

HOW TO

RECOGNISE BURNOUT

By the end of the Autumn Session, I started noticing a shift. I was still showing up to classes, meeting deadlines, and keeping on top of commitments... but my focus and energy weren't the same. Tasks that used to feel easy began to take longer, and there was a constant sense of mental fatigue. Looking back, these were the **early signs of burnout** – a 2021 study from Youth Sight shares 72% of students reported being stressed on a weekly or more frequently basis.

RECOGNISING BURNOUT EARLY

Early recognition is essential, but burnout does not always present in dramatic ways. It may appear as **chronic tiredness, difficulty concentrating, or disengagement from previously meaningful tasks**. These signs often emerge when responsibilities accumulate without adequate opportunities for rest or reflection.

THE VALUE OF WEEKLY PLANNING

Every Sunday morning, I try to take **ten minutes to outline the week ahead**. This process is designed to minimise uncertainty and support better time management. It involves the following steps:

- **Listing key deadlines** and events in the next two weeks.
- Identifying **three core priorities** for the week.
- Allocating **blocks of time** for study, rest, and fun activities.
- Leaving **space for flexibility and adjustment**.

This structure reduces decision fatigue and helps prevent tasks from accumulating, with the goal to establish a rhythm that supports long-term performance without blocking yourself in a rigid time frame.

As the Spring Session carries on, we must reflect on the habits we developed in the Autumn Session and attempt to make minor adjustments. Rather than working longer but unproductive hours, I aim to intentionally prioritise structured and meaningful routines.



ADDITIONAL PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT BALANCE

Having a perfect balance is unrealistic but we can try to implement habits that allow us to look forward to activities but also support us during stressful academic times.

Non-Negotiable Rest Periods

I allocate one evening per week for non-negotiable rest. This **time is set aside for personal activities** that are not related to study or work, and can look different for everyone. Some of my evenings may look like cooking dinner with my loved ones, finally finishing a sweet treat that I've been saving, face mask, bingeing a comfort show, journaling, blasting an album from my childhood (you can never go wrong with a *Disney Channel* soundtrack), or scrolling through *Pinterest*.

Tracking Completed Work

Alongside task planning, I maintain a **list of completed items**. This reinforces progress and helps keep perspective during busy weeks; ticking off tasks has also been proven to boost dopamine levels, playing into the *small wins theory*.

Semester Overview Mapping

At the beginning of the Semester, I **review all major deadlines and commitments** by adding everything into my *Apple Calendar* with two week and one week reminders. I prefer *Apple Calendar* as it links it to my phone's notifications but *Google Calendar* is also super helpful! This broader view allows me to avoid last minute cramming (which we are all guilty of), then planning accordingly.

I also try to identify "crunch weeks" early. If I know that Week 10 is going to be intense, I start scaling back on extracurricular commitments and outings in Week 9. It's not always possible to avoid stress, but pre-empting it gives me more control over how I respond.

Ultimately, preventing burnout is less about finding one perfect strategy and more about **building habits that support you consistently**. Whether it's weekly planning, a protected rest day, or simply giving yourself permission to pause; I hope you prioritise self-care in the Spring Session.

