

A photograph of a small, vibrant green seedling with several leaves growing out of a crack in a dark, textured asphalt surface. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light grey. The image is partially obscured by a white curved shape on the right side of the slide.

# Emotional resilience study skills

Based on materials produced as part of an emotional resilience research project by Leigh Downes, Ruth Wall and Anne Alvaer

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# Content warning

This tutorial focuses on how to study potentially emotive and sensitive material.

Participants will be encouraged to participate and may give examples of topics and case studies that could be distressing.

# Agenda

Why do we study emotive topics?

What is emotional resilience and how do we develop it?

Study approaches for emotionally challenging module material.

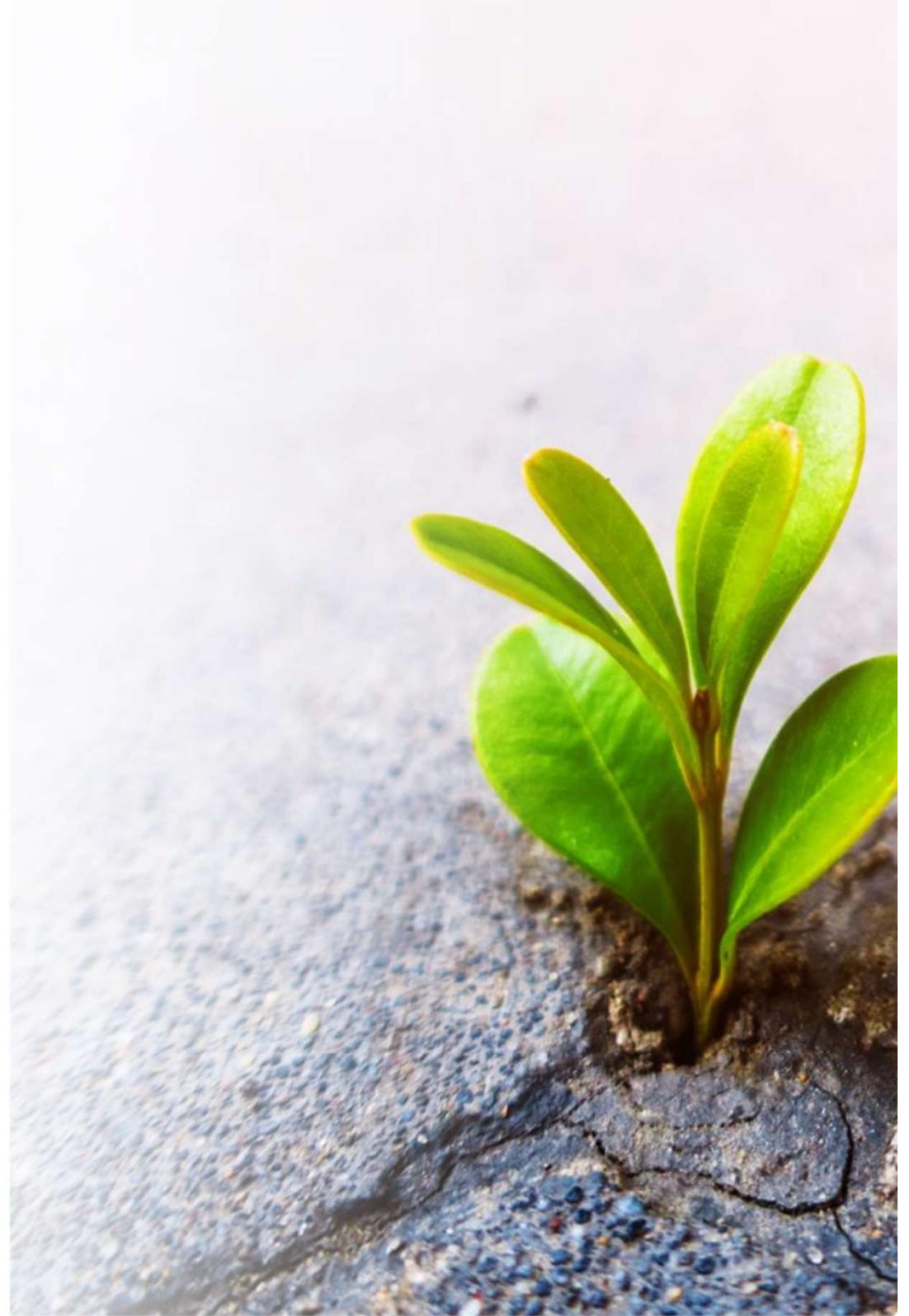
Techniques for managing well-being when studying.

