

Strategies for development of specific aspects of learning

"CLARA definitely broadened my learning, and allowed me to see beyond what I was learning in the classroom"

"It just makes you really think about where you're standing at University, not just kind of grinding through a degree...."

"So CLARA did, kind of, indirectly help me in the sense that I was able to recognise the attributes that I had for when I was applying for jobs, for my resume."

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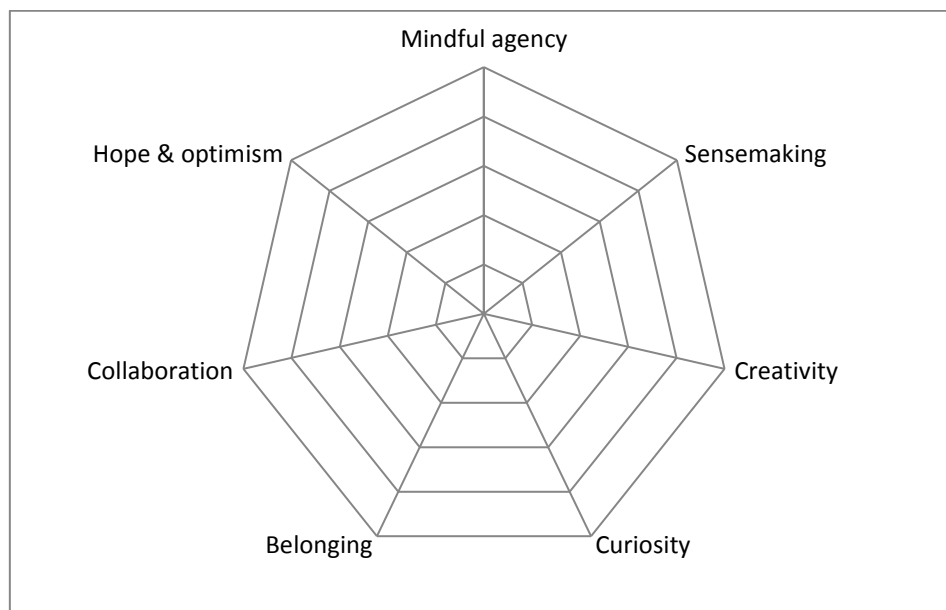
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Reflection Questions

Look at your profile and consider these questions:

- What do you think about your profile?
- How well do you agree with it?
- How well does it describe your learning power as you know it?
- What experiences of learning have helped to shape it this way?
- How would you like your profile to be?
- How could you use your learning power strengths to improve your learning and performance?
- What might you learn about yourself from this?
- What might you do differently?

Reflect on how you learn in different situations. As your understanding of the eight dimensions increases, consider how well you use each of them and how you might strengthen them.



Rigid Persistence

Openness to learning

Fragile Dependence

Self-assessment of CLARA learning dimensions

Mindful Agency / Reflection

Mindful agency incorporates:

1. Managing the processes of learning
2. Managing the feelings associated with challenge, and
3. Agency in taking responsibility for learning purposes, processes and procedures.

It integrates three distinct strands in the research literature: metacognition, the role of affect in self-regulation, and self-efficacy or agency.

This dimension is about **taking responsibility for my own learning** and for improving it. It's about how I **manage my feelings, my time, my energy, my actions** and the things I need to achieve my goals. It's about knowing what I want to achieve – and why, then knowing how to go about it; stepping out on the path towards my goals. People who have Mindful Agency take time to reflect and think things through; they like to understand the big picture and how each part fits together. They plan ahead and ask questions like, 'Where am I coming from?', 'Where am I now?', 'Where am I going?' and 'How will this task help me to get there?'

Learners with very little Mindful Agency are quite likely to react hastily or mindlessly to whatever they encounter. They are less self-aware and may confuse self-awareness with self-consciousness.

