



# CREATIVE BURNOUT TOOLKIT

Learning to take better care of yourself as an  
artist, and your wider community



**STUDENTS' UNION**  
UNIVERSITY FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS

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University is usually branded as the best and most important years of your life – not only are you in the final stages of your education, but you are also starting to discover who you are as an artist. However, university can be intense and can sometimes take a toll on your health.

The purpose behind this handbook is to help you to understand what creative burnout is, what self and collective care is and how you can take care of yourself during your time at university. There is also a scheduling spread in this toolkit to help you organise and manage your time.

This handbook may not provide all the solutions you could be looking for but, produced on the back of months of research, it may guide you in the right direction, give you an idea of how you can make improvements to your self-care routine and how you can recognise, deal with and prevent burnout.

I hope you find this handbook helpful!

In solidarity,  
Simone Ziel  
Vice-President Surrey 2018/19

# CREATIVE BURNOUT AT UNIVERSITY

Studying a creative subject at university can allow you to grow in your desired craft by receiving expert knowledge and guidance from tutors and being given the space to exercise that creativity through different modules.

But, at times, the university experience may not be as amazing as you expected. It's common for students to experience burnout; creative burnout is a combination of both your degree and your craft causing you to lose motivation, love and enjoyment for them.

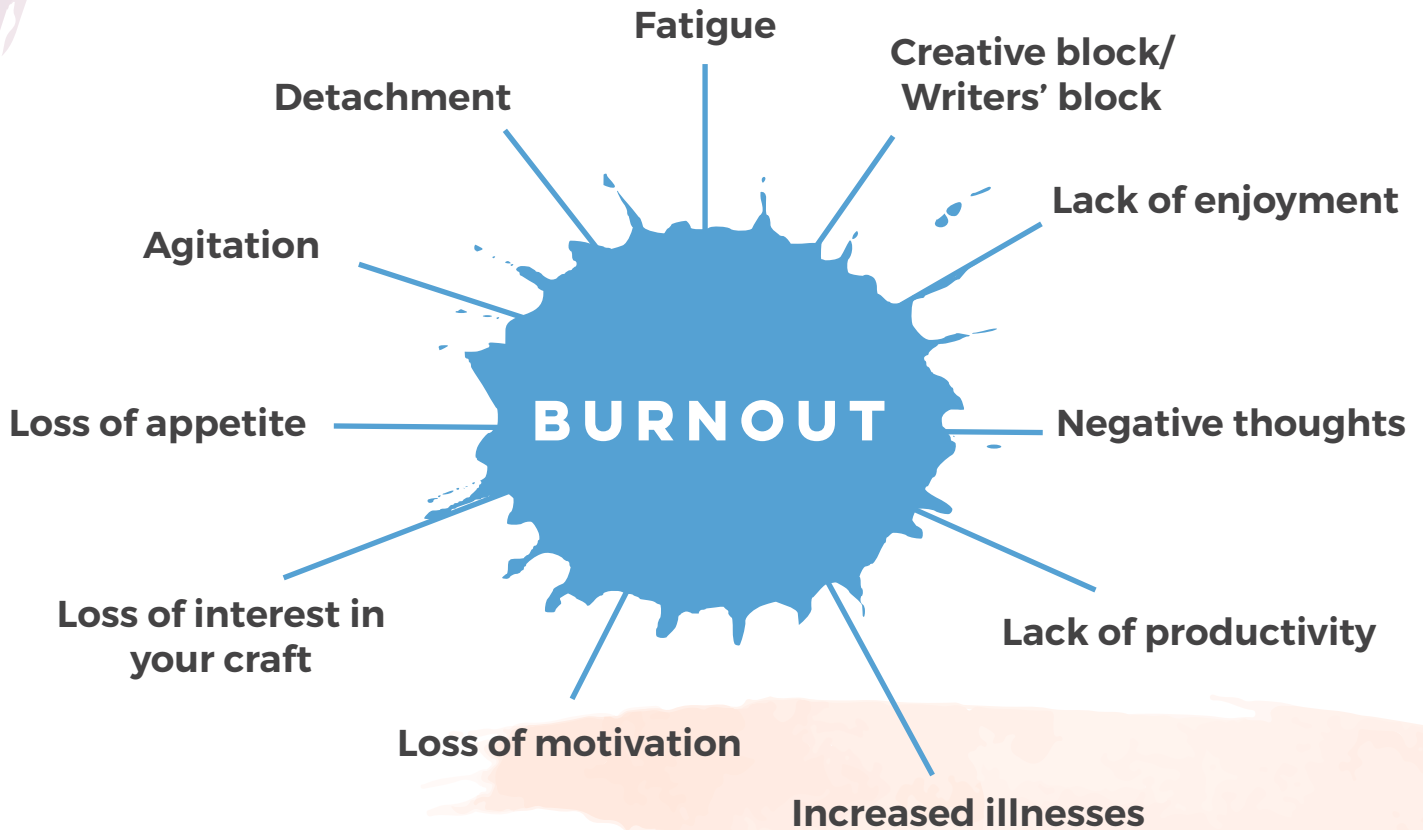
## WHAT IS BURNOUT?

