

Faculty of Community Services

Academic Support & Resource Centre

Mindful Learning: How to Stay Focused and Reduce Academic Burnout

Feeling overwhelmed by schoolwork and other responsibilities is fairly common in university students. Therefore, it is very important to develop mindfulness techniques to enhance focus and prevent academic burnout. Mindfulness can improve concentration, reduce stress, and enhance information retention.

A Brief Introduction to Mindfulness in Learning

- Mindfulness is about bringing your full attention to the **present moment**; it allows you to engage more deeply with what you're learning.
- By **focusing on one thing at a time**, you can improve concentration, reduce stress, and retain information more effectively.
- Mindfulness techniques help keep you **grounded**, enhance **cognitive function**, and allow for a more **intentional approach to studying**, which can make learning feel less overwhelming.

Mindful Study Techniques

- **Single-Tasking:** Instead of multitasking, practice focusing on **one task at a time**. If you're reading, focus solely on reading without checking your phone or switching tabs. Research shows that single-tasking can improve retention and help you complete tasks more efficiently.
- **Mindful Breaks:** After every 25-30 minutes of study, take a 5-minute break to reset your focus. Use this time to **stretch, breathe, or go for a short walk**, allowing your brain to refresh before diving back into studying.
- **Focused Attention Technique:** Before starting, choose a small object (like a pen or a paperclip) and place it near your workspace. Set an intention to **keep your focus solely on your study material for a set period** (like 20-30 minutes). When you catch yourself drifting, glance at the object to gently remind yourself to refocus on the task at hand. This can help you become aware when your mind starts to wander and guide you back to the present task without feeling frustrated.

Managing Academic Overload

- **Set Realistic Goals:** Break down your workload into **smaller, manageable tasks, and set goals** that are achievable within the time you have. Completing these small tasks builds momentum and can help you avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- **Learn When to Say "No":** Understand your limits and **don't overcommit**. If you're asked to take on additional responsibilities or social activities during a busy academic period, remember that it's okay to say "no" or reschedule. **Prioritizing your mental health is key.**
- **Balance Study with Self-Care:** Make time for activities that recharge you – whether that's exercise, a hobby, or spending time with friends. Self-care can be as simple as making sure you're eating well, getting enough sleep, and giving yourself **downtime to unwind**.

References

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