Typical behaviours:

- Thoughtful about intentions
- Makes conscious choices about how to learn
- Plans and applies effective learning strategies
- Reflects on personal learning experiences
- Takes responsibility for own development

Strategies for development:

- Remember that assessing and plotting your progress with the eight learning power dimensions is in itself an example of mindful agency. Try to do this at least once a month or quarter, for your learning as a whole across all areas. Keep a 'learning log' of key moments and milestones (see also Hope and Optimism)
- Make planning charts for yourself, in three formats: weekly plans for the time you control; quarterly plans with assignment deadlines and main events; a

yearly plan, with holiday dates, project deadlines and key events you are involved in

- Make practical lists: daily to-do lists; dependencies; questions to ask others; bright ideas that pop into your head at odd times; shopping lists of what you need to buy or ask for. Use post-it stickers that can move between your work area and your diary/planner and be thrown away when all items are crossed off
- Take a step back to refocus in the middle of a concentrated piece of work, to check whether you are still on track and following the guidance you were given. Ask someone with 'fresh eyes' to review what you are doing and renew your perspective
- When you step back, ask 'What have I learned?' (see also Hope and Optimism)
- When you are starting a major piece of work, create a mind-map to help you see the whole picture and then make a timeline to help you plan a step-by-step approach that will work
- Use your Mindful Agency to decide when and how much time to give to these 'stepping back' and 'organising' processes, so that you don't lose momentum and fail to get the job done
- Use Mindful Agency to help you decide when and how to use the other learning power dimensions: when to 'be creative' and when to 'follow the rules'; when to question and when to accept; when to seek help and when to manage on your own.
- Reflection – see Kaya's model on the next page:
<http://cmapspublic.ihmc.us/rid=1PC8NRGW0-2BL1DL-2GNL/ReflectiveLearningSpiral-JKayaPRPIC.cmap>
- Meditation eg Headspace app
- Get some work experience or alternatively apply for a scholarship to have time to focus on studies if the problem is that you have to work long hours to support yourself/family
- Read stories or watch films of successful people with similar attributes
- Student counselling to help balance studies and home responsibilities – this can help with developing skills in negotiating, learning to prioritise and setting goals or to retrain the brain away from depression/anxiety states
- Other university support such as UTS:HELPS & Library study skills.



Reflective Learning Spiral

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I have developed the Reflective Learning Spiral to use with my students.
I am currently preparing a paper about the Reflective Learning Spiral and will add details in due course.

The purpose of reflective practice is to learn from an experience.

What is your **INTENTION**? ... **ATTENTION** in a new learning moment?
The **FUTURE** ← is about

Action Plan
What new strategy will I try?
What will I do differently next time?

LESSONS LEARNED
What lessons did you learn from your experience?

INSIGHTS
You might explore new ...
 YOURSELF ... as a learner, team member, leader
 A **PROCESS**, such as teamwork, stakeholder analysis, design, proposal development, brainstorming
 about
CONCEPTS, such as leadership, complexity
 The **ISSUE** or **COMMUNITY** related to your proposal
 You don't need to explore ALL of these ...
ONE is enough!

Learning Moment
Describe in detail the learning moment you are reflecting on
 describe
 Where you were?
 Who else was there?
 Why were you there?
 What were you doing?
 What were other people doing?
 What was the context of the event?
 What happened ... and what was your part in this?
 What parts did the other people play?
 What was the result?

Feelings
Why does this event stick in your mind?
are → A subjective response to the Learning Moment

Values
What is **IMPORTANT** to you?
What do you **CARE** about?
 include
 How you were feeling when the event started?
 How did it make you feel?
 How did other people make you feel?
 How did you feel about the outcome of the event?

Analysis
An objective assessment of the Learning Moment
 include
 What went well? ... Why?
 What went wrong or did not turn out as expected? Why?
 In what way did you or others contribute to the outcome?
UNDERSTANDING

Lessons learned
Analysis and Lessons learned are about
SENSE MAKING

Feelings and Values
are about
MEANING MAKING

How do you **THINK** about the learning moment?
 What mental models or theoretical frameworks might help you understand this event?
 What resources are you exploring that deepen your understanding?
 Don't forget to cite references.

