TAITA TAVETA UNIVERSITY

MY MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

A UNIVERSITY STUDENT'S POCKET TOOLKIT

Understand your feelings. Build healthy coping skills.

Know when and where to seek help.

Prepared by the Student Counselling Unit

HOME OF IDEAS

1. YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Mental health is part of overall health. It affects how we think, feel, relate to others, make decisions and respond to everyday challenges.

REMEMBER

- Everyone can experience emotional or psychological difficulties.
- Having a difficult time does not mean you are weak.
- You do not need to wait until a problem becomes severe before seeking help.
- Asking for help is a positive step towards wellbeing.

2. COMMON CHALLENGES AT UNIVERSITY

- **Academic pressure:** examinations, deadlines, poor grades and fear of failure.
- **Anxiety and stress:** persistent worry, tension, panic or feeling overwhelmed.
- **Low mood:** ongoing sadness, hopelessness, loss of interest or low energy.
- **Loneliness:** homesickness, isolation or difficulty making friends.
- **Relationship concerns:** breakups, family conflict, peer pressure, harassment or abuse.
- **Financial pressure:** fees, HELB delays, food, transport or accommodation challenges.
- **Substance use:** alcohol or other substances affecting health, relationships or studies.

3. NOTICE CHANGES IN YOURSELF

Pay attention to persistent changes in mood, sleep, appetite, energy, concentration, relationships, attendance or academic performance.

If these changes last, feel overwhelming or interfere with daily life, speak with a qualified counselling or health professional.

4. QUICK PERSONAL SELF-CHECK

Pause and ask yourself:

- How have I been feeling emotionally lately?
- Am I sleeping and eating reasonably well?
- Have I withdrawn from people or activities I usually enjoy?
- Are worry or negative thoughts interfering with my studies?
- Do I feel safe, supported and able to cope?

This is a reflection exercise, not a diagnostic test. It does not provide a score or diagnosis. If you are concerned about your wellbeing, arrange a conversation with the Student Counselling Unit or a health professional.

5. PRACTICAL COPING TOOLS

GROUNDING: 5–4–3–2–1

Name 5 things you can see; 4 things you can feel; 3 things you can hear; 2 things you can smell; and 1 thing you can taste. Move gently through the exercise and pause if it makes you uncomfortable.

SLOW BREATHING

Breathe in gently, then breathe out a little more slowly. Repeat for a minute or two without forcing your breath. Stop if you feel dizzy or uncomfortable.

CHALLENGE A DISTRESSING THOUGHT

- What am I telling myself?
- What facts support this thought? What facts do not?
- Is there another, more balanced way to view the situation?
- What would I say to a friend in the same situation?

BREAK A PROBLEM INTO STEPS

Name the problem, list possible options, choose one manageable next step, try it and review what happened. Ask someone you trust for help when needed.

6. BUILD A DAILY WELLBEING ROUTINE

- **Sleep:** Keep a regular sleep and wake time where possible.
- **Eat and hydrate:** Have regular meals and drink water.
- **Move:** Walk, stretch or take part in activity you enjoy.
- **Connect:** Talk with a trusted friend, family member or mentor.
- **Study in steps:** Break assignments into smaller tasks and take breaks.
- **Unplug:** Take breaks from social media and online comparison.
- **Recharge:** Make time for hobbies, rest, prayer or reflection if meaningful to you.
- **Reach out:** Ask for support before problems become unmanageable.

7. HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

- Choose friends who respect your values and boundaries.
- It is okay to say no to pressure, unsafe situations or unwanted behaviour.
- Communicate honestly and respectfully.
- Seek help if a relationship involves threats, coercion, violence or abuse.
- Avoid comparing your life with edited images on social media.

8. ALCOHOL AND OTHER SUBSTANCES

Substance use can affect judgement, sleep, mood, safety, relationships and academic functioning.

If you are worried about your use, speak to a counsellor or health professional. You can ask for help without shame.

9. WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

Contact the Student Counselling Unit or a qualified health professional if:

- Distress is persistent or getting worse.
- You cannot manage everyday activities or academic responsibilities.
- You experience ongoing anxiety, sadness, panic or hopelessness.
- You are affected by harassment, abuse, grief or trauma.
- Alcohol or other substance use is becoming difficult to control.
- You are worried about your safety or someone else's safety.

10. URGENT HELP: SUICIDE OR SELF-HARM CONCERNS

TAKE EVERY SUICIDE OR SELF-HARM CONCERN SERIOUSLY. If you may act on thoughts of suicide or self-harm, or someone is in immediate danger: do not stay alone; tell a trusted person now; move away from medicines, weapons or other means of harm; and seek urgent help at the university health unit or contact the Security office. If supporting another student, stay with them if it is safe to do so and arrange urgent professional assessment. Do not promise to keep an immediate safety risk secret.

IF A FRIEND TELLS YOU THEY ARE THINKING ABOUT SUICIDE

- Listen calmly and without judgement.
- Ask directly whether they are thinking about suicide or harming themselves.
- Do not leave them alone if there is immediate danger.
- Contact the Student Counselling Unit, university health unit or Security office.
- Do not try to manage a high-risk situation by yourself.

11. ACCESSING SUPPORT AT TTU

STUDENT COUNSELLING UNIT

Visit the Student Counselling Unit at Taita Taveta University to request professional support. You may also approach the Dean of Students' Office for guidance on accessing student support services.

For urgent medical or safety emergencies, go to the university health unit or contact the Security office.

12. A MESSAGE TO KEEP

YOU MATTER. YOUR LIFE MATTERS.

Your struggles do not define you. You do not have to solve everything today. Take one safe step, reach out to someone, and allow yourself to receive support.

TAITA TAVETA UNIVERSITY

STUDENT COUNSELLING UNIT

Supporting student mental, emotional and psychosocial wellbeing

HOME OF IDEAS

This toolkit is an educational resource. It does not replace professional assessment, counselling, diagnosis or treatment.