- Burnout is the state of feeling physically, mentally and emotionally drained which stems from lack of motivation and excessive stress.
- Like stress, it can have a negative impact on your wellbeing.
- Although it can stem from stress, both stress and burnout are two different things: stress comes from too much (too much pressure or demand of you physically and mentally), whereas burnout comes from not enough (exhaustion, lack of motivation, feeling 'empty').

## AS CREATIVES, WHAT CAN CAUSE BURNOUT?

- When your project is physically and/or mentally demanding
- High or overly demanding expectations either from yourself, your peers or degree
- Unchallenging work that may not show off your potential, or a task you are not interested in
- A big deadline is approaching
- Lack of sleep
- Working in a toxic environment or with a toxic group for a project

So, what happens to us when we experience burnout? Here is a diagram of the most common signs of burnout:



## WHAT IS SELF AND COLLECTIVE CARE?

• The Self-Care Forum, a forum created after a meeting between members of the Self Care Campaign and the Minister of State for Care Services in 2011, and the official organisers of Self Care Week in the UK, define self-care as: “The actions that individuals take for themselves, on behalf of and with others in order to develop, protect, maintain and improve their health, wellbeing or wellness.”

• Self-care has some major health benefits; it helps to reduce stress and anxiety levels, boosts wellness and improves your mood. It is usually recommended by health professionals for minor conditions that may require little to no medication.

• Collective care is the act of individuals taking care of each other to improve their wellbeing.

• Self and collective care can be anything from spending time with friends and joining a new fitness class to journaling and taking a break from social media.





## WHY IS SELF AND COLLECTIVE CARE IMPORTANT?

It allows you to make your health and wellbeing a priority and helps you manage your health. It means you are, or will be, aware of your current health state which can help prevent ill-health further down the line and, ultimately, gives you a greater control of your wellbeing.

It gives you a chance to preserve and recharge your creative battery, especially when working on a demanding project at university. You will be able to work effectively without compromising your health.

Self-care is necessary for your sustainability as both an artist and a university student. It means, for the sake of your development of your practices and overall wellbeing, you need to incorporate self and collective care practices into your routine to prevent burnout and stimulate your growth.

*“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare”*

- Audre Lorde

# HOW TO PREVENT BURNOUT

## HOW TO PREVENT BURNOUT BY PRACTISING SELF AND COLLECTIVE CARE

Self-care shouldn't be limited to those who currently have poor wellbeing but should be incorporated into everyone's lifestyles – and practicing self-care can help prevent burnout, relieve stress and aid your health. Whatever you do to take care of yourself and your wellbeing, ensure that it caters to your needs. No one knows your mind and body better than you do so you will know the best practices. Here are some ways you can practice self and collective care using the Five Ways to Wellbeing model, recommended by the NHS and Mind.

