

# What's on ...Your Mind?

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"Any transition is easier if you believe in yourself  
and your talent"

Priyanka Chopra

## Welcome to the latest issue of What's On Your Mind?

Welcome back! As we commence a new year, the return of the Student Wellbeing mental health newsletter is designed to provide advice and guidance to all students returning to study after the Christmas break. Whether you're moving back into halls, a school leaver still adjusting to independence for the first time or entering the final few months of your degree, settling into a new chapter of your life can be challenging. We hope you find the information and techniques within the newsletter helpful.

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## Transition and Disability



The transition to University life can be a challenge for any student. You may be living away from home for the very first time, managing your own finances and taking responsibility for your own welfare and wellbeing. These are just a few of the new challenges you may face as you embark on your new Higher Education academic pathway. If a student is also disabled, the transition to University life can be complex and have additional challenges that need to be managed.

### **So what can a disabled student do to support their transition to University life?**

1. **Be aware of your support needs.** You are the best person to identify your support needs. Who knows themselves the best, the answer is you! If you choose to disclose, please make contact with an Adviser in the Student Wellbeing Service in the first instance.
2. **Communication is key.** You have chosen to come to University and the University staff want all students to have a positive University experience and achieve their full potential. If you have unanswered questions, we encourage you to talk to either your academic tutor or the support services. This can be via face to face interaction, telephone calls, emails or texting which ever method of communication is best for you. Please get in touch with someone, you do not need to feel you are isolated and alone.
3. **Accessing extra support.** A student that has evidence of a Disability may be entitled to apply for additional support at University. Please contact a Disability Adviser in the Student Wellbeing Service to discuss any additional support needs. (Contact details on back)

Through your induction into University you will have the opportunity to meet the Support Services. They want you to speak up, so ask questions. They don't bite :)

## Autism Spectrum Disorder—What do you Know?

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### The Facts:

- Definition for ASD can include difficulties with social communication and socialising.
- It is estimated around 700,000 people in UK living with autism.
- Statistics show more males are on the autistic spectrum, but it may be females have different coping strategies and present symptoms differently.
- Autism affects people in different ways, although there may be some similarities
- It can affect someone's' everyday living and functioning with activities and interests.
- For some people their senses are affected by certain situations causing behaviour to change. For instance, bright light or too much noise can cause people on the spectrum distress or an inability to concentrate.
- Due to aspects of some individuals' personality, approximately 1 in 10 people with ASD can have a high level of knowledge, memory and skill because of continual patterns of behaviour focusing on certain topics. This can be positive in certain situations, but cause difficulties in adjusting to some social interactions. For example, people with ASD may find it difficult to recognise facial expressions and the feelings of others.
- Some people with ASD can experience the feeling of isolation because they may not have the social skills or able to join in with small talk.

## Autism Spectrum Disorder— How to Support



- Students may wish to access Student wellbeing service for support and guidance and signposting to services
- Speak clearly and slowly
- If the person is upset, keep the environment as calm as possible
- When you ask a question be patient and wait for a reply allowing time to process what has been said
- Listen and acknowledge what the person is saying
- Find out about their likes/dislikes and get to know them
- Ask what helps and what hinders – perhaps help with organising a situation if it is appropriate
- Help them prepare for change explain what will happen and provide structure and plans to assist them with the change
- Say what you mean
- Face them and make eye contact but don't expect it back
- Reduce background noise and distractions

### Adults with Autism

The NHS talks about how adults with ASD grow up without their condition being recognised and this is sometimes through choice. The link below from the NHS details how a diagnosis can make it easier to access support services.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/adults/>



## Competition Time



Complete the crossword insert attached and return to the Student Wellbeing Service reception to be entered into the prize draw for your chance to win the mystery prize... P.S., reading the feature on ASD on pages 3 and 4 may help you.

### DOWN:

- A) Abbreviation of autism spectrum disorder (3)
- B) People with ASD can experience this (9)
- C) What can student wellbeing offer students with ASD? (7)
- D) \_\_\_\_\_ and acknowledge what the person is saying (6)
- E) Statistics show this gender are more commonly on the autistic spectrum (4)
- F) People with ASD struggle to \_\_\_\_\_ their emotions (7)
- G) If this is too bright, this can cause distress or an inability to concentrate (5)

### ACROSS:

- H) Some students with ASD find this part of university/college life challenging (9)
- I) \_\_\_\_\_ are important (3)
- J) Don't focus on the negative, focus on the \_\_\_\_\_ (8)
- K) Which other staff members other than the support services can you talk to about ASD? (5)
- L) You'll be given this precious commodity in student wellbeing (tick, tock)? (4)
- M) Unscramble the anagram to find the answer: **no ale** (5)
- N) Reduce background \_\_\_\_\_ and distractions (5)
- O) You'll be given the chance to talk clearly and \_\_\_\_\_ (6)

## Homesickness

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For those of you who started a degree in September, this has been a time of great change. You've been separated from your family and old friends, and left your familiar environment behind. While this transition can be very exciting and bring positive new challenges and opportunities, it can also bring practical and emotional problems that you may not have fully anticipated. With time, these problems tend to lessen, and you may already have felt settled in before you went home for Christmas. Coming back after a month or so away from university can, however, be unsettling.

