



How to flourish in your first year of college or university

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What do I know?

- Well, I'm a:
 1. clinical psychologist
 2. instructor of undergraduate psychology courses
 - before that, TA for undergraduate courses
 3. former university student

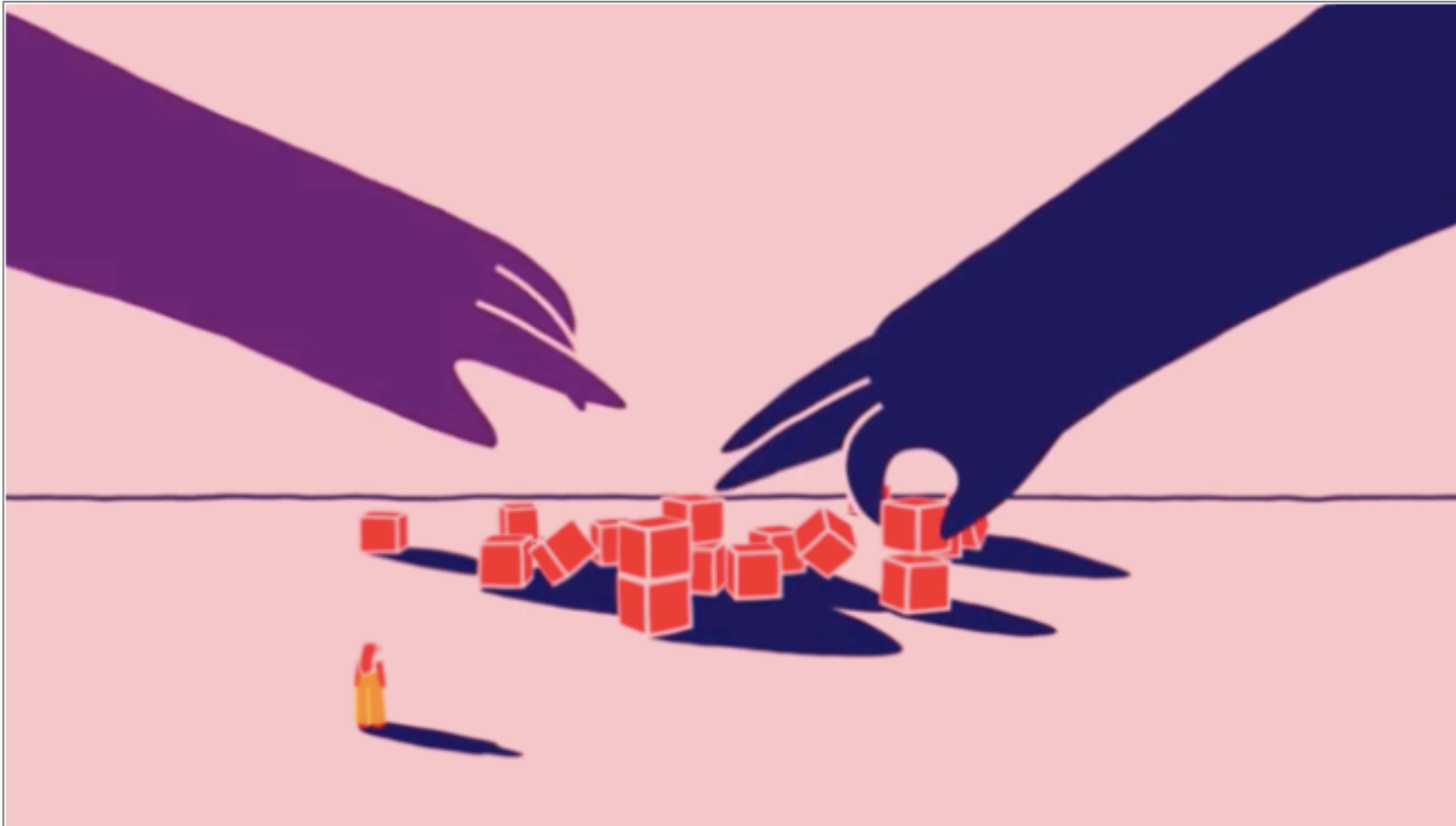


2004-2008



2008-2015

What this presentation is all about...

