

UCU STARTERS GUIDE

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO STARTING AND SURVIVING UNIVERSITY
Fall 2018

A MedCo Initiative

In collaboration with PsychologyCo, GastronomyCo, GymCo & MindfulCo





WHAT TO EXPECT

1 | *Nutrition*

2 | *Recipes*

3 | *Physical Health*

4 | *Mental Health*

5 | *Body Balance*

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Hey, welcome to the UCU starters guide!

Starting university can be tough: you move away from your parents/siblings/people you love and have to start a new life somewhere else, maybe even on the other side of the world. You might need to switch to another language, you need to cook healthy meals for yourself, maintain a social life, do extracurriculars, get enough sleep, exercise, and, now we're at it, you might want to do well in your courses. All these things can be extremely overwhelming, not just for starting students, but also for those who have been at UCU for a while. Especially when everyone else seems to succeed and thrive, you might start to feel isolated and alone. Of course, there are people who move to campus and get their life together straight away. Everything falls into place for them and they feel at home after just a couple of days. However, this is not, let me stress this, the default. It is perfectly fine if you don't feel like this. Many people struggle with anything or everything, from switching to English, or making friends, to finding a major they actually enjoy and want to pursue. The thing is, when you see other people doing well -because let's be real, you mostly see people doing well, you don't see the breakdowns that happen behind closed doors - you can tend towards going to blame yourself. There must be something wrong with me if I feel this way, right? Maybe I am indeed not smart/fun/special enough to be at UCU. But I am here to tell you: **you are not alone.**

When I started to talk to my closest friends about the things that got to me last year, I realised that, indeed, I was not the only one who struggling with A or B. Although I thought many of my friends were living their best lives, they were dealing with their own, yet similar, issues. The more we opened up, the more I realised: we need to be sharing more. Talk about what is actually going on in your life, and not be satisfied with a "Yes, I am fine", from your friends. Because once we start communicating, we realise that no one is perfect and everyone has issues they are trying to tackle, however minor or major it might be or feel. And that is the reason I started writing this guide: sharing my experience, telling you everything I had wished I had known before coming here, and asking others to do the same.

In this guide, you will find all information you need on starting and surviving university. Everything from scientifically intricate parts on nutrition, to FOMO, sleeping, yoga or reaching out for help will be discussed here. This can act as your reference guide for when you are totally lost, or when you are just trying to educate yourself. You might not find all information relevant or interesting, and that is absolutely okay. Take from it what you need, work with the information and share it with others, in an attempt to make life a little bit easier for everyone. **The is the UCU starters guide, for UCU students, by UCU students**

- Nienke Schouten



Chapter 1

NUTRITION

MedCo

Finding and understanding proper nutrition

Nutrition; one of the fundamental factors in attaining and maintaining good health. As more and more research is being conducted, it becomes exponentially more difficult and tedious to find credible nutritional information. However, nutrition can be fascinating, intriguing, astonishing, delicate, and wonderful as well. I would even argue that it is most of the time. The influence of what we eat is, of course, important to our overall health. It is no coincidence that Hippocrates stated: "Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food." 2400 years ago. Every single molecule within any food item has a specific task in your body. It can help transport other molecules through your body, build muscle, make your skin clear and hair soft, it can strengthen your bones and maybe even work in preventing cancer development. And that, the power of these tiny molecules, is the beauty of nutrition.

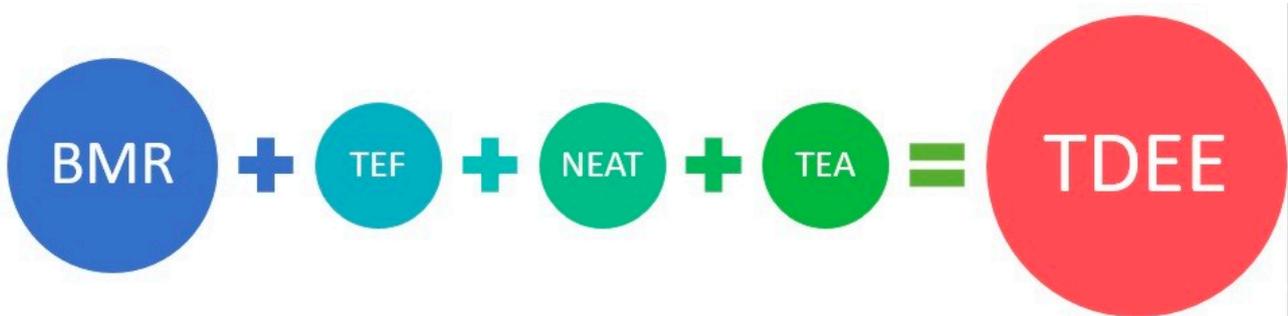
This guide will not aim to replace the book for UCU's biochemistry course, I am not here to tell you what you should or should not eat, and, most importantly, I am not here to tell you not to drink alcohol anymore. Another big disclaimer is that I am not here to give you any sort of medical advice, if you are struggling with nutrition or general health, please do contact your GP. This guide is created to provide you with the nutritional basics, ranging from quite a scientific breakdown of all macro's and micro's, to creating nutritionally balanced meals. You might not find everything interesting or applicable to your daily life. However, for those who are interested in a more background information: I've got you covered. I am here to make your life just a little bit easier by all the information you need to make nutritionally sound choices. You can read all about vitamins, minerals, food, and energy needs in this one document. No need to look up other papers (feel free to though!) or spend nights searching for you ideal macro ratio.

You might have noticed that I have addressed you, the reader, multiple times. The reason for this is that I do not want this guide to be an impersonal and general guide. I specifically want this to be personal and -as far as this is possible- enjoyable to read. However, I also acknowledge the fact that this guide needs to and will be credible. Therefore, the text will be scientific and academic at times. Bear with me though, because in the end this is me sharing one of my biggest passions with you and I promise you that all this information, the fun facts and the beauty of how all of this ties into your overall health, will be worth the read.

An energetic introduction to nutrition

As mentioned before, food provides us with energy to go about our days. This energy is usually expressed in kilocalories (kcal), however, this is most commonly referred to as calories (Gropper & Smith, 2018). This energy is essential for basic human functions, e.g. breathing, blood circulation and reparation and maintenance of tissues. Moreover, it is needed for movement, like walking to class, getting a snack and cooking yourself dinner. All these factors are combined into a sum of energetic needs: total daily energy expenditure (TDEE) (Melanson, 2017). TDEE can be divided into the following categories:

1. Basic Metabolic Rate (BMR): the minimal amount of kilocalories an individual needs to stay alive, without any physical activity taken into consideration. To specify, if you were to lay on your bed and watch Netflix for 24 hours, you would need to eat a certain amount of calories to survive. (Melanson, 2017).
2. Non Exercise Induced Thermogenesis (NEAT): amount of kilocalories burned during intentional exercise, like playing football or going for a run. (Melanson, 2017).
3. Thermic Effect of Activity (TEA): amount of kilocalories burned during activity physical activity, which is not exercise, this includes going to the store to get groceries, walking to class, and comparable activities. (Melanson, 2017).
4. Themic Effect of Food (NEF): the amount of kilocalories needed to digest the food consumed in a day. This depends on the different foods you eat, and the macronutrients they contain (Melanson, 2017)



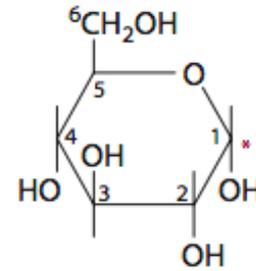
The amount of energy people need to meet their TDEE differs significantly. This depends strongly on the factors listed previously, as well as weight and height. Moderately active males and females are normally advised to consume 2400-2600 and 2000 kilocalories, respectively (Zelman, 2008). However, if you want to know more specifically how much kilocalories you need in a day to gain, maintain or lose weight in order to reach a healthy

weight, try searching for an online TDEE calculator.

The daily consumed energy usually comes from the three main macronutrients: **carbohydrates** (giving you 4kcal/gram), **fat** (giving you 9 kcal/gram), and **protein** (giving you 4 kcal/gram) (Gropper & Smith, 2018).

Technically speaking, alcohol is a macronutrient as well, however, -hopefully- this is not the main energy provider for most individuals, nor should it be.

Macronutrients differ from micronutrients in that they are essential in large quantities, usually multiple to hundreds of grams a day.



A molecule of glucose

The macro-/micronutrients differentiation will be the leading difference in structuring the nutrition part of this guide. Firstly, there will be a focus on macros, especially carbohydrates, fats and protein. Afterwards, more depth will be offered on micronutrients. The different vitamins and minerals will be discussed, as well as their importance in the human body.

Macronutrients

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates, more commonly referred to as carbs, are the main energy provider for most people (Gropper & Smith, 2018). When thinking of carbs, foods like pasta, rice, bread, and noodles often come to mind. Indeed, these foods do contain their fair share of carbohydrates, however, carbohydrates are not limited to these obvious sources. Fruits, beans, vegetables, dairy, and meats all contain carbohydrates, albeit in smaller quantities. Over the past few years, it has become a trend to demonise carbohydrates by claiming they are the main cause of weight gain. Consequently, more and more people have put their bowl of pasta to the side, replacing it for low-carbs (and, frankly, often unenjoyable) alternatives. Things like zucchini pasta, almond meal bread, and cauliflower rice have become more popular, especially in the health and fitness industry. With this, the popularity of low-carb diet has increased as well, leaving people all over the world sad and hangry. You might be inclined to throw away your steaming bowl of pasta or freshly baked bread, because you also want to become your best and fittest self. And you cannot eat carbs then, right? Luckily, the truth is a bit more nuanced. However, before we can dive into all the nutritional myths and facts about carbs, let's first have a look at what carbohydrates are exactly. Unleash your inner science nerd, and let's talk biochemistry.

Carbohydrates can be split into two distinct groups: simple, and complex carbohydrates. These complex carbohydrates are polymers, which simply means that one complete

molecule consists of multiple repeating units, called monosaccharides (Gropper & Smith, 2018). These monosaccharides are also known as simple sugars; they are the smallest form of carbohydrates, they cannot get any smaller and still be recognised as a carb. The most well-known and infamous monosaccharide is glucose, however, there are two more monosaccharides: fructose and galactose, which have similar structures to glucose. The attachment of one monosaccharide to another results in a disaccharide. By linking the three different monosaccharides, 4 different disaccharide combinations are created. Both monosaccharides and disaccharides belong to the group of simple carbohydrates. This is in contrast to oligo- and polysaccharides, where three to ten, or more than ten sugar units bind together, respectively. To make it easier to understand the concept of the monosaccharide binding, try comparing it to a beaded necklace, where every bead is a monosaccharide. One bead on its own might be aesthetically pleasing, however, when you combine the beads and tie them together, they will form one bigger functional object.

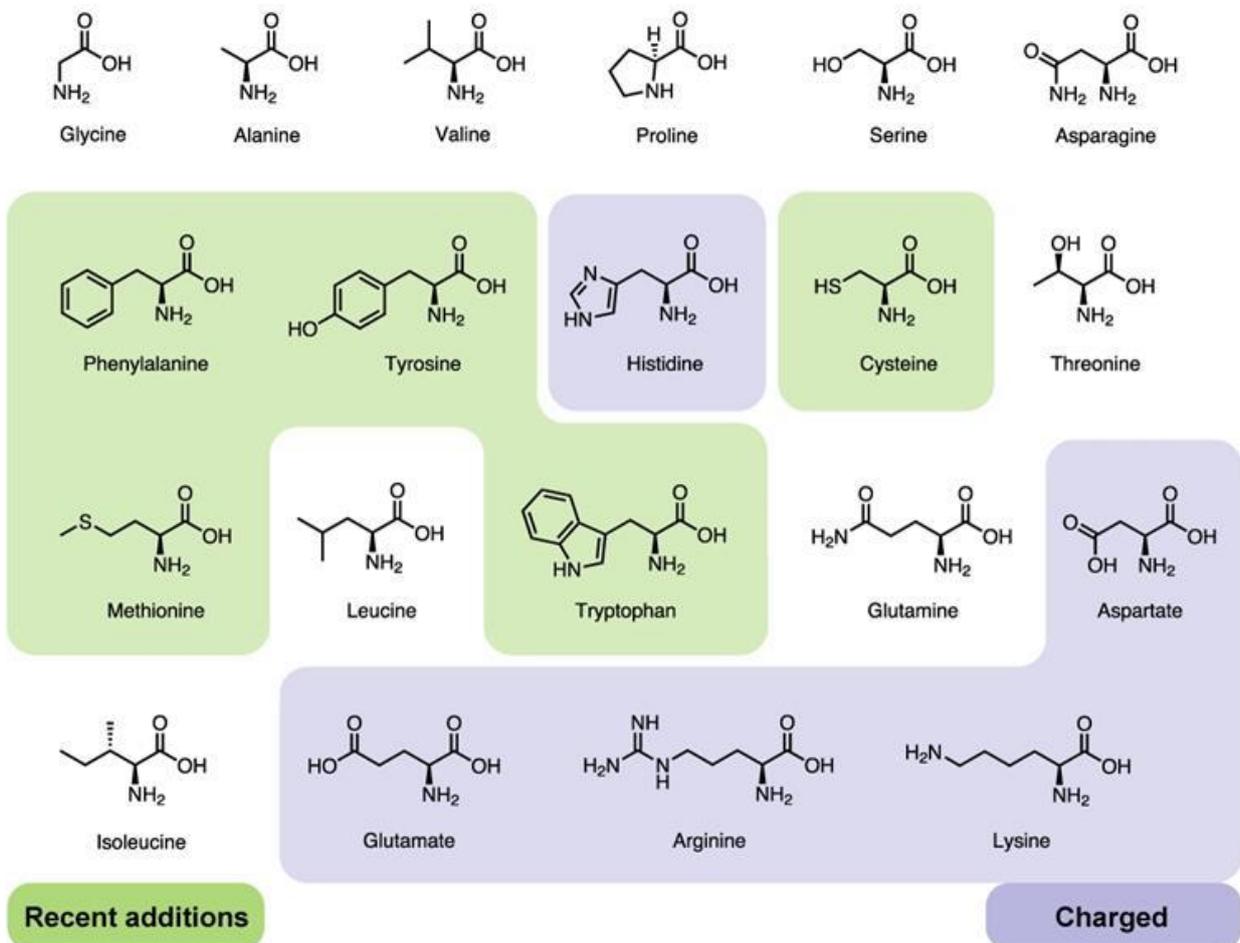
As simple carbohydrates are, as the name implies, simple, metabolising them is not demanding for the body (Gropper & Smith, 2018). To elaborate, monosaccharides can be taken up into the bloodstream by the small intestine without having to be broken down any further. Disaccharides can enter the bloodstream after the cleavage of the one bond between the two monosaccharides. Naturally, this leads to a fast uptake of both monosaccharides and disaccharides. Consequently, the level of sugar in the blood can rise rapidly. This is in contrast to oligo- and polysaccharides, as multiple-step breakdown is needed for absorption to take place.

