

# WHAT WOULD YOU TELL YOUR YOUNGER SELF?

YOU ASKED, WE LISTENED...



QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST



# BIG LIFE CHANGES = Big emotions.

If you're leaving school, starting college, or levelling up to university, you're probably feeling all the feels—excitement, nerves, maybe even a wee bit of "what if I completely screw this up?"

Good news? You're not alone. Loads of students have been through it and wish they'd known a few things earlier. So, we gathered your questions and their best advice and turned it into your ultimate survival guide for making the transition easier.

Expect straight talk, practical tips, and solid resources to help you tackle everything from budgeting to making friends (without the awkward small talk).

**WHEREVER YOU'RE AT,  
THIS GUIDE HAS YOUR  
BACK. let's DO this.**



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# FRIENDSHIPS: YOUR EDUCATION GLOW-UP

School, college, uni—whatever stage you're at, friends (hopefully) make the journey a wee bit less chaotic. They're your hype squad, study buddies, and go-to people when life throws curveballs (or fireballs, iykyk).

From Monster©-fueled all-nighters to laughing through awkward group projects, friendships bring support, confidence, and good vibes to your academic life. And it's not just about surviving deadlines—these connections can turn into lifelong friendships (and, let's be real, future networking gold).

Whether you're making new friendships or strengthening old ones, surrounding yourself with the right people will help you thrive. So, put yourself out there, join activities, and embrace the moments that turn classmates into your circle of support. Don't get disheartened if it takes time to find your flock, some things are worth waiting for!

Get top tips on healthy friendships including coping with peer pressure [here](#).

Living with others can be a great experience, but it also comes with challenges—so how do you avoid arguing relentlessly over who does the dishes or who makes dinner?

## Disagreeing well

- **Stay calm** and use respectful language.
- **Listen actively** and try to understand the other person's view.
- **Find common ground** and be open to compromise.
- **Choose the right time** to talk.
- **Ask for help** (if needed, from another friend, roommate or residential assistant).

## Getting on with roommates

- **Set clear expectations** early (cleaning, guests, noise).
- **Respect each other's space** and routines.
- **Communicate regularly** to avoid misunderstandings.
- **Be considerate** and share responsibilities.
- **Build a positive relationship** through shared activities.



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# EVERYTHING YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CONSENT AND WHY IT MATTERS

Consent means giving clear, enthusiastic, and voluntary permission for something to happen—especially in personal and intimate situations. It's a key part of respectful relationships and safe social interactions.



## WHAT DEFINES CONSENT?



### FREELY GIVEN

Consent must be given without pressure, manipulation, or influence.



### REVERSIBLE

Anyone can change their mind at any time.



### INFORMED

Everyone involved must understand what they're consenting to.



### ENTHUSIASTIC

Consent should be a clear “yes,” not the lack of a “no.”



### SPECIFIC

Saying yes to one thing doesn't mean saying yes to everything.

## WHY IT MATTERS

- Starting uni, tech or college is a time of new experiences and relationships.
- Respecting boundaries builds trust in student communities.
- Understanding consent helps prevent harm and supports a culture of respect.

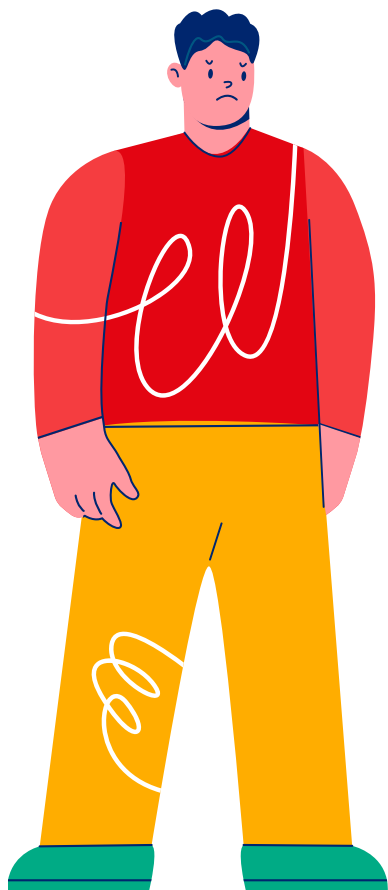


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# LONELINESS & Being Away FROM HOME

You might've been so ready to get away from home — no more parents, your own rules, freedom unlocked...