Sensemaking

This dimension is about **making connections** between everything I know - ideas, memories, knowledge, skills, facts and experience – and **making sense** of them in relation to each new context of learning and performance. It's about being able to create a 'knowledge map' of what I'm learning, so I can see how it all fits together and 'find my way around'. It's also about how 'learning matters' to me, connecting new insights with my own story and things that already matter in my life. This strengthens my sense of purpose in my learning.

To learners with little Sense Making, everything seems somewhat fragmented, harder to understand and they find it more difficult to know what's important or how to go on.

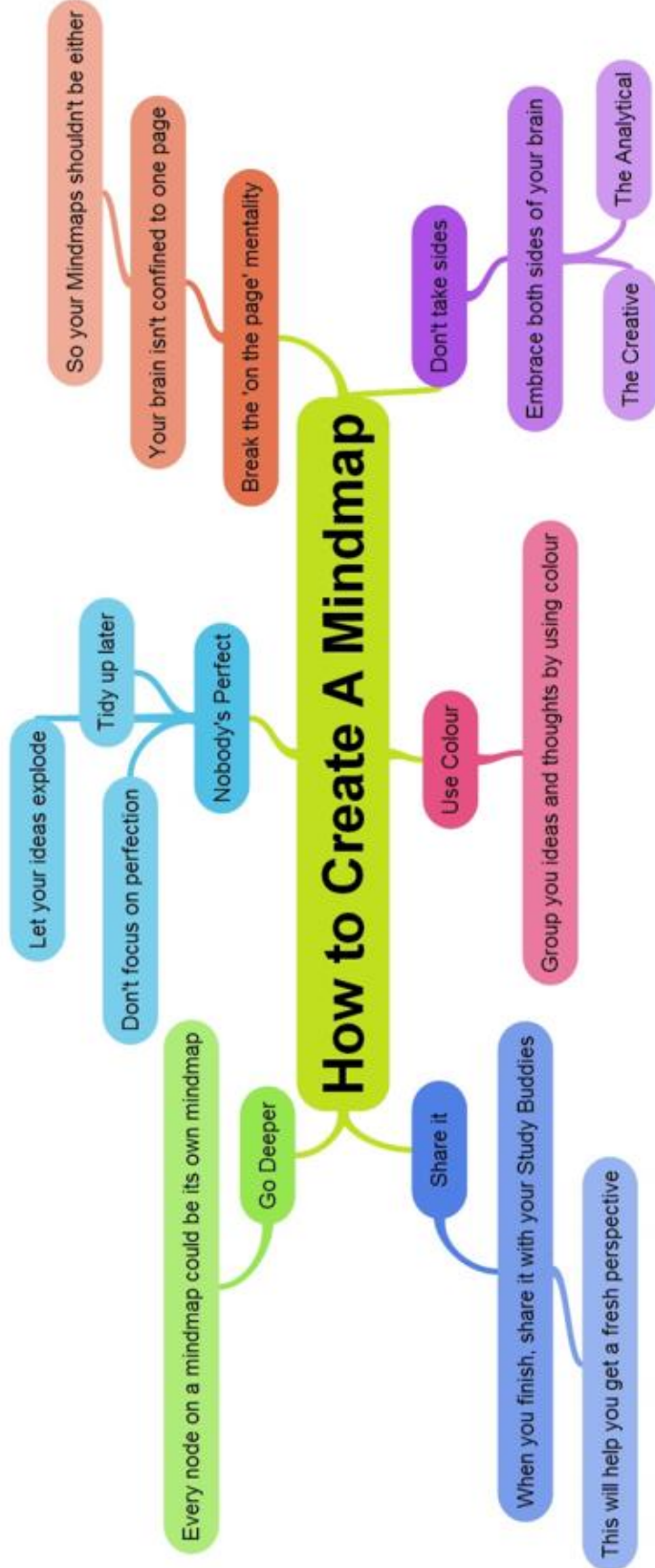
Typical behaviours:

