

# **Towards Success in Tertiary Study Logo**

## **with Ongoing Medical Conditions**

**such as:**

- **Asthma**
- **Cancer**
- **Chemical Sensitivity**
- **Chronic Fatigue Syndrome**
- **Chronic Pain**
- **Diabetes**
- **Epilepsy**
- **Glandular Fever**
- **Lupus**

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The **Towards Success in Tertiary Study** series web address is at:  
<http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/towardssuccess/>

Contact your Disability Liaison Officer at your institution for information on alternative formats.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **WHY READ THIS BOOKLET?**

This booklet has been written for students who are studying or intend studying at tertiary level and who have ongoing medical conditions. The strategies included here bring together the experiences of many students, staff and support organisations. The booklet also builds on existing resources, both print and electronic media.

## **Studying with Ongoing Medical Conditions**

Many students with ongoing medical conditions associated with disabilities or chronic illnesses find that attendance at lectures or tutorials is difficult. You might also find that the impact of your illness may also prevent you from becoming involved in the broader social activities at university. Some students may experience feelings of isolation because of periods of absence, hospitalisation or mobility difficulties.

Successful study with ongoing medical conditions can indeed be challenging, but students with these conditions often have enhanced maturity and life skills because of their experiences. By adopting a range of strategies, and by using the various services available at universities, students with ongoing medical conditions can maximise their chances of success.

## **HOW DO ONGOING MEDICAL CONDITIONS IMPACT ON STUDY?**

You might find it useful to explain to friends and lecturers that ongoing medical conditions can impact on learning in a number of ways. Students can find it more difficult to complete tasks on time, and to participate in group activities, both academic and social. Confidence and self-esteem can also suffer when tasks seem to take longer.

**“It takes me ALL my time just to keep up with lecture notes - and I feel SO guilty if I go out even for one night!”**

**“The medication gives me a ruddy complexion which is often mistaken for good health; the lecturer says I look really well and I’m sure he thinks I’m a fraud.”**

Conditions and their effects vary widely from student to student and can impact on study in different ways. Some of the possible effects on study include:

- fluctuations in concentration and memory
- unpredictable illness episodes resulting in reduced study time
- low energy periods/overwhelming fatigue

- fluctuations in motivation
- reduced tolerance for stress
- feelings of loneliness and isolation
- loss of self confidence
- anxiety about losing control (fainting, epileptic episodes, chemical/food reactions)
- adverse medication side-effects
- reduced mobility (both in terms of ease of university access and ease of fine motor co-ordination)
- chronic and intermittent pain.

You might also find it useful to refer lecturers to information on **Reasonable Accommodations: Strategies for Teaching University Students with Disabilities** at:  
<http://www.anu.edu.au/secretary/disabilities/book4.html>

## **STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL STUDY**

Employing study strategies that suit your condition, as well as developing your own study strengths, can reduce the effects of ongoing medical conditions on your learning. In addition, knowing your preferred learning style, and therefore what works is an excellent start to successful study.

Ask your DLO (Disability Liaison Officer) for the booklet: **Discovering Your Learning Style** in the **Towards Success in Tertiary Study** series to learn more about adapting study techniques to your particular learning style.

Here are some strategies that have worked for other students with ongoing medical conditions.

## **Ideas for Getting Started and Keeping Going**

### **Getting motivated**

- Focus on the strengths you have. Remind yourself of all your successes and achievements. Writing a list of your strengths in your diary is a good start.
- Comparing yourself with others, or to the way you were before your illness, is **not** a good idea.

**“Before I developed diabetes, I used to have endless energy and was able to sit up all night writing an essay. Now I have to be much more careful about balancing my routine and diet so I can complete assignments.”**

- Do not accept stereotypes and limitations which other people may impose on you.  
**“A course co-ordinator discouraged me from doing a Human Movement course because of my disability. I challenged his advice and managed to complete the course part-time. My view is if you have a dream go for it!”**
- Maintain motivation by utilising symbols like these, to show progress and celebrate partial completion of tasks.