But do you really? A lot of us end up missing the little things way more than we expected. And that's totally normal.



## HERE'S HOW TO DEAL WITH IT WHEN HOMESICKNESS HITS:

### ✓ KEEP THE VIBES ALIVE

Call, text, or FaceTime family and friends. Social media is just emotional support on tap.

### ✓ GET A ROUTINE GOING

Having a daily rhythm (study, food, chill time, movement) helps you feel grounded and in control.

### ✓ PUT YOURSELF OUT THERE

Join clubs, go to events and meet people. Even if you aren't typically a social butterfly, going out will be way better for your mental health than doomscrolling in your dark bedroom!

### ✓ MAKE YOUR SPACE YOURS

Bring stuff that reminds you of home — photos, cozy blankets, fairy lights. Instant comfort.

### ✓ LEVEL UP ON ADULTING SKILLS

Learn how to cook, budget, do laundry (no, it doesn't magically do itself), and plan your time. It's all part of the process of locking in.

### ✓ TALK IT OUT

Feeling homesick? Don't bottle it up! Chat with a friend, mentor, or support services. You're definitely not alone and not the first or last person to feel that way.

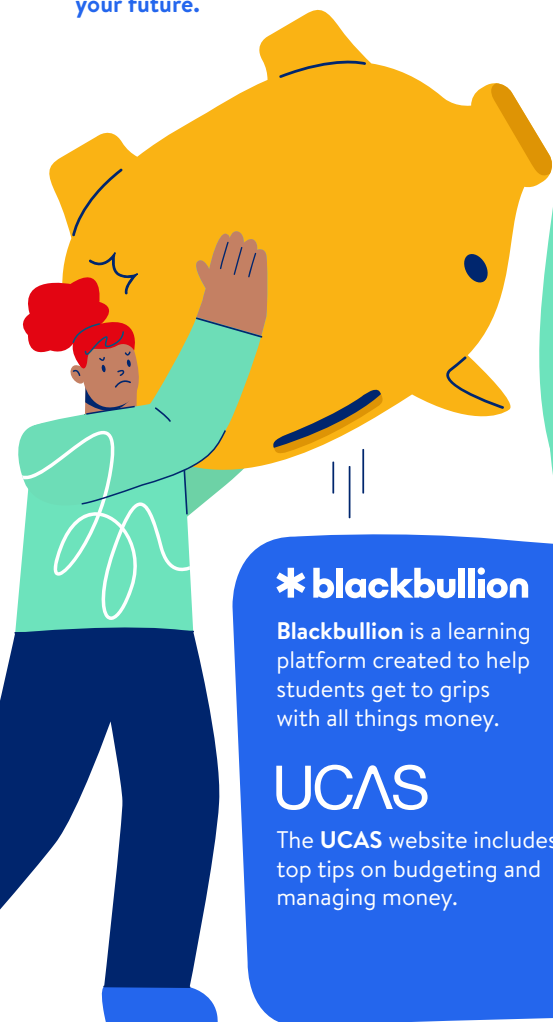
**Missing home doesn't mean you're not ready — it just means you're human. You've got this.**



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# MONEY MANAGEMENT: HOW TO NOT GO BROKE

Let's be real - handling your own money while you are studying is a big deal. It can totally affect how you experience education and life and impact your future.



## \* **blackbullion**

**Blackbullion** is a learning platform created to help students get to grips with all things money.

## **UCAS**

The **UCAS** website includes top tips on budgeting and managing money.

## HERE'S THE LOWDOWN:

- **Budgeting = ADULTING**

Make a budget to keep track of what's coming in (like student finance or job pay) and what's going out (aka bills, food, etc). It helps you to not overspend.

- **Pay in THREE**

Yes, Klarna is great. Pay in Three does NOT mean things are free until next month as much as we'd all like to think it does! You could get into some serious debt as late fees pile up. Chances are, if you need to finance a Nando's, you should boil a pot noodle instead.

- **Save a little, stress less**

When you are feeling flush or have a wee bit of extra to spare, try to stash some cash for "just in case" stuff. Future You will thank you.

- **Freebies are a win!**

Look into additional sources of funding such as scholarships or grants & ask your Student's Union for advice. Look out for student discounts and deals. Don't sleep on free (or almost free) money.

- **Side hustles = Extra cash**

A part-time job can help cover costs—and teach you time management skills too. Even just one shift a week can make a big difference to your pocket and help fill out your CV.