- Seeks to make connections and integrate ideas
- Makes a whole from separate parts
- Relates new learning to relevant past and current personal experience
- Connects learning from different sources
- Engages with new information or ideas and relates to them

Strategies for development:

- Choose a field or topic you know quite a bit about and create a mind-map for it. Use your 'map' to connect up:
 - Why it matters to you – your feelings and connection with it
 - Facts and figures
 - History and development
 - Current state of play
 - People associated with the topic
- Use mind-mapping to start you off with any project or campaign in which you have to organise and present knowledge
- Take an everyday object – e.g. the first manufactured thing you used today – and think about everything that had to happen for that object to be there for you
- Play a game with a friend: each of you think of an object, animal, person or idea. Try connecting up the two things you have thought of in some way (example 'flowers' and 'winning the world cup': answer – petals showered over the open-top bus in the victory parade)
- For a new campaign or project, your team could create a 'mega mind-map' so everyone can add new connections whenever they see them
- Think about emulating the way teams in crime dramas use wall displays to build up a picture of all the evidence collected so far and how it connects up
- For every new piece of learning you come across, think about how it relates, or could relate, to something you remember experiencing or hearing about

- For every new project, complete the sentence, 'What matters to me about this is...' and write down three ways in which it will make a difference to your stakeholders.
- Use Library How-to Guides (e.g. assignment survival guide) and UTS:HELPS.
- U:PASS could be another valuable way of observing how others learn.



Creativity

This dimension is about using my imagination and intuition when I learn, being playful and 'dreaming' new ideas, having hunches, letting answers come to me, rather than just 'racking my brains' or looking things up. It's about going 'off the track' and exploring ideas and coming up with unexpected and often better solutions.

Those with a lot of Creativity understand that learning is often about surprise, wonder and inspiration, not simply about sticking to rules and routines, doing as you were told or following instructions.

Without creativity, learning is confined to what someone can achieve using logic and reasoning, or may be limited by doing what they have always done, or by instructions and procedures imposed on them.

Typical behaviours:

- Explores possibilities and enjoys novelty and uncertainty
- Uses intuition and creative imagination
- Plays with ideas and concepts
- Willing to let go of control and feels safe enough to take risks
- Sees 'mistakes' as opportunities for learning
- Allows the mind to 'float and dream' at times and 'sleeps on' questions or problems

Strategies for development:

- Practise thinking 'outside the box' rather than sticking to the way you have always thought about a problem or challenge.
- Visualise characters and situations in which the concepts, ideas and facts in your learning become real for you: such as by describing your customer's point of view or picturing your audience in advance
- Use visual representation: colour, pictures, diagrams, symbols, imagery, 'emoticons' to illustrate your points, not just text
- Make mind-maps with labels or draw 'trees' with 'meaning branches' to show how possibilities multiply when you think about alternative scenarios
- Use a different approach to present your work: e.g. a stream of consciousness, diary, cartoon, news article; try a storyboard with illustrations, to explain the topic to someone less experienced
- Think about the processes and procedures you tend to follow in your work and see if you can break away from them constructively by doing things differently
- Let your mind 'float free' when you are stuck or puzzled; see if your 'dreams' or imagination come up with a way forward, allowing yourself time to consider new and different options
- Trust your subconscious mind as much as you do your thinking ability: notice how you sometimes come up with an answer or see something thing more clearly by 'sleeping on it'.

- Getting a job could be an excellent way to build the ability to be creative with troubleshooting and problem solving.
- Choosing electives that use project based learning.



Curiosity

This is about the desire to investigate, find more out and ask questions, especially 'Why?' If I am a curious learner, I won't simply accept what I am told without wanting to know for myself whether and why it's true. I might challenge what friends, leaders, parents, teachers, colleagues say, rather than take it at face value. I want to know the reason for everything, as young children often do.

Learners with less Curiosity might be present and involved in learning activities, but relatively passive, expecting others to tell them or show them what to do and how to improve rather than working things out for themselves or finding things out for the group.

