

# YOU'VE GOT THIS

A Student's Guide to Well-being  
at University and Beyond

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# YOU'VE GOT THIS

A Student's Guide to Well-being  
at University and Beyond

**RACHAEL ALEXANDER**



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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**R**achael has qualifications in counselling psychology, cognitive behavioural therapy and consciousness psychology. During her 20-year career working with industry, retail, education and mental health charities she has helped thousands to live their lives with resilience, integrity and love. Sharing her own challenges, experiences and acquired wisdom, Rachael demonstrates how self-development and spiritual awareness are the keys to courageously transforming your life to one of action, confidence, faith and trust.

# FOREWORD

**A**s someone who grew up in a very dysfunctional household and who struggled through his school years and young adult life, this book resonated with me. Helping young people who are struggling and looking for direction is something close to my heart.

It is an excellent guide to help students through a potentially difficult and challenging time in their lives. If I had been given some of the guidance and help this book offers at that age, my life would've been very different. I fell through a hole at that age and was kicked out of school with no qualifications and had very few prospects in my young life. Drink and drugs became a sanctuary for me and I sank into a very low vibrational place. I also struggled with a lack of self-esteem and made many bad decisions as a result.

Rachael's advice and guidance are also infused with spiritual wisdom and knowledge from her own journey overcoming difficulty to create a successful life. You learn a lot on this kind of journey, and it is a common theme among therapists who are successful in their careers. There is no substitute for having been a fully paid-up student at the open university of real life. Failure and hardship can be great teachers.

This book will help you navigate through many of the pitfalls that young people typically face at a formative age. Having an awareness of the potential we have as human beings can change the course of your life. With this kind of knowledge, you can take full control of your health and mental well-being and avoid the cycle of dependency and reliance on the system that many fall into.

Looking after your own health and well-being is the key to living a happy and abundant life. With the right guidance, you can live a self-empowered life where you are in control of your own destiny. You can

experience higher realms of consciousness when you work on your inner self and cultivate self-discipline. This is the way to live a truly empowered and ultimately enlightened life. For me, awakening after years of struggle was the turning point in my life.

I went from a life of struggle, low self-esteem, financial hardship and addiction into a life of health, success and abundance. Anyone can do the same with the right guidance, and Rachael's book points you in the direction of self-empowerment, independence and self-love. It has everything you need to navigate the challenges of life in this day and age, but more than that it will show you how to thrive and prosper and live a truly abundant and happy life. Knowledge is power!

Young people have so much potential, but often this potential remains untapped because of self-doubt or conditioned patterns of behaviour that are unresolved. Knowing you can break free from these can be so liberating. Releasing trauma and negative conditioning allows a person to grow and live freely without being bogged down by baggage from the past. When you are free in this way, life becomes easier and opportunities manifest everywhere. When your vibrational energy is high you naturally attract things, people and situations that match that same frequency.

Knowing and understanding that you're a powerful human being with infinite potential is life changing. When you create this feeling and learn how to control your mind and ego-self, you begin to set yourself free. The healing journey starts now with this book; I thoroughly recommend it and I hope that every student reading this book lives an amazingly abundant life in which they realise their full potential.

Remember to let go of old wounds and traumas or any sabotage patterns; be aware of your shadow self and make wise choices and decisions that align you with things of a high vibrational nature. Live your life to the full and go beyond fear and self-doubt. Be kind and loving to others but also stand your ground and be strong and courageous when you need to be. Speak your truth always. As John Lennon once said, *'telling the truth will not get you a lot of friends but it will get you the right ones'*.

One of the biggest regrets people have at the end of their lives is not taking enough chances and not loving enough; remember that always. Live life from your heart as much as you can, be kind and

compassionate and remember that every good deed you do has a ripple effect with an impact on others. Think of the karmic imprint you want to create in the world. Life is a gift and full of opportunities. Make wise choices every step of the way and life will flow!

Good luck and I hope you get everything from this book that you need.

*Glenn Harrold*  
*Author and hypnotherapist*





# INTRODUCTION

*You've always had the power my dear – you just had to learn it for yourself.*

Glenda the Good Witch (Wizard of Oz)

## WHY HAS YOU'VE GOT THIS BEEN WRITTEN?

.....

