LEARN TO MAINTAIN WELLBEING
Having a sense of wellbeing means being able to live life and experience challenges with a feeling of balance, stability and connectedness, regardless of external circumstances. It is based on how you feel about yourself, the quality of your relationships and your ability to manage feelings and work through difficult situations with clarity.
The ABC's provide a framework for understanding the various aspects of wellbeing. Taking positive actions in these life areas will help contribute to your overall sense of wellbeing. Consequently, a lack of wellbeing often suggests difficulties in at least one of these aspects in your life.

**ACTING WELL**
Acting Well means being able to act effectively, in accordance with your personal life values. Acting well helps you to develop a balanced sense of achievement and enjoyment of life.

**BEING WELL**
Be-ing Well means being able to think clearly while remaining in touch with your emotions. Another way of looking at this is having a good balance between your “head and heart”.

**CONNECTING WELL**
Connecting Well means having strong, meaningful and fulfilling relationships with others. A healthy sense of connection with others ensures a sense of belonging and allows us to obtain the support we need when faced with challenges.

When you don’t take care of these 3 areas of life, they can become a source of stress and unhappiness. When you learn to approach them effectively, your overall sense of wellbeing grows and life feels better.

The strategies to help you better manage these life areas are outlined below.
These strategies are tried and tested skills to help you manage life situations more effectively.

1. ASSESS WITH OBJECTIVITY
When our head is muddled with intense emotions, all good sense and wisdom usually go out the window. That is why it’s useful to be able to respond to situations with greater clarity. With a stable and clear mind, any responses will be more appropriate and effective.

Tips to help you Assess with Objectivity:

– Strengthen your mind. Practice meditation. There is a wealth of research data showing the positive effects of meditation on our brain and overall wellbeing. We do physical exercise to increase our physical health and we can also do mental exercises to increase our mental resources.

– Stabilise your mind. When you’re faced with difficulties, pause for a moment to check in on your current mind state. If your mind is scattered, a few deep breaths or a short break can create the stability you need to work through the issue more effectively.

– Rest your mind. We need to rest the mind by taking time to relax and rejuvenate. If your mind is too tired or tense (i.e., too ‘fried’) you’re less likely to have any objectivity or clarity of thought. It is also important to know when to walk away, rest and come back with a fresher mind.

– Step back from the storyline. In difficult situations, our mind often comes up with unhelpful stories that are often variations of the “I can’t do this” or “I’m not good enough” storyline. If you catch your mind drifting into these unhelpful storylines then learn to

2. ACCEPT WITH MINDFUL AWARENESS
The next set of strategies relate to how to better handle difficult feelings and emotions. Feelings, even the really uncomfortable ones, are a very natural part of being human. At times they help us out by letting us know what’s going on around us — for example anxiety can alert us to real danger and prime us for action. However, a lot of the time there may be no obvious reason for them to be there (e.g., when there is no genuine threat to our safety) and they still show up!

Tips to help you Accept with Mindful Awareness:

– Allow space for your feelings. When you notice a particular feeling, remind yourself that this is a natural reaction to situations and to allow space for these feelings. See video on next page.

– Develop the capacity for mindfulness. Mindfulness is a non-judgemental and non-
reactive state of mind in which we are clearly aware of our present moment experience. By actively observing our feelings in particular ways, we become feel less overwhelmed. This can be developed through the use of mindfulness meditation.

- **Use your body as an anchor.** It is often difficult to be aware of abstract emotions. However, each emotional experience has associated physical sensations, and focusing on these with mindful awareness can help you step back from these feelings. There is above a useful video to the technique of accepting emotions via the sensations in your body.

- **Use labelling to help develop awareness of emotions.** It can be useful to pay attention to emotions or physical sensations by giving them labels as you notice them, for example, “tightness”, “tension”, “heat”.

- **Bring a sense of engaged awareness into daily life.** Commit to doing a few routine activities in your daily life with a sense of awareness and being fully present with the felt experience in your body while doing these activities. For example, you can be aware of your movements while walking to the station or be mindful while you’re eating. See videos on next page.

  - **Be patient.** When we are feeling impatient, our emotions are usually telling us that we are reacting to a situation that can’t be changed (e.g., getting restless waiting for a train that’s running late). The moment you become aware of impatience, remind yourself to create space for the feeling and learn to accept that which you can’t change.

Please check out the CAPS “Mindfulness” and “Managing Your Emotions” skillshops.

3. **ACT WITH VALUES**

Although it is often our thinking and feelings that affect how we act in situations, our actions also in turn affect how we think and how we feel. Therefore, another key set of strategies for wellbeing is taking action in line with our core values. While goals are items that can be ticked off when completed, our values are deeply personal and tell us about how we want to live our life and the kind of person we want to be.

**Tips to help you Act with Values:**

- **Clarify what your values are.** If you make your values explicit, you are in a better position to act in accordance with them. Take time to reflect on which values are important to you by asking yourself “what do I want my life to stand for?” or “all achievements aside, how do I want to be remembered?”