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# SCAM ALERT: DON'T GET PLAYED

Scammers don't just target older people, they also love targeting students, and they're sneaky about it.

## WATCH OUT FOR DODGY STUFF VIA:

- Emails
- Random phone calls
- Socials
- Fake job or scholarship offers

## RED FLAGS TO LOOK FOR:

- They ask for personal info (like your date of birth or banking details)
- The message feels urgent or threatening
- It sounds way too good to be true (because it probably is)

## COMMON SCAMS TO KNOW ABOUT:

- Phishing (fake emails or links to steal your info)
- Online shopping scams (you pay, the item never shows. Think IG clothing brands with 10 followers)
- Tuition/payment scams (fake messages about outstanding student fees)

## HOW TO STAY SAFE:

- Double-check who's messaging you
- Don't click shady links or give out info
- Report anything suspicious to your campus IT and security departments



**TRUST YOUR GUT. IF IT FEELS OFF, IT PROBABLY IS. STAY SHARP AND CHECK OUT THESE GREAT RESOURCES:**



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# WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM MY STUDIES BEYOND SCHOOL?

So you've made it across the finish line at school or are just about to—now what? Post-school courses (aka uni, college, Tech etc.) are all about building the skills and knowledge you'll need for your future career. You'll get a mix of theory and hands-on experience. But heads up—it's not always smooth sailing.



HERE'S WHAT YOU MIGHT STRUGGLE WITH (AND IT'S TOTALLY NORMAL):

- **WAY MORE WORK**

The workload can hit hard. More assignments, more reading, more everything.

- **TIME JUGGLING 101**

Balancing TikTok and A levels was tough enough. Unfortunately it doesn't get better in uni. Now you'll have lectures, parties, going out, study time, TikTok and possibly sleep!

- **DO-IT-YOURSELF LEARNING**

No one's chasing you to get stuff done. Unless your friend is barking at you to do your part of the group project, you're on your own!

- **STRESS IS REAL**

Pressure to do well can mess with your head. It's okay to feel overwhelmed—just don't be afraid to ask for help.

## **BOTTOM LINE:**

IT'S A BIG SHIFT, BUT YOU'VE GOT THIS. AND IF IT GETS ROUGH, THERE'S SUPPORT OUT THERE AND IT COMES IN MANY FORMS – TALK TO FRIENDS, FAMILY, LOOK AT ONLINE RESOURCES LIKE THE ONES HERE, SPEAK TO SUPPORT SERVICES IN YOUR PLACE OF STUDY – USE IT.



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# DIGITAL DISTRACTIONS: THE STRUGGLE IS REAL

Let's be honest — staying focused is hard at the best of times but even moreso when your phone's blowing up, TikTok's calling, and Netflix just dropped another season of your favourite binge-watch show.

## WHAT Digital Distraction looks like FOR students:

- Scrolling Insta or TikTok instead of studying
- Trying to “study” with YouTube playing in the background
- The group chat is trying to organise something when you're “locking in”
- Falling into the “just one more reel” trap and suddenly it's midnight

## WHY it matters:

- Results can take a hit
- Your attention span ends up COOKED.
- More stress, more anxiety
- You feel like you're always behind
- Late-night scrolling = terrible sleep



## NEED HELP?

THERE'S THIS SUPER USEFUL SITE WITH TOOLS THAT WORK ON ALL KINDS OF DEVICES. IT HELPS BLOCK DISTRACTIONS, TRACK YOUR HABITS, AND KEEP YOUR GOALS IN CHECK. TOTAL GAME-CHANGER.