<b>‘To Do’ List</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Symbol</b>
• Medical appointment	1	Urgent	*
• Maths Assignment	2	Fully completed	
• A Geography Report	3	Nearly there	/
• Returning library books	4	Delegated	D

## **Getting organised**

- Utilise **‘SMART’** goals to plan your course, study and career.  
**Specific**– complete an essay introduction rather than work on the whole essay.  
**Measurable** – have a task checklist that you can tick off.  
**Assignable** – determine how much you can do and delegate if possible.  
**Realistic** – focus on a section rather than revising all of Biology 101.  
**Time frame** – set a realistic time frame (within the hour, end of the day/week).
- Use a year planner to map out important dates (assessment tasks and exams).
- Use a weekly timetable to outline study, personal and medical requirements.
- Use a prioritised daily **‘To Do’** list.
- Break tasks into smaller manageable segments over several weeks (a 2000 word assignment can be broken into stages of question analysis, brainstorming, planning, reading and research, writing first draft in one paragraph steps, editing for structure, editing for style and grammar, writing the bibliography and proofreading).
- **Prioritise!** Avoid just reacting to things as they occur by prioritising. Stephen Covey’s book **First Things First** suggests the following grid, noting that people under stress spend most of their time in quadrant 4 (as an escape). The most important boxes are 1 and 2. If you don’t have time to work on important goals, perhaps you are spending too much time on relatively unimportant things.

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	<b>1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assignments due tomorrow</li> <li>• your best friend's birthday</li> </ul>	<b>2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an essay due in 4 weeks</li> <li>• recognise new opportunities and challenges</li> <li>• long term projects</li> </ul>
Not Important	<b>3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interruptions</li> <li>• some phone calls</li> </ul>	<b>4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• junk mail</li> <li>• some phone calls</li> <li>• watching TV</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

## Getting started

- Organise a quiet, interruption-free study zone.
- Don't forget the 10 minute con job - tell yourself you **will** work for 10 minutes (even 5 minutes on a bad day). If you can't continue, OK, but more often than not, getting started is the hard part and you'll be able to continue.
- Start a study session with something easy, like sharpening a pencil or opening a file on your computer.

## Keeping going

Have long term, short term and daily goals and don't forget that it's OK to spend a few minutes day dreaming about those long term goals - for example, an image of your graduation party.

**"I was told I'd never survive living and studying in the city because of chemical allergies by one of my doctors - it felt great telling him I'd graduated."**

- Focus on what you have achieved (not what you have been unable to do).
  - **Reward** yourself for completed goals (watch your favourite TV show, arrange to meet a friend for dinner, surf the net, splurge on your favourite food).
  - Some people find it effective to 'dedicate' a piece of work to a friend.
  - There are always peaks and troughs in a study year - remember the ups when you're in the depths of a down.
  - Develop a sense of your own identity and self-worth; you are a person with talent and creativity independent of your uni assignments.
  - Keep balance in your life between body, mind and spirit. See that movie, talk on the phone for an hour, take the dog for a walk.

## Making the Most of 'Up-Time'

One of the hardest things about living with an ongoing medical condition is its relentlessness; but some days are better than others. Learn to recognise these 'up-times' and make the most of them.

- Schedule difficult and more demanding tasks for when you're feeling OK.
- Multi-task during your up-times. Some ideas: listen to your taped lecture notes while you're driving or exercising; summarise your ideas on to tape while you wash the dishes; practise your oral presentation skills in the shower.

It's OK to cram a lot into these times, but don't over do it!

**"...the lack of stress is always the most important factor in studying effectively. Doing homework when you shouldn't only means that you won't be able to do homework later.... "**

## Dealing with Stress

There will be times when you may feel overwhelmed by your workload. Remember that you are not alone; many students may feel this way especially as assignment deadlines and exams approach. A little stress will help you to perform at your optimal level. The key is to feel in **control**.