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# A bit about this session

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- This session is based on a research project on how undergraduate criminology students managed studying emotive topics
- The research project emerged from a recognition that we need to talk more about the impact of studying this content, and how to do it well and safely



# Academic study can be emotive...

- Case studies that are distressing
- Case studies that connect to our own lived experience
- Accounts of human pain or suffering
- Accounts of injustice
- No 'easy answers'...

So why do we do it?

# NOTE:



- What counts as an 'emotive' topic is different for everyone! There is no 'right' way to feel about a particular topic or case study.

What motivates us to study or research hard things?

# What motivates us to study or research hard things?

- Wanting to understand why things happen
- Wanting to prevent human pain or suffering
- Wanting to make sense of our own experiences and the world around us
- Wanting to 'give voice' to people – or ourselves
- Wanting to 'bear witness' to injustice
- Wanting to work in a related field

# Mixed feelings ...

Many students expect to study real life and potential difficult issues.

Many experience a complex a mix of positive and negative emotional responses during their study, for example, feeling sad and angry alongside feeling interested and empowered.

What are some of the benefits and challenges of studying emotionally challenging topics?

Benefits	Challenges

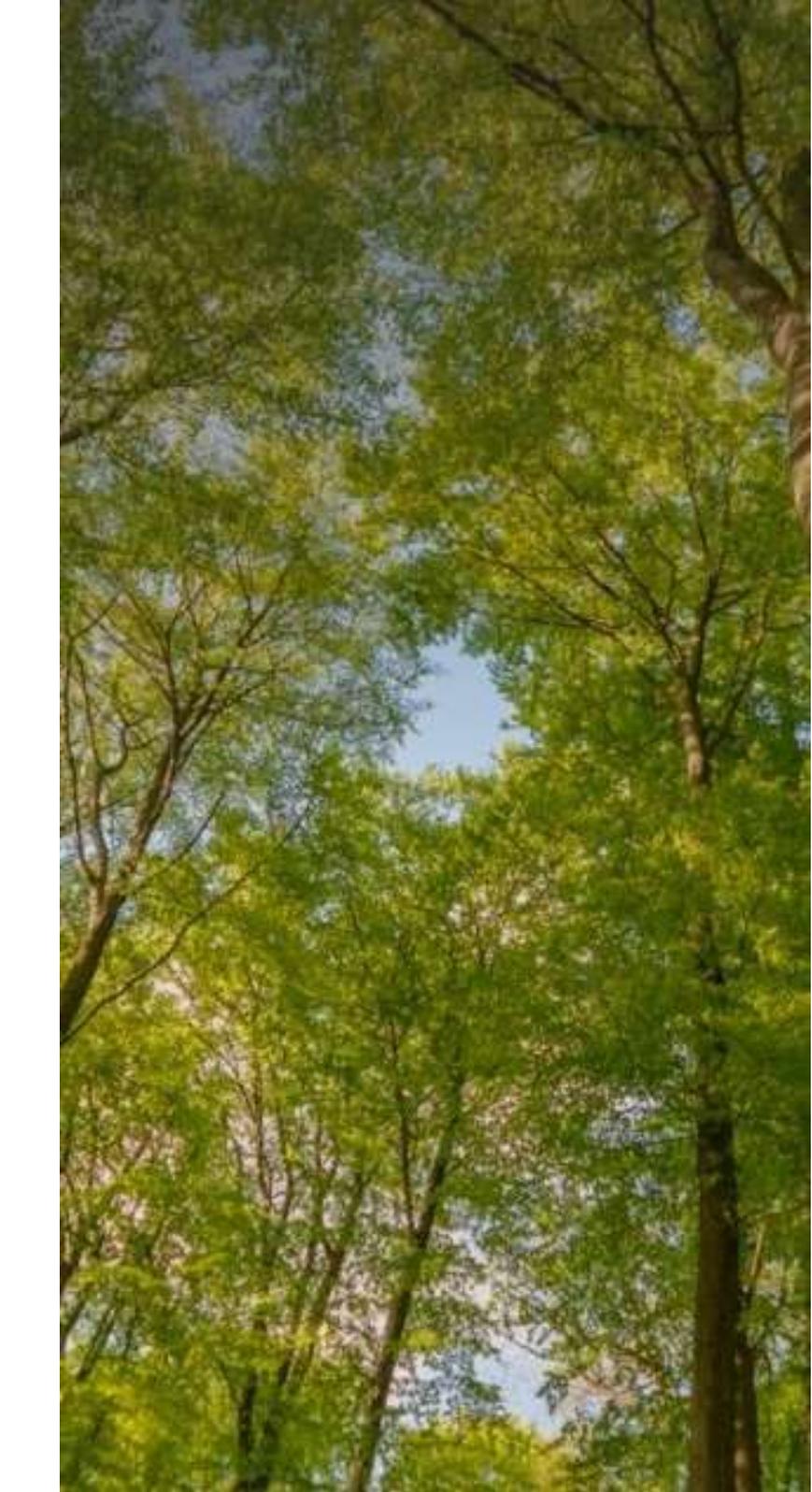


To study  
these topics,  
we need  
emotional  
resilience

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Emotional resilience:  
the ability to 'bounce  
back' from difficult or  
traumatic experiences.





# Benefits of emotional resilience skills:

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- reduced stress
- improved well-being
- greater academic achievement
- increased social engagement
- important employability skill