Typical behaviours:

- Enjoys the challenge of the unknown and confronting complexity
- Learns by working things out, solves problems, seeks out information and understanding
- Enjoys questioning, finding out and self-directed research
- Refuses to accept propositions at face value

Strategies for development:

- Think like a detective: not only interested in answers but clues, patterns and incongruities
- Look for opportunities to:
 - Ask questions at work, in tutorials, in lectures, of fellow learners first if it's easier, then your manager(s)/instructors
 - Say, respectfully, "I'm not sure I agree with that" and challenge people to explain and justify their opinions
 - Practise climbing the 'Why?' Ladder:
 - Think of a question – e.g. "Why do I work so hard?"
 - Think of an answer – e.g. "It's expected of me!"
 - Ask "Why is it expected of me?"
 - Think of an answer... and so on!
 - See how far you get. Write it down if you like.
- Keep a dictionary nearby and pounce on words you don't understand – so you do now! Use your existing contacts and resources to create a 'learning at work glossary'.
- Welcome the feeling of being challenged or perplexed and use it to drive your learning forward
- Play with 'What if...' scenarios - as all businesses have to do in 'future planning' – building the competency to 'find solutions'.
- Ask your manager/instructor to help you create an open climate – e.g. 'no criticism allowed!' – so that you are able to speculate, try out 'whacky' ideas on each other and ask 'What if...?' and 'Why?' questions with confidence.



Belonging

This dimension is about how much I feel part of a 'learning community', a group with a shared commitment to learn, improve and do better, whether at school, at work, at home or in my wider community. It's about the confidence I gain from knowing there are people around me whom I learn well with and to whom I can turn when I need guidance, support and encouragement in my learning journey.

People who are weaker in this dimension may feel left out, or out of place, 'not fitting' into their learning community: a 'square peg in a round hole'.

Typical behaviours:

- Fosters positive, respectful relationships with other learners, colleagues, fellow students
- Understands the value of teamwork and cultivates collective responsibility
- Is confident enough to develop and enjoy trusting relationships
- Seeks out and makes a positive commitment to communities of shared values and interests

Strategies for development:

- Make a list of people who can help you learn: at work, at home and in your outside interests. Next to each one, write down what they are good at: ways they can help; projects and skills they can help with. This is your 'Learning Team Sheet'.
- Imagine whose team sheet you might be on and what they'd say you are best at.
- Create a learning environment for yourself in your private area: clear space to set out your work; all you need within easy reach; no interruptions or distractions; an atmosphere of welcome and concentration that you look forward to being in, whether a break out area, meeting room or a space at home
- Build quiet time or 'thinking time' into your schedule
- Work with your colleagues and collaborators to create similar spaces, and times, when it feels 'OK to be me' and belong
- Pay as much attention to developing a collective identity as to developing an individual identity: make the idea of 'a learning community' real and tangible – one of the core goals of the group or team
- (as above) See all recognition and reward as belonging to the whole team
- University clubs , e.g. EGG (Electronic Gamers Guild) or the UTS Outdoor Adventure club, QUEERspace, or something that links with their own interests, might be another way to build a friendship support network of students at Uni.
- Volunteer at uni e.g. UTS Peer Network, or with an external affinity group

Collaboration

This dimension is about how I learn through my relationships with other people. It is about knowing who to turn to for help or advice and how to offer such things, too. It's about solving problems by talking them through with others, generating new ideas through listening carefully, making suggestions and responding positively to feedback. If I am strong in this dimension I can move easily between the group or team environment and learning on my own.

With less strength in this dimension people may either be over-dependent on other people, or more isolated in their learning, preferring to learn alone.

