SUPPORTING YOUR RETURN TO CAMPUS
As we prepare for life back on campus, your experience with various services will have changed. You may feel anxious, ambivalent, or excited – all these feelings are completely normal. We know that change is difficult, so we’ve created some resources to help offer some guidance and insight as you come on campus.

We hope the information provided helps you explore and plan for some possible challenges you may face. Wellness means different things to different individuals and there are many people, resources, and activities to help support you.

If you need additional support, join Entering the new normal: Exploring skills and strategies to thrive post-pandemic. The goal of this workshop is to facilitate meaningful conversations around what works best for you when re-entering your world.
During the pandemic, we were encouraged to isolate ourselves, keep six feet apart, wear our masks, and sanitize our hands to keep ourselves and others safe. For many, this has resulted in or reinforced existing social anxiety. As physical distancing restrictions ease and classes are back on campus, we have to readjust to socializing again and this may not be easy for everyone.
Social anxiety is increasingly common and a normal human reaction both during and after the pandemic.

Here are some tips to reconnect with others in-person and manage your anxiety.

1. **Self-compassion as a tool**

   Humans are creatures of habit – we like routine and consistency, so change is generally hard for many people. As we transition back to in-person activities and socializing, it can be physically and emotionally tiring. It’s important to be kind to yourself as you adjust to socializing again.

2. **Take it slow and allow yourself time to ease back into socializing**

   It may feel like you need to make up for lost time but filling your social calendar can become overwhelming and make social anxiety worse. Listen to what you need day-by-day and respect your boundaries.

3. **Approach, don’t avoid**

   While it feels good in the moment, avoiding all social interaction can make social anxiety worse in the long run. Go slow and take small steps to connect with others. Gradually exposing yourself to social situations can help combat social anxiety by allowing us to face our fears and build confidence over time.

   Examples:
   - Try walking around campus before classes start to familiarize yourself
   - Meet up with a friend for a quick 30-minute coffee catch up
   - Sit in a less crowded study space and gradually work your way up to more populated areas
**Practice self-soothing**

When anxiety is high, it is a signal that our nervous system has become dysregulated. Everyone will experience this at some point and learning how to calm your body so you can be your best self is a very important skill. Try visualizing your favourite calm space, listening to music, diaphragmatic breathing, or even just naming that feeling. These strategies are great because they can be done anywhere!

**Connect early and join in-person and virtual communities**

Did you know that having social supports and connections is one of the most powerful ways to deter the effects of stress? Start joining clubs that interest you or find your favourite places to go. The Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) and Graduate Student Association (GSA) offers many clubs and social activities you can join.

If you’re worried about overstepping boundaries and aren’t sure what level of comfort others have with social activities, be direct and ask them. Are they comfortable meeting for lunch on a patio? How about a socially distanced walk while wearing masks? These conversations may feel awkward but that’s completely normal. After a year in isolation, we may feel as though we have forgotten how to communicate.
Change and uncertainty have challenged our typical routines this past year – sleep, physical activity, and extracurricular activities may have become disrupted, out of sync, or even non-existent. It’s understandable and almost inevitable that your habits have changed. You may have even learned that you function a lot better with 12 hours of sleep, or that you really love dancing to 80’s music. Harness what you have learned about yourself and focus on making routines that will help you be your best self.

Returning to in-person campus life could mean rebuilding those former routines or a fresh start. While building healthy routines require dedicated time and effort, our foundational health and wellness practices benefit from structure and consistency. When routines are established, they take up less energy, planning, thought, and time for the same positive outcomes. Here some things to consider as you develop new routines.
Prioritize healthy eating

For some, this might mean setting aside time once a week to do your grocery shopping and meal preparation. For others, this might be listening to what your body needs, practicing meaningful eating, or gathering with friends or roommates to make meals. Campus Wellness has a great resource on Food and Nutrition that will provide you with ideas for breakfast, snacks, and healthy eating during stressful times. Also, don’t forget about WUSA’s Food Support Services!

Move your body

Try to take a physical activity break at least once an hour. Whether it is going out for a walk with a friend, taking the stairs rather than the elevator, or stretching at your desk, choose an option that’s best for you. Read more tips on incorporating Physical Activity into your schedule.

Make time for sleep

Maintaining a regular bedtime and wake-up time has shown to help with information retention and academic averages. Our bodies need between seven to nine hours of sleep for optimal functioning. Learn how you can set up your room for sleep success.
Socialize with others

A sense of belonging to a greater community can improve your motivation, health, and happiness. It is normal to struggle when it comes to finding a connection, but there are ways to build a sense of belonging. Read more on finding a sense of belonging and making friends on the Social and Spiritual Health web page.

Maintain work life balance

Ensure that you maintain work life balance by prioritizing your time and have set work hours. You may notice tasks that may have taken little time or energy previously, take much more these days so be mindful of your stress levels. Once your work hours are over, unplug and try meditation, walk around, or watch a 30-minute episode of a show you enjoy. Learn more about stress management strategies.

It may feel difficult to incorporate all of these aspects into your daily routine. Be realistic about how long it will take to accomplish and give yourself a little extra time. Also, don't forget to apply what you've learned about yourself this past year. Your routine should be flexible, so it doesn’t feel too hectic or overwhelming.
Taylor has two in-person classes today and is going on campus for the first time since the pandemic. Follow along for a glimpse into their experience during the transition back on campus.

As COVID-19 guidelines are constantly changing, please check uwaterloo.ca/coronavirus for updates.
Use the *Campus Check-In Tool* before arriving on campus each day.

As of September 7, 2021, everyone in the University of Waterloo community, including visitors, must provide proof of vaccination before coming to campus.

Don’t forget to bring your WatCard, mask, and sanitizer!

Remember: Face coverings are required in common use areas of University buildings. This includes corridors, lobbies, washrooms, elevators, classrooms, teaching laboratories and meeting rooms.

• To keep common areas safe, we meet or exceed public health recommendations regarding cleaning and disinfecting all spaces, particularly high-touch surfaces
• Sanitizers will be available in all classrooms

Study carrels will be available for use at full capacity. No food but drinks are permitted.
Class

Head to the Student Life Centre (SLC) for lunch

- Make sure you remain two meters apart when waiting in line
- There are designated dining areas where you will be required to show your proof of vaccination through the enhanced vaccine certificate QR code and Government ID. You will have a 30-minute time limit so no studying will be allowed in these spaces.
- Don’t have time to wait? Download the Campus OrderUp app for pick up and free campus delivery options.

10:00 AM

Break with friends

12:00 PM

Head to the Student Life Centre (SLC) for lunch

- Need some study tips? The Student Success Office has a great resource on studying and learning strategies.

2:30 PM

Work out at the Physical Activities Complex (PAC)

- You do not need to book a reservation to access CIF or PAC Fitness Centres
- Show your QR code for proof of vaccination, Government ID, as well as your WatCard for check-in
- Wipe down your equipment before and after each use

3:30 PM

Work out at the Physical Activities Complex (PAC)

- This new and exciting facility features various cardio equipment, free weights, racks, Olympic platforms, and many more!

4:30 PM

Head back to residence

- Common areas such as lounges and study rooms are open. You will have a place indoors to work and eat. Masks are required when you’re not eating.