As stated before, simple sugars can raise blood sugar levels rapidly. A way of measuring the impact of carbohydrates on levels of monosaccharides in the blood, also known as the glycemic (recognize the word glucose in "glycemic" here!) response, is the glycemic index (GI) and glycemic load (GL) (Gropper & Smith, 2018). To specify, foods that are easily digested and absorbed, leading to a sudden rise in blood sugar levels, are said to have a high glycemic index. Contrarily, foods that make for a slow and steady rise in blood sugar level have a low glycemic index. Examples of food with a high glycemic index (>70) are sugary drinks, cakes, candy etc. (Dansinger, 2017). These foods are usually not too great for your body. Foods with lower glycemic indexes are fruits, legumes, meats, dairy, grains, and nuts. Note that the GI exclusively makes for a quantitative comparison (Gropper & Smith, 2018). The GI of a food is determined by feeding a subject 50 grams of this specific food and measuring the rate of carbohydrate absorption and comparing this to the absorption of glucose. As glucose is readily absorbed, its GI is set at 100. Almost all foods have a GI lower than this. There is one major flaw in this glycemic index, as it only tells you the comparison with glucose when only 50 grams of the specific food is consumed. One might eat a food with a considerable GI (like oreo's) in small amounts (one oreo), leading to no significant effect on the blood sugar levels. In contrast, one might eat a food with an extremely low GI (like beans) in large amounts (e.g. 6 cans of

beans), making for a significant rise of the blood sugar level. To counter this flaw, the glycemic load was developed. The GL takes both the GI and the consumed amount of food into consideration, making for a more suitable tool to classify carbohydrate-containing foods. The glycemic load is calculated by multiplying the mass of ingested carbohydrates with the GI of the food and dividing this by 100.

Protein

Protein. The one thing all bodybuilders and fitness fanatics will go crazy for. This is, of course, not without a reason, as protein contains the building blocks for muscle growth. However, protein's role in the body doesn't stop at making you buff! Protein is crucial in many biochemical reactions within your body (I won't bore you with more details, don't worry); it provides structure to your hair, skin, and nails; it plays a key role within almost all immune functions, thus keeping you healthy and flu-free; it provides energy - I could go on forever- (Van De Walle, 2018). Maybe you already knew all this information about protein, however, to become a real pro you might want to brush up on some biochemistry. Because what is the worth of applied knowledge without knowing the fundamentals?



The structure of all the different amino acids

Just as for carbohydrates, protein is built up of smaller units, which are called amino acids. The name of these single units gives us vital information about its structure (Gropper & Smith, 2018). Firstly, we see the word "amino", implying that the molecule contains an amine group, which consists of one nitrogen atom and three hydrogen atoms ($\sim\text{NH}_3$). Secondly, an amino acid is, clearly, an acid. This, from a structural point of view, that the molecule contains an acid group ($\sim\text{COOH}$). Do not worry if this biochemistry is not your cup of tea, it is not necessary to understand these groups for the rest of the information, rather, it gives you an idea of how an amino acid is built up. As said before, amino acids link together to form proteins. Proteins are huge molecules, containing hundreds, thousands or ten thousands of amino acids (Gropper & Smith, 2018). This is in contrast to carbohydrate length, which usually ranges from 1 to a couple of hundreds of monosaccharides.

In total, there are 20 amino acids. Of these 20 amino acids, our bodies can synthesize 11. This means that there are 9 specific amino acids that we cannot make ourselves, thus, we require them through our diet. As these amino acids needs can only be met through our dietary choices, they are referred to as essential amino acids. The remaining 11 are nonessential, this might give the impression that we do not actually need them, however, we do, but we can meet needs by making them.

Although all amino acids contain an acid an amine group, there is more to them (Gropper & Smith, 2018). All 20 amino acids are structurally (slightly) different, giving them a different electrical charge, solubility in water/fat, or polarity. All these factors are of extreme importance to the protein, as they determine how a protein is folded. You could see this folding as a tangled network of different beaded necklaces. All necklaces are made up from different amino acids. These "beads" can interact with each other, as they are differently sized, and have different properties. Due to these difference, a unique tangling pattern arises. One tangled necklace can also tangle into another already tangled necklace, making an even bigger mess. Proteins are no different: they fold, tangle, and interact with other proteins to eventually form a complex 3D functional structure.

In the human body, we cannot readily absorb the tangled mess of proteins (Gropper & Smith, 2018). We first need the untangle, and separate all the amino acids before we can take them up and build muscle, or perform other tasks. The digestion of protein starts in the stomach, where proteins are detangled, creating long and neat line of amino acids. Afterward, the long strand is cut into smaller pieces. The mixture of partially digested protein is moved to the small intestine, where even more breakdown takes place. The separate amino acids can then be absorbed and used.

So, how do we build muscle from protein? Recall that amino acids are the building blocks

for muscle growth, muscle is built up of 40% protein. Whenever you put a strain on your muscles, e.g. with exercise, they damage slightly. In order to prevent this damage in the future, more muscle is , making you stronger. To replenish your muscles and give them all the building blocks they need, you need a sufficient protein intake, this will be covered in more depth in the section Sports nutrition.

Fats

Where carbs are often demonized by today's fitness industry, the same could be said for fats, also known as lipids, a couple years ago. Fat-free and low-fat diets were all the hype, encouraging people to focus more on carbohydrate and protein intake. However, as with "carbohydrate-shaming", the fear of fat does not lead to any good. Listen close to what I am about to say: no macronutrient is bad for you. Not carbohydrates, not protein, not fat. Of course, we do need to nuance here: not all fats are created equally (Gropper & Smith, 2018). More information on this will be included later on. What is important for now is to realize that we need a balanced diet containing all these compounds to get or stay healthy. Eliminating one entire macronutrient, and with this many foods, from your diet is not the way to go for fat loss, nor for getting healthier. You might wonder what the function is of fats in our body, besides the fact that they can offer warmth and insulation by building up fat tissue (big disclaimer: other macronutrients can also build up this tissue). Fat molecules are everywhere, they create membranes for our cells, so we can live (Gropper & Smith, 2018). They are the basis for many hormones, including testosterone and estrogen, and fat helps with the absorption of different vitamins. Clearly, fat is of extreme importance in our body. To be able to differentiate between the different kinds of fats, and make educated nutritional choices (assuming that you want to), let's have a closer look at fat.

This is the part where more biochemical knowledge is needed to understand the difference between "good fat" and "bad fat". I will try to explain it in a way that is understandable and, hopefully, somewhat entertaining. However, no promises can be made. Whereas carbohydrates and protein are built up of several repeating units, fat is not (Gropper & Smith, 2018). Despite this individualistic mindset of lipids and the fact that there is only one way to build them up, they can vary in all different other ways. This makes for lipids to be an extremely diverse group of molecules, just like carbohydrates and protein. In order to create a fat molecule, we need two different things: free fatty acids, and a "thing" to attach the fatty acids too.

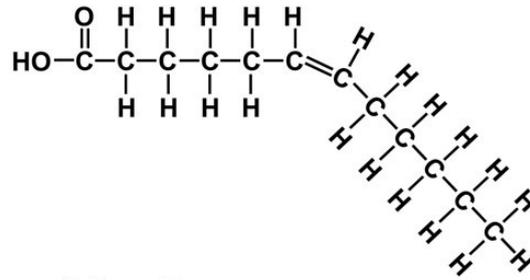
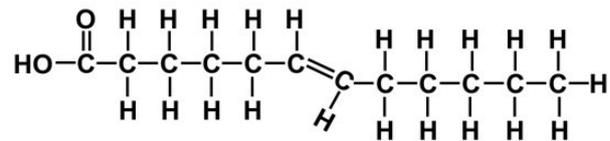
Let's have a look at fatty acids first, before we go further into the structure. Fatty acids are the simplest form of lipids: it is a chain of carbon atoms linked together, terminated with an acid group (recall from amino acids!). There are several ways in which fatty acids can set themselves apart from other fatty acids. Firstly, they can add or lose carbon atoms, making for longer or shorter chains.

only have one bond in common with their neighbors, they can have their hydrogen atom either in their right or in their left hand, depending on their orientation (Gropper & Smith, 2018). In biochemistry we, of course, do not talk about a hand, rather, we refer to these positions as trans; holding the hydrogen atom in the other hand compared to the neighboring atom- or cis; holding the hydrogen atom in the same hand as the adjacent atom. I promise this will be important later on, but if you're lost: don't worry. I will teach you some shortcuts in applying this as well.

What is interesting to note is that trans saturated fatty acids barely appear in foods naturally. Trans fats were created to improve the structure of many processed foods, making them more solid at room temperature. However, trans fats can have detrimental health effects, as they are strongly associated with decreased cardiovascular health, chronic inflammation, decreased HDL cholesterol ("good" cholesterol) levels, and increased insulin resistance (Gropper & Smith, 2018; Hung et al, 2016; Calder, 2015; Vanice & Rasmussen, 2014).

Recall from the beginning that we needed a support molecule for our fatty acids to attach to? Compare this to a coat hanger: where are you going to put your precious coats if you have no place to hang them? Now imagine that your coat hanger's maximum capacity is three coats. It can handle one coat, it is also fine with two, it loves three coats, but it can never have four. This is exactly what is also the case in fat molecules. A so-called glycerol molecule, the coat hanger, has three binding spots where three fatty acids, coats, can be attached (Gropper & Smith, 2018). It can live with less than three, but not with more. This glycerol is the backbone on which the fatty acids can rest; it is a stable factor.

Is all this information a bit confusing? Don't worry, it is all summarised in the table below. Moreover, practical application of this knowledge can be found in **Creating a well-balanced diet**.

cis-fatty acid**trans-fatty acid***Cis-fatty acid vs trans-fatty acid*

Saturated	Unsaturated	Trans fat
Has maximum atoms bound	Had a double bond	Has a double bond
Completely saturated, so hydrogen atoms trans or cis not applicable	Is usually in a cis formation	Is in its trans formation
Often associated with decreased heart health. Might have other health risks.	Associated with improved cardiovascular and neural health.	
Found in red meat, pork, fatty dairy products such as cheese, cream and whole-fat milk	Found in vegetable oils, nuts, olives, seeds, some fish, avocado	Found in small amounts in dairy, beef, and lamb. Most abundant in margarine, processed snacks, baked goods, desserts, non-natural peanut butters

Alcohol

At last, we have arrived at most people's favorite macronutrient: alcohol, which is the fourth, and also last, macronutrient we will be discussing. A common misperception is that alcohol is a carbohydrate, however, this is not the case (Gropper & Smith, 2018). Alcohol is, like the name already implies, an alcohol. Granted, alcohol is often paired with sugary syrups, in the case of cocktails, or with barley, wheat or hops, in the case of beer, but it does not fall into the category of carbs itself (Helms, Valdez & Morgan, 2015).

I do not think I have to tell you that drinking is not the best you can do to/for your body. With that being said, not consuming any booze at all might not be your ideal scenario (although it is of course perfectly fine to not drink at university!). As said many times before, the aim of this guide is not to tell you what you can and cannot do, rather it sets out to give you all the information you need to make an informed decision. So, what can we say about alcohol?

Let's start a couple of hours before the party. You might have noticed getting intoxicated at a faster pace on an empty stomach, in comparison to when you have had a meal before. The reason for this is that ethanol is absorbed most efficiently and quickly in the small intestine. If there is food in the stomach, then alcohol will not reach the small intestine as fast, as food inhibits gastric emptying. Therefore, it will not reach the bloodstream immediately, making for a delay in the alcohol-induced buzz.

Then you find your way to the party, where you have some drinks. When the alcohol has reached your blood, it affects your Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC), which is the percentage of alcohol in your blood (Legg, 2017). As the amount of blood in your body varies from person to person, one drink might affect person A very differently from person

B. However, the clearance rate of alcohol (20 mg/dL/hour) remains the same for all, independent of age or gender. Practically, this means that it will take about an hour for your body to metabolize one shot of alcohol, 2 hours for a big beer, and 3 hours for a large glass of wine.

After a night of partying comes the dreadful morning: you have a hangover. What causes this horrible feeling? And more importantly, is there a way to get rid of it faster? Hangovers occur when the alcohol level of your blood approaches zero again. There are multiple hypotheses why this might be the case, but there is no well-defined mechanisms yet. One theory argues that alcohol masks the damage it has done to the body when it is still present in the blood, thus, when you sober up this damage surfaces, making for a hangover (Thompson et al., 2017). Other researchers argue that alcohol causes dehydration and that this dehydration causes mood swings, headaches and other typical symptoms (Armstrong et al., 2011; Ganio et al., 2011). Lastly, the disturbance in sleeping pattern might also play a role in all your post-alcohol feelings (Examine, 2018).

A more important question for most is how to prevent hangovers. The most obvious and straightforward answer is not to drink too much. However, how do you define "too much"? The tables on the next page show you how much alcohol will most likely cause a hangover the following day, granted that the alcohol is consumed within 90 minutes.

On another note, there is little evidence suggesting that there are specific foods you can eat to cure your hangover, as most studies could not be replicated (Jayawardena et al., 2017). However, if you drink responsibly, that is on a full stomach, drink water to stay hydrated and try to get a decent amount of sleep: you are already on the right track. If all else fails, painkillers (make sure the ones you have at hand can be paired with alcohol!) may alleviate your pounding headache, and coffee might clear the fog from your head. As you might know, more alcohol consumption will relief the feeling of a hangover at first. However, it will extend your hangover too.

How much ethanol is sufficient to produce hangovers in most women

Body weight		Ethanol	Drinks*	Beer	Wine	Spirits
lb	kg	g		ml	ml	ml
100	45	50	3.6	1,265	527	158
125	57	62	4.5	1,581	659	198
150	68	75	5.3	1,897	790	237
175	79	87	6.2	2,213	922	277
200	91	100	7.1	2,530	1,054	316
225	102	112	8.0	2,846	1,186	356
250	113	125	8.9	3,162	1,317	395

* In the United States, a standard drink contains 14 g of ethanol. A can of beer (12 fl oz, or 355 ml, with 5% alcohol), a glass of wine (5 fl oz, or 148 ml, with 12% alcohol), and a shot of spirits (1.5 fl oz, or 44 ml, with 40% alcohol) are three examples of “standard drink”.

How much ethanol is sufficient to produce hangovers in most men

Body weight		Ethanol	Drinks*	Beer	Wine	Spirits
lb	kg	g		ml	ml	ml
100	45	54	3.9	1,380	575	172
125	57	68	4.9	1,725	719	216
150	68	82	5.8	2,070	862	259
175	79	95	6.8	2,415	1,006	302
200	91	109	7.8	2,760	1,150	345
225	102	122	8.7	3,104	1,294	388
250	113	136	9.7	3,449	1,437	431

* In the United States, a standard drink contains 14 g of ethanol. A can of beer (12 fl oz, or 355 ml, with 5% alcohol), a glass of wine (5 fl oz, or 148 ml, with 12% alcohol), and a shot of spirits (1.5 fl oz, or 44 ml, with 40% alcohol) are three examples of “standard drink”.

Micronutrients

As mentioned before, macronutrients are nutrients which you need in quite substantial amounts. Following this line of reasoning; micronutrients are those nutrients, which you do not need in a large amount. They are essential to the human body, however, little amounts are sufficient. The two groups of micronutrients are vitamins and minerals. The former includes organic compounds, meaning that they are made up of carbon, hydrogen and oxygen atoms, whereas the latter is built up from inorganic materials, like metals. In this part, we will go over the different kinds of vitamins and minerals, as well as their function in the human body, what happens in absence of them, and in which foods we can find them.

