

UKUPC Festive Campaign



Day 6: Mental Health and Wellbeing

As we approach Christmas and New Year and reflect on the last 18 months, it's been a period that none of us would have previously experienced nor predicted. Changes in working practices as organisations adapt to new blended working arrangements have resulted in significant changes for staff, academics and students. Notwithstanding the challenges that have been presented by Covid-19, the impact of the loss of loved ones, social distancing requirements, and the need for self isolation have all had a bearing on mental health and wellbeing.

UKUPC recognises that the changing environment is impacting upon all of its stakeholders and is working collectively to provide support and access to services that can assist with mental health and wellbeing. Some of the initiatives that have been undertaken include:

- Providing updates on availability and lead times for PPE equipment
- Access to framework agreements which provide [Employee and Student Occupational Health and Wellbeing Services](#)
- Stakeholder groups meeting more frequently to increase collaborative contact and address issues as and when they arise
- Access to framework agreements that provide goods and services that support delivery of flexible working arrangements; e.g., [Desktops and Notebooks](#), Sustainable Furniture Solutions (replacement framework coming soon), [Finance, HR & Payroll Services](#)
- Acknowledging the impact on staff morale and engagement and providing appropriate management to support staff throughout the pandemic.

As we approach the Christmas period, the presence of the Omicron variant will bring increased concern and possibly impact upon Christmas celebrations for many. In the event that the country moves from the current pandemic tier, it is possible that additional restrictions may be imposed that will impact upon our ability to interact freely. This will no doubt be keenly felt by many, who after having adapted to living with the pandemic for over 20 months and having been able to return to a relatively "normal" routine, will be required to comply with tighter restrictions. There are likely to be many who are struggling with their mental health and wellbeing.

Some of the following suggestions may help with improving your mental health and wellbeing over the festive period:

- **Spend time outside** - make an effort to go outside rain, snow or shine. Even without a lot of daylight, being outside can brighten our moods.
- **Take extra breaks** - it's good to take extra breaks and go outside or move our bodies. You can never go wrong with more movement and fresh air.
- **Turn on the lights** - make the room really bright and put the lights on before it gets dark to trick your body into thinking there's still daylight. Some recommend closing the blinds, so you don't notice that it's become dark.
- **Be around nature** - even if you can't get outside much, you can bring nature and plants into your house.
- **Change your workspace** - if you're feeling sluggish and uninspired, try changing up your workspace. Go to a coffee shop, co-working space, library or hotel lobby.
- **Put on some high energy music** -put together a playlist of your favourite upbeat music.
- **Breathe** - if you spend a lot of time behind a laptop then you have probably found yourself unhealthily hunched over. Sit up straight, put your shoulders back, and take some big breaths to get the oxygen circulating.
- **Drink more water** - feeling tired has been linked to not drinking enough water – and it's pretty much always good to drink more water.
- **Move more** - go outside and do something physical: go for a walk/run/swim/bike ride, chop wood, go ice skating, make snow angels, jump rope... anything that gets your heart rate and corners of your mouth up! The more we move, the better we feel.

Merry Christmas everyone – take care of yourself and others and stay safe.