- Pace yourself - some tasks may take you longer, but there is no prize for finishing first.
  - Ask for help with mundane chores so you can focus your energies on study.
- Take up meditation, yoga, visualisation exercises or listen to relaxing music.
  - Use a journal to write down your feelings and inspirational thoughts and quotes to keep you going through the rough patches.  
**"I used my journal to record my pain experiences; especially when I had bad days or was desperate to get home after uni and crash into bed."**
  - Online subject delivery modes may suit your needs and this could be a more realistic option. Remember that you can change your subject choice within the first two weeks of semester without incurring a HECS debt.
  - Identify and try to reduce environmental stress triggers such as chemicals, noise and bright light.
  - Humour is one of the world's best stress relievers. Other proven side effects of humour are: increased creativity, enhanced concentration, a stimulated immune system and increased friendships.
  - Don't feel guilty if you decide to go part-time. It may be a sensible option which maximises your chance of eventual success.  
**"I found that the daily demands of having to go into uni too exhausting and I was having relapse after relapse. I finally talked to my course adviser and decided to do a subject by distance education instead."**

**Be aware of the side-effects of any medications such as nausea, lack of concentration, dry mouth, drowsiness - then look at ways to overcome them (carry a drink bottle with you, schedule classes for times of the day you're at your best). Many tertiary institutions have a quiet area with a bed - a nap may help you get through the day.**

Here are some suggestions for building resilience to stress:

1. Recognise what you feel.
2. Soothe and calm yourself with your own resources, or find some supportive people or environment.
3. Try to pinpoint what is triggering your feelings.
4. Work out how to prevent or minimise that trigger, and control your reaction. It is a good idea to do this with another person, like a counsellor or therapist.
5. Practise a positive attitude every day, even if for 5 minutes in the morning. Then use it at the first sign of something potentially stressful.

Here are some strategies to avoid stress:

- Find out ways that calm you down best, and practise often.
- Ask for a quiet retreat or safe space .
- Take time off when feeling especially vulnerable.
- Know when to turn to others for support.
- Try to rearrange your situation to minimise stress.
- Boost your self-esteem.

## **Boosting your self-esteem**

This is a quick activity to help you conceptualise and boost your self esteem, adapted from <<http://www.mycoach.com/coach/esteem.html>>.

Imagine all of your strengths, strong positive resources and talents made into a physical garment. Describe the garment by answering these questions.

- What colour and shape is it?
- What does your garment look like and what material is it?
- What is its weight, size, length, texture and smell?
- Is there anything else that draws your attention to the garment?
- Put your garment on.
- How does having it on change how you feel?
- Imagine a time in the future in which you may be in a stressful situation. Now how does it feel with your garment on? How is this different from the old way of feeling?

Whenever you need to feel strong and resourceful, imagine yourself wearing your garment.

## **Managing Gaps in Attendance**

Because ongoing medical conditions can become more stressful at times, some students may need some time off studies to recover. This may range from a few days to several months, or longer. You need to make careful arrangements so that your place in the course is maintained.

The first option is to try to reduce your other activities which are not essential, to minimise stress and allow more time to study. If you recognise some early warning signs of extreme stress or another episode of illness, you can plan for some time off study to prevent a breakdown (find out how long you can be away from the course without penalty). Ask the Disability Liaison Officer for help in organising help such as:

- arranging taping or notetaking of lectures
- obtaining copies of lecturers' overheads or notes
- assisting with book loans or returns
- arranging tutoring
- re-arranging assessment time-lines
- arranging formal deferral if required.

If you are not well enough to make decisions on what you need or want, ask for a 'Hold' on decision-making until you are able to. It is important to know the time-lines for last date for refunds, deferment or incomplete work but sometimes these may be renegotiated or varied.

## **How long can I be away and still catch up?**

This varies, of course, with the course, your study load, and how well you feel. Some students say it's about four weeks but a few say it could be longer. Often a semester or mid-semester break helps in giving you extra time without falling too far behind, however, it is not easy to catch up fully if you had a full-time load and have been away for a few weeks. If the course content is non-sequential, you may make up the work at a later time, but if the content is sequential, it will be hard to understand the later content.

## **What are the options if I can't catch up right now?**

- Negotiate indefinite completion time or up to double time (if continuous assessment).
- Convert to self-paced or flexible delivery for missed subjects.

- Consider deferment.
- Withdraw from missed subjects (but consider Austudy/Youth Allowance workload requirements).
- Change course load to part-time.