After spending many years coaching clients, I understand how difficult it is for a person to take charge of changing a situation, no matter how much emotional pain it is causing. One of the reasons we are resistant to change is fear. Examples of fears stopping people from changing situations include fear of upsetting others, of not being liked, conflict, confrontation, disapproval, feeling a failure and fear of being judged by others. Fear can literally stop you in your tracks.

It is common to suffer experiences as a child which make you feel scared. If you are not taught how to process this fear, you grow up with a fear of fear, thereby living in a constant state of agitation and experiencing emotional pain. When faced with challenging situations, and because of your subconscious fears, you might doubt your ability to handle the consequences of taking action and therefore stay stuck, meaning your mental health slowly deteriorates.

For many years I was the same as my clients – scared of facing difficult situations and therefore stayed in emotional pain. I became so used to living this way that my only relief would be to drink alcohol to numb the painful feelings. But, of course, alcohol only offered me temporary relief from this pain. I didn't know it at the time, but I had many fears leading

# INTRODUCTION

to a huge lack of confidence, and I didn't trust my ability to deal with uncomfortable situations.

Attending university can be a worrying time for many students and so is an ideal time for you to learn how to deal courageously with different situations. This then allows you to experience great mental health and well-being, not only while at university but for the rest of your life. I hope that *You've Got This* will help you realise you are not damaged or broken or need fixing in any way simply because you might suffer from your mental health. If you can learn to think, feel and behave in empowering ways, you can and will become more calm, peaceful and untroubled.

## HOW CAN THIS BOOK HELP YOU?

.....

I suggest psychological and spiritual ways to deal with many different life situations you are likely to encounter while at university. Spiritual, as I define it, does not mean religious; it is about knowing you are more than just a human body, but a soul who is here to learn and share many great lessons, not least about loving yourself and others. Interchangeably I use the terms *Higher Power*, *Universe* or *Divine intelligence*. Yet if you believe in a loving God then please use the language which resonates with you. Some of my clients prefer to use *The Force*, as in Star Wars, or even Spirit Guides. Just think about words with which you are comfortable.

I also use the words *anxiety* and *fear* interchangeably. After years of research and from my own personal experience, these two words mean the same thing to me. For example, if I say, '*I have social anxiety which means I can't mix with people*', I then avoid mixing with people, thinking I have a *disorder* of some kind. With this mindset, I can think anxiety is more powerful than me and that I am damaged or flawed in some way. Granted the physiological symptoms are very real and scary but they should not have the power to control choices and dictate my actions.

However, if I reframe the original statement into '*I am fearful, and my fear makes it hard for me to mix with people*', this simple change of language makes it a much more empowering statement. This is because I can learn to face my fears by moving out of my comfort zone and practise mixing with people. The more I do this, the easier it becomes, and the anxiety/fear disappears. Simply changing the language we use can be incredibly helpful.

# YOU'VE GOT THIS

## HOW THIS BOOK WORKS

.....

The book is divided into ten chapters offering structured questions and answers which share simple and practical ways to deal with experiences you may encounter at university. You do not need to start at the beginning of the book, but simply find a situation you are struggling with and read the suggested topic. At the end of each topic are five journal prompts to help you process what you have read and apply it to your own experience. Feel free to scribble your answers in the book, or you may like to write them in a special notebook or type them up. It doesn't matter where you write your answers as long as you do. This is an effective way to reach clarity on a situation and a practice which has helped me greatly throughout my life.

There are no wrong answers to these questions; it is simply a process to help you discover more about the way you think, feel and behave and allow you to gain clarity on what your next steps could be to handle the situation. This self-knowledge encourages you to be honest with yourself about what you are thinking and feeling instead of avoiding making decisions, helping to reduce the mental and emotional turmoil you may feel.

You might like to highlight any sentences in the book which are particularly relevant to you to help reinforce your learning. There is also an affirmation in each journal section – repeat this to yourself regularly to help reframe your negative thoughts into positive ones. The journal section ends with a life lesson because the psychological maturity you are developing at university is transferable to other situations in your life.

## DO NOT SUFFER IN SILENCE

.....

In many of the answers, you will see I am a big advocate of reaching out for help. Over the years I have been very lucky to have the support of many kind and wise souls; mentors, teachers, friends, bosses, colleagues, counsellors, coaches, astrologers, psychics, mediums and a whole myriad of energy healers. There have been times in my life when I have not wanted to continue my human journey, but different people at different stages in my life have psychologically picked me up, dusted me off and sent me back out on my way, emotionally bruised but reignited. I am so

# INTRODUCTION

thankful to these people and encourage you to find people in whom you can confide.

