

Building resilience at University after challenging A-level results

Students across the country have been affected by the 2020 exam and marking process. In March, young students at both A-level and GCSE had to deal with their exams being cancelled. With the ability to focus on exams and work towards future goals taken away, these cancellations left many feeling lost. Anxiety was high as a consequence, further heightened by the pandemic itself and the extent to which adaptations (none of which 'young person friendly' such as for example, social distancing) had to be made to deal with all the various restrictions. Anxiety then peaked when, on results day students found out that their exam marks were less than predicted. For many, this meant their chances of going to university or getting a job in an uncertain job market were considerably negatively affected. A week on, the government 'u-turn' to consider teacher predictions instead has made the outlook more positive, but for many students, their sense of safety has been severely challenged and no doubt will intensify until they are settled properly at university.

Resilience is the way a person adapts to life's challenges and many young people will be resilient about dealing with this newest challenge. However, given the series of extraordinary events young people have had to face it is not surprising after results to feel shock, numb or to accept what's happened. This will be particularly true for those young people who have experienced something traumatic in the past.

Symptoms of shock

- You may find it hard to believe what's happened. This might mean you behave as though you are ok and everyone around you might think you are dealing well with it too. It might be awhile before you do start to react to it all.
- Some feelings you might have include being angry, upset, worried, embarrassed or uncertain. All of these might also make you feel like an imposter at university.

Steps to Take

- Realise what you are feeling is shock and give yourself some time to accept what's happened.
- Keep a routine – eating, sleeping and attending lectures. It helps to feel safe.
- Just because you feel like an imposter doesn't mean you are one – remind yourself of your achievements to date.
- Talk to others – they've all gone through the same exam results experience and find out if they are feeling the same way too.



@stem4org



- Note any changes in yourself and manage any negative ones carefully – for example, are you drinking more to cope with what you feel? Are you taking more risks? Are you not applying yourself to university work since you believe you shouldn't be there?
- Talk it over if you can, find out about student support or contact your GP.

Going to Your 'Second Choice' University?

If you had to take your 'insurance offer' university and find it hard to engage because it was your second choice, first give yourself some time to settle. Next, think about what is getting in the way of you accepting this choice: why you might be rejecting it? Often people confuse their second choice with themselves and feel like going here somehow reflects something negative about themselves. It's not the university that's the problem, it's how you perceive it. So work on not comparing it to your first choice and focus on the positives it offers. Give yourself a new way to engage positively with it daily. Work on appreciating yourself.

Make The Best of University

- Be available by engaging with what's on offer and signing up to societies
- Attend as many lectures as possible, even if they are online, in order to create your own timetable of academic planning
- Keep some basic self-care rules such as eating well and regularly, catching up with lost sleep and monitoring alcohol levels when you can.
- Get to know your housemates, spend time in communal areas
- Make your room feel comfortable and familiar – have some of your favourite things such as posters, pictures and lights around you.
- Balance time spent talking to people at home and new friends
- Reach out for help if you feel you need it

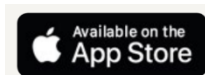


CLEAR FEAR



COMBINED MINDS

stem4 also provides clinically developed mental health apps that can be accessed anywhere for free. Clear Fear has a range of techniques to help teens manage anxiety whilst Combined Minds helps parents and friends support someone who is anxious. They are based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and a Strengths-Based Approach respectively and are available to download now from both Google Play and the App Store.



@stem4org

