



INTRODUCING UNIVERSITY LIFE

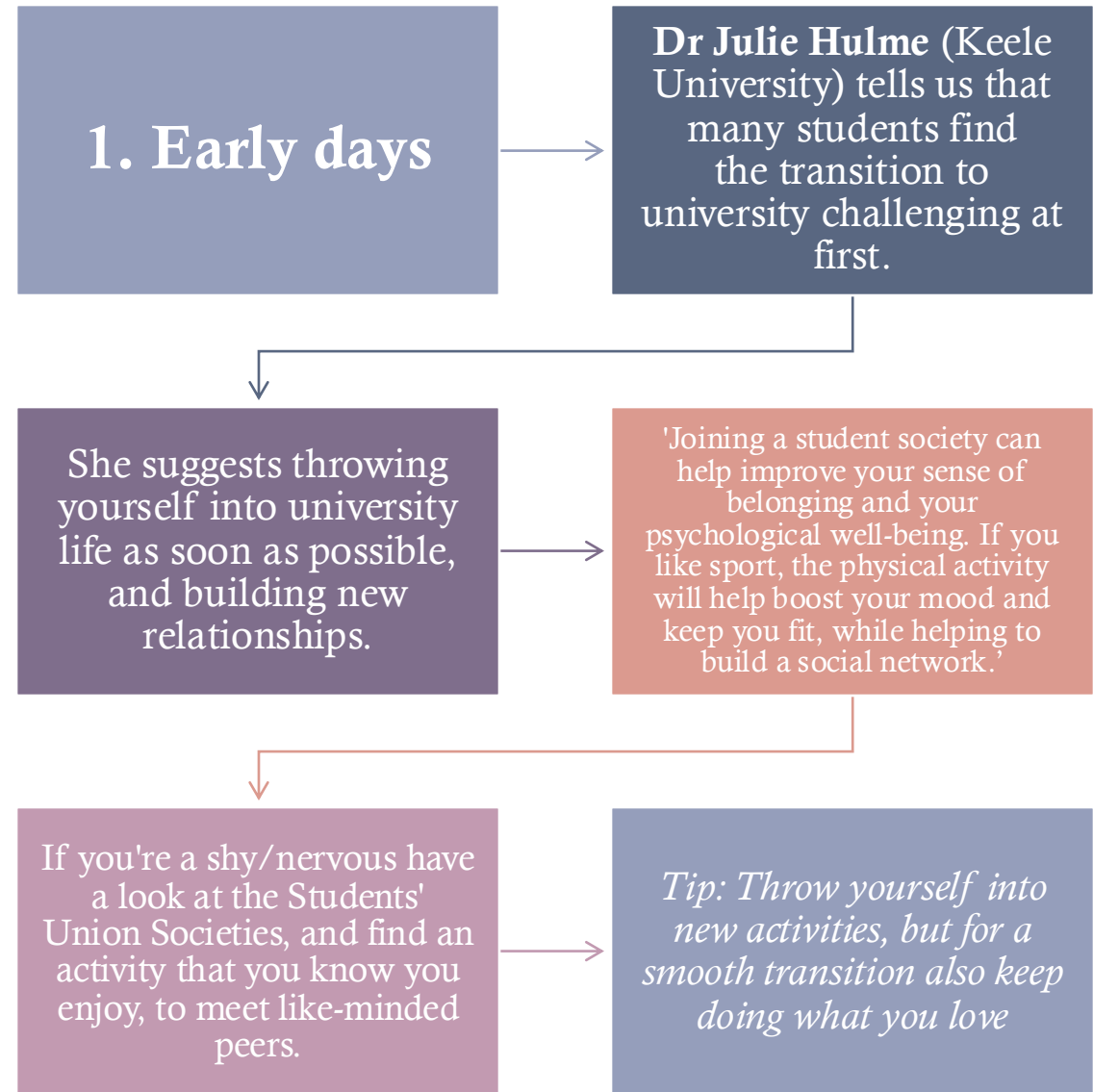
Week 2

AIMS FOR THIS WEEK'S SESSION:



- Learning about what to expect from University Life
- Models of Reflection
- [Guide to University Life by The Psychologist](#)

THE PSYCHOLOGIST GUIDE TO UNIVERSITY LIFE ELLA RHODES (14 SEPTEMBER 2017)





2. DON'T JUST READ – LEARN

- While reading is central to education it's important to learn how to read well, and deeply.
 - Dr Paul Hutchins (University of Wales Trinity Saint David) says learning does not necessarily follow reading: 'It is very easy to read something without taking the information in and learning from it.'
 - Research suggests we need to be motivated and pay attention to really take information in; so, find somewhere without distractions where you can pay attention to what you are reading, remind yourself why you are reading it, and stop frequently to ask yourself if you have understood it, and how you can link what you have read to the things that interest you.'
 - *Tip: Engage with what you're reading, on as many levels as possible*
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3. MONEY IN MIND

- Keep on top of your money while at university, and stick to a budget. Dr Thomas Richardson (University of Southampton) recommends using apps and online tools to help keep on top of finances.
- 'If you are really worrying about money get help with both finances and mental health at the same time. It can be a vicious cycle and you can't tackle one without tackling the other. If you have previously struggled with your drinking, poor mental health or an eating disorder be wary that this might make it harder to manage your finances at university, so get help *before* you start to struggle.'
- *Tip: Your wallet and wellbeing can go hand in hand: keep track of both*



4. MAKE YOUR GOALS SMALL AND DIGESTIBLE



- Dr Rebecca Sharp (Bangor University) says it is a good idea to set goals that are based on tasks rather than time.
 - 'Goals are more easily met when you break up a task into smaller pieces and decide how much you will do that day rather than how long you will spend doing it. For example, it is better to read two book chapters than sit for two hours trying to read.'
 - Once you have done what you planned to do, take a break and do something enjoyable.'
 - For a particularly challenging task make the pieces very small to begin with, and gradually increase them. That way, you are always making progress, no matter how small, and the task will seem less daunting.
 - *Tip: Focus on tasks not time*
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5. DON'T SUFFER IN SILENCE

Dr Alana James (Royal Holloway, University of London), whose research looks into peer support and mentoring, says that while independent learning at university is important, it does not mean support isn't available for students.



'If you get stuck with something try to find out the answer for yourself, try different resources, and try asking your student peers, but if you can't figure it out then do ask a member of staff.'



Most academic staff run office drop-in hours, times when their students can drop by with queries – do make use of these! Some of the most interesting conversations I've had with students have been when they've dropped by my office hour.'



Tip: Use your initiative but don't hesitate to seek help when you need it

6. MAKE THE MOST OF LECTURES



Although you can remotely access online lecture slides and video-captured lectures, always attend face-to-face lectures to fully engage with material and get the best value from your fees!



Jacqui Taylor, Associate Professor in Psychology Education (Bournemouth University), highlights the many benefits of attending lectures.



'The format of lectures has changed radically since the days of "sage on the stage" to better engage students and lead to improved learning.'



Now lecturers employ technology, such as voting on mobiles to check understanding and live Twitter feeds to ask questions.



With "flipped learning" students are given tasks to complete on a new topic and then the lecture reflects on these tasks and raises further issues, rather than the lecture being the first introduction to a topic.'



Tip: Preparing for and being active during lectures can lead to increased enjoyment and learning more deeply.

7. HOW MUCH DO YOUR FRIENDS *REALLY* DRINK?



We tend to overestimate the amount that other people are drinking, and can be tempted to drink more ourselves in order to fit in.



It can seem like everyone else wants to drink heavily in Freshers' week, but when [Dr Emma Davies](#) (Oxford Brookes University) asked second and third year students, they all said they wished they'd spoken up and not gone out drinking so much.