- **Identify important life areas.** Have a think about which are the important life areas for you, such as education, career, relationships, finances, leisure, and health. You can also rate each of these life areas according to how important they are to you.

- **Check whether you are living in accordance with your values.** Reflect on whether you are living in accordance with your values in the important life areas. This is a crucial step in helping you to realign yourself with what is most important.

- **Set value-based goals.** In each of your key life areas, and with your personal values in mind, set 3 types of SMART goals: the first goal is for this week (something to start with); the second is for this month (something more as you pick up momentum); and the third is for this year (something you aspire to continuously uphold). See video on next page.

- **Remain active and connected.** Staying active not only helps us stay physically, psychologically and emotionally healthy but also increases opportunities to connect with your community. Find ways to become part of a group or community that shares the same values as you. You could consider joining clubs or volunteering at the University or in your local area. Check out our Learn To modules on “Lift your mood” and “Build and Maintain Healthy Relationships”.

- **Allow space**

- **Accepting emotions**

- **Awareness in daily life**

- **Awareness in eating?? (is this caption correct?)**
– Ensure balance. It is important to give enough time to the different aspects of your life including the more achievement oriented areas (e.g., career, education) as well as leisure oriented areas (e.g., resting, socialising, having fun). Too much of one is never sustainable.

– Get enough rest. While staying active is important, having proper rest is equally important to enable us to live a values-based life. A good night’s sleep is essential for good physical and mental health. Check out the video above and information to improve sleep quality. There is also a Learn To module on “Improve Sleep”.

– Eat Healthily. This is about ensuring that you get enough nutrients essential for maintaining good health and wellbeing. A healthy and balanced diet energises us and helps improve our concentration, memory and overall mood. Check out our Learn To module on “Healthy Eating”.

– Confront fears. Fear naturally creates the tendency to avoid, which could hold you back from your valued life directions. The more the avoidance, the greater the fear becomes and you never get to test out how realistic your fears are. Remind yourself of your values, make a commitment and take action even if it’s uncomfortable. Take a look at the video about accepting your fears and still heading towards your values.

– Just ask. It’s no use if you have a support network but don’t access it. Learn to ask for help when you need it from people around you or access services that are set up to support you.

Scenario: The tutor hands out the first assignment for the semester, which is an oral presentation to be given in your tutorial. The list of presentation topics is passed around so that students get to pick their topics, which incidentally also determines which week your presentation falls on. The piece of paper goes around the room and finally with only one slot left, lands in front of you. You have no choice but to “volunteer” for the first slot – next week! Presentations are not your thing. You start to panic, horror stories of worst case scenarios start popping into your head. You lose sense of time as you panic away the remainder of the tutorial and the next thing you know the tutor comments as you walk out of the door, “I look forward to your presentation next week”. Doomsday never felt as close as today…

Applying the 3A’s: You walk out of the tutorial, feeling quite anxious. Firstly, you stabilise your mind by taking a few deep breaths. You feel a little calmer but your head keeps going “I’m dead! I’m going to fail this! I can never do presentations right!” You remind yourself (despite it being so difficult to) that this is just a storyline that you mind is broadcasting. You allow yourself to sit for a few moments with this sense of anxiety by noticing the physical sensations associated with the experience. You label these experiences, “tightness”, “tension”, “cold”, as you are aware of these sensations predominantly in your stomach area. As you sit through the experience, the anxiety starts to drop and you also become less affected by the storyline in your head (it’s still there in the background, you’re just not as tuned into it anymore).

At this point, you start to think through past experiences of presentations. Fair enough, there was that time in Year 8 that it went “terribly wrong” but there were many subsequent presentations that you managed to “survive”. You think a bit more and remember that the last presentation you did was actually quite well received by your tutor. Instead of thinking that “I can never do presentations right!”, you are now starting to change your thinking to “there were times when I came out ok and at times even got some good feedback.”
Taking a moment to reflect, you remember that a week ago, you made a commitment to yourself that you value “excellence” and “persistence” in your work. You also know (although quite intellectually at this point) that the more you try to avoid the issue, the worse it’ll become in the long run. You start to approach this as another chance to push yourself a bit more as you no longer want to keep avoiding the fears.

You pull out a piece of paper and work through the problem-solving steps, reflecting on what you need to do to prepare for the presentation. After having planned all that you need to do, you put your plan into action.

After a full afternoon’s work, you decide to take some time to catch up with some friends over coffee. You talk to them about the presentation and they give you some additional ideas.

After dinner, you look up some useful workshops for future reference at the university CAPS. You sign up for a workshop to help better manage your feelings. You finish up the goal you set for the day and dim your lights down to get ready for bed. Before falling asleep, you reflect with gratitude for the input from your friends, for having some courage to work with your fears (& values) and for having the first presentation so that you can get it out of the way!

**INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE**

If you require additional input on any of these strategies or would like to meet with one of our counsellors at the Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS), please check out CAPS website.