



A Guide to Sustainable Success in the New School Year

How to return to structure without burning out

1. IDENTIFYING YOUR INTERNAL RULES

Filling up your calendar with classes, work and social activities in the new school year is often exciting! While having a busy schedule can feel fulfilling, it is also important to make sure that you are prioritizing both your goals and your well-being to avoid burning out.

To build a schedule that puts you first, start by identifying the internal rules and narratives driving your current schedule:

- 1. Unpack Your "Shoulds":** List three expectations you currently have for yourself this term (e.g., "I should study 4 hours every night," "I need to say yes to every team project").
 - Expectation 1: _____
 - Expectation 2: _____
 - Expectation 3: _____
- 2. Values Check:** For each expectation above, ask yourself: *Is this coming from my own core values, or from a fear of falling behind / disappointing others?*
- 3. Defining "Enough":** What would a successful week look like if you measured it by your well-being rather than just your productivity?
 - My definition of "Enough" this week is: _____

2. EVALUATING YOUR COMMITMENTS

Now that you've reflected on some internal rules that you carry with you, it's time to evaluate your activities and commitments.

Consider what motivates your activities and decide whether it may be worth scaling back or delegating some tasks, to preserve your well-being while remaining productive:

Activity/Commitment	Is this necessary, meaningful, or driven by pressure	Action: Keep, Scale Back, or Delegate?
<i>Example: Organising every group project</i>	<i>Driven by pressure / control</i>	<i>Scale Back: Let others take the lead on 1 task</i>



3. SPOTTING SIGNS OF BURNOUT

As the school year progresses and assignments pile up, make sure you are staying on high alert for signs of burnout. These can include both physical and mental warning signs that you should incorporate more rest into your schedule.

Think about how your body and mind feel when you are overworked:

- **Physical Warning Signs** (e.g., tension headaches, digestive issues, shallow breathing, chronic fatigue, changes in sleep or appetite)
 - *What my body feels like when I am pushing past my limits:*
- **Mental Warning Signs** (e.g., brain fog, cynicism, difficulty concentrating, constant dread, internal critical monologue, feeling detached)
 - *What my mind sounds like when survival mode sets in:*

4. MAKING A PLAN TO REST

You may notice some of the physical and mental signs of burnout surfacing during the school year, especially during exam periods. **Although common, these signs should not be ignored.**

To avoid reaching a point of exhaustion, make a list of ways to rest that you can incorporate into your schedule. Identify examples of the following types of rest that are enjoyable and realistic for you:

- **Physical** (e.g. sleep, movement, stillness)
 - *Types of physical rest I can incorporate:*
- **Mental** (e.g. unplugging from screens, meditating)
 - *Types of mental rest I can incorporate:*
- **Emotional** (e.g. saying "no" to plans, space to feel without judgment)
 - *Types of emotional rest I can incorporate:*
- **Social** (e.g. time alone OR low-stakes time spent with loved ones/close friends)
 - *Types of social rest I can incorporate:*

Remember, you may need different types of rest at different times. You can always refer to your list and choose 1-2 activities to help you recover in the moment.

Returning to routine isn't about doing more—it's about supporting yourself while you do what matters. True progress includes rest, and sustainable success will never ask you to leave yourself behind.

If you feel overwhelmed by all of your responsibilities and struggle to prioritize your well-being, reaching out to a therapist can provide you with a safe space to heal and practical tools to support you.