'When they got to know their friends a bit better later in the year, they realised that most people didn't actually want to drink quite as much as they did... they just thought that everyone else wanted to, and matched their behaviour to that expectation.'



Tip: Don't assume other people will want to get drunk... only do what you're comfortable with

8. PUT FOMO TO BED



Social media platforms can offer benefits for wellbeing, such as combatting loneliness and strengthening peer networks, which are particularly important when embarking on a new venture such as university.



However, there is growing concern from parents, teachers and health professionals over their possible impact on sleep. Dr Heather Cleland Woods (University of Glasgow) said a fear of missing out (also known as FoMO) was to blame for social media interrupting our sleep.



"Try putting the device down a little bit earlier at night so you can allow yourself time to wind down, start to feel sleepy and drift off to sleep.



Some people say they find it difficult to leave a conversation as they feel its rude or people will take offence. But lots of people we have worked with have said this, which suggests they would be quite happy if someone asked to pick up a conversation in the morning as they need to get some sleep!"



Tip: Prioritise getting a good night's sleep over chatting online

9. TRY NOT TO THINK OF IT AS A CONSUMER EXPERIENCE

It's easy to see why students want value for money from their annual £9,000 tuition fees. But seeing yourself as a consumer at university is unlikely to be a path to fulfilment, or indeed a decent degree.



In research published last year, Dr Louise Bunce (University of Winchester) and colleagues surveyed more than 600 undergraduate students on their consumerism attitudes and behaviours in relation to their learning.



Being more consumer-oriented – for example seeing the degree as a product which was being purchased – was associated with lower academic performance.



Tip: University is expensive, but do try to see yourself as a student of your subject rather than a shopper



10. A MEMORABLE TIME

- Your university years are likely to be some of the most memorable times you'll have
- [Dr Catherine Loveday](#), University of Westminster, says:
- 'Your time will fly by, but research suggests that in years to come you will look back on it regularly and nostalgically, in what psychologists call a reminiscence bump. So fill your university life with memorable things: relax, have fun and make the most of it however you can!'
- *Tip: If, one day, you'd like to have a rich and positive recollection of your university life, grasp every opportunity to do memorable things!*



Back in August 2021, BBC Radio 4 launched [The Kindness Test](#). It was an online study created by a team at the [University of Sussex](#) led by psychologist Prof Robin Banerjee.

More than 60,000 people took part, making it the world's largest in-depth study on kindness. Here are some of the things we learned...



1. KIND ACTS ARE VERY COMMON

- Three-quarters of people told us they received kindness from close friends or family quite often or nearly all the time. And when we asked about the most recent time someone was kind to them, 16% of people said it was within the last hour and a further 43% said it was within the last day.

2. THE MOST COMMON KIND ACT IS TO HELP PEOPLE WHEN THEY ASK

Helping people when they asked was the most commonly reported kindness.

Next came doing favours for friends, opening doors to let people through, helping strangers to pick up things they'd dropped, followed by having concerned feelings for people less fortunate than them.

3. TWO THIRDS OF THE PEOPLE THINK THE PANDEMIC HAS MADE US KINDER

People who took part in [The Kindness Test](#) felt that in terms of their lifetimes, levels of kindness had either stayed the same (39%) or declined (36%).

Yet the experience during the pandemic seems very different with two thirds of people saying this unprecedented time made people kinder.

Perhaps because it was so difficult, people took more time to look after each other and noticed the small kindnesses that can make such a difference.

4. THERE'S A LINK BETWEEN KINDNESS AND WELL-BEING

It probably won't surprise you to learn that people who regularly receive lots of acts of kindness have higher levels of well-being.



The study also found that people who carry out more kind acts or even just notice that other people are carrying out kind acts also have higher levels of well-being on average.



This fits in with previous research showing that acting kindly makes us feel good.

5. EXTROVERTS GIVE AND RECEIVE MORE KINDNESS

Personality had a big impact on how often people said they are kind to others, but also on how kind people are to them.