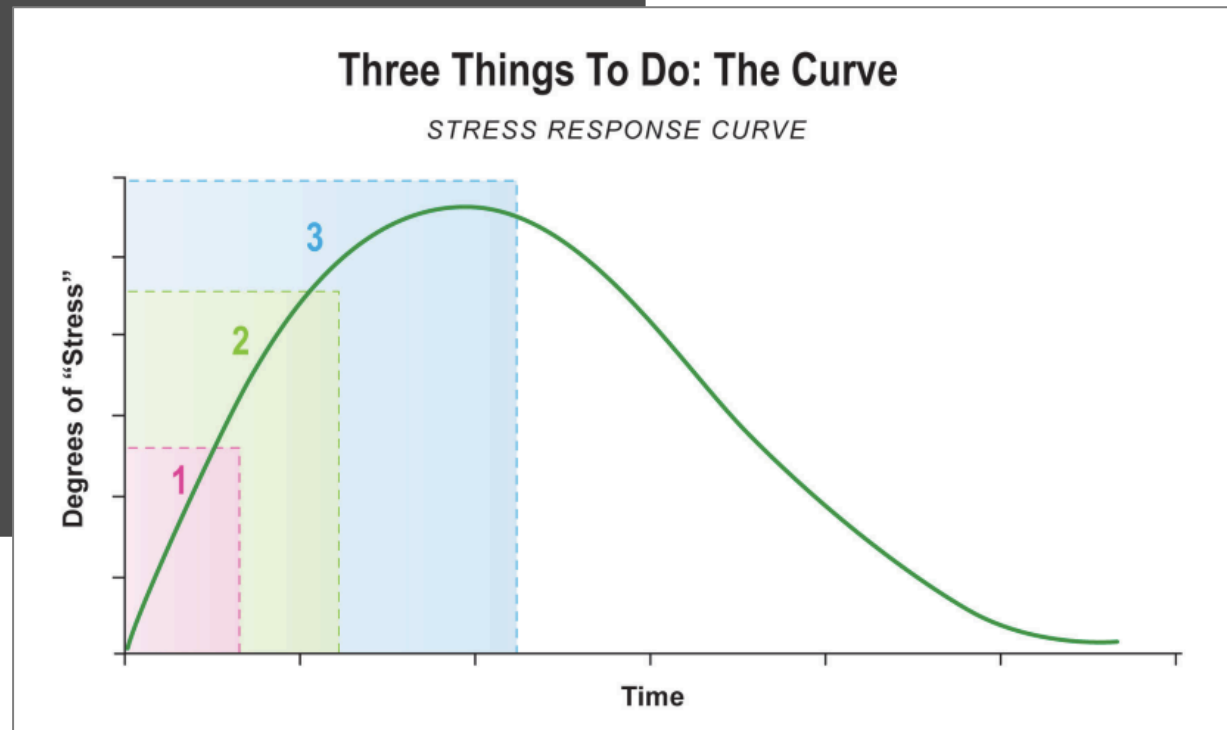




Key differences between high school and college/university

1. Workload
2. Pace
3. Anonymity
4. Responsibility and independence
5. Career planning

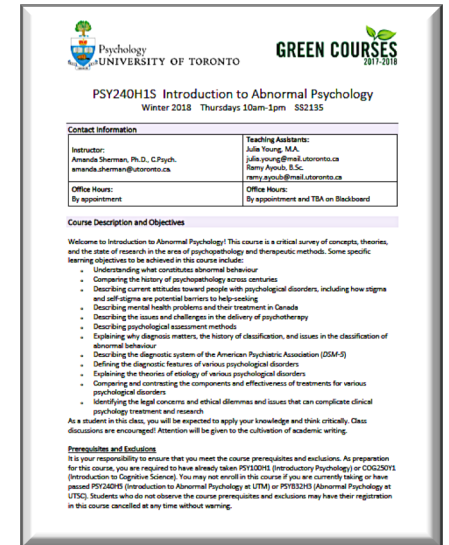
How to respond well to stress over time



1. Interpret the stressor – think of it as a positive challenge rather than a negative threat
2. Adapt to the stress – figure out what the problem is, and find ways to solve it
3. Use techniques to decrease the intensity of your stress response
 - Use calm breathing strategies
 - Think realistically about the problem
 - Get support
 - Take care of your body

First year tips and tricks

- Remember that it's not supposed to be easy!
 - Things *will* get better as you gain experience and figure it all out
- Don't worry about finding a clear path in your first year
 - Take a variety of courses to find out what you like and what you're good at
- Read the syllabus for each course carefully!
- Develop good organization and time management skills
 - Get a big calendar and use it!
 - Mark assignment due dates as 24 hours before they're actually due
 - Dedicate time for most of your school work to be done *outside* of class
- Put yourself out there to meet people and it will pay off
- During stressful times (e.g., exam periods), don't neglect your wellness
 - Make sure that you're getting enough sleep, eating regularly and nutritiously, exercising, and spending some time with friends
- Get help at the first sign of trouble - *don't wait until it's too late*



Learning from Dayna's experience