## Where to Look for Help and Advice

There are many staff in tertiary institutions who provide support for students with disabilities:

- The Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) can act on your behalf and arrange accommodations and equipment to suit your needs.
- The Learning/ Study Skills Advisers offer support in skills such as reading, writing and exam preparation.
- The Library Staff offer introductory sessions on using the library efficiently and assistance in accessing information and using library adaptive technology.
- University health personnel are familiar with university procedures, and may be able to provide supporting documentation for your condition.
- The Counsellors can help you with personal problems and other difficulties such as exam anxiety and motivation.
- The Chaplains offer pastoral care and other personal and spiritual support.
- The Student Union Welfare/Education Officers can answer questions about a range of academic rights and campus matters.
- The Career and Employment Advisers can tell you about the career outcomes of various courses, give information and advice on job seeking and can help link you to part-time jobs. They also assist new graduates find employment.

Other suggestions for maintaining momentum:

- Network early and outline your needs to staff, family and friends.  
**“My family and friends were terrific. I wouldn’t have made it through uni without their support and encouragement.”**
- Surround yourself with positive and supportive people.
  - Cultivate friendships - virtual and real (on electronic discussion lists and in support groups - see if your university has these).
  - Join a study group - this also helps with maintaining friendships and enables you to explore different study patterns.  
**“I find the Internet to be a great resource. It decreases the isolation of being housebound and it enables you to talk to others who are trying to study.... being able to access the library online is terrific when you can’t get out.”**
  - Does your uni have a mentor scheme? These can often be great ways to link socially and academically with students or staff.

- Remember that talking to people reinforces ideas and can be as useful as a solo study session (and much more fun). You can also do this ‘virtually’ by e-mailing other students. When you are tired, this is a useful technique for communicating with your tutor.
- **Did you know** that e-mail access is free at some unis? Check your university homepage for details or phone the uni computer centre.
- Contact peak support organisations (such as the Asthma Association or the CFS/ME Society) for further help and advice.

**Check out e-mail discussion groups, lists and resources at**  
<http://www.webcom.com/impulse/list.html>  
**and**  
<http://www.tile.net/>

## **Negotiating to Meet your Needs**

Be an **active** participant in how your life and work at university are managed. One of the big differences between secondary school and tertiary education is that in an adult learning environment, it is **your** responsibility to follow up on issues or ask for support. Ask questions, and don’t necessarily accept the first answer; always ask to speak to someone higher up if you feel your needs are not being met. Don’t forget you can also talk to Welfare Officers at your Student Union.

- Learn how to influence your environment to suit your needs (see below for a list of suggested accommodations).
- Negotiate assessment tasks to suit your illness or pain patterns.
- Don’t quit just because you’re exhausted; talk to someone first.
- Develop assertiveness skills. Remember **you are your own best advocate!** **“I would say that to be studying with this disease is a triumph in itself, to be working despite having a debilitating condition is very brave .... find a way to learn that suits you and the aspects of your illness best.”**

## **Experiment with Different Study Techniques**

### **Lectures, Seminars and Tutes**

Large group lectures can take a bit of getting used to. Many university classes can have 400 students with a different lecturer every week. This is in stark contrast to most year 12 classes which rarely have more than 25 students and are with students and teachers you have come to know very well.

There may be times when you are unable to attend classes. It’s important to let your lecturers/tutors know and arrange to obtain their notes and handouts.

You can also contact another student to find out what was discussed in class. If you find writing difficult or painful or you have prolonged absences, the DLO may be able to arrange a notetaker. Often, lecturers will have their notes available on the web (see the subject's outline) or for sale in the uni bookshop.

Suggestions for getting the most from lectures or tutes:

- **Always** attend the first tutorial or lecture because that is when most of the important information is given about the course. It is also a chance to get to know other students.
- Do some pre-reading before a lecture, even if it is a skim read to give you an idea of what to expect.
- If you find it difficult to sit through a whole lecture, try other seating/standing arrangements.
- Sit in the front to maximise concentration, but sit up the back if you need to move about or go out for a break.  
**“By visualising my pain as becoming part of a white-board and having it ‘wiped off’, I could sit through an entire lecture.”**
- Arrange to have split sessions if possible, or attend sessions on different days, rather than cram all your contact hours into one day. (Remember that you want to enjoy your study journey and not just the destination!)
- Increase concentration by focussing on the content or by asking questions.
- When your concentration is waning:
  - think of an engaging word from the lecture
  - imagine the lecturer in a funny situation
  - focus on the lecturer's body language
  - anything to engage you back into the lecture.
- Arrange to get notes or tape record lectures/tutes you can't attend (check with your lecturers, some routinely tape lectures). Replay these when you're too sick to attend and add in your spoken comments on another tape.

