

# Health & Wellness

TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES & EACH OTHER  
**ST. STEPHEN'S BOARDING**

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# Adjusting to Life at Boarding School

It takes everyone time to adjust to living and studying in the same place. Many of our new boarders at St. Stephen's are not only new to being a part of a residential community, but are also living abroad for the first time. For the first few weeks, we dive into boarding orientation. During this time, you will be very busy meeting new people, learning about St. Stephen's and exploring Rome. While the boarding orientation will allow for a healthy routine involving regular curfew and meal times, finding the rhythm that suits you best might be an ongoing process throughout your time in high school.

**READ ON FOR SOME TIPS & TRICKS**



# Some things to consider

## ARE YOU A NIGHT OWL OR AN EARLY RISER?

Some students are most productive in the morning and like to wake up early to complete assignments, whereas others prefer to work in the evening. You might even find that you are a combination of these two. Getting your 8 hours of sleep per night (at least) is essential to your overall well being, so establishing your most productive hours to get work done will help you in figuring out all the other essential parts of your routine.



## HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH DISTRACTION?

We are a closely knit community in boarding and it is so much fun to live with your friends. However, sometimes it can be easy to get distracted. On the next page there are some suggestions for maintaining focus. The more productive you are, the easier it is to create a balance between your academics and social life.

# Some suggestions



## [The Pomodoro timer](#)

This is a resource many of our students have found useful over the years. It times you for 25 minutes where you can aim to work with no distractions from your phone, social media, chatting with your roommate etc. Then, after the 25 minute period is over, you can take a short break of 5 minutes or so.

## **Apps that limit screen time**

There are many apps that limit your screen time, in one way or another. There is the more gentle [Mindful Browsing Google Chrome extension](#), which gently nudges you when you visit sites that you have set as temporarily 'off limits' by asking if you really want to spend your time that way. Or, if you know that approach is too gentle for your YouTube addiction, there is the more hardcore [Self Control App for your laptop](#), which completely blocks you from visiting the sites you list as off limits for the amount of time you indicate. There are plenty of similar apps out there for your phone. Or, if you have an iPhone, you can set time limits on your 'Screen Time' settings.

## **Spend some time getting to know yourself**



[16 Personalities](#) is a personality test which is based on the Meyers-Briggs model. You might find it interesting and informative as a tool to reflect upon your personality traits and the ways that this might impact your friendships, communication style, and work ethic, to name a few.

# Homesickness & Culture Shock



Homesickness is a natural part of adjusting to a new place and a new way of life. Moving to a new city, country, or even continent is a huge step that requires a great deal of bravery and courage.

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Although everyone deals with homesickness and culture shock differently, there tend to be some trends and patterns. On the next page you can read about the four typical stages of culture shock and below is a video which provides some advice for getting through homesickness:



# The 4 stages of culture shock

1

## THE HONEYMOON STAGE

When we first arrive in a new country, we might feel really positive about all of our new experiences. Everything around us is exciting and we might become infatuated with discovering a new language, food culture, and way of life.

2

## THE FRUSTRATION STAGE

Eventually, we might become quite tired of not understanding the language or culture in our new environment. Little things like missing the bus, ordering the wrong thing at a restaurant, or not recognizing any of the food at the grocery store might set us off. Things that were once charming might now feel annoying. During this stage, we might start to feel homesick.

3

## THE ADJUSTMENT STAGE

Our frustrations start to fade away when we get the hang of things. Over time we know how to get to our favorite restaurant without looking at Google Maps and we make close friends who we go explore the city with. We might even start ordering a cappuccino in Italian without realizing just how far we've come.

4

## THE ACCEPTANCE STAGE

The final stage is acceptance. Accepting our new environment doesn't mean there aren't some aspects of this new culture that are a bit irritating or hard to understand. Instead we can accept our new surroundings for everything they have to offer and are able to thrive within them.

# A suggestion:

## Integrating into your new environment

Engaging with your new environment can really help to curb your feelings of homesickness. For us at St. Stephen's, we are lucky to be right in the middle of Rome's beautiful and dynamic historic center.



At first, it might feel really daunting to be surrounded by a new culture and a new language. It can be really scary to not understand what people are saying to you! However, if you make an effort to learn some of the language and to absorb some of the local culture, you will feel much more integrated. There are so many ways to go about doing this, but we thought we would give you a head start by sharing a video below detailing one person's strategy for learning conversational Italian in just 7 days:



# Courageous Conversations

Living with other people can be wonderful, but it can also be challenging. Few relationships with roommates and friends are free from conflict. Below are some strategies for navigating conflicts and communicating effectively.