Vitamins

Vitamin A is the name for a group of compounds, which includes retinol, retinal, retinoic acid β -carotene (Gropper & Smith, 2018). The latter falls under another class within the vitamin A group; the carotenoids. These carotenoids are precursors for active vitamin A, and are often found in plants. This vitamin is essential for the synthesis of rhodopsin (a pigment used in the eye), it is involved in cell growth and differentiation, as well as immune function, and bone development. The best sources of vitamin A are beef liver and dairy products, closely followed by sweet potato, carrots -this is why your mother probably told you to eat them to see better in the dark-, squash, greens, broccoli, and cantaloupe. The recommended daily allowance (RDA) of vitamin A is 700-900 μ gram for women and men, respectively. To put this into perspective; one small sweet potato will already provide you with 500% of the RDA. Failure to meet these needs can lead to decreased sight in the dark, other eye-related issues, and dry skin.

Vitamin B is a family of vitamins (Gropper & Smith, 2018). This group is more extensive and is specifically divided into different vitamins, as they have distinct properties in the body, and are sourced from different foods.

Vitamin B1, thiamin, plays a vital part in several mechanisms within the body (Gropper & Smith, 2018). For example, it is important in energy transformation and functions in the nervous system. An extreme deficiency of vitamin B1 can lead to a disease called beriberi, which manifests itself in (muscle) weakness and also affects the cardiovascular system. Daily, we need about 1.1 mg of thiamin to maintain good health. This can be found in a variety of foods, ranging from pork to legumes, soy milk, and sunflower seeds.

Vitamin B2, riboflavin, has an important function in energy production and maintenance (Gropper & Smith, 2018). A deficiency can result in the little ruptures in the corner of the mouth or the outside of the lips. To prevent this, 1.1-1.3mg of vitamin B2 needs to be consumed, which can be found in meat, eggs, dairy, soy, grains, and almonds.

Vitamin B3, niacin, is, similar to vitamin B2, important in energy production and maintenance (Gropper & Smith, 2018). We need about 14-16mg of niacin to prevent issues like skin inflammation, mental confusion, and diarrhea. Good sources of this vitamin include tuna, beef, chicken, peanuts, avocado, wheat, and mushrooms.

Pantothenic acid, previously called vitamin B5, is one of those vitamins that can be found in almost any and every food (Gropper & Smith, 2018). Ranging from plant foods to animal products: it will contain pantothenic acid. This acid functions as a coenzyme (CoA, for all science majors) in the body, and is, therefore, important for many reactions. A deficiency, resulting from an intake sub-5mg, is extremely rare, but will result in numbness of hands and feet, paired with fatigue, and vomiting.

Folate is yet another member of the vitamin B family, and is also known as vitamin B9 (Gropper & Smith, 2018). Folate, as any other vitamin, has several jobs in the human body. Most significant is the role it plays in DNA formation and cell growth. A lack of folate can result in birth defects, which is why many pregnant women supplement with B9. The RDA for folate is about 300 micrograms, which can be attained through eating Brussels sprouts, leafy greens, avocado and asparagus. For example, 200 grams of spinach will already give you 100% of your RDA!

Vitamin B6 is essential in nutrient metabolism, as well as red blood cell formation (Gropper & Smith, 2018). The vitamin is most commonly found in animal products, like salmon, meat and chicken. However, whole-grain products, nuts, veggies, and certain fruits are also good sources. The RDA for vitamin B6 is 1.3mg, and 200 grams of broccoli will already set you at 30% of this. Add 80 grams of salmon to this and you're already at 100%! A vitamin B6 deficiency is rare, as it is found in a wide variety of foods. However, in contrast to many other vitamins, it is extremely toxic in high doses. Some supplements contain crazy high amounts of vitamin B6 (more than 200mg/day), which can lead to neuropathy, which is damage of your nervous system. You do not have to worry about getting too much B6 from your food, but if you're taking a multivitamin every day, do check if the vitamin B6 levels are not excessive (make sure it's less than 100 grams).

Vitamin B12, also known as cobalamin, is one of the vitamins vegans and vegetarians need to be cautious of. Vitamin B12 is mainly, if not exclusively, found in animal products, such as meat, fish, milk, dairy, and eggs (Gropper & Smith, 2018). Vegan milk or meat alternatives are often fortified with B12, however, it is extremely important to supplement this vitamin if you do not consume animal products! A deficiency of vitamin B12 can lead to anaemia, and is difficult to reverse. It can take years to develop such a deficiency, as vitamin B12 can be stored in the body, but once these reserves are exhausted you can face serious problems. The RDA for this vitamin is about 2µgrams per day. This RDA can be reached by any sort of animal product, or supplementation. For

example, a glass of skim milk already gives you 1.2 µgram.

Vitamin C, also ascorbic acid, is a well-known supplement people take to increase their immune health (Gropper & Smith, 2018). High vitamin C supplementation does not seem to have an effect on this, however, regular vitamin C supplementation does seem to have positive, yet quite moderate, effect on 3-13% of adults. Vitamin C is also a crucial factor in the synthesis of collagen. It, therefore, comes as no surprise that sailors suffered from scurvy in the last centuries. Fun fact, this was countered by feeding the sailors limes during their trips across the world. We need about 75-90mg of vitamin C per day to stay healthy. This amount can, rather easily, be found in a variety of plant foods, including papaya, oranges, cantaloupe, broccoli, peppers, grapefruit etc. Alcoholism and smoking increase the risks of becoming deficient, and subsequently developing issues associated with a lack of vitamin C: scurvy (extreme cases), compromised wound healing, bleeding gums, rupture of small capillaries.

Vitamin D is, despite the name, not a genuine vitamin (Gropper & Smith, 2018). In fact, it is a hormone derived from cholesterol. Vitamin D presents itself in two different forms, called vitamin D2 (ergocalciferol) and vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol). The former is derived from plants, whereas cholecalciferol can, in small amounts, be found in animal products, like dairy and eggs. Although both can, in theory, be sourced from foods, most of the vitamin D we need comes from the effect of sunlight, more specifically UV-B radiation, on our skin. This makes the precursor of vitamin D in the skin get travel through the body to finally become activated through kidney and liver metabolism. This activated vitamin D3 can then act on different tissues in the body. One extremely important factor to keep in mind though, is that sun is not strong enough during the autumn and winter months to start the vitamin activation pathway. Therefore, we, as residents of the Netherlands, need to supplement with vitamin D, as this is crucial for maintaining health throughout the colder and darker months. Low vitamin D concentrations have been shown to be strongly associated with depression multiple times (Anglin, Samaan, Walter & McDonalds, 2013). However, its effect doesn't stop there, vitamin D has highly correlated with bone density, as it plays a role in calcium homeostasis. Again, supplementation for vitamin D is highly advised, and supplements can cheaply be found at stores like HEMA or Kruidvat. The RDA for vitamin D is 15-20µg, however this recommendation does change with age.

Vitamin E is most abundant in plant foods, like nuts and vegetable seed oils (Gropper & Smith, 2018). It is an antioxidant and is active in safeguards cell membranes. Shortages of vitamin E in the body can lead to myopathy, anemia and neuropathy. As vitamin E is a fat-soluble vitamin, and is, subsequently, found in many fat-abundant foods, people following a low-fat diet might have trouble getting their daily needs of this vitamin.

Vitamin K was named after koagulation, which is the Danish version of coagulation, as it was important in this process (Gropper & Smith, 2018). In simpler terms: vitamin K is essential

in blood-clotting events, thus stopping an internal or external bleeding. This already shows the importance of sufficient vitamin K intake. As with vitamin E, vitamin K is mainly found in plant foods, like green leafy greens, vegetables, and soybeans. Interestingly, our bodies can synthesize vitamin K in the lower digestive tract, as we host specific bacteria who can create the vitamin. Unfortunately, the vitamin K produced here is not completely absorbed and does not satisfy human needs (for the vitamin 90-120µg).

Minerals

Minerals are, just like vitamins, extremely important to maintain health (Gropper & Smith, 2018). Minerals have many different roles within the body, as some work as cofactors in chemical reactions, while others are active in helping to strengthen your bones. Minerals can be divided into two different groups, according to how much you need of them. On the one hand, you have macrominerals, of which you need more than 100 mg per day. On the other hand, there are trace minerals, which are essential as well, just needed in a lower quantity (1-100mg/day). The major minerals and most essential trace minerals will be discussed below.

Calcium is a well-known mineral, as we all know it as an important factor in strengthening bones and teeth (Gropper & Smith, 2018). A deficiency of calcium can lead to illnesses like rickets and osteoporosis, are the loss of bone material and thus the weakening of your bones. Calcium can be found in abundance in dairy products, as one glass of calcium provides you with about 30% of your RDA. Most dairy alternatives are fortified with calcium, making them good alternatives. Other sources include legumes and leafy greens. In a day, you need about 1000 mg of calcium.

Magnesium is important in basic things like proper muscle contraction and maintaining normal and healthy heart contractions (Gropper & Smith, 2018). It should come as no surprise that a deficiency in this mineral can lead to muscle weakness, among other (neuro)muscular issues. The RDA for magnesium is about 300-400mg, which can be attained by eating a variety of nuts, seeds, legumes, whole grains, and leafy greens. 16 grams of pumpkin seeds can already give you 40% of your daily need, and 180 grams of spinach gives you about the same. Another good source is black beans, as 1 cup provides you with about 30% of your RDA.

Phosphorus can be found in huge quantities in the body, which is not without a reason (Gropper & Smith, 2018). All the membranes of all your cells contain phosphorus, making it abundant everywhere. Phosphorus can be found in many different foods, like meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy, nuts, legumes, and grains. It is uncommon to have a phosphorus deficiency, as requirements are easily met through diet. The RDA for phosphorus is set at around 700mg.

Iron is well known as an essential factor in oxygen transport throughout the body (Gropper & Smith, 2018). A deficiency of iron can lead to fatigue, anemia, and other energy-related

issues. Good sources of iron include meat, especially liver, as well as molasses, legumes, leafy greens, and whole grains. The RDA of iron is set at 8mg and 18 mg for males and females, respectively. Say that throughout the day you eat 200 grams of spinach and two pieces of bread, then you're already at 8mg. One thing to note is that drinks like coffee and tea inhibit iron absorption. As much as 65% of all iron can be kept from being absorbed if you drink a cup of tea with a meal. Best is to drink coffee and tea an hour after or before eating an iron-rich meal.

Copper is another trace mineral that can prevent anaemia (Gropper & Smith, 2018). It is also involved in healthy immune system functioning. As with iron, copper can be found in meat, whole grains and legumes, which means that when you try to reach your RDA for iron, you are likely to meet your copper needs as well. You need about 900µg of copper per day to maintain health.

Zinc is involved in nutrient metabolism, as well as collagen formation (Gropper & Smith, 2018). It also plays a role in alcohol detoxification (so listen up!), and cell replication & growth. Males need about 11mg of zinc per day, whereas women meet their needs by consuming 8mg. This can be found in many different foods, including oysters, wheat, beef, whole grains and poultry. If you eat around 100 grams of beef, you will already get 5mg of zinc.

Creating a well-balanced diet

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines a healthy diet as one that:

"[...] helps to protect against malnutrition in all its forms, as well as noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer" (WHO, 2018).

Where do we start with this healthy, balanced "diet"? (Note: I put diet between quotation marks, as I don't believe in a diet, rather, having nutritious eating habits are part of a healthy lifestyle. A diet sounds restrictive and boring).

A healthy diet begins with the right energy intake, as was mentioned at the beginning of the nutrition part. Maybe you need or want to gain some weight, in order to become a healthier/stronger version of yourself. In this case, you'll want to eat above your maintenance calories (Helms, Valdez & Morgan, 2015). In a nutshell, this entails that you will need to eat more than you burn, in other words, more than your TDEE. If you want to maintain your current weight then you will need to eat as much as you burn during a day. You can either calculate this or go by feeling (although this will not be as effective or accurate). If you are a fan of tracking your food, and this does not burden you mentally, then you can do so. Otherwise, eat according to your hunger. If you want to lose weight you will need to, you guessed it, consume less than you need. Important to note is that, as

you are eating less food, you might want to put an emphasize on nutrient-dense foods, like cruciferous greens or legumes (Gunnars, 2018).

Other important factors in a healthy diet are salt intake, saturated fat intake, trans fat intake, and refined sugar consumption (WHO, 2018). You might want to consider limiting these elements and focus on whole grains, legumes, and protein instead. From a practical point of view, this means eliminating most pre-packaged food, and starting to cook for yourself instead (this guide will provide you with the tastiest recipes!). For example, when looking at instant noodles, we can spot a worrying trend: most of the packages you can find in the store full of salt (about 3 grams per serving) and saturated fat (about 6 grams per serving). When taking the 5 gram upper limit for salt intake into account, you might understand why it is so unsettling. Of course, eating instant noodles once in a while won't hurt anyone, but making it a staple in your diet is not the best idea. For saturated fat, the upper limit set by the WHO is 22-28 gram (10% of the average calorie intake of a female and male, respectively). The same 10% upper limit "rule" goes for sugar, but as it contains less calories per gram than fat, the upper limits are 50 gram for women and 62,5 gram for men. However, if you want to benefit from the effects of a low-refined sugar diet, try cutting down to 5%, as recommended by the WHO. In practice, this equates to 6 teaspoons of sugar. As a reference point, one 300 mL can of coke contains 21 grams of sugar.

All this information may sound extremely restrictive and complicated at first, is there anything the WHO does want you to eat?! Luckily, there are several guidelines and tips on what to eat to promote fitness. For example, eating a variety of different foods is strongly advised (WHO, 2018). The emphasis of sustainable and healthy diet should be on different kinds of fruits, legumes, fiber, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts and/or seeds. This also includes 400 grams of fruits and vegetables, which comes down to about 5 servings. Say you eat a banana with your breakfast, some cucumber at lunch, you snack on an apple and some grapes and finish your day with a serving of veg with your dinner, then you are already set!

If you want to create a balanced meal, be it breakfast, lunch or dinner, try to include the three main macronutrients: (complex) carbs, protein, and fat. The complex carbohydrates will give you sustained energy throughout the day, while the protein will promote satiety (Greco et al., 2017). Fat, on the other hand, will help with the absorption of specific nutrients. Having all macronutrients in a meal promotes diversity, and makes it easier to meet your recommended daily intake of vitamins and minerals. At this point, you might be wondering where you can find foods that are filled with either carbs, protein or fat. Find your answer in the following table:

Carbohydrates	Protein	Fat
Legumes	Legumes (beans, lentils)	Nuts, and seeds (including things like peanut butter and tahini)
Fruits	Meats and fish	Oils
Vegetables	Eggs and milk	Fatty fish
Whole grains (whole grain wheat, couscous, bread, rice, oats, corn, barley, quinoa -technically not a grain, but has the nutrient profile of one-	Soy products like tempeh, meat replacers, tofu, soy milk etc.	

Now we have all this beautiful, yet quite theoretic, knowledge, it is time to get practical: how would an average day of eating look?