# Emotional resilience study techniques

# Some approaches to study emotive content



# Suggestions: (the list is not exhaustive)

Theme	Technique
Flexibility	Take a break, time out, take space
Support	Family and friends, therapist, mentor, tutor, pets, peers
Body	Exercise, go for walk, sleep/rest, bath/shower, food/drink, gardening, medication, smoking
Joy	TV/ films, video games/audio book, music and sounds, hobbies, faith
Self-care	Mindfulness/Meditation, positive self-talk and affirmation, relaxation, diary/journal

# Know when you need help

- Most of the time, most of us are good at managing our emotional responses
- Occasionally, we might need more help...
  - Your tutor is not qualified in mental health, but can provide encouragement and support in your studies
  - Available student support services
  - Other students can be a great source of support
  - Friends and family outside study
  - Professional help and support

# Take home message

Studying can expose us to emotive and difficult content.

Emotional resilience skills:

- are important for well being
- can be learnt, developed and improved upon
- leads to greater academic achievements, increased social engagement and is an important employability skill

So

- develop a strategy that works for you
- listen to your body and emotions
- plan how to reduce stress if you are negatively affected by the module material

# Going further

[How can we better support student learning of sensitive topics in distance education? | FASS Centre for Scholarship and Innovation \(open.ac.uk\)](#)

- **If you are interested in support and resources around studying with a mental health issue and the everyday challenges of student life** [Student Minds](#) is a charity that provide specialist support for students struggling with their mental health. They also run [Student Space](#) that provides expert advice and information, student stories and support to help all students to navigate the challenges of student life, as well as support via [text chat](#), [phone](#), [webchat](#), and [email](#).



**Any  
questions?**