier ways to cope with the issues? Using alco-

hol to "self-medicate," especially if this leads to a lack of other coping tools or to problems getting worse, is a sign of unhealthy alcohol use.

It may seem obvious, but regular, heavy alcohol use, especially if it feels compulsive (i.e., difficult or impossible to control) is another red flag. I often hear students say, "I'm not an alcoholic because I don't drink alone" or "I don't drink every day, so I don't have an issue."

Whether one drinks alone versus socially or every day versus a few days a week doesn't define whether a problem exists—it's also about the level of control one has and the impact of the drinking. Whenever a person is having unwanted consequences from drinking, they could be said to have a problem.

If you think you may have a problem with alcohol, there are several resources at UCSC for getting more information and help: [CAPS](#), [Student Health Outreach and Promotion \(SHOP\)](#), and [Slugs for Health and Growth](#).

Foods for Your Moods

Although there is no “magic diet” to cure depression, counteract ADHD, or prevent anxiety, eating healthy is good for your overall well-being. And, there are some foods that do seem to have a specific impact on how you feel and how you function.

Carbs for Calm

Eating carbs can make you feel calmer and happier. Researchers assume that this is because eating carbs can raise serotonin levels. If you’re reaching for carbs to boost your mood, choose “complex carbs,” such as whole grains (e.g., whole-grain breads and crackers, brown rice, fruit) rather than simple carbs (e.g., foods heavy in sugar and/or made with white flour), as they are healthier and may help you avoid a “sugar crash.”

Protein for Energy

Feeling tired and sluggish? Instead of reaching for caffeine, try having some protein. Protein boosts energy and mental focus. Like carbs, proteins such as turkey, tuna fish, and chicken may boost serotonin. Protein can be found in lots of other foods, too, like cheese, soy, yogurt, peanut or almond butter, beans and peas, and red meat.

Vitamins and Minerals for Mood

Research has shown that B vitamins may have a big impact on mood and energy levels. One study found that men who got less folate (a B vitamin), especially those who also smoked tobacco, tended to be more



depressed. The same study found that women who got less B12 were more likely to feel down. It’s unclear if depression reduces B vitamins or if low B vitamin levels causes depression.

Either way, you can increase your B intake by eating a Mediterranean diet. This diet emphasizes eating primarily plant-based foods, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes (e.g., lentils, peas, soybeans, garbanzos) and nuts; replacing butter with olive oil or canola oil; and using herbs and spices instead of salt to flavor foods. B12, unlike other B vitamins, is found only in animal sources, such as eggs, meat, poultry, fish, and dairy.

Deficits in vitamin D have also been linked to depression. Being outside in the daylight or sitting near a win-

dow and exposing your skin to sunlight is one way to get more vitamin D (but be sure to use sunscreen). Fatty fishes like tuna, salmon, and sardines; eggs; mushrooms, and fortified milk are also good sources.

The mineral selenium may also be related to depression. Get more selenium in your diet by eating whole grains, beans and legumes, meat and poultry, nuts, dairy products, and seafood.

Expert Advice

To talk with a professional about your diet and how it may relate to mental health, make an appointment with Nancy Jackson, the UCSC Student Health Center nutritionist. Call SHS at (831) 459-2500 during business hours.

Upcoming Events

LET'S TALK: Let's Talk is a drop-in space where you can have a brief, confidential, one-time chat with a professional CAPS counselor. No appointment needed! Let's Talk is held four times a week from 1 to 3 pm at different locations in fall, winter, and spring, except holidays and finals weeks. All registered undergrad and grad UCSC students are welcome at all locations of Let's Talk. For more info, visit our [website](#) or call (831) 459-2628.

TRANS, NON-BINARY, GENDERQUEER, & GENDER QUESTIONING STUDENT SUPPORT GROUP: This weekly drop-in group provides a welcoming environment and support to discuss topics of interest brought up by group members. Wednesdays from 3:30 to 4:30 pm at the CAPS Central Office Group Room. Call group facilitator, Lain Lease, L.M.F.T., at (831) 459-1476 for more info.

PSYCHIATRY 101 WORKSHOPS: These one-time workshops, offered several times a quarter, provide information about medications for mental health issues and psychiatry resources on and off campus. Sign-up and referral by a therapist or medical doctor are required. The remaining workshop for winter quarter is Monday, March 11th, 9:15 to 10:15 am. For more info, visit our [website](#) or call (831) 459-2628.

CAPS INFORMATIONAL GROUP FOR MIXED-STATUS & UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS: This drop-in informational group provides an overview of available CAPS services and the off-campus referral process and clarifies myths about access to services. The remaining meeting for winter quarter is Thursday, 3/7, 3:30 to 5:00 pm, at the EOP Office, ARCenter, Room 121. Call group facilitator, Erica Lopez, L.M.F.T., at (831) 459-2572 for more info.

PARENT-STUDENT SUPPORT GROUP: A supportive environment for those struggling with the unique challenges of parenting while being a student. Children up to age 1 year welcome with parent. The remaining meeting for winter quarter is Monday, 3/11, 10:30 a.m. to noon at Family Student Housing #712, Family Center. Call group facilitator, Susan Gulbe Walsh, Ph.D., at (831) 459-2377 for more info.

ANXIETY TOOLBOX: This three-part workshop series gives you information and coping tools for managing anxiety and stress. Meets for three hour-long sessions that build on each other. Although it's too late to sign up for winter quarter, check our [website](#) to learn more and see the schedule for spring quarter, or call for more info at (831) 459-2628.

I bought myself an anti-stress coloring book...