"When I transitioned from high school to university, I focused on whether or not my roommate and I would get along. I should have focused on whether or not I was ready to handle the academic changes. Spoiler Alert! *I was definitely not ready for those changes.* It turns out, getting along with my roommate was a breeze for me (we became great friends) but the academics were not.

There was much more reading than I had ever had done before, and it was more complex than I had expected. *I could not use the same study strategies as I did in high school* (cramming the night before does not work nearly as well in university), and *I was quickly falling behind.* I did not go to any academic help sessions or talk to my Academic Advisor or my professors. *I did not reach out for any help at all.* I was too scared.

Since I let this fear take control of my life, I did not figure out how to handle university schoolwork until my 3rd year at university. *The damage was already done.* My grade point average was not high enough to graduate, I was kicked out of my program, and I had already failed multiple classes.

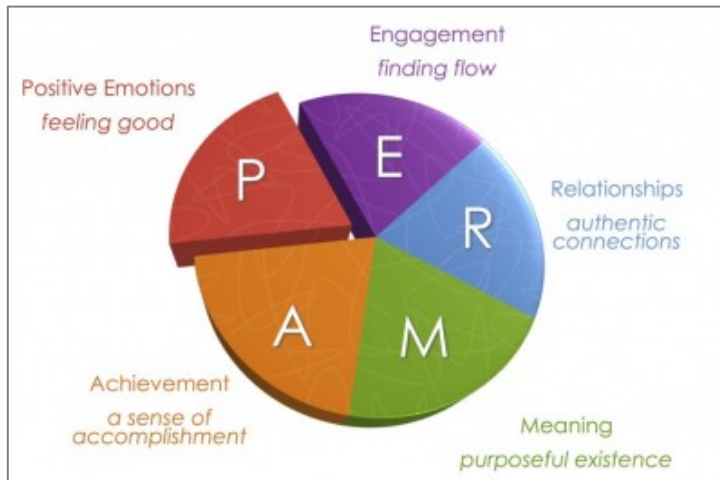
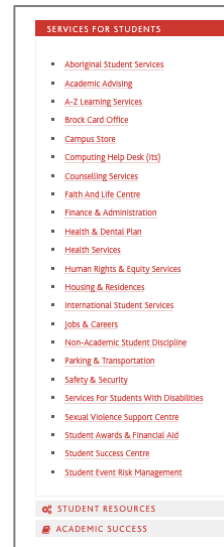
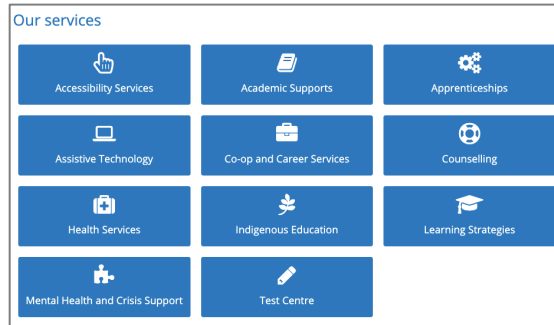
That all changed when I started being more responsible for myself, pushing myself way outside of my comfort zone, and talking to the people I needed to talk with to get help. It was not easy, and I was constantly fighting my own instincts. But, with the help of Student Services and some specific professors, I was able to complete my degree by staying an extra year, go on to teacher's college, and successfully graduate!"