A personality scale was included in The Kindness Test and the people who were kindest were more likely to score high on extroversion, and also on agreeableness and openness.

People who score high on openness are imaginative and curious, and like having new experiences.

6. PEOPLE SEE MORE ACTS OF KINDNESS AT HOME THAN ANYWHERE ELSE

When we asked people where kindness takes place, the home came top, followed by medical settings, the workplace, green spaces and shops.

The places where people saw the fewest kind acts were online, on public transport and in the street.

The good news was that people generally agreed that kindness was valued at work, especially in social work, healthcare, hospitality and education.

7. WOMEN CARRY OUT SLIGHTLY MORE KIND ACTS ON AVERAGE AND SO DO PEOPLE WHO ARE RELIGIOUS

- Of course we have to rely on self-reports in this study, so there is a possibility that women and religious people feel that they ought to say that they are kind in order to look good.
- But plenty of people are prepared to admit they're not very generous, for example, and previous studies have shown that we are quite good at judging our own levels of kindness.



8. WE WORRY ABOUT OUR OFFERS OF KINDNESS BEING MISINTERPRETED



People were asked what might stop them from being kind and the top reason they gave was that they were afraid their actions might be misinterpreted.



People also said that they didn't have enough time to be as kind as they'd like to and half said social media played a part in stopping them being kinder.



Hear more results from our kindness study in Radio 4's [The Anatomy of Kindness](#).

9. PEOPLE WHO TALK TO STRANGERS SEE AND RECEIVE MORE KINDNESS

What's interesting about this one, is that this difference between those who do and don't talk to strangers, persisted even when personality was taken into account.

So it's not just that the extroverts are more likely to be kind and also, because they're extroverts, more likely to talk to strangers.

Whatever personality you have, the more you talk to strangers, then on average the more kindness you receive, but also the more kindness you notice going on around you.

10. INCOME MAKES LITTLE DIFFERENCE TO HOW KIND PEOPLE ARE

How much money people earn had zero correlation with overall reports of being kind.



But we did also ask people to imagine they had received an unexpected windfall of £850 and how much of it they might give away.



While some were honest enough to say none of it, the average amount people said they would give away was £252.



People with the lowest incomes tended to say they would give away lower amounts on average, which makes sense because they could least afford to, but interestingly the people with the highest incomes also gave away the least.

THE WOMAN WHO WAS KIND EVERY DAY FOR A YEAR



- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0bt6c4j>
- **What happens to your brain when you're kind?**



TEN SMALL WAYS TO TEND TO YOUR SOCIAL HEALTH

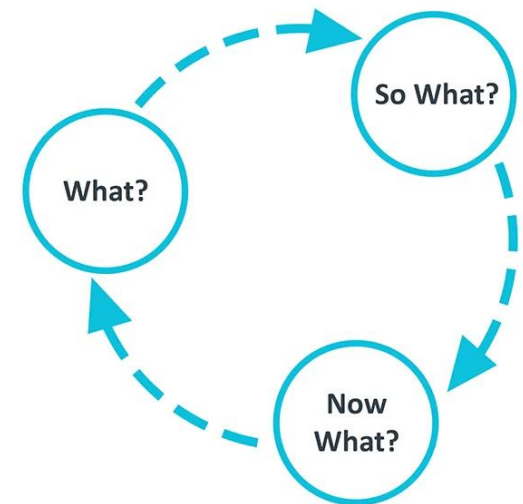
**GILLIAN SANDSTROM,
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF
KINDNESS AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX
(APRIL, 2026)**

Ten small ways to tend to
your social health | BPS



ACTIVITY: TEN SMALL WAYS TO TEND TO YOUR SOCIAL HEALTH

- Read the article on `your social health`.
- TASK: Write your first 200-word reflection on what thoughts emerge from reading the article.
- Simple Model of Reflection, see handout (What?, So what?, Now What?).



ANY QUESTIONS?



Remember –



“Psychology is about understanding people - including yourself.”



See you next class...and be kind!