You could start your day with a bowl of oats, made with (plantsbased) milk and topped with fruit and nuts. You immediately have some complex carbs, protein, fat, and minerals and vitamins. Alternatively, you could make yourself some yogurt with muesli, and also top this with fruit and nuts. For lunch, you could have wholewheat bread or wraps, with things like hummus, peanut butter, chicken, vegetables, avocado etc. Dinner could be anything: you might like pasta, soups, curries, risotto; everything can be adapted to fit your health goals. Some simple googling will do the trick! Of course, you will get hungry when you are trying to manage your workload, social life, exercise, 5 committees and keep up with the latest news (UCU confessions). Things like fruits, nuts, vegetables with dips, rice cakes make for very easy snacks. You could also bake things yourself by setting your inner cooking goddess free. Do keep in mind that there is nothing wrong with eating cookies, cake, crisps etc. etc. There is a place for all those things within a balanced lifestyle. Going out to dinner with friends, grabbing a drink after a long week, or getting a donut just because you feel like it only reinforces a healthy relationship with food.

It is hard to stick to diets, or reach the goals you want to reach. In order to make it a bit easier, here is some advice you can use, but first, some disclaimers need to be made. First of all, that there is no such thing as one perfect one-size-fits-all diet. What works for you might not work for your best friend, and what works for me might not work for my brother. We all have different needs and other things we want to get from our diet. Secondly, a well-balanced diet should be sustainable. To specify: there is no use in starting an extremely restrictive diet on Monday, to find yourself gorging your way through an entire roll of oreo's on Tuesday. A balanced diet is not only nurturing your body, it also keeps your mind sane; it is sustainable and enjoyable over a longer period of time. If you are making an effort to live a healthier lifestyle, try to avoid drastic changes. Rather, take it slow! Maybe you want to eat healthier in general, then don't make the mistake of eating salads

for every meal, while solely snacking on celery (disclaimer: this is not the definition of a healthy diet). Try to start your day with a healthy breakfast in the first week, and eat the rest of the day how you normally would. Then in the second week, try swapping your unhealthy snacks for things like fruits, nuts, crackers etc. Make a small, yet sustainable, change every week and you will find building up this new lifestyle to be easier on your body and your mind. This also goes for other health goals, like gaining weight or increasing endurance. Creating habits takes time, don't be too hard on yourself. Fun fact, research shows that it takes about 66 days for the average person to automate a new behavior (Lally et al., 2010). So if your new lifestyle does not work out in the first week, don't give up.

Reading labels

As discussed before, there are certain elements in food that you might want to limit, or at least pay attention to. The most important ones, according to the WHO, are salt, saturated fat, trans fat, and sugar. However, when we are in the supermarket, how do even begin reading labels? Especially if they are in a foreign language? Below you can find the nutritional label for a loaf of whole grain bread. This will function as a guide through the Dutch language regarding labels.

Voedingswaarden

Deze waarden gelden voor het onbereide product.

	Per 100 Gram.
Energie	1094 kJ (261 kcal)
Vet	4.1 g
Waarvan verzadigd	0.6 g
Koolhydraten	36.6 g
Waarvan suikers	1.8 g
Voedingsvezel	7.7 g
Eiwitten	15.2 g
Zout	1 g

Voedingswaarden	= Nutrition facts
Energie	= Energetic value
Vet	= Fat
Waarvan verzadigd	= Of which saturated (with regards to total amount of fat)
Koolhydraten	= Carbohydrates
Waarvan suikers	= Of which is sugar (with regards to total amount of sugar)
Voedingsvezel	= Dietary fibre
Eiwitten	= Protein
Zout	= Salt

Some words you might want to look out for when reading labels included “volkoren”, meaning wholegrain and “gehydrolyseerd vet”, which means trans fat. Naturally, there are a bazillion names for sugar, and there is no use in stating all of them here, as you can read the total amount of sugar on the label. Do keep in mind that there are always naturally occurring sugars in foods. This does not mean that the product has added sugar and that you should stay away from it. What is more important is looking at the amount of dietary fibre, as this promotes healthy gut motility.

Nutrition frequently asked questions

In order to make this guide as useful as possible for you, we asked the people at UCU what nutrition-related questions they had. In the following section, you will find these questions, as well as the answer to them. As with everything, you can find all the sources we used to provide you with this information in the bibliography in the last part of the guide.

Is caffeine bad for you?

As you know, caffeine is a stimulant that can help you stay awake and feel more alert (Petre, 2016). Caffeine mostly influences the brain, where it inhibits adenosine. This compound accumulates throughout the day and, consequently, makes you feel drowsy. When you consume caffeine, adenosine cannot bind to its receptors and this sleep-induced effect is prevented. Although caffeine has a reputation of being detrimental for your health and messing with your sleep schedule, it is not as bad as it seems. This, of course, only goes when it is consumed in moderation. Caffeine is an addictive substance, so it is not recommended to drink more than 4 cups of coffee (or any other caffeine rich equivalent) per day. Moreover, it is not a good idea to consume more than 200mg of caffeine in one go. On the image on the next page you can see how much caffeine different drinks and foods contain. As mentioned, caffeine might not be as bad for you as you think. It has even been reported to protect the liver against scar tissue formation (cirrhosis). Drinking 2-4 cups of coffee a day has also been linked to a reduced risk of cancer, and improve gut health (Petre, 2016). However, do keep in mind that caffeine can inhibit iron absorption and that caffeine addiction can become very real. If you think you are completely dependent on caffeine, try cutting down one cup a day, until you

don't drink more than 2 cups of coffee per day. You might experience headaches and mood swings up to the first 6 days, but these symptoms will be gone afterward.



What is so special about super food? (avocados, coconut oil, blueberries etc.)

Super foods have been all the hype for a couple of years now. You cannot enter a store without seeing chia seeds, goji berries, agave syrup and hennep powder everywhere. However, there is no one food, that can cure cancer on its own, or which can relieve all your mental health problems. That being said, there are foods that are extremely nutrient-dense, and which are very healthy within your daily diet. These foods don't necessarily have to be shipped here from Peru, they don't have to have crazy names and they do not need to be hyped up. You probably already have many "super foods" in your pantry! All the nutrient dense foods like legumes, oats, berries and leafy greens can be considered "super foods", simply because, per calorie they contain, they have an incredible amount of micronutrients. The media telling you something is a superfood, does not mean it actually is (especially when you pay 20 euro's for the tiniest little bit). So, which foods are so crazy good for you? Garlic, for all the pasta lovers, is very good for your health. Garlic is linked to reducing blood pressure, and improving the "good" cholesterol in your blood (Ashraf et al., 2013; Ried et al., 2013). This is all because of glutathione activity, which is an antioxidant abundant in garlic. Another class of foods is leafy greens, which are, as you could read in the **Micronutrient** section rich in many essential minerals.

How healthy is fruit juice?

Fruit juice is, or rather: was, perceived as a healthy alternative for sugary drinks. And granted, fruit juice will in most cases be a better choice than soda, as it has more nutrients

and other beneficial compounds. However, the issue with many juices is that all the fiber is removed, and sugar is added. This will lead to an increased glycemic index (see section **Carbohydrates**), and thus a rapid increase in blood sugar levels. To avoid this, it is best to eat the whole fruit. You will avoid added sugar, you will get all the fiber and avoid blood sugar spiked. Another option is to make smoothies yourself, which will not eradicate the fiber. Another advantage of smoothies is that you can add anything you like, specifically greens. Nutrient-dense foods like spinach or kale are easily incorporated into smoothies without affecting the taste. You will get a kick of energy and nutrients after drinking this! On a final note, there is nothing wrong with drinking fruit juices once in a while, but make a treat, rather than a staple in your diet.

Is being vegan healthy?

Veganism is a way of eating, or living according to some, in which one excludes all products that come from animals. Vegans do not eat meat or fish, similarly to vegetarians, but also exclude dairy, eggs, and in most cases honey. Although many people have their biases for or against a vegan diet, we are here to look at the scientific facts. According to the American Dietetic Association (ADA), a well-planned vegetarian, as well as vegan, diet is appropriate for all stages of life. This entails that, with the right knowledge and planning, veganism can be healthy for babies, as well as for elderly people (Vesanto, Winston & Susan, 2016). A vegan diet is even associated with many health benefits. For one, people following a plant-based diet are less likely to be overweight, and have lower chances of heart disease and hypertension in comparison with meat eaters. Moreover, diabetes rates among vegans are lower than among meat eaters. This might come as great news for vegan advocates, however, do keep in mind that there is a difference between eating no animal products, and following a well-planned vegan diet. The latter takes all the nutrients that are more scarce in plant foods in comparison to animal products into account. In order to follow a vegan diet healthfully, you should pay attention to several different things.

Firstly, protein. Getting enough protein on a vegan diet is not a big issue. Many plant foods are great sources of protein. Examples are tofu, tempeh, seitan, legumes, soy milk, nuts, whole grains, and seeds. As stated by the ADA, protein requirements are always met when enough calories are consumed. All RDA's for essential and nonessential amino acids can be reached on a vegan diet.

Secondly, iron might be an issue for vegans, as the most bioavailable version of iron is found in meat and other animal products. However, when paying attention to vegan iron sources, like leafy greens and whole grains, iron needs can be met. This is where the "well-planned" comes into play. You cannot just leave out meat from your meal, you need to replace it with a good alternative, or make up for it during the day.

Thirdly, calcium is often seen as an issue for vegans. As found by the ADA, vegans usually have lower bone densities than meat and dairy consumers. However, as I stated in the **micronutrients** section, vegan dairy alternatives are usually fortified with calcium.

Incorporating these drinks, as well as other calcium-rich products into your diet will suffice

in meeting your calcium needs. It is important to take notice that you consume enough of these products to keep bone density up.

Vitamin B12 is almost exclusively found in animal products. Many vegan products, like meat and dairy alternatives, are fortified with vitamin B12, however this is often not enough to meet your RDA! Therefore, it is absolutely essential to supplement with vitamin B12 if you want to maintain good health. Cheap, yet good, supplements can be found in most drug stores, as well as online.

In conclusion, you can definitely follow a vegan diet and be completely healthy. This is supported by the ADA, and even comes with health benefits. However, it is important to plan your diet and realise that there are nutrients you need to pay extra attention to. In case of doubt, you can always take a multi vitamin to cover all your nutritional needs.

Practical tips for nutrition at university

There is only so much advice students can give each other. After all, we have not even finished our bachelor's. For this reason, we asked the staff of college hall what their favourite snacks were during a long and intense day. The following is what they submitted.

1. Dried and non-dried fruit, including apricots, dates, apple, bananas, berries etc
2. Nuts, including almonds, walnuts, peanuts etc.
3. Carrots with or without hummus, mustard or other dips
4. Cherry tomatoes
5. Peanut butter sandwiches
6. Soup
7. Dark chocolate
8. Soup with bread
9. Muesli bars
10. Oatmeal
11. Rice cakes
12. Banana bread
13. Espresso, with or without milk
14. Herbal tea in combination with some food

And of course there are many more things you can snack on during your studies. It is, whatever you decide to eat, important to keep your brain fuelled up so you can perform to the best of your abilities!

Chapter 2

RECIPES



GastronomyCo

Recipes to get started at university

Starting UCU can be overwhelming. On top of the academics, you also have to manage living on your own and feeding yourself. Maybe you have never cooked before in your life (no, frying an egg does not count). And even if you know how to cook, feeding yourself every day can be a challenge. You will probably want to eat something tasty, healthy, cheap and easy to make, and on top of that: you do not want to eat the same thing every day. Since the majority of UCU students know the struggle of finding a recipe that fits all these criteria, GastronomyCo made a collection of some easy and delicious recipes! There is also a basics list included to get you started. These recipes are easy to tweak to your own liking, so make sure to experiment with different ingredients. And do not forget the most important thing: have fun!



Basics List

Pantry

- Sunflower oil
- Olive Oil
- Salt and pepper
- Vegetable stock
- Grains: 500 grams pasta, rice, couscous, bulgur and potatoes of any kind
- Jar of 100% peanut butter
- Rye bread (fills you up very quickly and stays good for a long time)
- Instant coffee or tea bags
- 6 eggs
- Jar of curry paste
- Onions
- Garlic
- Lemon juice

Stock up your freezer!

- Frozen peas
- Frozen spinach blocks (good for pasta sauce)
- Frozen mangos (midnight snack)
- Frozen pizza

Canned foods

- Diced tomatoes (can be used as tomato sauce for pasta)
- Pesto
- Any kind of beans (chickpeas/ black beans/ kidney beans, they are all a source of protein)
- Brown pre-cooked lentils
- Corn
- Coconut milk
- Pureed tomatoes (can also be used as tomato sauce)

Spices

- Crushed cumin
- Cinnamon
- Garlic powder
- Chili powder
- Turmeric
- Ginger powder

Sweet Potato Salad with Halloumi

Ingredients:

- Sweet potato
- Lentils
- Cherry tomatoes
- Halloumi (Any other kind of white cheese, like goat cheese and feta, also work. Don't fry those though)
- Cucumber
- Spinach
- Spices: turmeric, cumin & chili powder (could also use paprika powder or cayenne pepper)

Salad Dressing:

- Vinegar (Preferably Red wine or Apple Cider)
- Olive oil
- Mustard

Optional:

- Zucchini (If you decide to add this, cut it in ribbons and stir fry it for a few minutes or bake them in the oven together with the tomatoes.)
- Fresh mint or basil

Steps:

1. Preheat the oven to 180 degrees. Rinse the cherry tomatoes and put them in an oven dish with some olive oil. Then put them in the oven for ±11 minutes. (You can also cut up the cherry tomatoes and put them in your salad without baking them in the oven, but in this salad, I prefer the taste of roasted tomatoes!)
2. Cut the sweet potato into small cubes. Heat some oil in a frying pan and add cumin, turmeric, cinnamon and chili powder to taste. When the oil is hot, add the sweet potato and turn the heat to medium-low. Put a lid on the frying pan and let the sweet potato fry until soft enough (±8 min.)
3. Rinse and drain the lentils, cut the cucumber and tear up the spinach into smaller pieces. Add all to your salad bowl/plate.
4. Slice the halloumi and heat up a frying pan without oil, fry the halloumi until both sides have browned and are a bit crispy. Add to your bowl.
5. When the tomatoes and sweet potato are done, also add those to your salad bowl.
6. For the salad dressing: Take a small bowl and add vinegar and olive oil in a 1:1 ratio, use tablespoons. Add one teaspoon of mustard per vinegar: olive oil. Adjust based on what you like. Add the dressing to your salad and enjoy!

Mashed Sweet Potato and Veggies

Ingredients

- 1 sweet potato
- Little bit of milk
- 100g corn
- 1 avocado
- Kale
- Beetroot
- Onions
- Eggplant

Method

1. Cut the sweet potato into small pieces (you can leave the skin on!) and boil it for about 15-20 minutes until it becomes quite soft
2. Cut the onions and eggplant into dice and fry it in a pan. Add salt, pepper, garlic powder and oil. Keep frying until the onions become soft and sweet. The eggplant will need a little longer, add water to steam it and get the other water out.
3. Add soy sauce to the onions and eggplant.
4. Remove the water from the sweet potato, add salt, pepper, garlic powder, nutmeg and a dash of milk and using a fork mash it all together.
5. Cut the avocado into small pieces and add this, together with the cold corn and beetroot onto the sweet potato.
6. Add the onion and eggplant to the mix and voila!