Typical behaviours:

- Has good social resources to learn through
- Knows how to work with others
- Benefits from pooled learning and shared expertise
- Enjoys collaboration but confident and capable of taking sole responsibility when required

Strategies for development:

- Think of those you learn with as part of your 'learning resource kit': use them to help you think through problems, identify learning opportunities, discuss your work and test your learning power together. Remember, you are helping them too.
- When you are working in pairs or small groups, remember to: ask questions; listen carefully; say things like, 'Well done!' or 'That's good!'; admit what you don't know and contribute what you do know, when it's relevant. You don't have to say a lot to be a good team player
- Keep a pad to write down questions to ask others and suggestions to offer them, when they are available
- When you accept responsibility for a task or project, don't leave the group before you have:
 - asked all the questions you need, to understand it;
 - found out roughly how long you are expected to spend on it;
 - checked you have all the resources – equipment, budget, clear brief, access to knowledge – needed to complete it
 - made arrangements for updating the group, getting help, advice or feedback and checking things out that you might have missed
- Try to find learning strategies which involve working together, such as quizzes and memory games, for revision; question and answer sessions, to test understanding; brainstorming, for generating new solutions
- Be on the lookout for opportunities to discuss and share ideas, seek out other opinions, observe different methods and compare and contrast approaches to problems
- See all recognition and reward as belonging to the whole team

- To develop an appreciation for other people's perspectives and how to work with and for them, try undertaking a program such as BUiLD (Beyond UTS International Leadership Development) or Global exchange
- Group learning options such as U:PASS and support services such as UTS:HELPS are a good way of meeting others, sharing experiences and observing how others learn.
- A great way to develop social confidence would be through programs such as Conversations@ UTS or the HELPSMates buddies through UTS:HELPS.
- Developing skills in confidence and public speaking could be done through a group such as the Toastmasters club.



Hope and Optimism / Resilience

This dimension is about being confident that I can change, learn and perform better, given time and opportunity. It is helped by having a positive story of learning and performance to reflect upon, that gives me a feeling of having 'come a long way' and of being able to 'go places' with more learning. Whatever has happened, though, and whatever obstacles I face, if I have a lot of Hope and Optimism I shall accept the challenge and believe I can succeed.

Learners with less of this are more likely to feel 'stuck' and give up easily. Believing they might fail, they can be less willing to try.

Typical behaviours:

- Sees learning as a positive experience
- Relishes new challenges
- Seeks out new learning opportunities
- Accepts responsibility for learning
- Believes in own capacity to change

Strategies for development:

- Think of yourself as a Learner – open and ready to accept any opportunity to learn, all your life.
- Think about how your body gets stronger and fitter with training and stimulus and start a regime for your mind and brain
- Look out some of your old development plans (PDPs) or projects and compare what you were doing a year or more ago with what you are capable of doing now
- Keep a learning journal: recording 'What have I learned?' with your hopes, plans, successes, failures and other milestones, monthly or quarterly
- Think of your progress as a 'learning journey' – where are you in the journey at the moment?
- Ask your tutor or line manager to help you to notice the new things you are learning to achieve
- Remember, there are no such things as 'mistakes': only lessons to learn! Every experience moves you forward, if you want it to
- Read biographies of people in relevant fields, who you are interested in, and think about how your own life might look when you have achieved your goals
- Review your CV regularly, asking your friends and colleagues to help you remember and record all your significant achievements
- Talk to people with more experience in your field. Ask them about the journey they have taken, how they have changed over time and what they have learned.
- To help with the issue of coping financially, small student loans via Special Needs and Financial Assistance, are a short-term aid. In the longer term, it could help to talk to UTS Careers Service about finding part-time work.

- It might help to develop independence and self-confidence by doing a summer Internship or a volunteer program such as Build or The Big Lift or even an overseas abroad program like Aims Overseas.



Openness to learning / Open-mindedness

This dimension is about **being open to learning, new ideas and challenge** and having the **'inner strength'** to move confidently from purpose to performance by embracing learning and change, rather than either giving up and withdrawing or 'toughing it out' and getting mad with the world. It's about knowing, deep down, that I can go on learning when things get tough. I know learning isn't always easy and that struggling, even failing sometimes, is a natural part of it – so I'm open and ready for new ideas and ready to change my mind and my heart as I learn. I need to be like this to build my learning power.