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## *Mindful communication*

Mindful communication (sometimes referred to as 'non-violent communication') is a way of expressing yourself that allows you to represent yourself accurately while also minimizing the harm caused to the other person.

HERE ARE SOME KEY STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO COMMUNICATE MORE MINDFULLY:



The first step is to identify and understand how you are feeling



Think about what specifically is bothering you about what your friend or roommate's behavior



Use "I statements" rather than accusing the other person



# What are "I Statements"?

"I statements" are the most essential piece of communicating mindfully and effectively. By using "I statements" we focus on others' actions and their impact on our feelings. Our own feelings are the only thing we can be certain about, so focusing on these can be a gentle and effective way of communicating things that are otherwise difficult to convey.

They usually follow the format: "When you \_\_\_\_\_, I feel \_\_\_\_\_".

## FOR EXAMPLE:

- ★ "When you snooze your alarm for an hour in the morning, it makes me feel stressed and tired."
- ★ "When you borrow my clothes without asking, it makes me feel uncomfortable."

The opposite of "I statements" are accusations, which are not an advisable method of resolving conflicts.

## EXAMPLES OF ACCUSATIONS:

- ★ "You're gross for leaving your clothes on the floor."
- ★ "I think you're being selfish when you FaceTime your family loudly in our room."

*see the difference?*



# Self-Care



## Q'S TO CHECK-IN WITH YOURSELF



xo @heyamberrae

One of the most essential skills you will gain at boarding school is independence. With independence comes the need to care for oneself.

While parents, family, and friends back home are still just a phonecall or FaceTime request away, it is also important to learn what centers, soothes, and grounds you.



## ANXIETY GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

focus on your breathing, then identify

5 things you can see



4 things you can touch



3 things you can hear



2 things you can smell



1 thing you can taste



@jyf-designs



It is not only in moments of struggle that we need to care for ourselves. Self-care is a daily practice. By practicing self-care, we take an active interest in our health and wellbeing. It doesn't always have to take the form of face masks and meditation, but can sometimes be as simple as getting enough sleep, eating well, and reaching out to someone you trust.



Self-care is different for everyone. If you're an extrovert, it might be making a plan to go to dinner with friends. If you're an introvert, it might be snuggling up in bed with your favorite film. It's also possible that neither of those things are soothing to you, and that is absolutely okay. The most important thing is to sit with whatever you're feeling and to listen to your instincts about what might be the best thing for you to do in this moment.



# Resources at St. Stephen's

You are not in this alone! At St. Stephen's we have many resources to help and support you. If you are struggling with anything, whether it be big or small, your advisor is always there for you. If you would rather speak with a trusted adult in the community who is not your advisor, that is also a great option! Either way, we encourage you to reach out.

If you have any physical or mental health concerns, questions, or even just things you're wondering about, the St. Stephen's Wellness Center is available. Up on the 3rd floor, you will find trained nurses and a counseling team. You can find more information about our wellness team here:

[Wellness Center Website](#)



# Advisory Program

All St. Stephen's students are assigned an advisor. While many day faculty serve as advisors, all incoming boarders will be paired with a member of the boarding faculty. Since we all live together in boarding, students tend to know their advisors really well. Especially in the first semester of living in boarding, it can be really helpful to know that you have a designated person to ask any and all questions.



## WHAT DO ADVISORS DO?

An advisor's primary purpose is to be your go-to adult in the St. Stephen's community. If you are having trouble academically, with your roommate, or just have general questions about how things work at school then your advisor would be the person to go to!

Every other week we have a group advisor meeting. Each advisor has between 5 and 8 advisees. Advisors and advisees can also choose to meet one-on-one, but it is up to them to schedule that time together. At the end of each semester, your advisor will write the comments on your report card. Your parents and advisor might also be in touch at various times throughout the academic year, including during two designated advisor meetings. For families who live far away, these advisor meetings can be held online.



## WHAT IF I WANT TO CHANGE ADVISORS?

Sometimes people just don't get along, and that's okay. Sometimes students find that a member of faculty who is *not* their advisor becomes their go-to person for advice, and that is also completely okay. What this can mean is that you actually have extra support, using both the resources of your advisor and other adults in the community. However, if you feel that you would really be better off with someone else as your advisor then you can ask the Boarding Head and Dean of Students about this. Typically the swap would be made at the end of an academic year, or semester.