Optional

- Add a crunchy side by making kale chips from the oven: sprinkle cut kale with salt and some olive oil, pop it in the oven for about 6 minutes until it's crispy and mix it through your meal!
- You can add however many veggies you want, the more colorful the healthier,

Couscous Curry

Ingredients

- One white onion
- Garlic
- A carrot
- Half a red bell pepper
- Broccoli
- Chickpeas (optional)
- Coriander (optional)
- Coconut milk
- Couscous
- Vegetable stock
- Spices (crushed cumin, turmeric, garlic powder, salt and pepper, cinnamon, paprika)

Method

1. Cut the onion and garlic in small dice and fry them in a dash of olive oil.
2. Once they become glossy add all the spices which are mentioned. These should be thoroughly mixed so they cover all the surface area of the onion. Then add the carrot and bell pepper, which are both cut into thin slices, to the pan.
3. Fry this until the paprika is a little softer, then add half a teaspoon of vegetable stock mixed in a cup of boiling water, to the pan, together with the broccoli (this way the broccoli will be steamed but still crunchy)
4. Wait until most of the water has evaporated. Then add the coconut milk (about half a can, 100ml) and some more water.
5. If necessary, add some more cumin and turmeric for flavour and add the chickpeas and couscous (half a cup each).
6. The couscous will soak up the water and coconut milk together with the flavour!
7. After serving it on a plate add cut coriander on top and potentially add extra salt.

Basic Tomato Sauce

This sauce contains less sugar and salt than store-bought sauce, is very versatile, easy to make and cheap!

Ingredients for ±4 people:

- Canned tomatoes (2x)
- One big carrot
- One onion
- Garlic (as much as you like)
- Fresh basil
- Salt
- Cayenne pepper or chilli powder

Instructions:

1. Cut up the onion. Heat up olive oil in a pot and add the onion.
2. Cut up the carrot into cubes and mince the garlic. Add to the pot. Let it fry for a bit and stir occasionally to make sure nothing burns.
3. When the carrot has softened a bit, add the canned tomatoes, some basil and a tiny bit of cayenne pepper/chilli powder, and a pinch of salt.
4. Bring to a boil while stirring occasionally. Let it boil for at least 5 minutes.
5. Done!

Examples of dishes you can use this sauce in:

- Pasta. Mix in some veggies and/or meatballs and add cheese. If you like, add some diced celery at the same time as the carrots.
- Use this sauce instead of store-bought for lasagna.
- It makes a nice base for a curry! Add in some curry paste, veggies and coconut milk. Eat it with rice or Naan.
- Instead of only adding cayenne pepper, also add some cumin, turkuma and cinnamon. Then add zucchini, chickpeas and pepper and eat it with couscous.

Carrot Coconut milk Soup

Ingredients for 4-6 people

- 50g onions
- 300g carrots
- 300g potatoes
- 20g Ginger
- 1 tablespoon curry powder
- 1 litre vegetable stock
- 1 can of coconut milk
- salt, pepper and sugar
- cut dried apricots

Procedure

1. fry onions, carrots, potatoes and ginger till everything is cooked
2. Then add the curry powder and mix everything well
3. Afterwards add the vegetable stock
4. Let everything simmer for 25 min
5. Then use a hand mixer to blend everything together
6. Add 1 can of coconut milk, add salt, pepper and a pinch of sugar
7. Stir everything and let simmer for 5 min
8. Then ready to serve with pieces of dried apricots

Couscous Salad

This salad is easy, tasty and perfect for meal-prep!

Ingredients (for 3-4 servings):

- Garlic (1 clove)
- Olive oil
- Chicken- or veggie stock (300 ml)
- Dates (As many as you like! You can also use raisins or dried apricots)
- Couscous (200 g)
- Chickpeas (200 g)
- Carrot (100 g)
- Red bellpepper
- Small red onion
- Parsley or coriander (cilantro)

For the salad dressing:

- Olive oil (2 tbsp)
- Lemon juice (2 tbsp)
- Cumin (1 tsp)
- Turmeric (1 tsp)
- Ginger powder (1 tsp)
- Cayenne pepper (a pinch)
- Salt (a pinch)

Steps:

1. Mince the garlic. Heat up some olive oil in a pot and add the garlic. Make sure it doesn't burn.
2. Add the stock and dates and bring to a boil. When it's boiling, add the couscous. Keep stirring until the couscous has taken up all the stock. Then take the pot of the stove and put a lid on it.
3. Drain and rinse the chickpeas. Peel, cut and clean the remaining vegetables and the cilantro.
4. Add into your tupperware/salad bowl. Add the couscous.
5. Mix all the ingredients for the salad dressing and add to the rest.
6. Taste if it needs any more salt or lemon juice and enjoy!



Chapter 3

PHYSICAL HEALTH

GymCo

How to maintain physical health at UCU

The gym can be quite intimidating, as it is a small space, and most people always look like they know what they are doing. However, trust me when I say, no one really does. Everyone looks at cool workouts they see on Instagram, and then try to recreate it in the gym. When we're not using Instagram, we often use an App to guide us through a workout. There is the individual who creates his or her own workout program, but none of us is a certified personal trainer. If someone tries to help you, don't feel intimidated! Rather, accept their help, as it will help you improve faster and get stronger. If you are hesitant about going to the gym alone, bring your friend along and train together. Put on some loud music and blow off some steam together. Keep in mind that the UCU gym has peak hours. You will find the gym to be extremely crowded between 17:00 and 20:00 every day. If you are a morning person, you can try and go to the gym before your classes, and get some energy before you have to survive an entire day of heavy mental exercise. Otherwise, later at night might be the perfect time to unwind. Keep in mind, though, that the gym is only open from 8:00 until 23:00 every day.

We've taken the initiative and listed some of the benefits you will get out of working out and on a regular basis. UCU can be a very stressful place if you don't know how to best prioritise your work and plan your time. Although it sounds counterintuitive, setting time apart for going to the gym and working out might give you more productive time in a day, as you can experience more mental clarity and feel more energised. This, consequently, can make you more productive and organised. However, there are even more reasons why going to the gym is a good idea.

Sleep Better

When you exercise, your body requires a lot of energy. When the night approaches, you will find it a lot easier to fall asleep and remain asleep, even if you suffer from insomnia. However, one day of exercise will not be much of a change. You will have to exercise regularly to see some significant changes. You can test it yourself, by going to the gym a regularly for a week or two, and see if you feel any different!

Improves Self-Esteem

By this, we don't mean that your appearance will improve your self-esteem, but rather the hormones that your body releases during a workout have an impact on your confidence. When you exercise, you feel better, and people will start to notice your newly gained confidence. You don't have to workout to fit a certain body tip or reach a certain level of fitness, rather, work out because it makes you feel good.

Decreases Back Pain

Well set-up, regular workouts will increase your muscle strength, endurance, flexibility and posture. This, consequently, will help decrease the back pain that you will inevitably get when sitting behind your laptop every day. Several studies have shown that regular exercise is an effective treatment for recurrent lower back pain.

Improves Sex Drive

For those of you who want to improve their sex drive, exercise is your best friend. It does not only help all males out there to increase their testosterone, which will prevent erectile dysfunction and impotence, it also gives you more energy and stamina.

Reduces Anxiety and Depression

You may have heard of/or experienced that the heavy workload can increase anxiety and depression in students. Exercise is an amazing mood-elevator which will help you to manage stress and reduce your levels of anxiety. Exercising regularly will have an antidepressant effect which is comparable to the potent antidepressants such as Sertraline. However, it cannot be stressed enough that if you are struggling and nothing is working, that you should see a professional.

Strengthens Immune System

If you find yourself getting sick a lot, just about any doctor will tell you that no pill or nutritional supplement has the same power as frequent moderate activity when it comes to lowering the number of sick days people take. Over-exercising can be an issue too though. Find an exercise routine that works for you, and which you enjoy. If you stick to this, chances are that your over-all health will improve.

Improves Focus

Lack of sleep and a lot of stress severely weakens your focus. Exercise will help your brain's ability to concentrate, remember, visualise, plan ahead, and solve problems. This is because a fitter body will supply a more rich amount of oxygen to your brain.

Improves Energy Levels

Recent studies show that regular exercise can increase your energy levels, even when suffering from chronic medical conditions associated with fatigue. A study in 2006 showed that the average effect of regular exercise was greater than the improvement from using stimulant medications, such as medications that treat ADHD. Forget the cup of coffee you drink every morning, or energy drink to help you stay awake when you finish your assignment late at night. Drop everything, go outside and go for a walk or even workout after your class. You'll find it much easier to concentrate and be more energetic when you study.

Improves Confidence

This ties in with my point on self-esteem. Physical appearance is not everything, but for those of you who aspire to have that amazing body or just having great skin without using all those beauty products, regular exercise is your buddy. Just about every physical attribute can improve when you exercise regularly. But don't go too crazy, as we will tell you in a couple pages, your body will tell you what's good for you and what is not. Listen to your body.

Reach your Potential

When you are in great shape, you are a better version of yourself. A physical transformation will ultimately improve your mental, emotional and spiritual state.

What happens if we don't exercise regularly?

Some people are born with naturally thin frames and the metabolism that allows them to eat whatever they want without gaining weight. It sucks watching them be their "perfect self" while others struggle to attain the best version of themselves. It's tempting for these people to forego exercise and rather sit on the couch with some chips, a tub of ice cream and a good burger. However, your body and mind will quickly tell you to get up and start exercising.

When you stop exercising, your body also stops craving nutritious foods because it no longer requires the extra sustenance. Instead, nutritionally-poor-but-delicious foods like potato chips and chocolate cake become quite enticing. It is a lot easier to eat a bag of chips when you're sitting in front of the TV and binge-watch an entire season of your favourite show on Netflix with your friends than it is while you're in the middle of a workout session in the gym. Once you start eating junk, you start craving more junk and it is just a downward spiral from there.

This will also quickly be reflected by your mind as a lack of exercise can eventually lead to a diminished sense of your own well-being. Being stuck in the habit of eating junk food while watching your favourite TV show, will make your body lose its muscle tone and strength and as a result, your self-esteem can suffer from it. A diminished self-esteem might lead to social isolation and further bad eating habits.

Vigorous aerobic exercise such as swimming or running stimulates your body to release endorphins. Endorphins are natural painkillers that help elevate your mood. Resuming physical activity benefits your mental health as well as your physical health.

Physical Health Tips/Ideas

In this part, we'll discuss how the challenges with exercise and fitness associated with UCU. This will offer some easy tips to overcome these challenges to make sure you remain fit during your time at UCU. Exercise is important for all aspects of life: cognition, health, mental health - the list goes on, it's even been dubbed the 'magic pill' of life.

Challenges of UCU

UCU, where the workload is heavy and stressing is non-stop, can make it easy to start lazing around when it comes to exercising regularly. But when the stress levels surge and the hangover hits, there can be nothing more relieving than blowing off some steam! Even if it's just for a ten or twenty minutes a day - go for a run, play football, go dance, join the BOOTCAMP... The exercise options at UCU are endless - so it might be worthwhile to check them out! But if you're strapped for time, it might be a within your interest to check out UCU's very own Gym! Located conveniently right next to the bar. Although small and at times packed with people (17:00-20:00) it's perfect for squeezing in a workout - between classes, with some friends, or to warm up those cold winter days! But if you're keen to burst the bubble, then Olympos and other gyms nearby also offer great opportunities for exercise, these include classes (spinning, yoga, etc..). UCU students often complain about how they don't have time to go to the gym, but getting at least some exercise everyday should be a priority specially for students. Neuropsychologists suggest that getting 10-20 minutes of aerobic exercise can sharpen your focus as your blood gets pumping -

therefore working out a bit before an exam may help you get better grades! Even one of the professors at UCU nominated for Professor of the Year: Patrick Wijchers tells all his classes to clear their head before taking his exams with some physical exercise.

Confidence in the gym

Once you make it to the gym, the next hurdle is to actually start exercising. The most crucial aspect of exercising is having the knowledge to do so safely. This section discusses how you can gain more confidence and make your workouts more efficient through teaching you methods and gym basics to get started, but it's really up to you how you want to exercise.

When going to the gym, you do want to have some background knowledge into what exercises and you are actually doing - so take the time to do some research (Websites: Bodybuilding.com, Fitness.com, etc..). Doing the research may seem excessive, but we can't stress the importance of this first step more, as it will ensure that you're doing 1) the right exercises for your muscle group; to avoid muscle exhaustion 2) the exercises right; to avoid injury. It's further important to realise that everyone is different and just because an exercise works magic for one of your friends/peers/etc.. , it does not mean that that exercise will necessarily work for you. So the most important thing to take away from this section when exercising is to **LISTEN TO YOUR BODY**. If an exercise or a certain movement starts to hurt, stop the exercise and move to a different exercise.

UCU students might get intimidated by each other in the gym - but there's no reason for that! UCU is a community - so why should the gym be any different? Everyone is simply trying to get fit, so let's help one another with working out too! You might not have all the knowledge to master a movement, but someone else might. So if you're feeling unsure about an exercise/weight/movement - don't be afraid to ask for a "Spot". "Spotting" is a gym term for the act of supporting another person during a particular exercise and the role of a "spotter" is to be there should anything go wrong or the lifter/exerciser cannot complete the lift. The usage of spotters is strongly encouraged for all students including more experienced "Gymlads and Gymladies" - but especially for beginners.

The picture below shows what spotting could look like for barbell squats. as you can see the woman behind the person lifting is ensuring he maintains his form as he brings the weight down.





The idea of spotting is to not lift the weight or do the exercise for the person being spotted - but to assist and inspire confidence simply by being there. Therefore it's important as a spotter to be prepared for anything, so pay good attention to the person doing the exercise!

Setting goals and using workout plans

Setting goals

Think about what it is you wish to achieve. This should come from yourself and your own definition of being 'fit' or 'healthy'. No one is perfect and we can always strive for improvement in the right direction. Examples could include:

- a certain weight you would like to be
- a certain fitness PR (e.g. 60/80/100 kg bench press)
- a certain amount of push-ups, pull-ups, or sit-ups you want to be able to do or for example the ability to plank for a certain amount of time

Be realistic in setting your goals. You do not want the goal to be so difficult that you cannot achieve it or that you get demotivated because you do not see yourself making the goal (unrealistic). However, you also do not want to make the goal too easy because then it might lose its meaning (why strive for it?), which could also demotivate you. Find the right balance.

Set up a plan to achieve your goal in a certain amount of time (this could be a couple days, weeks, or months). Once you have set a deadline for yourself you can think of where you are now and where you want to be in that amount of time. Then you can set up a plan, thinking about how you can improve incrementally (on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis) When you achieve the goals you have set, you can reward yourself.

Workout plans

The first thing you should think about is whether you want to improve your cardio, lose weight, or gain muscle. When you know what your goal is, you can design your exercise routine and nutrition accordingly. Of course it is always possible to combine these goals, although gaining muscle and losing weight at the same time is very difficult.

1. Cardio exercises. If you want to increase your stamina these activities are recommended:
 - Running
 - Cycling
 - Dancing
 - Elliptical
 - Jumping rope
 - Rowing
 - Swimming
 - Boxing

All of these activities are available on campus, except for swimming.

2. Workout circuits

Besides doing cardiovascular exercise on campus, it is also possible to go to the UCSA Gym. The gym provides a space for all UCU students to lift weights, use the workout-machines, or to do body-weight exercises. Here are some exercises you could try.