## THE BENEFITS OF TALKING AND TABLETS

.....

I also want to be upfront about my views regarding the use of psychiatric medication such as anti-depressants and anti-anxiety tablets. While some tablets may help some people feel better, it is my personal belief that it is valuable to take the time to explore the way you think and feel. Supporting my belief are guidelines issued for consultation (November 2021) by the National Institute for Health Care and Excellence (NICE). They state that patients should first be offered group classes in things such as meditation, behavioural therapy or individual counselling sessions and should not be routinely offered anti-depressant medication as a first-line treatment for less severe depression unless that is the person's preference.

Talking to a doctor is often the first step in accessing help and you can work together to help you make an informed decision by considering all the different treatment options available. Aim for informed consent which is an interactive agreement between yourself and your doctor on the most suitable course of treatment for you, so that you understand the risks and benefits of taking medication. There are resources in the further reading section of this book which can also help you.

Of course, as a spiritual psychologist I recommend you also consider alternative ways to help heal yourself and some of these ways are listed throughout the book and in the resources section. While you may not have encountered some of these methods before, they have helped me stay alcohol and medication free while traversing some extremely difficult times. However, the most important thing to remember is that it takes courage to reach out for help and make the right decision about the best treatment option for you.

From one brave warrior to another, I thank you for taking the time to read *You've Got This* and trust it helps you realise, whatever happens, you've got this.

*Rachael Alexander*  
*rachael-alexander.com*

# CHAPTER I

## STARTING UNIVERSITY

.....

*What would life be like if we had no courage to attempt anything?*

Vincent Van Gogh

### SCENARIO

.....

Jack stalked out of the living room, slamming the door behind him. Feeling angry but not really knowing why, he stormed into his bedroom and stared with dismay at the multitude of boxes piled up around him. Knowing the boxes' contents were furnishings for his room at the university he was due to start, he felt the familiar sense of nausea rising and the slow ache of stomach cramps starting.

It had all seemed such an exciting adventure when he had visited the university campus back in April, but now the excitement had dissipated and all he felt was a sense of dread and worry which seemed to have been plaguing him for weeks. His state of mind was made worse by the constant commentary by his well-meaning family, *'Ooh it won't be long before you go now Jack'* and *'I bet you are really looking forward to university Jack'*. He would plaster a smile on his face and nod his head feigning enthusiasm, but underneath this mask, he was starting to panic that going to university was the biggest mistake of his life. As freshers'

## STARTING UNIVERSITY

week drew nearer, he grew less and less enthusiastic about the whole experience but couldn't tell anyone how he was truly feeling in case they thought he was weak and stupid.

And now this morning he had struggled to catch his breath and the gripping stomach pains had elevated to a new level. He really thought there was something seriously wrong with him and had even started to imagine terrible things would happen to his family when he left for university. He would busy himself to distract himself from these thoughts, but they plagued him incessantly, especially in the evenings.

He didn't want to worry his mum by telling her he was having second thoughts as he could see she had her own worries caused by a particularly stressful time at work. Also, he had seen how much money she had spent on bedding, lamps and kitchen equipment for his new life and didn't want this to be wasted. Feeling exhausted, Jack put his headphones in, pulled his hood up and distracted himself with social media: he had learned long ago that avoidance was the best way of blocking out intrusive thoughts and feelings.

.....

### Remember ... you've got this

It is understandable Jack is having these thoughts and feelings. You see, as humans, we prefer the familiar; we like routines, habits and structure in our lives and Jack is living in a comfort zone in his current life. The thought of leaving the familiar and going to university can be scary as it is the unknown. His current life makes Jack feel emotionally *safe* as he knows he is not at risk of being hurt physically, emotionally or mentally. This is why many people do not like change – because change brings uncertainty which is scary. Yet, think about how this scenario might play

## YOU'VE GOT THIS

out. By facing his fears and starting university Jack can learn that new beginnings can feel scary, and it is perfectly normal to have doubts and fears.

When your future appears uncertain, your internal hardwiring triggers a protective alarm response called fear, and hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol are released into your bloodstream. These hormones can make you feel a certain way and for good reason – to make you stop and reflect on whether the experience you are considering is safe and how likely you are to survive it. This is how the human race has survived for so many years.