## **Notetaking**

At tertiary level it will be up to you to decide what is important to note. Some lecturers may provide you with lecture notes, but make sure that you engage in **active** notetaking to suit your purpose. Here are some suggestions:

- Leave a column at the left of your notes so you can add other material or your own comments. Read through your notes at the end of the day, underlining, circling and adding questions or comments. Reviewing notes within 24 hours is a good memory enhancer and jotting down your own comments will help you gain ownership of the ideas.
- Ask a friend to take notes for you, if you miss a lecture or tute.

- Take notes in a way that suits your learning style so for example: visual learners can put the information into diagrams and use arrows to link ideas. Colour can also be helpful (invest in a multi colour pen).
- Use a laptop to take notes if you find it easier.
- Find out about ergonomic pens and other items to make writing easier.

## Reading

One of the most striking differences between school and a tertiary environment is the amount of reading that you will be given, however, don't panic! The art of reading effectively is to learn to skip judiciously. Here are some strategies:

- Ask for course outlines and booklists **before** the semester and get an early start.
  - If it is too uncomfortable or painful for you to read, then arrange to have key texts read to you or see if they are already available in audio format. Plan ahead as this may take time to organise.  
**“I'd had RSI for many years and couldn't turn pages easily, I was really surprised to find out that I could become a member of the Talking Book Library which meant I could have my text books in audio format.”**
  - Read selectively; ask lecturers to indicate important texts.
  - Using efficient reading techniques will reduce your reading time. Most advice on reading aims to promote **active** reading.
  - Have focus questions in mind before you start and be brave about deciding not to read interesting but irrelevant sections.
  - Decide what is important as you read - and **always** take notes (even if it is a dot point or two on a post-it note stuck in the appropriate spot in your textbook).
- If you underline or highlight material - avoid the temptation to: underline the important bits; underline the bits you think might be important, and then underline the rest (just in case it might be important; don't overdo it!).
  - Take notes from your reading directly onto computer - most libraries will have the facilities for this, or you may be able to borrow a laptop from the DLO.
- Share a reading list between friends to cut down on reading.

## Exams and Assessment

The best advice for exams and assessment is to **be prepared**. Leave plenty of time for revision or for assignment preparation. Here are some suggestions:  
**“When I was in year 12, I used to leave everything to the last minute, often staying up all night before an exam. Last semester I had to be more organised to stay on top of things, especially around exam time.”**

- You may be able to arrange for alternative assessments: for example, oral exams, or multiple choice questions instead of long essay questions. (Check with the DLO, preferably at least 5 weeks before the exam).
- If the physical task of writing is a problem, you may be able to have someone transcribe your audio taped essay or act as scribe during your exams. **“It took me a while to find out that I could submit my essays on tape as I had developed poor vision due to diabetes.”**
- If you need alternative seating or frequent breaks, ask to do your exam in an alternative environment.
- Get a good night’s sleep before an exam.
  - Avoid exam postmortems (“...you mean there was a question 6?”).
  - Reward yourself after each exam. This is **VERY** important when exams are time-tabled close together.

## Memory and Concentration

Some students find that 'information overload' is a side effect of tertiary study. Your condition may induce short term memory loss ('foggy brain' or 'cotton wool brain' sensations). Some medications influence memory and concentration spans too.

Here are some suggestions for combating the dreaded **foggy brain** episodes:

- Keep a notepad in your pocket or purse to record useful comments or ideas. (This can be handy for those nocturnal or bus queue brainwaves.)
- Take frequent breaks to avoid information overload.
- Relax! Remember that effective memory is based on understanding material first. **“When I was highly stressed, I just couldn’t focus on any study at all. I had to visualise myself relaxing and completing the task first, then information would flow more easily.”**
- Use earplugs to obtain absolute quiet.
- If you are allergic to dust-mites and chemicals try an ioniser and/or an air filter. Have you seen the ionisers that you can wear like a necklace?
- The colour **yellow** can act as a mind stimulating colour to aid concentration.
- Short intensive bursts may be worth considering rather than long periods of concentration.
- Try to mentally recharge after an activity that you have completed or before starting the next task. **“When I lose concentration, I find I go back to a lovely saying from Lewis Carrol’s ‘Alice in Wonderland’: ‘Fan her head!’ the Red Queen interrupted. ‘She’ll be feverish from so much thinking.’ It always helps me to take a break and start afresh.”**