Upper-body exercises

- Bench press (Chest, shoulders, triceps)
- Upright dips (Chest, shoulders, triceps)
- Bench dips (Triceps)
- Pushups (Chest, shoulders, triceps)
- Pullups (Back, biceps)
- Skull crushers (Triceps)
- Tricep cable pushdown (Triceps)
- Dumbbell triceps overhead extension (Triceps)
- Dumbbell biceps curl (Biceps)
- Barbell biceps curl (Biceps)
- Barbell shoulder press (Shoulders)
- Dumbbell shoulder press (Shoulders)

Lower-body exercises

- Deadlifts
- Squats

- Burpees
- Lunges
- Calf raises
- Quadricep curls
- Leg lifts

Exercises for abs

- Situps
- Planking
- Leg raises
- Crunches
- Toe touchers

We recommend you to combine these exercises into your own plan/circuit. Generally, people work out for 60 minutes. For almost all of the above mentioned exercises we recommend doing 3 sets of 10 reps.

Two seemingly contradicting things are key when it comes to working out: consistency and variation. Try something new once in a while to keep exercising fun for yourself. By consistent, and watch yourself grow!

Sport nutrition

You might want to work out to get in shape, gain muscle, or, more generally, as a means to living a healthier life. Whatever your aim is, you probably have come up with a more or less structured workout plan that fits your schedule, interests, and goals. This is a great start, however there is a very important factor of working out that cannot be ignored, and that is nutrition! We all know that living and eating generally healthy will impact your life positively, however, specific strategies in eating can lead you to faster and better results. In this section, we will go through the basis of an appropriate nutrition for people interested or currently engaged in consistent physical activity.

Foods for fuel and exercise

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates have the main role of providing energy, consequently they are the most important source of fuel for exercise and sport activity. They are stored in muscle or liver tissue as glycogen. Before doing any physical activity, it is therefore important that enough carbohydrates are stored and available. A balanced diet in carbohydrates helps ensure that the body has enough energy for activity, as well as help aid recovery.

Estimated carbohydrate needs depend on how much physical activity you perform per week and on your body weight. General guidelines are provided in the following table:

Duration of sport or exercise	Recommended intake (per kg body weight per day)
3-5 hours per week	4-5 grams
5-7 hours per week	5-6 grams
1-2 hours per day	6-8 grams
2+ hours per day	8-10 grams

Protein

Protein has the fundamental role of ensuring the growth, repair, and maintenance of body cells and muscle tissues. The amino acids are the building block of protein. More information can be found in the general section on nutrition. Different amounts and combinations of amino acids constitute different proteins. Consequently, when working on your diet, you must account for those amino acids which cannot be produced by your body and therefore must be eaten through specific foods or products. High protein quality is found in animal sources (meat, fish, eggs, dairy) as well as plant sources (soy, tofu, quinoa, ...). When choosing how to eat your proteins it is important that you choose low fat foods and vary between different products. In this way you will ensure that you provide your body of all the necessary protein for healthy muscle growth and repair. It is a common misconception that vegan and vegetarian diets lack in fundamental amino acids intake. Vegan can provide the body of and vegetarians should make sure to consume a wide variety of plant proteins to ensure that enough amino acids are provided to the muscles.

A normal adult should consume about 0.75g of protein per kilogram of body weight per day. Strength and endurance athletes should instead consume about 1.2-1.7g. It is a common myth that consuming lots of extra protein will result in bigger muscles. The body however, uses only the protein necessary and the extra protein will be stored as energy (fat on the body). Furthermore, people tend to focus on the protein and often neglect carbohydrates, which are the most important source of energy for exercise. As long as physical activity is consistent in someone's weekly routine, the eaten carbohydrates enter a so-called "carb-cycle" which assures a high and efficient "burning" of the carbohydrates.

On top of consuming protein as a means of a healthy and balanced diet, incorporation of some protein after physical activity is important for adequate and efficient muscle tissue repair and building.

Fat

Fats, as well as carbohydrates and proteins, is a rich source of energy. It is an essential nutrient of the body. However, it must be consumed carefully. Saturated fats should be consumed carefully, whereas unsaturated fats can be consumed with more freedom. Calories intake through the amount of fat in the consumed products should not be more than 35% of the total energy intake from food, with consumption of saturated fats not passing 11%.

Stay well hydrated

Sufficient fluid intake is necessary for an efficient and optimum recovery. Dehydration will cause tiredness and hinder performance by reducing strength and aerobic capacity. It is important to stay fully hydrated before, during and after physical activity and generally drink at least two liters of water a day. Drinking from a water bottle rather than having glasses will help you make sure that you drink enough water throughout the day.

Common sports nutrition questions

Should I take protein shakes?

For most active people daily body protein needs can be achieved from a healthy, varied diet and protein. In those cases protein supplementation is unnecessary. You can get all the protein you need to build and maintain muscle by eating protein-rich foods, and you don't have to rely on protein shakes. However, if you struggle to find enough sources of protein, or you are in a rush, then there is nothing wrong with taking protein shakes. They are not bad for you, nor will they make you excessively bulky. Whenever making decisions on how much protein to eat per day make, realise that excess of protein is not being used by your body to magically make muscle appear. If you want to know more protein and sports nutrition, consider reading *The muscle and strength pyramid: nutrition*. In this book, you will find everything you need to know on sports nutrition explained and backed up by science!

Should I take vitamin or mineral supplements?

Likewise protein supplements, poor food choices should not and cannot be compensated for by taking supplements. You can, in most cases and under most circumstances, reach your daily vitamin and mineral, needs through a varied, nutrient-rich diet, containing plenty of fruits, vegetables, starchy foods, etc... There is little evidence that vitamin and mineral supplements, if you are already consuming a balanced and healthy diet, will improve performance. However, in some cases they can be necessary for certain population groups. For example, there are few rich food sources of vitamin D, and it is mostly obtained through exposure to the sun. People who do not receive much exposure

to the sun are indeed advised to take vitamin D supplements. Especially in the darker and colder months in the Netherlands. See section on vitamin D in **micronutrients**.



Chapter 4

MENTAL HEALTH



Psychology Co

How to avoid pressure experienced UCU

Due to a stimulating and socially active environment, students at UCU often struggle with pressure. It is common for university students to experience social and academic pressure. However, too much pressure can be unhealthy and severely influence our well being. In the following section, Psychology Co aim to raise address this problem. By identifying various sources of pressure, we want to provide students tools needed to deal with them. To do so, we will address various forms of academic pressure and social pressure that may be experienced at UCU.

Academic pressure

How to deal with academic pressure

Academic stress undoubtedly has an effect on every student. The community at UCU is surely not an exception, as the educational standards are set up high. It is a normal part of our lives here, but we have to learn to cope with it in an effective and healthy manner. What to do? That is the question we are going to try and tackle here.

Time for yourself

Especially during the exam periods - midterms and finals - it is important that you remember to take time for yourself. Find different ways to relax and unwind. Listen to some music while you are taking a break so as to get your mind off the work in front of you for a while. You could also spend some time with your friends, during dinner or lunch times for example. You can use these as opportunities to socialise and also realise that you are not alone in this position. Everyone has to eat, so make use of this! You can watch a movie after you are done for the day or read a novel. Anything that makes you feel relaxed and anything that gets your mind off the stress is more than welcome.

Time with Others

Understand that you are not alone in this situation. All students go through academic stress. Try not to isolate yourself from the world, as this can lead to even more stress. Share your feelings with anyone you want, talk to your friends or your parents about it if you like. The peer supporters are also there for you, as is Mark Baldwin. Bottling up your thoughts and feelings can make you feel alone in this, but you should try and see that you are not. The presence of others can be reassuring and calming if you let it. And even if you believe you do not have time for this, even ten minutes of conversation with another person can help clear your mind a little bit and also help you feel understood in this.

Proper Nourishment

Although it might not seem like a priority at the time, eating well during periods of stress is highly important. Give your body the appropriate nutrients and energy it needs. Try to eat lots of greens and fruits. Keep yourself hydrated. You may not notice it right away, but good, healthy food will keep your body up to speed and will provide it with the proper fuel to keep going when you need it the most! It is easy to set eating well aside when other things, such as exams or essays, seem much more important on the spot. But do not forget that the two actually go hand in hand. Just indulging in the first thing you can get your hands on, such as some snacks or fast food, can make you feel even more tired and they will not give you the good energy you need in stressful times. Sure, they come in very handy on the spot, but they should not be the main source of your nutrition. Nourishing your body will lead to a better functioning of your mind.

Physical Activity

Whether it is a short walk in the forest, a quick swim in the nearby swimming pool or simply a jog around Wilhelminapark, go for it! Physical activity is known to release endorphins, which will put you in a better mood and will give you the good energy you need in order to effectively cope with stress. Anything is better than nothing and just half an hour of going out and about can work miracles. Your mind will be more clear and it is a good way to get out of the library or out of your room. It is easy to forget to get out from time to time, but your mind really does need some unwinding!

Meditation and Yoga

You may not be practicing meditation or yoga, but they have been proven to be effective in coping with any kind of stress. The UCU community provides free classes in both areas, so feel free to try them out! Remember that you need to be an ally to your mind in times of academic stress. And an hour of disconnecting from your work might be exactly what you need. Taking your mind off the things that you need to do can really good fuel for further concern.

Procrastination

It is important to understand that procrastination is a habit. While many people consider themselves “procrastinators” as if it were an unchangeable part of their personality, the truth is that, like any other annoying habit, there are gradual steps you can take to overcome or at least better your procrastination problems.

One psychological trick you can use to overcome your habit of procrastination is by understanding the basics behind something known as “operant conditioning”. This is basically a fancy way of saying that your brain will increase behaviors that are fun for you and decrease behaviors that are less fun for you.

While this may sound obvious, a lot of this occurs in your subconscious – meaning that you probably aren't aware of the extent to which this impacts you.

To use this knowledge to begin reducing your procrastination, you can use a simple system of rewards and punishments. Some people already do this to a limited extent, telling themselves things like “I can go to this party/watch TV etc. if I finish this assignment”, this is giving yourself a reward for getting things done, and it is an effective way to motivate yourself. Alternatively (but less favorably), you can use a system of punishments such as not using Netflix for a week if you don't study 3 hours every day.

However, almost nobody considers the flip side: if you are trying to get work done but eventually give up because you would rather do something fun instead, you are doing the worst possible thing: reinforcing your procrastination by rewarding yourself for not doing work. In your subconscious, you are increasing the chances that you will

procrastinate again because you are developing a positive association between giving up and having fun!

Breaking up major tasks into smaller pieces – a way to avoid the problem of delayed gratification. Sometimes, all it takes is just the first step. You may feel like you're "not in the mood" or "too tired" or any other excuse to not start working on an assignment, but it doesn't usually take a lot of effort to just get started with the first thing you need to do for a larger assignment. Make sure that you choose a first task that is easily manageable, so that you don't give up – a couple of pages of a reading are an example of a good start. Chances are that after finishing the little task you will already be in the correct mindset for working and will be able to continue with something else. Even if not, at least you no longer have the whole assignment ahead of you.

Along the same lines, an effective technique is to break down your entire assignment into lots of smaller pieces. The main problem with larger assignments, in terms of procrastination, is that the gratification of finishing them seems incredibly far away. When we think about getting started, all we consider is how much work we have ahead of us before we can relax and unwind, leading us to not want to do the task. If you break it up into smaller pieces and reward yourself for getting ahead, the whole process of finishing the assignment becomes more manageable and less like a boring wall of work approaching you.

If all else fails, you could try something known as "structured procrastination". This method works around the idea that when people procrastinate, they will avoid their biggest to-dos most intensively. Instead of doing the assignments or work you know you'll enjoy most (or despise least) right away, structure your tasks from most (the bigger/more frustrating ones) to least daunting. That way, whenever you feel like you can't or don't want to continue on the main task you should be focusing on, you have no excuse to give up completely – you've saved up some easier work that you can do instead! Over time, you will either finish your big task or procrastinate all the smaller ones away, leaving you with a more manageable workload than you started with.

Social pressure

Peer pressure

Peer pressure may seem like an overly discussed and trivial topic, but it is nevertheless an important one, because as much as people/we like to believe they are resistant to it, it actually has an effect on our decision-making. Therefore, this social phenomenon and its implications deserve to be studied at length, but in order to make this e-book maximally helpful and relevant this section will focus on the aspects of peer pressure related to the difficulties of a UCU student's life, namely resolving the trade-off between a moderation in

drinking/risk-taking and the 'life of the party' social status, and finding the balance between exceeding in courses or extracurriculars and a stress-free leisure.

Misconceptions

Before delving into causes and mechanisms of peer pressure, it is essential to address and debunk some common misconceptions about it. To begin with, since peer pressure is most evidently/intensely experienced in high school, when people are in the process of forming their identity and are therefore most prone to external influences, it is often assumed that students outgrow the susceptibility to peer pressure once they start university. However, in fact, college is the time when people become independent from their parents and instead, rely significantly more on their peers for advice. As a result, they are just as likely, if not more, to be influenced by their friends and to agree to things they would not normally do in order to fit in. The second main misconception relates to the way peer pressure is exerted. The prototypical situation that is often used to clarify the idea is usually a person being pressured to do something he is unsure about through insults, or comments about the cowardice of 'the victim'. However, this example applies only to a fraction of the cases, and in fact, peer pressure is more often implicit (exerted through 'reasonable' suggestions or even non-verbal cues) than explicit (overt), which makes it more difficult to notice and monitor. Thirdly, peer pressure is usually reserved for pressure towards unhealthy or deviant behaviors, such as alcohol/cannabis consumption or excessive risk-taking, but people can be drawn into doing seemingly positive or socially beneficial activities that may have an adverse effect on them in the long run.

Mechanisms

A factor to be taken into consideration is one's susceptibility to peer pressure. Is proneness to peer pressure a universal characteristic or is it dependent on individual traits? Research has shown that there is even a biological component to peer pressure - Bault et al. (2011) reported a higher activation of certain brain areas (striatum and medial prefrontal cortex) involved in reward mechanisms when a task was successfully performed in the presence of a peer than when the same task was performed in isolation. The findings demonstrate that humans are pre-wired to seek approval of their community and of their peers, which is also supported by the theory that the need for belongingness is universal and the desire to fit in is natural. Moreover, it is one of the fundamental needs that have to be satisfied for a fulfilling life, for self-actualization. However, certain populations might be more prone to peer-pressure due to their social standing in a time of transition. The individual qualities of a person also play a role - susceptibility to peer pressure has been linked to self-esteem and studies have shown that the less confident are more prone to it (Neighbors, Larimer, Geisner & Knee, 2004), but the differences in the experienced peer pressure largely depend on the integration of a person in the community. In general, according to the social identity theory, people view in-groups (members of their friend group) more positively than out-groups (outsiders). As our self-concept is partially determined by our social standing, it is important for us to be part of the likable ones, part of the in-groups.

Freshmen begin their college experience as out-groups and aim to form a group or become a part of one as fast as possible, which is why they exhibit a higher tendency to conform to the majority as compared to second and third years (Palmeri, 2011).

