

## MATURE STUDENTS

### STUDENT COUNSELLING

### WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

If you would like to make an appointment to see a counsellor to learn more about this topic, please contact the counselling service on your campus.

Distance students can contact any of the campuses. Please tell the receptionist if you need an urgent appointment.

### CONTACT DETAILS

#### ALBANY

Health and Counselling

Hours 8.30am - 5.00pm

Monday - Friday

Phone (09) 443 9783

Email: [Studenthealth@massey.ac.nz](mailto:Studenthealth@massey.ac.nz)

#### MANAWATŪ

Student Counselling Service

Turitea Campus, Palmerston North

Hours 8.30am - 5.00pm

Monday - Friday

Phone (06) 350 5533

Email: [s.counselling@massey.ac.nz](mailto:s.counselling@massey.ac.nz)

#### WELLINGTON

Student Counselling Service

Hours 8.30am - 5.00pm

Monday - Friday

Phone (04) 801 2542

<http://crow.massey.ac.nz>

<http://health-counselling.massey.nz>



# MATURE STUDENTS

Look around your university campus and you will notice that you are by no means alone if you are a mature (over 25 years old) student. Whether you have returned to study to advance your career, begin a new one or enter the workforce after focussing on raising a family, studying offers challenge and opportunity.

## THE ADVANTAGES

Advantages to studying when older include having a clearer idea of who you are and what you want, support networks are often more settled and life experience has helped you develop resilience and balance.

## THE CHALLENGES

When people return to studying, their lives are often much more complicated and involved than they would be at age eighteen. Students typically face life circumstances which from time to time interfere with academic commitments.

## THESE INCLUDE:

- The demands of various 'life' roles. Roles as Parents, Partners, Income Earners and Caretakers of elderly relatives are difficult to juggle on top of study. These demands can be unpredictable. Care and concern for a sick child the day before an assignment is due can place overwhelming pressure on a mature student.
- Choosing to study may mean financial sacrifices. Pressure to pay the rent, mortgage, food, electricity and telephone bills as well as having enough money for unexpected expenses can create on-going anxiety.
- The demands of single parenting as a mature student can be especially difficult. Being the only parent available to attend to children's needs may mean that mature students who are single parenting are constantly 'giving out' with less likelihood of receiving support and 'time out' themselves.
- Beginning tertiary study after a long break from academic work can be scary. Mature students often face fears of 'not being able to make the grade.'

- The risk of burnout can be high for mature students. Pre-existing time commitments can make study at University a pressured experience.
- Becoming a student at a mature age can feel lonely. Friends and family may not always be supportive and offer less than useful advice. The dominant age group of other students on campus may create a sense of isolation or 'not fitting in'. Other people's circumstances may feel very different from your own.

## TIPS FOR MATURE STUDENTS

- **Work to your strengths.** Plan according to what works for your scheduling needs. Ask yourself when it is easiest for you to concentrate. Where is the best place to study?
- **Establish support networks** with friends, family and other students before you need them. Support networks involve people available to help out when necessary. This might include a baby-sitting club, which works on a reciprocal basis.
- **Develop connections** with other mature students in order to share experiences. Making connections on campus can help you feel more settled and that you belong. Get to know people on your course, no matter what their age, this can help you feel more socially connected and enable you to chat with other students about assignments or set up study groups.
- **Be organised.** A fine tune time management skill to ensure work is kept up to date as much as possible. This helps avoid getting behind because of unexpected events. The Centre for Teaching and Learning is available to assist you in this area as well as with any other study skills you may need to develop.
- **Give yourself permission** to study. Sometimes study comes last on the list of 'things to do' because of a belief that other people come first. Study is part of your work and you are entitled to give it the attention it requires.
- **Believe in yourself.** Remember that mature students often do very well at University. This success reflects their commitment, enthusiasm and life experience.
- **Ask for help** if you need it. You deserve to be supported. Familiarise yourself with the student support services on your campus.

## JO'S STORY

*I left school at 16 and worked in retail for several years until the birth of my children. After several years of part time work and raising a family I decided I wanted to go to university to give myself more options, and develop my strengths and interests*

*Getting used to the day to day reality of being in a university was difficult at first, and learning how to be a student (taking notes in a way that made sense later, academic writing, using online databases) was a steep learning curve. However I found that accessing the support services really helped, and a session with one of the learning consultants at Centre for Teaching and Learning put me on the right track.*

*The other transitions were around organising my study around my family needs, and good time management has really been important there. My children still need to know that mum is available for them.*

*The great things about coming to uni as a mature student has been getting to know new friends, enjoying the diversity of papers and interest groups, and growing in confidence in myself as a student, mother and prospective employee.*

*I really recommend giving study as a mature student a go. We bring a lot to the table—our life experience, our adaptability and common sense. Have fun and ask for help if you get stuck.*