What to do if you feel overwhelmed

- You can still depend on your old friends and your family
- Create a new support system at school
 - Reach out to other students in your residence, classes, extracurricular activities, job
- Find resources at school to help you, help yourself
 - Always read your course syllabus *first*
 - Talk to your course instructors or teaching assistants
 - Ask questions before or after class
 - Attend office hours!
 - *Be respectful*
- Campus support services
 - Academic Advising
 - Peer tutoring
 - Writing/Academic Centre
 - Library workshops
 - Student Health Centre
 - Student Counselling Centre
 - Accessibility/Disability Services
 - and more...

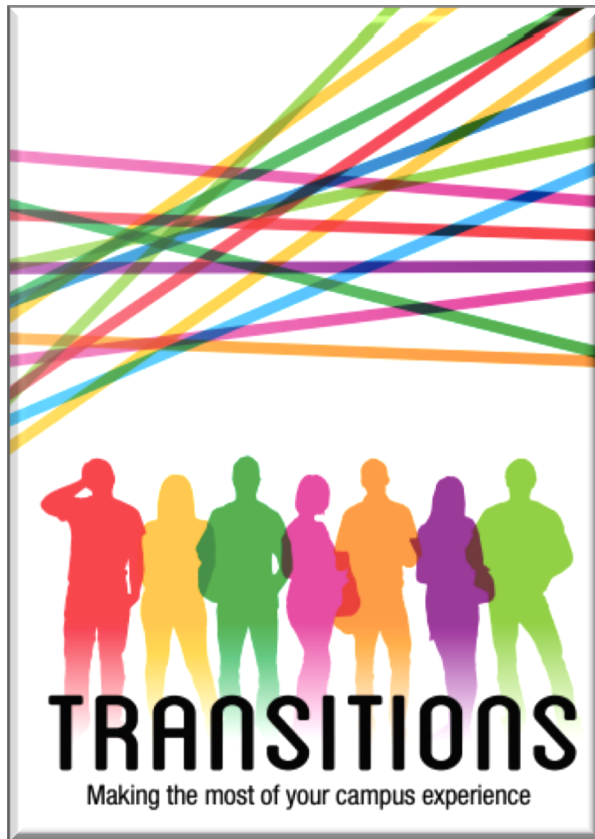


Preparing over the summer



- Go to your school's website and check out the student services available
 - If you have a documented disability, register in advance with Accessibility Services
- Prepare for the fact that it won't always be easy, but remind yourself that you will *learn to cope* with challenges and setbacks
 - Resilience – bouncing back from setbacks stronger than you were before
 - Grit – determination and unwavering focus on challenging long-term goals
- Consider what you want to *gain* from your experience, other than just a degree
 - What will make you happy with your life in postsecondary school?
 - PERMA

Good resources to check out



teenmentalhealth.org/transitions



knowbeforey.ednet.ns.ca