Alcohol and cannabis consumption

One of the major areas of student life that peer pressure plays a significant role in is alcohol and cannabis consumption. Beverages and soft drugs are an inseparable part of the going out culture, and as parties provide an enjoyable opportunity to socialize and become closer with acquaintances, students who do not like drinking very much, might still do it in order to fit in. Researchers have identified three mechanisms of peer pressure: active offers of alcohol or soft drugs, modelling other's behaviour and perceived drinking norms (Borsari & Carey, 2001; Crawford & Novak, 2007; Perkins, Haines & Rice, 2005; Haug et al., 2011; Dempsey et al., 2016). Active offers of alcohol are the most explicit type of peer pressure, but they are rarely considered as such, because they are usually well meant and aim to involve the person in bonding activities such as drinking games, for instance. As the people who are most engaged in these activities are often regarded as fun and charismatic, students may unconsciously wish to resemble them and behave in a similar way by drinking more than they would want to. But perhaps the most powerful influence on students' drinking behavior is their misperception of drinking norms. Several studies have shown that students vastly overestimate the amount of alcohol and cannabis their peers consume, which leads them to drinking and smoking considerably more (Borsari & Carey, 2003; Crawford & Novak, 2007; Neighbors, Lee, Lewis, Fossos, & Larimer, 2007). In addition, while drinking is associated with positive experience and on college campuses students who drink are regarded more favorably than those who abstain from alcohol (Robertson & Tustin, 2018), people overestimate the amount of approval they receive for conforming to the social norms (Borsari & Carey, 2003). Perceptions of drinking norms and alcohol offers and behavior modelling are rarely associated with peer pressure, which is why while it is difficult to monitor and control them, it is beneficial to be aware that these mechanisms might have an impact on your drinking behavior more than your own preferences.

Academics and Extracurriculars

Even though the notion of "peer pressure" is usually reserved for the influence that prompts people to engage in unhealthy or deviant behavior, students may feel pressured to take part in many seemingly beneficial activities that may nevertheless be overwhelming and thus, harmful in the long run. For instance, students' allocation of self-study time and their participation in extracurriculars might be impacted by their peers'

agenda. If one's friends are members of multiple committees, they might decide to join many organizations in order not to fall behind. A study conducted by Bursztyn, Egorov, & Jensen (2017) showed that students in an Honors class were more likely to enroll in an additional course when they were told their decision would be made public than when the confidentiality of their choice was guaranteed by the researchers. Similarly, as UCU is an Honors college where high achievers are well regarded, it is possible that some students take on more responsibilities and invest more time in extracurriculars than it would be optimal for their wellbeing in order to fit in. While to a certain extent the achievement-oriented environment at UCU might be a good influence on some students, as it might motivate them to apply themselves, sometimes being invested in many activities, as rewarding and enjoyable as they are, may be overwhelming and can lead to a burnout. In this way, the decision to join committees, based on the strive to be as involved in campus life as your peers, can be harmful in the long run, so it is important to consider your own preferences and availability first and foremost.

The takeaway

Peer pressure plays a significant role in people's decision making through high school, university and even afterward, but can often go unnoticed as it can act on us in subtle ways. Contrary to the popular belief, peer pressure is not always an overt coercion into risky behaviors; it can also be implicit and directed towards positive actions, which is why it may be difficult to distinguish from one's own convictions. Being more aware about the ways in which it can influence you might make you more likely to identify what your real preferences are and notice when you are being nudged to conform.

FOMO – Fear Of Missing Out

Like many other universities, UCU has a vibrant campus life. Through the vast amount of social activities, it creates a community. From daily events organized by committees, to wine Wednesdays at the bar, there are endless possibilities to interact with others. Upon our arrival UCU, each and every one of us is encouraged to make the best out of this to get the fullest university experience. However, whether you are an exchange student or a first-year student, the abundance of choice may be overwhelming.

Imagine it is a Thursday night. You have plans to attend someone's party, instead of going to an interesting event organized at the same time. At the party you know that you'll have a great time, but the thoughts of missing out on a new and potentially exciting experience may trigger FOMO. FOMO or Fear Of Missing Out, can be thought to arise from the abundance of choice amongst activities or experiences, coupled with the uncertainty over the 'best' choice and an anticipatory regret over the option not selected (Milyavskaya et al). Unlike post regret decision, which occurs when realizing that the other choice would have been better, FOMO may be experienced despite believing that the best option was chosen. The decisional regret experienced may be tied to a Western lifestyle. In the western world, there are fewer guidelines for young adults about how to make meaningful life choices. As a result, FOMO may generate pressure upon decisions

about social activities. So for instance, instead of going to that cool party, you may decide to do something else, just to avoid missing out on a potentially meaningful experience.

To make the best of your university life, it is important to understand the impacts FOMO can have on everyday life, and how this can be dealt with.

Consequences of FOMO

First year students

FOMO is commonly experienced amongst university students, particularly first year students. Along with more responsibilities, the first year presents a greater opportunity for new and exciting social activities. This requires a balance between the social life and the 'adult' life, forcing us to choose between activities. In fact, frequent FOMO overall has greater negative effects on first year university students compared to students in other years.

Mental wellbeing

FOMO is commonly related to an overall decline in mental well-being. This may be due to the decisional regret caused by FOMO which often leads to feelings of dissatisfaction. For instance, even though you have chosen to do something you like, the mere feel of missing out on something else, can have a negative influence on the experience of the chosen activity. As a result, you are less likely to enjoy what you have chosen to do. As FOMO is characterized by a constant desire to remain socially active, it commonly contributes to social anxiety. Therefore, it can have long term effects on mental health, causing greater stress and negative emotions, which are factors involved in the development of depression. Furthermore, this also influences academic motivation.

Academics

Research has shown that similar levels of FOMO are experienced during both required and voluntary activities. This suggests that it is not just a matter of self-regulation to complete a required activity such as studying. As a result, when studying FOMO can cause more distraction meaning less focused attention is dedicated to work.

Fatigue

It has been suggested that the experience of FOMO is influenced by the day of the week and time of the day. For instance, Thursday, Friday and Saturday are usually the days where the most social activities occur. Therefore, with increased social opportunities FOMO is likely to increase.

Particularly, as social events are more frequent in the evening, to avoid missing out students may go to bed later. This results in a lack of sleep, and increased feelings of fatigue.

Additionally, the abundance of choice of activities, require more energy and though for decision making. Therefore, frequent FOMO experience is related to greater mental fatigue.

Moreover, the constant fear of missing out may trigger the false belief that either one should be studying or spending time with others. This can cause guilt when individual wants to spend time alone, rather being with others. Consequently, little alone time is taken, which lead to greater fatigue and a decline in mental well-being.

FOMO and Social Media

Direct social contact or virtual contact to new information creates the same experience of FOMO. However, social media plays an important role in the experience of FOMO. Online apps such as Facebook and Instagram, provide virtual unlimited possibilities to gain insight about what is happening in our environment. This creates a constant stream of information, increasing the possibility that one will come in contact with new information. Thereby, an increased experience of FOMO linked with an unhealthy relationship with social media.

How to deal with FOMO

As seen above, FOMO can have various impacts on a student's life. Therefore, it is important to tackle this problem. Of course, this is much easier said than done, but the first step to counteract its negative consequences is to focus on what you are doing in the moment. Try to avoid getting overwhelmed by all the options available at UCU. Instead, whether you have chosen to go to a drawing workshop or a cooking class, simply try to enjoy what are doing in the moment. Remember the fact that you have chosen to do something means you are interested in it. Of course, this may not always apply to academics, but in the long run, the courses you have chosen will help to get you where you want to be.

Moreover, if alone time is something you need to feel good, make some time for yourself every week. Try to something which is not necessarily related to academics or social life.

This will give you a break from a hectic university life. Not only, will you be able to function better, but it may be easier to enjoy what you are doing.

Regarding FOMO and social media, it is quite tricky. As most information about social activities is posted on social media, it is very hard to simply stop using it. Instead, try to limit your social media use. For instance, logout from fb or instagram after checking the your daily feed. This will make it easier to avoid some notifications that may trigger FOMO.

Lastly, if you are a first year struggling with FOMO, try to remember that is not only experienced by students but most people struggle with it. Talk with others so you can help each other out.

Breaking the bubble

Coming to UCU might be quite a different experience from what you're used to. You live with people your age, your friends are very close by and everything you have to do to get

somewhere is to get up and walk for a couple of minutes. There is no need to bike or take public transport to get to the study building, library or the party.

This is certainly amazing. However, there are some flaws about it (in case if you haven't noticed yet). Being in one place most of the time and surrounded by the same people might be tiresome. UCU is such a tight community, where people know each other, see each other every day and sometimes that can be a problem. Occasionally it is indeed frustrating seeing people you know having fun, going somewhere altogether, while sitting in your room not knowing where to put yourself. You might have experienced it. At least in your first year. If it's not your case, great! Anyway, no matter if you feel a little bit lonely sometimes sitting in these four walls when all your friends are busy, or you are just an experienced UCU student who is tired of the non-changing environment, there is a small advice to you that we can give- break the bubble!

Why would you go somewhere, if you can technically still enjoy yourself in our cozy bubble, where everything is so familiar? Changing environment, simply put, is a good way of distraction from academics, first of all. UCU workload is very high sometimes, and our college is a place that is primarily associated with studying. Hence, it is essential to take your mind off all the deadlines, readings and upcoming exams to free your overloaded brain every now and then. You have options to choose from depending on what you think is the best way to break the bubble.

If you're looking for a calm place where you can simply be alone (watch out! you will still find some UCU students there), the forest nearby might be the place you would want to go to. Want to take a break of UCU, try to find inner peace, listen to some music or enjoy nature? Whatever the reason is, if you feel like something not as chaotic and crowded as the city, you should try it out.

In case if you prefer to be around people, you should definitely go to town. Utrecht is a beautiful student city, where you can enjoy yourself no matter what your interests are. Plenty cafes, study places, clubs, etc. If you don't really know where to go in town, don't give up! You can always browse internet, check out different websites on events in Utrecht. One of the most helpful tips would be - check Facebook (if you have it)! There are always events nearby you in town. If you are looking for a new study place, there are a couple of options as well. As UCU students we have an access to UU study areas. Uithof library or the UU building in the city centre are very nice places to study at. You can also find a place in a cafe if you want to combine business with pleasure.

If you feel like you explored our city enough, you can always visit others! The Netherlands is a small country, and everything is so close by! Take a ride to Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague, Maastricht or any other city that you prefer. If you are an international, ask a Dutchie to join you and give a small tour!

Sleeping

We all know the importance of enough sleep, and the effect it has on your mental clarity, mood, and overall mental wellbeing. That being said, the student life is filled with factors working against that so much needed time under the blankets. Think of the heavy academic life, your busy social life or maybe the scariest of all: your laptop and phone. And although you try so hard to tell yourself that today you really go to bed early, you always end up a sleep when the clock strikes 2. Disappointed at yourself and tired from Netflix, you wake up for your 9 AM to go to the vending machine and get an overpriced cup of coffee. How much sleep you need differs from person to person, as some people do well on only 6 hours, while others need to be in bed for at least 9 to feel okay. A general guide is to try and get a minimum of 8 hours of sleep a night. If you know that you need more or less, that is fine too, however, do keep in mind that sleep deprivation is a serious issue! In order to help you fall asleep, we have gathered some tips and tricks.

The temperature of your room

In general, it's much better to have your room at a low temperature. This has to do with the temperature of your body during a sleep cycle. When your body goes to sleep the body temperature lowers itself as the body prepares for tiredness and other mechanisms. Therefore, sleeping in a colder room (15-20 C), you will fall more easily asleep. In a hot room or sleeping with many layers keeps your body sometimes too warm and therefore difficulties sleeping. Thus, turn off the radiator! Time to freeze!

Limit or stop Netflix and WhatsApp use

This is not, or at least shouldn't be, something new. Everyone knows that sleep is disturbed or difficult when you watch a whole series on Netflix or look at your phone before bed. This has to do that the light transmitted from your screen gives a signal to your brain to stop melatonin production. The hormone that causes you to feel sleepy and eventual will let you fall asleep. Instead, the light causes an opposite hormone to be released: cortisol, which gives you even more energy. Thus, PUT THOSE SCREENS AWAY, read a book you intelligent/illiterate human being.

Keep alcohol/coffee/nicotine away as far as possible

Alcohol initially gives you a very easy way to fall asleep. But be aware. Alcohol is metabolised in the body which causes certain chemicals to be released and which will bring your body in an aroused state. This state will never reach deep sleep or REM sleep as it is officially called. When not reaching REM sleep, you will wake up feeling tired and mostly with a headache. Therefore, leave that 2/3 glasses of wine just before bed time.

Coffee is another cup which is a ferocious enemy to the sleeping cycle. With a high concentration of caffeine, it causes blockage in the brain which stop melatonin to bind to

your neuron that make you feel sleepy. Caffeine works for about 4 hours, yes it works a long time.

Now maybe the odd one: Nicotine. Nicotine is a chemical/neurotransmitter which binds in the brain to certain specific areas. One area releases dopamine which causes the addictive effect of smoking. The other area increases a stimulant which keeps your body from falling asleep. Thus, although a smoke before bed seems to be relaxing it actually works against getting a good night sleep/allowing your body to fall asleep.

Best amount of sleepy time

To start off, there is no specific amount of time a person must be asleep. This is very individually based. However, on average for adults the advised bedtime is 6-8 hours. It can be said that it is better to don't sleep than to sleep for two hours as you will awake your body from REM sleep. This causes you to feel even more tired than you would feel without the 2 hours. A minimum of 4 hours is advised.

What helps me falling asleep

The first advise would be an organised, cold and dark room. Switch off all your lights, make sure there is a temperature between the 15-20 degrees and clean your room. An organised room keeps your head clear and less stressed.

Have 10 minutes or an hour before going to bed a destress activity such as reading a book or writing down all stress factors of that day and give a solution to them. This will give you a peaceful mind. In general, it is good to have a ritual before you go to bed, this is very up to you (Such as listening to podcasts), only don't do anything of the above.

Don't eat too much before bedtime! This only works against a good night sleep! Leave the *Thuisbezorgd* at night...

Don't exercise just before bed this only excites the body and needs time to get to normal levels. Therefore, exercise only in the morning or afternoon but not at night.

Nap no more than 25 minutes after you have been awake for 8 hours! Studies have shown that napping longer than this only affects your sleep in a negative way if you nap for 2 hours e.g.

Your body has a natural sleeping cycle. At a specific time you will become awake and will become tired at a specific time. This is also called the circadian rhythm. Therefore, sleeping in, although really nice is not really a good idea as it only will make you feel tired. It is better to have a regular sleeping pattern. So if you sleep at very irregular times, try to put some regularity in your schedule of going to bed and waking up.

Apps that help track the sleep

There are many ways to track your sleep, but a very useful way is by using your smart phone which gives you an indication of how well you sleep. Tracking your sleep might give you some valuable insides in how to improve your sleeping schedule. Or it might reassure that you are on the right track. Here is a list of some of the best apps available. I use sleep cycle which I think is a great one, it is easy to use and gives a nice overview of you sleeping patterns. However, it's of course a subjective decision.

1. UP by Jawbone
2. Fitbit
3. Sleep cycle
4. Motion X 24/7
5. SleepBot

Other tips and tricks

As with nutrition, we asked the staff of college hall whether they had some valuable advise on how to fall asleep. Their advise varied from drinking herbal tea before bed, to listening to calm music and performing a body scan (Look it up on YouTube!). Many staff members said to read a book, or listen to an audiobook before going to bed. No Netflix. No phone. No work. Just you and a good book, to wind down after a long day and give your mind a break from thinking and working all the time. Going for a walk, but not doing strenuous exercise, seemed to be helpful for many staff members too. Talking to someone to get all your worries of your chest before going to bed was something that was mentioned often as well. Combining all this together, you could say that the best bedtime routine would look as followed:

You could go for a walk, come home and make some herbal tea, while talking to your best friend about your day, while there is soft and calming music playing in the background. During this time, your phone is already on airplane mode, there is no need to be disturbed by others now. Then, you make your way to your room, put on more calming music and meditate for 10 minutes. You brush your teeth and get into bed, where you get your favourite book and read a chapter of it, until you feel yourself drifting off. Goof night!