Here are some suggested memory enhancement strategies:

**Try out some memory techniques websites at:**

<http://stad.dsl.nl/~coach/memory.html>

<http://www.mindtools.com/memory.html>

- **Review** material within 24 hours and practise a little everyday. Use a small note book or cards you can carry in your pocket.
- **Association** is a good way to remember information, however, it's important that your associations are relevant for **you**. Make links between information and other substitute words or visuals (usually the more bizarre the association the better the retention). For example, to remember the symbol **Pb** for **Lead**, imagine a **Plumber** with a lead pipe.
- **Mnemonics** associates the first letter of words to form a rhyme or a word. For example, to remember the 5 forms of energy transformation - the word **McHALES** (**m**echanical, **ch**emical, **h**eat, **a**tomic, **l**ight, **e**lectrical and **s**olar) works well here as a memory word. Another example, to remember the first 20 elements of the periodic table in order, after hydrogen, use: **Helen Little Beryl Brown, Chews Nuts On Friday Neights, NaMgAl SiPS Chlorine After Killing Cawboys**.
- **Number rhymes** associates the numbers 1-10 with a word that sounds like each number. For example, 1, bun; 2, shoe, 3, tree; 4, door; 5, hive; 6, sticks; 7, heaven; 8, skate; 9, vine; 10, hen. Then associate words to be remembered with each word as a memory peg. For example, to remember 'Kangaroo' as a first word in a list, visualise 'a kangaroo eating a bun'. To remember 'wombat' as a second word in the list, visualise 'a wombat wearing a shoe, and so on'.
- **Mind Maps** help you link ideas. Start off with the main topic in the centre and then brainstorm in the manner of Kipling "I have six friends that serve me true, **what, when and where, why, how and who.**" Link the ideas with arrows and circles, and then decide on an appropriate order, for example, chronological, comparison/contrast, most important to least important and so on.

**Visit a concept map web site at**

<http://w3.aces.uiuc.edu/AIM/Discovery/Mind/concept.html>

## Using Adaptive Technology

Your DLO may be able to help with the purchase of some hardware and software. Ask what adaptive technology is in the library, Study Skills Unit and Disability Liaison Unit.

You might also find the following websites useful.

**Ability Research Corporation**

<http://www.spin.net/~abilitycorp/>

**Royal Blind Society**

<http://www.rbs.org.au/rbs.html>

**The Independent Living Centres in Australia**

<http://www.iinet.net.au/~ilcwa/ilc.html>

- Are you really using all the advantages your computer can give you? A computer course may prove a time-saving investment.
- Think about how you can use files and folders on the computer to help sort ideas for an essay.
- A notepad computer may be useful in arranging your notes.
- Investigate concept map software (for example, **Inspiration** at <http://www.inspiration.com>).
- Other software such as **Endnote** can simplify referencing tasks.
- **Did you know** you can increase the size of the text on screen by using the zoom text facility in **Word** to reduce eye strain and fatigue.
- Investigate voice activated technology to reduce fatigue associated with writing.

Explore **Dragon Dictate** software at  
<http://www.dragonsys.com/marketing/>  
and other **Voice Recognition Software** at  
<http://www.iglou.com/vrsky/index.html>

- If you have photosensitive epilepsy, choose monitors that are interlaced (anti-glare screens may also be useful).

## HOW CAN YOUR UNIVERSITY HELP?

### Accommodations

You have a right to ask for accommodations which will make it easier for you to study with an ongoing medical condition. Contact your DLO/lecturers/tutors early to ensure your needs are met. Some of the adjustments or accommodations which might be useful include:

- assignment extensions
- alternative course tasks or assessments
- additional exam time, rest/meal breaks or alternative location
- use of a scribe during the exam or for an assignment
- provision of notetakers

- special desks, ergonomic chairs, reading stands for books, stools for laboratory sessions, special library trolleys, special glass reading box for print sensitivities
- lockers for storing heavy items
- rest areas/safe insulin injecting areas
- specialist software/hardware
- change of lecture or tutorial locations
  - rest/meal breaks during classes
  - assistance in the library.