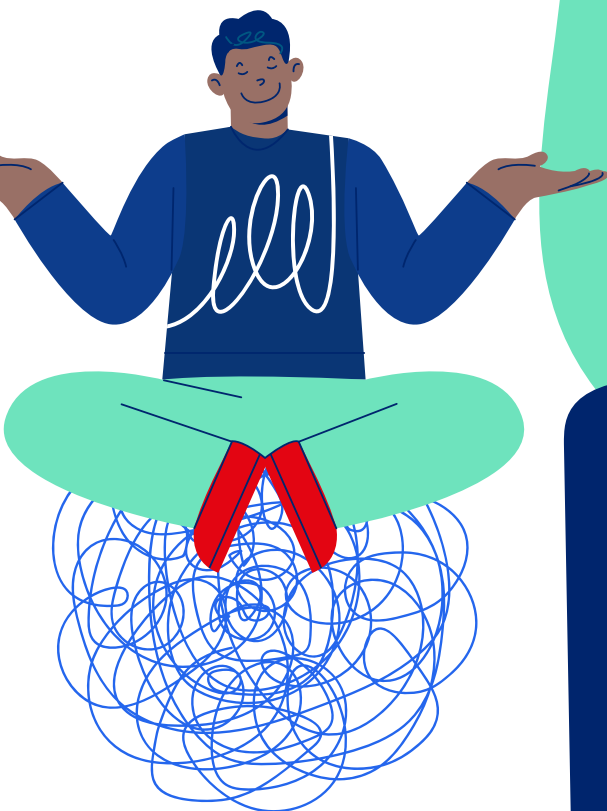


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# NORMALISING STRESS

Your next big adventure in education is going to be exciting, but also lowkey stressful. And guess what? That's normal. Stress doesn't mean you're weak — it actually means you care. 'A little pressure can also be a great motivator

Think of yourself like a tree — the wind (aka stress) might shake you, but if you're flexible and grounded, you'll bend, not break.



## HERE'S HOW TO RIDE THE STRESS WAVE WITHOUT WIPING OUT:

- **Talk ABOUT It**

Feeling stressed? Say it out loud. Chat with your mates — chances are, they feel it too. Swapping tips = everyone wins.

- **Time Management IS a game-changer**

Staying on top of things now means less panic later. Procrastination feels good... until it doesn't.

- **TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY**

Move your body, eat some real food (yes, not just instant noodles), and get sleep. It all adds up and helps you handle stress better.

- **PROTECT YOUR MIND like you DO YOUR PHONE**

Mental health is just as important as physical. Meditation, yoga, breathwork, or even blasting music and dancing around your room — whatever helps you reset.

## DON'T BOTTLE IT UP

IF it's getting TOO MUCH, CONTACT SUPPORT SERVICES EARLY. STRESS PILES UP FAST IF YOU IGNORE it.

There's also loads of online resources that can help you through the rough patches — check them out and don't go through it alone.

**Stress happens.** But with the right mindset and tools, you will cope.



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# WORK / STUDY / LIFE BALANCE = MAJOR KEY TO CONSISTENT SUCCESS & HAPPINESS

Trying to juggle classes, work, and life? It's a lot. But finding that balance is how you stay sane and keep winning. Here's the vibe:

## 1. Time Management = your Bestie

Use a planner or digital calendar to block out time for class, studying, work, and chilling. Break big tasks into smaller ones so they're less scary.

## 2. KNOW YOUR PRIORITIES

What **MUST** be done this week? An assignment? Work shift? Family thing? Lock in on what matters most and go from there.

## 3. Set Boundaries, Protect Your Peace

It's okay to say no. Don't overload yourself with work or social stuff that'll mess with your studies or rest time.

## 4. SELF-CARE ISN'T OPTIONAL

Sleep. Move your body. Do something you love. You can't pour from an empty cup!

## 5. ASK FOR HELP

Hit up your friends, partner, family, or support groups. No shame in needing backup — we all do sometimes.



**REMEMBER -**  
Balance isn't about doing everything  
— it's about doing what matters and  
keeping yourself in the game.



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# COPING 101

## HOW YOU DEAL MATTERS

Life can feel like a lot sometimes — deadlines, drama, pressure, and just trying to keep it together. The way you cope with stress makes a huge difference. Some ways help you bounce back stronger, others... not so much. Let's break it down:

### HEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES = SUSTAINABLE AND FUN

These are the things that actually help you feel better long-term:

- **MOVE YOUR BODY**  
Exercise boosts your mood and helps kick anxiety to the curb. Dance, walk, gym — whatever works for you.
- **TALK IT OUT**  
Venting to a friend, family, or trained professional hits different. You don't have to go through stuff alone.
- **MINDFULNESS + MEDITATION**  
Slowing down your brain = major chill. Apps, breathing exercises, or just being present helps. You could also get back into reading for some healthier escapism!
- **GET CREATIVE**  
Art, music, writing, or even just doodling — expressing yourself is therapeutic
- **STICK TO A HEALTHY ROUTINE**  
Sleep well, eat something green once in a while, and don't skip self-care. Small habits = big impact.