Chapter 5

BODY BALANCE

MindfulCo

How to keep your mind and body balanced in a hectic environment

Life as a student, and especially one at UCU, is chaotic. It can at times be overwhelming how much is going on, and the best thing to do when you struggle keeping your head in game is to take a moment to calm yourself down. MindfulCo hosts weekly classes, ranging from ashtanga yoga to morning meditation, which are all set up specifically to help you calm down and to become aware of yourself and your body.

In the following section, we'll find different routines and challenges you can use to give your body and mind a break.

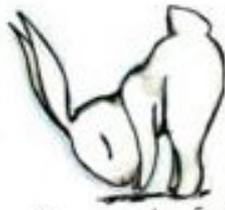


Morning Yoga

hold each pose for 10 seconds



Mountain Pose



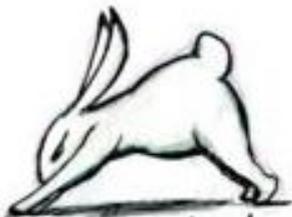
forward fold



downward dog



Warrior 1



downward dog



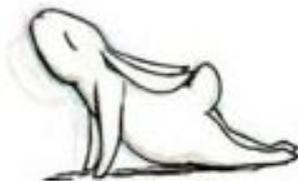
Warrior 1



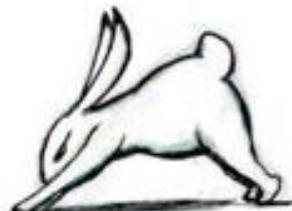
downward dog



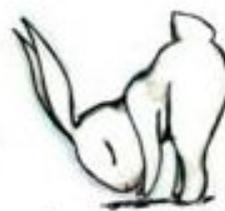
child's pose



upward dog



downward dog



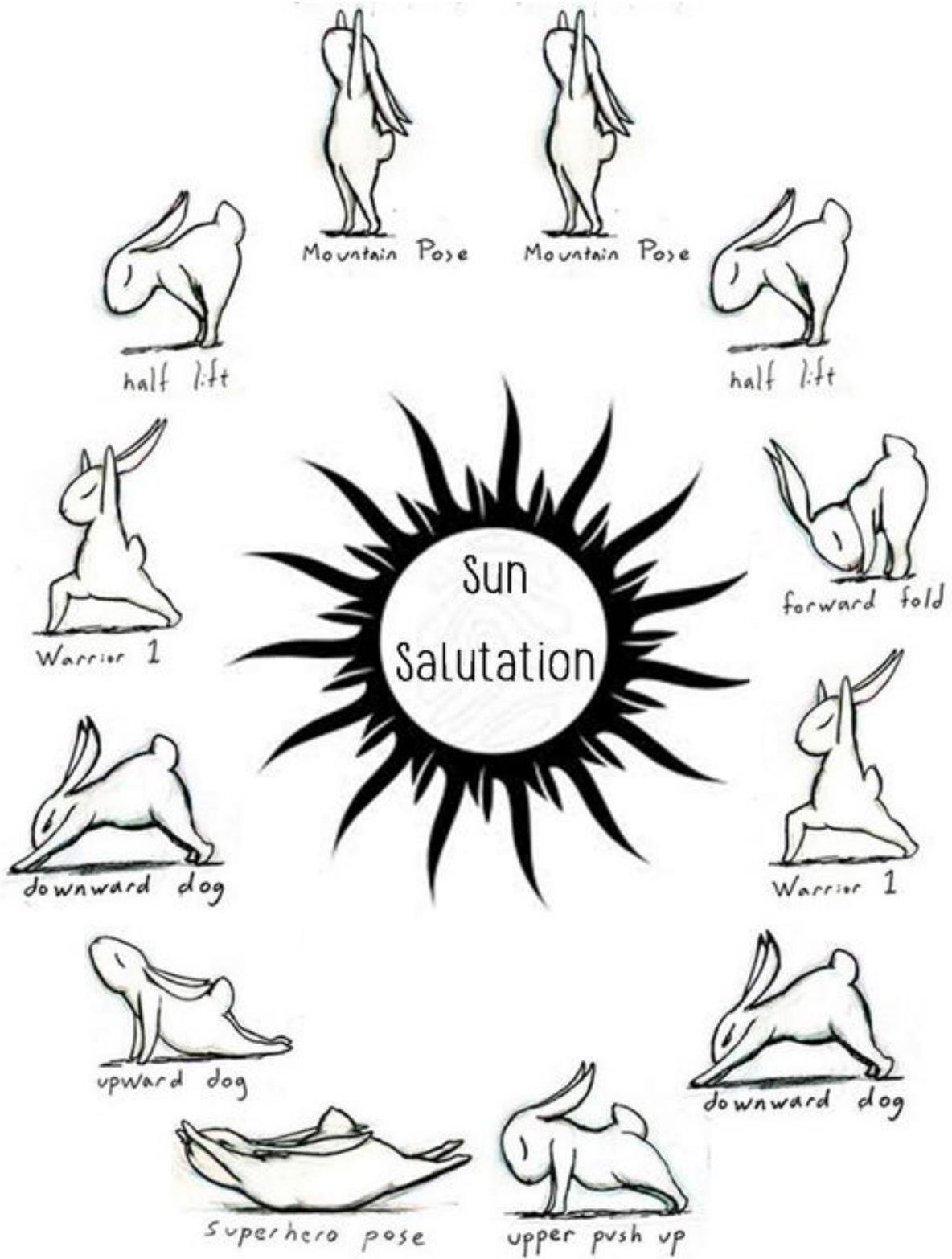
forward fold



Mountain Pose

Repeat this sequence x6

Breathe deeply and evenly, focus on your form,
keep your back straight.



YOGA

POSES FOR BEGINNERS





the one minute **MEDITATION**

Take a deep breath.

***Breathing in through the nose,
Breathing out through the mouth.***

***Breathing in feeling the lungs expanding,
Breathing out feeling a sense of letting go.***

***Breathing in to feel the body getting fuller,
Breathing out to feel the release of any tension.***

***Breathing in feeling alive and awake,
Breathing out feeling muscles relaxing.***

***Breathing in that sense of fullness,
Breathing out that unnecessary tension.***



CRUSH ANXIETY

with The Anxiety List

With the Anxiety List, we take a moment each day to identify those things that are bothering us and offer our brains a "solution" to rest on.

COMMIT TO A TIME



Choose a time each day to write your Anxiety List and set an alarm on your phone or place an appointment in your calendar. You don't need long, just 5 minutes will do. I recommend just after lunch so that you have time to experience both states, which makes feeling good oh so sweet.

LIST YOUR STRESSORS



At your scheduled time jot down any stressors that you have experienced throughout the day (you may also do this as they come up). These may be big or little things. Anything that is stealing your peace, make a note and let's crush that anxiety!

OFFER SOLUTIONS



After each of your listed anxieties, note a solution or certainty. This may be an action step to take such as making an appointment or even "I'll think about it in the morning", "next week" or ideally, at a time that you can actually DO something about it!

KEEP REASSURING



As these anxieties pop back up during your day, assure yourself that you have already chosen a solution and there is no further need to think about it. You may want to review your list.

BE PROACTIVE



If a new anxiety pops up, pull out your list, note the stressor and draft a new solution. You can be proactive with this. Do not let worries run away with your joy!

KEEP IT UP



Continue this practice for at least 30 days and then reevaluate. I no longer use this tool at a set time, I have trained my brain to look for solutions on the fly!

IF YOU'D LIKE TO LEARN MORE, CHECK OUT
WWW.AJOYFULPLATE/ANXIETY-CRUSHING-TOOL

Chapter 6

REACHING OUT



As already stated in the introduction to this guide, facing problems alone can be extremely isolating. You might go and blame yourself, when there is no reason to do so. You might feel like you have no friends to talk to, or no one to love in general. However, the importance of reaching out is insane. You always have someone to talk to. Not only is there the peer support group, which has incredible members which can comfort you, or simply listen to your story, there are also professionals that can help you with problems that are too big to face on your own. The first step is to realise that you need help, to admit to yourself that sometimes you cannot do everything by yourself. No one can go through life alone, we all need someone to lean on from time to time. And there is no shame in this! If you are struggling, then indicate this to your friends, unit mates, parents, the peer supporters, or contact someone who has more experience. Once again, and I repeat this because it is so so important, there is no shame in needing help. Everyone needs help. We are not on our own. You are not helpless, and you can overcome any and all obstacles. Your problems are not less real or significant than those of someone else. If you are struggling with something, then that in itself means that the issue is big enough to go and reach out. Just remember that.

You might be sceptical, and wonder what talking and reaching out could mean for you. However, in order to show the importance and relevance, Mark Baldwin, the UCU health professional, has gathered some testimonials from people at UCU who have struggled, but asked for help. All testimonials are anonymous, as all his work is confidential. However, seeing what reaching out can do for other people will hopefully take some of your worries away, and will convince you to search for help if you need it.

Testimonials

"Whilst I haven't been seeing him for long it's extremely comforting that someone wants to listen to my problems and figure them out. Often I feel that issues of depression, self-esteem, and anxiety are forgotten about by family and friends, and his suggestion to see me on a bi-weekly basis completely usurps this assumption."

4th semester international male

"My general feeling about UCU has improved positively since my meeting with the Student life officer, and I'm very relieved and happy I now know I have somewhere to go to when I have a problem."

2nd semester Dutch female

"I think he is already very accessible to all students and his is very knowledgeable of all aspects relevant to students."

2nd semester international male

"As a first year, I didn't think I had the required skills or knowledge to be in UCU and struggled with the academic and social pressure of campus life. I started going to Mark after a break-up after which I spiralled into depression. Unfortunately, the process of getting a trained psychologist involved a lot of waiting lists, questionnaires, intakes and diagnosing. During this entire period, Mark and I met once a week, talking about my problems, but also about life, art, music, hiking and literature. Even after I got a therapist, I still went to him to complain about her. I realised that there is a fundamental difference between a counsellor and a therapist. A therapist is bound to certain codes of formality, whereas Mark just related to me on a personal level, saying I hear you, I can recognise or imagine this. I always left his office feeling a bit braver, lighter and more inspired. "

Alumna Dutch female

"Mark is amazing. I feel valued and respected and he listens very well. He gives amazing feedback and I feel much better after talking with him."

3rd semester Dutch female

"I am very impressed by the warm and safe environment that Mark manages to create in his office"

3rd semester Dutch male

"For me, it was very nice to have someone to listen, who could not only understand, but properly support my feelings and give advice that is both constructive, personal, and comforting. It's made me realise that if I would consider it healthy or beneficial, it's okay to ask further and seek more professional help; by being supplied with this support, I feel as though I've been given the space to grow emotionally, accepting both the good and the bad days."

3rd semester Dutch female

"Having a weekly rhythm with Mark has been helping me significantly in a lot of areas in my student life. Whether it is concern about mental health, finances, academia, or personal growth; he always genuinely cares and endeavours to improve myself and my situation in those different aspects. Besides offering great and effective advice, he can quickly connect with several other relevant supports and thereby is able to help me make external changes and real improvements."

2nd semester international male

"My experience with Mark was both validating and eye-opening; my perspective and the feelings I was going through were not only respected, but prioritised. I never felt pushed into revealing anything I didn't want to, but there really was no topic off-limits and I didn't feel awkward or unwelcome at any point. I say the experience was eye-opening because Mark encouraged me to look at the situation from a different vantage point, and brought

up different ways I could handle the things I was going through. “

1st semester International female

“Mark has been an inspiring anchor for my time at UCU. His office offers a non-judgemental space of calm and rest, and I've often left it with new strength and a fresh outlook on things. During hardship Mark plays an important compassionate role for many, and in our talks and walks has made me feel more capable and supported.”

7th semester international female

“I would like to offer a few words about Mark Baldwin and his role as Student Life Officer. If asked to capture in one word what Mark offers, I would have to say 'confidence'. As a tutor, if I have concerns about a student I know I can talk about things with Mark or refer the student knowing that there will be support and often very practical help. Having this confidence makes my job as a tutor much less stressful! It also means I can refer a student knowing that they will receive the support they need in a timely and professional way. In addition, Mark is incredibly diplomatic – his communications are sensitively handled, he is intuitive to the needs of students, staff, parents, and more, and this is reflected in how he communicates. An astutely adaptable person, Mark knows when to step in, but importantly, also knows when to step back. He has enabled my tutees, so that they are equipped to help themselves. This takes confidence, and I think students get this from their interactions with Mark. So yes, 'confidence' sums it up for me”

UCU Tutor

“I very much appreciate all the help I've been given in the past year. “

3rd semester Dutch female

“I highly value our counselling relationship. He treats me with respect and really shows that he is serious about helping me. He actively listens without judgement, so there is no topic off limits, which especially helps for topics that I would not and/or could not discuss with most other people. Even after all those, he still sees the good in me and focuses on nurturing all the good qualities in me. To find a common ground and promote openness between us further, we also occasionally exchange our art expressions of our emotions; him with his drawings and me with my poems. We also share inside jokes once in a while when appropriate, which makes me feel that not only our relationship is positive and harmonious, but also unique and personal. Most importantly, however, while most people would just give generic recommendations, he has put in serious efforts to help me and accompany me hand-in-hand on some necessary aspects, which cannot be said for most people I sought help to. From our counselling relationship, I have observed and experienced significant impacts with satisfying improvements. In short, it would have been much more difficult to deal with my struggles alone, if I had not met Mark.”

2nd semester international male

"I came to see Mark at the beginning of the school year so that the UCU community was aware that I was dealing with depression. I sought alternative counseling in Utrecht, but I still see Mark regularly to discuss campus life and to make sure my schedule at UCU is compatible with my therapy sessions. Mark has been a huge support, he has helped me get in touch with my teachers when needed, as well as addressing various issues related to campus life. I feel comfortable coming to Mark's office to talk and share my story, and when I leave his office I feel supported by the UCU community as I continue to improve my mental health."

1st semester Dutch female

"My counselling with Mark Baldwin has been particularly useful as he was able to direct me towards psychological support and also advise me on help that is available through the university, such as psychological support. He also helped me with my Learning Accommodation Agreement, allowing me the support I need to continue my studies whilst also allowing me to challenge myself in a way that doesn't hurt my mental health. It has been great to be able to discuss this with someone and to know that I have the support available, alongside my traditional therapy and mentoring that I have. This allows me to apply the coping mechanisms that I learn in psychological sessions to my studies at UCU."

1st semester international female

CONTRIBUTORS

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MedCo

Sophie Thomas, Justus van Nispen tot Sevenaer, Nienke Schouten

PsychologyCo

Ariane Percipalle, Joel Ghahremani, Maria Rokhmaniyko,
Nastya Peltekova, Nora Mititelu

GastronomyCo

Meije van Vliet, Ariane Percipalle, Lena Wa, Mai Thai de Rijk, Iris Michels

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Stella Rüggeberg, Cassidy Copiens, Filippo Bezzi, Ferdinand Sondre Geus

MindfulCo

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