### CONNECT

Connecting with others benefits your social wellbeing. Whether it is with friends, family, your community or with strangers, engaging with people who love and support you and hold similar interests is a great way to boost your morale. You can connect in many ways like:

**Meeting up with loved ones and have a night in or night out**

**Joining a club/society**

**Attending events related to things you are interested in**

**Engaging with your neighbours and local community**

### BE ACTIVE

Physical activity is not just good for your body, but also your mind. Even low-impact movement is good for you, and can be combined with social activity as well. Even brain training exercises and games exercises works various parts of the brain. You can be active by:

**Joining the gym, a fitness class or sports club**

**Walking or running**

**Doing everyday chores**

**Brain training activities like crosswords or Sudoku**



## TAKE NOTICE

Sometimes when you are really busy with coursework, it is hard to take notice of what is around you when your focus is on making sure your essay is written well, your sketchbook is of standard or whether your upcoming shoot and final edit comes out well or not. Taking an occasional step back or break from your projects to be aware of your surroundings, thoughts and the present. Doing this can keep us in touch with yourself and not lose yourself within the hustle and bustle, and it can also restore motivation. You can help yourself to start to take notice through:

- Going for a walk in a different environment**
- Taking a break from your work**
- Practicing Mindfulness**
- Write down, or think about your current achievements**

## KEEP LEARNING

Learning about a new subject or skill, or revisiting old skills allows you to get out of your comfort zone and explore new ideas. This can increase your confidence, help you to meet open-minded people, and provide you with a new hobby to help you feel more grounded and capable. You could keep learning by:

- Reading a book on a topic you don't have any knowledge about**
- Re-connecting with old skills**
- Joining a class or sign up to a short course**
- Subscribing to a factual YouTube channel**

## GIVE

No matter how big or how small, from smiling at someone to buying someone you love a gift or giving your time to help someone, giving allows you to make a form of impact in someone else's life and, as well as connecting with others, can be a way of practicing collective care with others and showing your appreciation. You can give by:

- Reading a book on a topic you don't have any knowledge about**
- Re-connecting with old skills**
- Joining a class or sign up to a short course**
- Subscribing to a factual YouTube channel**

# HOW TO PREVENT BURNOUT

## GO BEYOND

So, you've checked out the Five Ways to Wellbeing model but you might want to go a step further - here are a few more suggestions based on our definition and your suggestions about what self-care can be.

### DISCONNECT

As well as connecting in positive and meaningful ways, you can also make a conscious effort to disconnect from things that are having a negative impact on your wellbeing. This can be permanent or temporary depending on what you want to disconnect from - this can range taking a break from engaging in political conversations, staying away from social media or taking a well-deserved break from a project you've been working on for hours. This will give your mind and body a moment to rest and relieve yourself from any stress or burning out.

### EAT

Your diet is very personal to you - what works and makes you feel good won't be the same as it is for someone else. If you're vegan, vegetarian, omnivore, or you're living on an all-noodle diet - be aware of how you feel after you eat, check in with yourself to see that you're making positive (and sustainable!) choices for you. No diet is right or wrong, but you need to make sure your diet makes you feel energised and satisfied as much as possible.

If you experience disordered eating or start to notice extreme and unusual behaviours toward food and exercise, please see your GP. Behaviours could include restricting your diet to specific foods, limiting your food intake, uncontrollable overeating or 'binging', as well as purging (vomiting, taking laxatives, or over-exercising to 'compensate' for eating). Your GP may be able to refer you to specialist support. Some irregularity in your diet is okay, but if your diet becomes extreme or you feel that you have lost control over it, it is time to seek medical support.



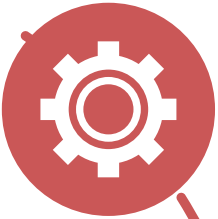


It is common for a lot of students to pull all-nighters on the run up to an intensive study week or hand-in period.

However, constant all-nighters can cause sleep deprivation and impact your everyday wellbeing. If you do decide

to power through a sleepless night, make sure you drink enough water, move around every two hours and ensure you have at least 7 hours sleep the following night. If you have insomnia or other sleep disorders, there are some lifestyle changes you can try to help aid your sleep. The NHS suggests regular exercise, dietary monitoring and relaxation activities. Your GP can also refer you to a therapist for cognitive behavioural therapy for further support.

## SLEEP



## SCHEDULE YOUR TIME

If you realise that your time is getting put under more stress by the week, write a schedule so you can keep on top of all your tasks. Delegate time for each task and delegate these tasks throughout the week on appropriate days. When doing this, make sure that you allow yourself time for yourself - schedule your self-care activities! - and don't underestimate the time it'll take you to complete things.

## DON'T NEGLECT THE CLICHÉS

Yes, seeing the same advice pop up all the time can get frustrating but there is no harm in trying these suggestions out for yourself. One person's self and collective care routine will likely be different to yours and someone else's. For example, having a bubble bath, especially if you use bath salts and/or oils can help with relieving muscle tension. Reading a book or doing a face mask might be the perfect thing to relax you on a particular day.

