



Coming Back Stronger



Booklet for students

Coming Back Stronger

Worksheet 1: My struggles

What I'm Struggling with:	<i>e.g. Difficulty concentrating on study</i>
What I'm feeling about it:	<i>frustrated, anxious</i>
What I say to myself:	<i>"It's too hard" "just give up"</i>
What I'm Struggling with:	
What I'm feeling about it:	
What I say to myself:	
What I'm Struggling with:	
What I'm feeling about it:	
What I say to myself:	
What I'm Struggling with:	
What I'm feeling about it:	
What I say to myself:	



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Worksheet 2: What would I say to a friend?



Pick one of your current struggles from Worksheet 1 and imagine your best friend had told you this was what he/she was struggling with and how they were thinking about it.

What would you say to them that would be encouraging, compassionate and caring?

How does it feel when you say this to yourself rather than the harsh, critical way we often talk to ourselves?



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Worksheet 3: What I currently do – Attempted solutions and long-term effects

The problem or struggle that I have	What do I do in the short-term to deal with this? Does it help?	What's the effect of this strategy in the long-term? Does it help?

Worksheet 4: Turning problems into goals

What am I struggling with?	What's my goal for this problem?
<i>e.g. Feeling Isolated</i>	<i>Building stronger connections with friends and family</i>

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Worksheet 5: Your guide to building daily habits for success

Suggestions	My Ideas to Implement This
<p><u>Give yourself a reasonable time-limit:</u> 2-minute rule, 10-min rule to get stuff done. Once you start you may find you spend longer on the task, which is an added bonus.</p>	
<p><u>Remove distractions :</u> Put your phone on silent or put it in a different room. Keep your workspace clear Find a quiet place</p>	
<p><u>Combine what you like with a chore you don't like:</u> Use music or podcasts while you're cleaning or exercising</p>	
<p><u>Be specific and write a clear plan -</u> when, what, how long for. e.g. "This week I'm going for a 1/2 hr walk around the neighbourhood every day at 4.30pm"</p>	
<p><u>Reward yourself!</u> Record your wins by marking off a chart or allowing yourself a pleasant activity afterwards or at the weekend.</p>	



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Worksheet 6: Identity & values – Who am I and what do I stand for?



What are values and how are they different to goals? Goals are things we want to achieve or *get*, like getting the job of our dreams. Values on the other hand don't have an endpoint or outcome, rather they're things we want to *do or be*, like being a good friend, or being trustworthy. Values are about what matters to you – what's important to you in the big picture. **And, interestingly, the more you take action guided by your values the more likely you are to be motivated and to have a sense of well-being.**

To help you identify what's important to you, what you stand for, try this imaginary exercise:

It's 10 years into the future and it's your birthday. You're surrounded by friends and family, all the people you care most about. You start to discuss the global pandemic of 2020 and how it affected everyone:

What stories do you want people to share about you? What would you like them to be saying about you and how you coped with this unbelievable time in our history?





What stories would *you* want to tell about this time, about how you coped with this pandemic and lockdown in the final years of school, or early years of studying at university? What did you learn about yourself?



What are the things you would like to be known for?





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Worksheet 7: Putting it all together

- 1. Identify with your values:**
E.g. I'm the sort of person that/I am..../What's important to me is...
 - 2. What I'm struggling with right now:**
 - 3. What am I saying to myself about it?**
 - 4. What would I say to friend that's more helpful and encouraging?**
 - 5. What's my goal? What am I doing short-term that's not helping long-term?**
 - 6. What daily habits can I put in place?**
Set an intention:

Give myself a realistic time-frame:

Avoid distractions:

Combine it with something I like:

Reward myself:
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Worksheet 8: What to do when it's all getting too much

1. **ACCEPT MY DISTRESS**

Recognise what you're feeling and tell yourself it's OK to have that feeling. You don't have to be afraid of it or push it away.