Think about how YOU are affected by your condition and be creative in the solutions (not all solutions are complex or expensive!).

## **Do I have to Disclose my Condition to Receive Help?**

Many of the suggestions in this booklet can be implemented without disclosing your illness. However, your faculty or department will need to understand your illness and how it impacts on your study if they are to provide accommodations. You can always **partially disclose** by talking to your DLO. The DLO can then facilitate **special consideration** or **accommodations** while maintaining confidentiality about the precise nature of your illness. Some students like to make arrangements themselves while others prefer to have the DLO do this. Most lecturers and support staff are understanding and can accommodate your needs.

Advantages of disclosing your condition include:

- access to services such as accommodations, adjustments to courses, facilities and services
- better understanding and acceptance
- greater emotional support
- greater interest, care, and follow-up from staff
- appropriate action in difficult situations from staff
- clear **rights** of non-discrimination
- advocacy support or support for self-advocacy.

Many students still opt to disclose, despite some reservations.

**"I could say nothing about my illness, but that doesn't help me, because I need some conditions in the course modified, and asking for that without disclosure is more difficult, otherwise lecturers see it as privileges."**

## **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS**

If you have a disability or ongoing medical condition, you have **rights** under the **Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act and State Equal Opportunity legislation**. This means that you are entitled to ask for accommodations to be made for you so that you can participate in your chosen course.

Make sure that you provide feedback to your lecturers or to the DLO if you feel that your needs are not being met. If you are still not satisfied with what is being provided, you should inquire about how you can make a complaint through your institution's internal procedures. Use an advocate if you are feeling weak or too vulnerable to assert your rights effectively yourself.

If you have gone through this process and are still not satisfied, you can take the matter to the **Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC)**. HREOC has a web page at:

<http://www.hreoc.gov.au/>

and you can go straight to the Disability Rights section at:

[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability\\_rights/index.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/index.html)

(The Disability Law Advocacy Service can assist you with this Ph: 03-9602 4877, in Victoria). The publication **A User Guide to the Disability Discrimination Act** can be obtained from Villamanta Publishing Service on 03-5229 2029 (in Victoria), and information about disability rights can be viewed at the above websites.

## RESOURCES

A list of peak bodies and peer support groups that provide support and advice can be found in the White Pages under Disability Services and Support Organisations or via the Internet at <http://www.whitepages.com.au/>

Many students have found online resources enormously useful and easy to access. This list should help you get started in using electronic and print resources to achieve your study goals. Ask your librarian for assistance too.

To help you get started using the Internet, you may wish to try out:

**Surfing the Net Tutorial** at

<http://www.macarthur.uws.edu.au/ssd/ldc/Nettute.html>

and check out **Some Hot Links for Online Research** at

<http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/lisu/researchonline.html>

### **Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities (ADEC)**

Provides advocacy, education, training, information for people with disabilities from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Ph: 03-9388 1613

Fax: 03-9380 1857

**Alternative Assessments for Students with Disabilities**

<http://www.anu.edu.au/secretary/disabilities/book1.html>

**Association of Graduates who have a Disability**

Australian Alumni Group

Ph & TTY: 03-5227 1427

**Cancer Awareness and Empowerment Group**

Ph: 03-9878 9199

**CANCER-L (WVNET Cancer Discussion List)**

To subscribe send an email message to [LISTSERV@WVNUM.WVNET.EDU](mailto:LISTSERV@WVNUM.WVNET.EDU)

In the body of the message type the `LISTSERV` command on a single line:

`SUBSCRIBE CANCER-L Your Full Name`

Contact: Susan Rodman ([u0ac3@wvnum.wvnet.edu](mailto:u0ac3@wvnum.wvnet.edu))

**Chemical Awareness in Schools**

<http://www.spiriiit.com.au/~rdi/cas/>

**Chemical Trauma Support Organisation**

<http://www.eastend.com.au/~goble/Acta/>

**Chronic Fatigue Syndrome**

- **Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME) Society of Victoria**

