

THE STUDENT SURVIVAL TOOLKIT:

5 Strategies for Mental Health & Motivation



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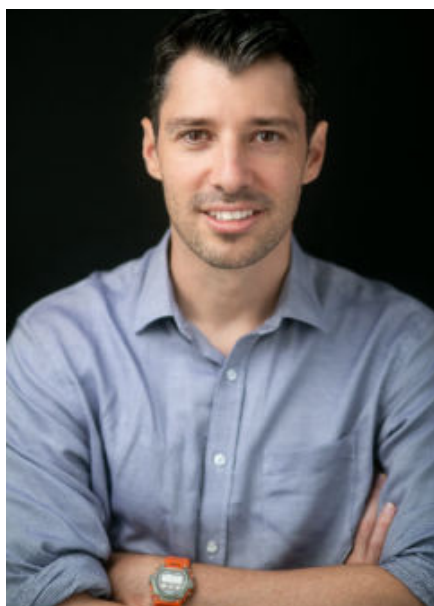
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INTRODUCTION

Hello, I'm Kieran Mountney.

I'm a passionate advocate for emotional wellbeing, inclusive support, and the kind of everyday clarity that helps people feel more like themselves. Over the years, I've worked with clients from all walks of life—supporting them through workplace stress, anger, anxiety, and the quiet overwhelm that so often goes unnoticed.



University is a time of growth, challenge, and change. This toolkit is designed to support your mental health, motivation, and sense of meaning—whether you're thriving, surviving, or somewhere in between.

Each chapter offers a gentle, practical strategy to help you reconnect with yourself and move forward with clarity.

CHAPTER I

Grounding Yourself Daily

Why It Matters

When life feels chaotic, your nervous system can go into overdrive. You might feel scattered, anxious, or disconnected from your body. Grounding is a simple way to bring yourself back to the present moment—reducing stress and restoring a sense of calm.

It's not about fixing everything. It's about finding one moment of peace. And when practiced regularly, it can become a powerful anchor in your day.

Reflection Prompt: What does "being present" feel like in my body?

TRY THIS RITUAL

Each morning, before checking your phone or rushing to class, take two minutes to ground yourself:

Sit quietly and breathe deeply

Name 5 things you can see

4 things you can touch

3 things you can hear

2 things you can smell

1 thing you can taste

This sensory check-in helps anchor you in the here and now. You can also use it during moments of overwhelm—before an exam, after a tough conversation, or when your thoughts start racing.

Tip: Write the steps on a sticky note and keep it near your desk or bedside.

CHAPTER II

Permission to Be Human

University often rewards perfectionism—high grades, packed schedules, constant productivity. But behind the scenes, many students feel exhausted, anxious, and ashamed of their struggles. The pressure to perform can quietly erode your sense of self.

This chapter is an invitation to soften. To acknowledge that being human isn't a flaw—it's a strength. You're allowed to feel overwhelmed. You're allowed to not know. You're allowed to rest.

One of the simplest tools I use in counselling is the "permission slip." It's a gentle way to challenge shame and offer yourself compassion.



Write yourself a permission slip. Literally. Use a sticky note, journal, or scrap of paper. Examples:

"I give myself permission to rest."

"I give myself permission to feel confused."

"I give myself permission to not have it all figured out."

"I give myself permission to ask for help."

Place it somewhere visible—on your desk, mirror, or inside your notebook. Let it remind you that you don't have to earn your worth. You already have it.

This isn't about lowering your standards. It's about raising your kindness.

Reflection prompt: What permission do I most need to give myself today?



CHAPTER III

The Belonging Inventory



Why it matters: University can trigger deep questions about identity and belonging. You might feel out of place, unsure of who you are, or disconnected from your roots.

Try this journaling prompt:

Where do I feel most like myself?

Who makes me feel safe?

What spaces energize me?

What beliefs no longer fit?

This inventory helps you reconnect with your values and find your people. Belonging isn't about fitting in—it's about feeling seen.

Reflection prompt: What part of me is asking to be acknowledged?



CHAPTER IV

Interrupting the Spiral

Why it matters: Stress and anxiety often spiral—one thought leads to another until you're overwhelmed. Interrupting that spiral helps you regain perspective and take action.

Try this 3-step tool:

- 1.Name it: "I'm spiralling."
- 2.Ground it: "What's the actual issue right now?"
- 3.Shift it: "What's one thing I can do today?"

This technique isn't about ignoring your feelings—it's about slowing them down so you can respond with clarity.

Reflection prompt: What helps me feel calm when my thoughts race?



CHAPTER V

The Resilience Routine

Why it matters:

Motivation isn't constant—it needs structure and care. A weekly routine helps you reflect, reset, and stay connected to your goals.

Try this planner:

Monday: One thing I'm proud of

Wednesday: One thing I'm learning

Friday: One thing I'm letting go of

You can write these in a journal, planner, or notes app. The goal is to build emotional momentum—not just academic progress.



Reflection prompt: What does resilience look like in my daily life?



CONCLUSION

You're Allowed to Grow at Your Pace

University can be exciting, but it's also full of pressure, uncertainty, and emotional ups and downs. If you're feeling overwhelmed, you're not alone—and you're not failing. You're growing.

This toolkit is here to remind you that rest, reflection, and support are all part of the process. You're allowed to take up space, ask for help, and move at your own pace.

As a counsellor, I work with students across Cornwall and online who are navigating stress, identity shifts, and the quiet weight of “keeping it together.” If you're ready to talk, I'm here—and you're welcome.

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