2. **DISTRACT**

Emotions come and go, but while they're strong it's helpful to ride them out by doing something to distract you:

- Play with the dog
- Draw, paint or get involved in a hobby
- Be with other people
- Help someone else
- Go for a walk or get some exercise

3. **SELF-SOOTHE**

Use your five senses to discover things that make you feel good:

- Vision - decorate your space, look at art or inspiring photos
- Sound - music, nature sounds
- Smell - cooking, lavender, aromatic candles or essential oils
- Touch - comfortable clothes, cuddling a pet, warm shower
- Taste - favourite food, coffee or hot cocoa

4. **IMPROVE THE MOMENT**

By doing relaxation or yoga, meditation or mindfulness
Imagine a place where you feel happy, safe and relaxed
Be present in the moment - describe 5 things you can see, hear or touch





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Worksheet 9: Healthy eating

If your brain is going to work well, it needs the right fuel.

Remember, garbage in = garbage out!

Young people who have a well-balanced diet have more energy and better concentration and memory than those who eat a lot of junk food. You need a diet rich in proteins (meat, fish, cheese), veggies, fruit, dairy and wholegrains (bread, brown rice, pasta) – these are your ‘brain foods’!

It’s also important to eat regularly and not skip meals. Eating small amounts more often (“grazing”) helps your metabolism and energy levels


Make sure you eat breakfast – for those of you who can’t stomach food first thing in the morning, try having a smoothie or a piece of fruit, or take a healthy snack with you to school that you can have when you arrive. Have plenty of healthy options in the fridge and pantry for when you feel like a snack between studying.

Here are some ideas:

- Wheat crackers and low-fat cheese
 - Low-fat yoghurt
 - Fruit
 - Nuts
 - Multigrain muffin with cheese/peanut butter/vegemite
 - Carrot or celery sticks with low-fat dip
 - Hard-boiled egg
 - Low-fat sliced turkey breast
- Remember to drink plenty of water to keep you hydrated. Eat something before you go into the exam room!


While it may be tempting to get an instant ‘hit’ with caffeine, energy drinks or lollies, these only give you a temporary boost, and often leave you feeling more tired and irritable. Here are some facts about the amount of caffeine contained in common foods:

Short black coffee	110mg
Instant coffee	70mg
Tea	10-50mg
Coca-Cola	49mg can
Energy drinks	80mg can
Milk chocolate	20mg per 100g
Hot chocolate	10mg





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Worksheet 10: Sleep, exercise & relaxation ideas


Sleep

- Aim for at least 8-9 hours a night
- Get into a good sleep routine- aim to go to sleep the same time each night and get up the same time each morning. The most beneficial sleep you get is before midnight.
- Schedule busier activities earlier in the day
- Exercise regularly
- Avoid daytime naps
- Have a 30 min wind-down time before bed:
- Turn off electronic devices (computer/TV/phone)
- Have a warm shower or bath
- Make yourself a sleep-inducing drink (warm milk, herbal tea)
- Minimise anxiety – write worries down on a piece of paper
- Listen to quiet music
- Do some relaxation or slow breathing (instructions page 7)
- Avoid drinks with caffeine (see above)
- Take the pressure off getting to sleep by turning the clock face away

Regular exercise

- Try and do at least 30-60 minutes per day of:
- Moderate activities like brisk walking, bike riding with friends, skateboarding and dancing
- Vigorous activities such as football, netball, soccer, running, swimming laps or training for sport

Relaxation

- Give yourself regular rewards and time out
 - Do yoga or meditation
 - Practice slow breathing (see next page)
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Worksheet 11: Calming technique using your breath

Instructions:

Initially when you're learning this technique it's best to find a quiet place and either sit in a comfortable chair with good back support or lie down.

Close your eyes and spend a short time letting your body settle. Focus your attention on any sounds you can hear, either inside the room or outside. Move your attention from sound to sound without getting caught up in any one particular sound. Then bring your attention back to your body and notice where your body is touching the chair (or bed).

Keeping your eyes closed; place your hands on your diaphragm (the triangular space just below your ribcage). Practice breathing from here, rather than from your upper chest. Imagine you have a balloon in your diaphragm – as you breathe in you are inflating the balloon and as you breathe out you're deflating the balloon.