Don't dismiss common advice unless you know it won't work for you and your circumstances.



# SCHEDULING PAGES

As an artist and a university student, you'll always be busy; but no matter how busy you are, you will always have spare time here and there. One of the most common and most advised things to do is to schedule your time. For some people, they use their phone calendars, for others, they keep physical diaries. Maybe this is something that could help you.

Below is a planner you can use to schedule your time. You can fill this in however you want.

DAY	AM	PM	MEALS	SELF/COLLECTIVE CARE TIME	AM MOOD	PM MOOD
MONDAY						
TUESDAY						
WEDNESDAY						
THURSDAY						
FRIDAY						
SATURDAY						
SUNDAY						



**MY GOALS FOR THE WEEK ARE:**

**COMPLETED?**

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

**MY ACHIEVEMENTS THIS WEEK:**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTES TO SELF**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# USEFUL CONTACTS

If you are aware of any physical, mental or emotional issues that you have that requires attention then it is best to speak to someone about it and get it checked out. Below is a list of organisations you can check out and contact.

<b>NHS HELPLINE</b>	111.NHS.UK/	<b>111</b>
<b>MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION</b>	WWW.MENTALHEALTH.ORG.UK/	
<b>NIGHTLINE</b>	NIGHTLINE.ORG.UK/	<b>0207 631 0101</b>
<b>SAMARITANS</b>		<b>116 123</b>
<b>SWITCHBOARD - LGBT+ HELPLINE</b>	SWITCHBOARD.LGBT/	<b>0300 330 0630</b>
<b>ANXIETY UK</b>	WWW.ANXIETYUK.ORG.UK/	<b>03444 775 774</b>
<b>BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY</b>	WWW.BACP.CO.UK/	
<b>BEAT EATING DISORDERS</b>	WWW.BEATEATINGDISORDERS.ORG.UK/	<b>0808 801 0677</b>
<b>HEALTH TALK</b>	WWW.HEALTHTALK.ORG/	

We give free, unbiased, non-judgemental and confidential advice on a range of student concerns (and if we don't have the answers, we can help find someone who does!).

Core support hours are 10am-4pm Monday to Friday.



## Chris Carr

Advice & Representation Co-ordinator

Call/Text: 01634 888 754 // 07827316142

Email: ccarr.su@uca.ac.uk // advice.su@uca.ac.uk

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ccarr.su](http://www.facebook.com/ccarr.su)

Skype (by arrangement): UCASU\_advice

The University's Specialist Advisers give support with finance, health, wellbeing and more. You can also book counselling sessions.

[www.uca.ac.uk/student-services/](http://www.uca.ac.uk/student-services/)  
[www.uca.ac.uk/student-services/counselling/](http://www.uca.ac.uk/student-services/counselling/)

**Burnout Prevention and Treatment**

HELPGUIDE.ORG

**What Self-Care Is – and What It Isn't**

by Raphailia Michael, MA - PSYCHCENTRAL.COM

**Influence of Exercise Intensity for Improving Depressed Mood in Depression: A Dose-Response Study.**

NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV

**8 Symptoms Of Creative Burnout & How To Fix It, According To Mental Health Professionals**

by Kyle Rodriguez-Cayro - BUSTLE.COM

**Creative burnout is inevitable. Here are 10 ways to beat it**

FASTCOMPANY.COM

**How To Survive Creative Burnout**

SCOTTBURKEN.COM

**The Politics of Self Care**

by Anna Peichel - PLATFORMWOMEN.ORG

**Is Self-Care an Act of Resistance?**

by Christine Grimaldi - DAMEMAGAZINE.COM

**Self-Care is an Act of Political Warfare**

by Tris Mamone - HUFFINGTONPOST.COM

**The Politics of Conspicuous Displays of Self-Care**

by Jordan Kisner - NEWYORKER.COM

**The Self-Care Toolkit**

by Pete Moore - PAINTOOLKIT.ORG

**How to improve your mental wellbeing**

MIND.ORG.UK

**Boost your Physical Wellbeing**

CABA.ORG.UK

**5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing**

NHS.UK

**Benefits of Exercise**

NHS.UK





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