People less open to learning may be **fragile and dependent**, on the one hand, more likely to give up easily and accept that they are not getting anywhere; or they might be **'rigidly persistent'**, on the other hand, determined to stay as they are, do things their way, tending to blame things they can't control, less inclined to listen to others. Either way, they will be hindered from building their learning power.

Typical behaviours:

- Enjoys problem-based learning
- Good at accepting and managing negative emotions, fears and frustrations related to learning
- Willing to wrestle with difficult concepts and change the mindset when necessary for success
- Confident in pursuing goals but willing to adapt and change
- **Fragile and dependent** learners may go to pieces if faced with confusion or uncertainty. They are risk averse, with less ability to persevere and are likely to seek and prefer less challenging situations. They are dependent upon other people and external structures for their learning and sense of self-esteem.
- **Rigidly persistent** learners are 'closed' to their learning environment and likely to be unavailable to learning relationships. They are less likely to build trust and listen to others, feeling safer 'going their own way'.

Strategies for development:

- U:PASS would be a good forum for discussing learning and concepts, not going for the 'right' answer.

- When you are really struggling to understand something, remind yourself that uncomfortable feelings are an important part of learning: all effective learners have them!
- Just as your body needs exercise, so does your brain. Don't give up when it starts to hurt: that's when it's getting fitter!
- Instead of waiting till you've 'sorted' a problem before writing anything, try describing your uncertainties, doubts, confusions. Welcome them! They may turn out to be part of the answer.
- Fear makes the thinking brain shut down. Being afraid of failure can cause it to happen. Adopt a new motto for your learning, like: 'Give it a go!' 'Who dares, wins!' 'Feel the fear and do it anyway!' "That which yields is not always weak."
- Practise taking calculated risks for work; talk them through first with someone sharing responsibility for your success. Listen well and then take responsibility. As your risks work out, your confidence in your own judgment will be strengthened
- Set a 'risk-taking' objective in your PDP (Personal development plan)
- Talk through your Key Result Areas with your manager/instructor in advance, so you are clear about the criteria by which your work will be judged. Assess your own work objectively against these criteria before it is judged by anyone else, so you become gradually less dependent on external judgments
- Create your own 'private' assessment system, based on how well you have tried, risked, failed, adapted your strategies and tried again. Use it to reward yourself in small ways.
- You've done all you can; the task still seems impossible? Put it down and do something different. Return to it when you are fresh



Useful links

Some of these are links to resources and services at UTS. You are welcome to use any resource pages. For services for UTS students look for the corresponding service at your university.

CLARA website: <http://clara.learningemergence.com/>

Other key websites for referral:

Beyond Blue: <http://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

(The) Big Lift: <http://www.biglift.org/what-is-the-big-lift/>

BUILD: <http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/opportunities/build-program/build>

Careers Service: <http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/opportunities/career-development/careers-service>

Carer's provision: <http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/students-who-are-parents-or-carers/information-carers>

Counselling at UTS: <http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/health-and-wellbeing/counselling-service-and-self-help>

Debating: <https://www.facebook.com/UTSDebating>

Financial Assistance: <http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/financial-help/financial-assistance-service>

Global Exchange: <http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/opportunities/global-exchange/what-global-exchange>

Group work: <http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills/group-work>

Headspace: <http://www.headspace.org.au/>

HELPS: www.helps.uts.edu.au

MOOCs: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massive_open_online_course

Peer Network: <http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/opportunities/peer-network-program/peer-network>

Smiling Mind mindfulness meditation: <http://www.smilingmind.com.au>

SoUI in UTS Shopfront: <http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/opportunities/community-and-leadership-programs/uts-shopfront>

Study Skills: <http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills>

Toastmasters: <http://www.toastmasters.org.au/>

University clubs: (Social and sporting): <http://www.activateuts.com.au/>

U:PASS: www.ssu.uts.edu.au/peerlearning

Volunteering opportunities across campus: <http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/opportunities>