Breathe in and out (through your nose) slowly and evenly in a 6-second cycle. Breathe in for 3 seconds. As you breathe in say to yourself (in, two, three). Then breathe out for 3 seconds. (Say "relax, two, three). Do not hold your breath at any point, you want a nice steady and slow rhythm.

On each out breath, when you say 'relax' to yourself, try and consciously relax your body and imagine that you are breathing out the stress and the worry.

To start with, do as many cycles as you feel comfortable with. This could be as short as two or three breaths, or anywhere up to two minutes. You do not need to practice for longer than two minutes. If at any time during the practice you feel uncomfortable, stop and revert to your normal breathing. Then try again when you feel more comfortable.

Once you become familiar with the technique, you can use it anywhere, anytime you feel stressed or worried. You don't need to close your eyes or sit down, just remind yourself to 'breathe' and take a few slow breaths to calm you down.

REMEMBER – THIS IS A SKILL. You will only improve with regular practice, so try to do brief practice at least 2-3 times per day. If you practice regularly, it will be easier to remember this technique when you do feel stressed.





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Worksheet 12: Useful apps and resources

Books:

"Good thinking: A teenager's guide to managing stress and emotions using CBT", Louise Remond & Sarah Edelman

"Surviving Year 12", Dr Michael Carr-Gregg

Youtube: James Clear - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8ApZXWgJq4>

Mel Robbins "The 5-second rule" -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoWnfCoFdYs> ‘

If you need further help...

- Talk to your school counsellor, parents or teachers
- Consider group or individual counselling
- The Kidman Centre UTS, based at Randwick, offers individual therapy and group programs. Bookings can be made by calling (02) 9514 4077 or emailing kidmancentre@uts.edu.au
- Kids Helpline – phone 1800 55 1800 or email counselling at www.kidshelp.com.au
- Reading – ‘*Surviving Year 12*’, Dr Michael Carr-Gregg, and ‘*Good thinking: A teenager's guide to managing stress and emotions using CBT*’, Louise Remond
- Websites and apps – ReachOut.com ‘Breathe’ and ‘Sleep’ apps; Smiling Mind app, Mindshift app
- Domestic violence support - <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>





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Worksheet 13: Where to get help


If it's an emergency go to your local hospital ED, or call your local community health after-hours crisis team

Tell someone - Talk to your school counsellor, parents or teachers

Consider group or individual counselling

The Kidman Centre UTS, based at Randwick, offers individual therapy and group programs. Bookings can be made by calling (02) 9514 4077 or emailing kidmancentre@uts.edu.au

Online counselling and resources:

- [Lifeline](#) on 13 11 14
 - [Kids Helpline](#) (up to 25 yrs) on 1800 551 800 or email counselling at www.kidshelp.com.au
 - [MensLine Australia](#) on 1300 789 978
 - [Suicide Call Back Service](#) on 1300 659 467
 - [Beyond Blue](#) on 1300 224 636
 - [Headspace](#) on 1800 650 890
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Worksheet 14: And lastly...some motivational quotes to help you succeed!



If you connect strongly to any of these quotes, feel free to write them out and stick them somewhere in your room to keep you motivated and focused:

"Tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today" - *Malcolm X*

"Change your thoughts and you change your world." – *Norman Vincent Peale*

"If you can imagine it, you can achieve it; if you can dream it, you can become it." – *William Arthur Ward*

"The best way to finish an unpleasant task is to get started." – *Anonymous*

"Try not. Do or do not, there is no try." ~ *Yoda*

"It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer" – *Albert Einstein*

"Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal, nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude" – *Socrates*

"The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack in will" – *A. Branson Alcott*

"Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out" – *William Shakespeare*

"Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm." – *Winston Churchill*

"Successful and unsuccessful people do not vary greatly in their abilities. They vary in their desires to reach their potential." – *John Maxwell*

"If we did all the things we are capable of, we would astound ourselves." – *Thomas Edison*

"You miss 100% of the shots you don't take." – *Wayne Gretzky*

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us." – *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