"Homesickness" is felt by many students (and not just by fresher's). You may have looked forward to the chance to become independent of your family and manage your own life, but be struggling with the realities of adjusting to a new place and forging new relationships. Some people adjust relatively quickly, but for others it takes a while. You might still feel disconnected, lonely, and out of control, and long to be back with the people, and in the places, you know well.

One of the challenges will have been fitting in with your new flat mates. This might be the only time in your life when you suddenly need to get used to living with several strangers. It's very common for there to be differences that are hard to address: different attitudes to keeping the kitchen clean, different opinions about when people should be quiet and let others work or sleep, different views about friends staying over for the night. It's possible you have all been getting on very well and have sorted out any issues as they arose, but perhaps there are still problems for you.

## Homesickness—Part 2



Finding the right balance between your academic and social life can also be tricky. Most students going away to university know no one else on campus. They are keen to make new friends. To some this seems to come naturally, but others can feel awkward, lack confidence and feel they don't belong. You might have felt pressure to do things you wouldn't normally do - going out clubbing, for example, drinking more than you should – to try to fit in. This can have left you feeling tired, embarrassed, broke – and more confused than ever.

If your homesickness is persisting, it's important not to keep it to yourself. You can book an appointment with the Student Wellbeing Service to talk things over in confidence. It could also help you to know that you won't be the only student having such feelings. Your course and house mates may look confident and well-adjusted to university life, but at least some of them will be putting a brave face on it. Share your feelings with someone else. You might find they feel just like you.

**Wilson, B (2017) Student Wellbeing Counsellor (Buxton)**

**For tips on coping with homesickness follow the link below or scan the QR code:**

<https://www.topuniversities.com/blog/how-stop-feeling-homesick-university>



## Local Mental Health Support (External to the University)

**Trent PTS (16-18 years old)** E: [www.trentpts.co.uk](http://www.trentpts.co.uk)

**Tel:** 01332 265659

**Derbyshire Federation for Mental Health** E: <http://www.dfmh.co.uk>

**Grapevine** E: [www.grapevinebuxton.org.uk](http://www.grapevinebuxton.org.uk)

**First Steps Derbyshire** E: [www.firststepsderbyshire.co.uk](http://www.firststepsderbyshire.co.uk)

**Derbyshire Focus Line Mental Health Helpline**

**Tel:** 08000 272 127 (Weekdays- 5pm-9am / Weekends - 24hours)

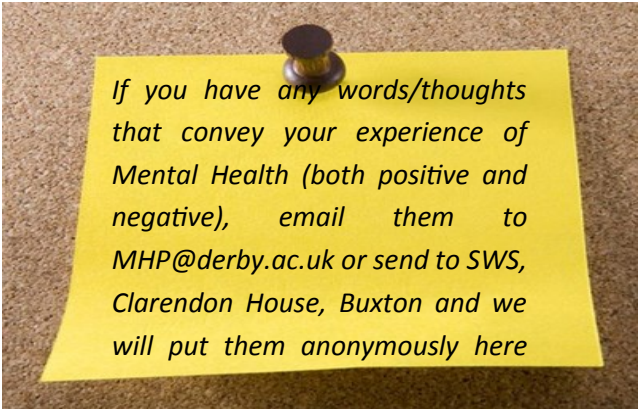
**Insight Talking Therapies** E: [www.insighthealthcare.org](http://www.insighthealthcare.org)

## Contact Us...

### Student

### Wellbeing

Clarendon House  
1 Devonshire  
Road  
Buxton



*If you have any words/thoughts that convey your experience of Mental Health (both positive and negative), email them to [MHP@derby.ac.uk](mailto:MHP@derby.ac.uk) or send to SWS, Clarendon House, Buxton and we will put them anonymously here*

**Phone:** 01298 330414

**E-mail:** [SWSBuxton@derby.ac.uk](mailto:SWSBuxton@derby.ac.uk)

**Web:** [www.derby.ac.uk/student-wellbeing](http://www.derby.ac.uk/student-wellbeing)  
[www.blc.ac.uk/student-handbook/student-](http://www.blc.ac.uk/student-handbook/student-)