### UNHEALTHY COPING = FEELS GOOD NOW, WRECKS YOU LATER

These might seem like quick fixes, but they can mess with you long-term:

- **SUBSTANCE USE**  
Using alcohol, drugs, or chugging Red Bull to numb out? Temporary escape, long-term issues.
- **AVOIDING EVERYTHING**  
Ignoring your problems or putting things off = instant stress later.
- **SNAPPING AT PEOPLE**  
Taking your stress out on others just spreads the negativity — and makes you feel worse after.
- **GHOSTING EVERYONE**  
Withdrawing and isolating yourself might feel safe, but it cuts you off the support you need.  
  
If you really need a break, tell people beforehand and don't burn bridges!
- **COMPULSIVE COPING**  
Obsessive gaming, binge shopping, or scrolling for hours might distract you, but it won't heal anything. We all love new clothes, but has a jacket ever convinced you to study?

### BOTTOM LINE?

Healthy coping keeps you going. Unhealthy coping keeps you stuck. Know the difference, and give yourself what you really need. You need long-lasting peace, not a 10 minute distraction!

### WANT TO COPE A BIT BETTER?

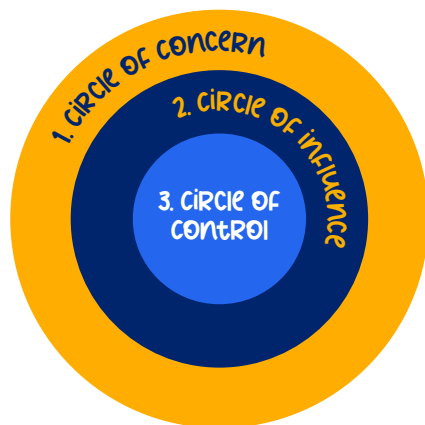
Check out these resources and support spots — they've got your back when life gets a little too real.



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# THE 3 CIRCLES OF NOT FREAKING OUT

Ever feel overwhelmed by literally everything? The Circle concept helps you figure out where to put your energy so you don't spiral. Let's break it down:



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## 1. CIRCLE OF CONCERN

This is all the stuff you might care about but have zero control over — like global events, other people's opinions, the weather, or what your ex is doing.

Don't waste your energy here. It's pointless and you'll just get burnt out.

## 2. CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

This is what you can't fully control but can have some impact on — like group projects, friendships, or your grades (to a point).

Focus your effort here. You can influence outcomes in your favour by how you communicate, act, or respond.

## 3. CIRCLE OF CONTROL

This is the stuff you have full control over — your thoughts, actions, attitude, effort, choices.

Put most of your energy here. This is where real change happens.

### How to Apply This as a Student

1. **Set realistic (SMART) goals** – Start small and build momentum.
2. **Take initiative** – Don't wait for motivation, act first.
3. **Build healthy relationships** – Surround yourself with people who support you.
4. **Practice self-awareness** – Reflect regularly on your thoughts and actions.

**WORRY LESS ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN'T CONTROL, AND DO MORE WITH WHAT YOU CAN. IT'S THE ULTIMATE MOVE FOR PROTECTING YOUR PEACE AND STAYING IN YOUR POWER.**

# YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS *alone*

Make sure your support needs are met — here's what's out there for you in Further and Higher Education:



SUPPORT EXISTS. USE IT.  
YOU'RE NOT MEANT TO FIGURE IT  
ALL OUT ALONE. ASK QUESTIONS. GET  
HELP. THRIVE.



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## academic support

- Study workshops & tutoring
- Academic advisors for course help
- Library & research hacks

## money help

- Scholarships & emergency funds
- Budgeting advice
- On Campus jobs

## social & community

- Clubs & societies
- Events to meet new people
- Peer mentors & buddy systems

## mental health & wellbeing

- Counselling & safe spaces
- Stress-busting workshops
- Peer support groups
- Check out: [Mind – Student Mental Health](#)

## accessibility & inclusion

- Disability support + adjustments
- Tech tools & learning aids
- Inclusive learning environments
- DSA Guide: [Save the Student](#)
- nidirect Support: [nidirect.gov.uk](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk)

## career & future planning

- Job Search, interview and CV skills
- Global opportunities
- Internships
- 1-on-1 career coaching









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the ReDD project

UCAS

Which?

Ygam



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Developed by Student Wellbeing at Queen's University Belfast. We would like to thank all the young adults who shared their questions and experiences with us to help shape the resource.



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