However, because this biological chemical response can make you feel nauseous and short of breath and give you an impending sense of doom, you may retreat into what you perceive as safety and don't embrace the new experience. You stay stuck in your comfort zone. Sadly, life can then feel meaningless, and you may start to display behavioural symptoms called depression where you question the meaning of your life.

As Jack has never left home and moved to university before, he has no actual evidence of whether he will feel safe and be able to handle university meaning he is unable to feel calm at this moment in time. His worry is triggering his fear response, meaning adrenaline and cortisol are consistently being released into his bloodstream, causing biological symptoms of nausea and stomach cramps to continue. This in turn increases the amount of worry he experiences which in turn triggers more hormones to be released and the cycle continues. The medical model calls this anxiety, yet, in reality, it is simply a biological fear response out of control which Jack has never been taught how to control. Social media scrolling is simply a distraction technique, trying to block out his fearful thoughts. The best action for Jack to take is to use his courage to power through his fears as courage is his superpower.

Understandably, there may be times when you feel so emotionally overwhelmed that you choose, or are advised to take, psychiatric medication to help you cope and this may be the right thing to do. While it takes great courage to admit you are struggling with uncomfortable

## STARTING UNIVERSITY

physiological symptoms such as low mood, medication does not always help you face the core fears which are causing you to feel overwhelmed. All your emotions, both the positive and not so positive, are valuable signposts to guide you through your life. The more you realise you can handle anything which comes your way, including your emotions, the more you can live a happy and successful life.

## TOPIC 1.1 I HAVE CHANGED MY MIND AND I DON'T WANT TO GO TO UNIVERSITY

.....

Well done, it takes great courage to change your mind and you should be very proud of yourself! Since making the decision to attend university, you may have realised something about yourself or your life which means you want to choose a different option, and this is okay. Maybe you felt pressurised to go but have now realised university is not your preferred option. Awesome!

However, sometimes you may want to change your mind, but in reality, it is fear making you doubt your original choice. A new experience, one you haven't conquered before, can appear scary, meaning you try to avoid it as you think you may fail or are unable to handle it in some way. It is understandable you may have doubts right now about leaving home and going to university as it is a huge step into the unknown. However, it is well known that if students stick at university for the first six weeks, they'll normally see their course through to the end as it can take those six weeks for you to adjust to the new environment.

You may currently be feeling out of control as you are not sure what is going to happen at university. You may think you will struggle with the workload, fail to make new friends, miss home or even that you will be miserable for the next three years. While these worries are natural, in reality, these events are unlikely to happen, and you don't want your fear to stop you from embarking on a potentially life-changing experience.

The interesting component about fear is once you have faced your fear, your worries disappear. So perhaps you would rather look back in six months and be able to say, *'I had my doubts about going to university, but I felt the fear and did it anyway and it is an amazing experience'*. Equally, you may say *'I am so proud of myself because I tried university and I found out it wasn't for me'*.

Either way, you win as you have shown yourself how brave you really were by facing your fears. And if you really have changed your mind, then yes, some people around you will probably freak out for a few days, but they will get over it once they realise you have a right to make a different decision to what they want or what you once wanted, which is all part of maturing into an independent adult. Well done.

# STARTING UNIVERSITY

## SELF-ENQUIRY REFLECTION 1.1

.....

So, let's recap. Yes, you can change your mind (even if others will freak out) but make sure it isn't your fear which is tricking you into thinking you don't want to go to university. Remember, you have a right to admit you are scared – being scared is part of being human.

**I have the courage to admit I feel scared.**

1. On a scale of 0–10 (10 being *you've got this*) how do I feel about going to university?
2. What specific doubts and worries do I have about going to university?

**Remember, it is completely understandable and acceptable to have these doubts because university is a new experience.**

3. What would I say to a friend who was having these doubts and worries?
4. What am I looking forward to regarding the university experience?
5. If I acted with courage, what would my choice be?

## LIFE LESSON

.....

It is perfectly acceptable to change your mind in life; however, you must ensure fear is not trying to change your mind for you. The more you face your fears and embrace new opportunities in your life, the more confident you will feel and the less anxiety you will experience. Avoidance of exciting new experiences and opportunities can make life very dull indeed.

# CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude *You've Got This* by sharing a piece of writing which I repeat when I am feeling angry, confused, helpless, sad or even just overcome by fear. I came across it after attending a weekly 12-step group called Al-Anon. Here I shared time with kind souls who offered me understanding and compassion while I traversed an emotionally challenging time. After completing the 12-step programme (thank you Wanda) which the group advocates, I learned the true power of surrendering to divine intelligence.

At the end of each meeting, we closed with the serenity prayer and were encouraged to repeat it throughout the week when experiencing emotional discomfort.

*God,\* grant me the Serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And Wisdom to know the difference.*

*\*Like me, you may be uncomfortable using the word God so please replace it with a word which suits your beliefs.*

I share this with you now as throughout your university life and beyond you will have many different experiences, some good and some which, through no fault of your own, will be painful and unable to be changed. Therefore, your soul lesson is to have the serenity to trust in your ability to handle them and believe the tough times will pass, as they always do.

You will also have times where you realise you are in emotional pain but have the courage to take action to change the situation, allowing

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you to walk away from the pain. While this too can also be emotionally turbulent, your confidence will increase as you realise you can use your personal power to shift to a place of peace.

Knowing the difference between what you can and can't change is called wisdom and is learned through experience. I trust this book has given you suggestions to practice exerting your personal power to change challenging situations, thus allowing you to feel at peace.

May you find this mantra as beneficial I have.

From one brave soul to another

*Rachael*  
*rachael-alexander.com*

# FURTHER READING AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT

**Y**our university will have staff members within different departments who will be able to offer you support in handling challenging experiences. There is no need to suffer in silence and you are not alone. However, there are also many external sources of support which you can access, and the following are suggestions but not an exhaustive list.

## HELP WITH PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

.....

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- Cooper, D (1998) *The Power of Inner-Peace*. London: Piatkus.
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## FURTHER READING AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT

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- Williamson, M (1996) *A Return to Love. Reflections on The Principles of A Course in Miracles*. London: HarperCollins.

## UNDERSTANDING PSYCHIATRIC DIAGNOSES, DRUGS USED AND WHY YOU MAY FEEL THE WAY YOU DO

- .....
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- Hari, J (2018) *Lost Connections Why You're Feeling Depressed and How to Find Hope*. London: Bloomsbury.
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- Mate, G (2018) *In The Realm of Hungry Ghosts – Close encounters with Addiction*. London: Penguin Random House.
- Mate, G (2019) *When The Body Says No – The Cost of Hidden Stress*. London: Penguin Random House.
- Van Der Kolk, B (2015) *The Body Keeps The Score – Mind, Body and Brain in The Transformation of Trauma*. London: Penguin Random House.

## HELPFUL ORGANISATIONS

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- 12 step-groups
- Alliance for Student Led Wellbeing
- AMOSSHE
- Beat Eating Disorders
- Dig-in Insight Network
- Gamblers Anonymous
- Healthy University Network
- Hearing voices.org.
- Mental Health Foundation
- Mental Health Foundation
- Mental Wellbeing in Higher Education
- MIND
- Narcotics Anonymous
- Nightline
- NSPA.Org (suicide prevention)
- Papyrus
- Samaritans
- SANE
- SHOUT (<https://giveusashout.org/>)
- SMARTEN
- Students Against Depression
- Student Health Association
- Student Minds
- Students Union
- UK Healthy University Network
- UKAT (UK Advising & Tutoring)
- Universities UK
- University Mental Health Advisory Network

*\*Apologies to any support groups omitted, please contact the publisher if you would like to be considered for inclusion in future editions.*

## FURTHER READING AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT

### SPIRITUAL HEALING MODALITIES

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You may like to explore the following. Try to use recommendations where possible and use your intuition as to whether the person appears kind, honest, trustworthy and displays integrity.

- angelic healing
- astrology
- coaching
- counselling
- crystal healing
- gong bath healing
- health kinesiology
- kinesiology
- massage
- meditation and visualisation – I strongly recommend <https://glennharrold.com/>
- past life regression
- psychic/mediumship
- reiki healing
- shamanic healing
- soul retrieval
- yoga

### USEFUL PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES

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- Assertiveness including the *Assertive Bill of Rights*
- Attachment theory
- Co-dependency
- Karpman Drama Triangle
- Inner-child work
- Transactional analysis