<http://avoca.vicnet.net.au/~mecfs/>

Ph: 03-9888 8991

- **CFIDS/FMS (Fibromyalgia) Links**

<http://www.tertius.net.au/cfidsfms/links.html>

- **CFS Discussion List - Signing Up**

<http://www.tertius.net.au/lists/Tertius.net.au>

- **YPWC (Young Persons with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) web site at:**

<http://www.ypwcnet.org>

**Chronic Illness Alliance**

<http://www.chronicillness.org.au/>

**Disability Information Network Australia (DINA)**

<http://avoca.vicnet.net.au/~dina/>

**Disability Information Resource Centre (DIRC)**

<http://www.dircsa.org.au/dircpamt.html>

**DIRECT (The Directory of Disability Information and Resources for the**

**Education Community - Tertiary)**

<http://direct.deakin.edu.au>

**Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria**

<http://www.epinet.org.au>

Ph: 1800 134 087 Toll free

Ph: 03-9813 2866

**Friends' Health Connection**

Online one-to-one customised peer support

<http://www.48friend.org/index.htm>

**Independent Living Centres in Australia**

<http://www.iinet.net.au/~ilcwa/ilc.html>

Ph: 03- 9254 5400

**Multiple Chemical Sensitivity**

<http://www.mcsrr.org>

**OZADVOCACY**

Information dissemination and discussion list for people interested in disability rights in Australia. To subscribe send a message to

[listserv@maelstrom.stjohns.edu](mailto:listserv@maelstrom.stjohns.edu)

and in the body write:

subscribe OZADVOCACY your name

Contact: Ria Strong ([strong@infoxchange.net.au](mailto:strong@infoxchange.net.au))

**PAIN-L:**

An educational email discussion list (forum) on Chronic Pain.

To subscribe send an email message to [listserv@maelstrom.stjohns.edu](mailto:listserv@maelstrom.stjohns.edu)

In the body of the message type the **LISTSERV** command on a single line:

**SUBSCRIBE PAIN-L Your Full Name**

Contact: Hank Roth ([odin@gate.net](mailto:odin@gate.net))

**RDLU (Regional Disability Liaison Unit)**

<http://www.deakin.edu.au/extern/rdlu/>

Ph & TTY: 03-9244 5102

Fax: 03- 9244 5104

**Study Skills**

- **Unilearning**

<http://www.macarthur.uws.edu.au/ssd/unilearning/>

- **Owl Handouts: An outline of all the documents**

Excellent resource for study

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/by-topic.html#ESL>

**TIPD (Tertiary Initiatives for People with Disabilities)**

<http://www.qut.edu.au/pubs/09other/tipd/tipdhome.html>

**Victorian Lupus Association**  
Ph: 03-9650 5348

## **Books**

Buzan, T. (1995). **Use your head** (updated ed). London: BBC Books.

Birch, N. A., Rothery, M. & Waltrowicz, C. (eds) (1998). **Making it happen: A resource book for people who have a disability and who are considering post-school options**. Melbourne: RDLU.

Clanchy, J. & Ballard, B. (1991). **Essay writing for students: A practical guide**. Melbourne: Longman.

Donoghue, P. J. & Siegel, M.E. (1994). **Sick and tired of feeling sick and tired: Living with invisible chronic illness**. NY: Norton.

Lorayne, H. (1990). **Super memory- Super students: How to raise your grades in 30 days**. Boston: Little, Brown & Company.

Marshall, L. & Rowland, F. (1993). **A guide to learning independently**. Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.

Orr, F. (1997). **How to pass exams**. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Turney, C. & Teo, R. (1994). **A guide to successful transition to university: You can make it!** NSW: Sydmac Academic Press.

## ....ON BEING A STUDENT

Relax. De-stress. Learn to fly in your mind. Overcome obstacles. Insist on goals, however tiny they may seem. Let go of pain. Release the tension. Open up to new challenges everyday. Be flexible. Befriend the unexpected. Aim for summits. Enjoy the journey. Pause when you're tired. Take a deep breath and rest a while. Make new friends, virtual too. Surf the web to link up and network. Embrace the magic of 'up-times'. Congratulate yourself. Celebrate your strengths. Remember you can always soar like an eagle in your mind. Remember that just because pain is invisible doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. Educate the world. Take action. Grow at all steps towards success but on your terms and at your pace. You can make it!