You Need to Calm Down – and Have Dessert

XC International Council Meeting
28th of October 2026

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Overview

- How to recognise signs that someone may be struggling
- How to listen to someone who is struggling
- Helpful vs. unhelpful responses
- How mental health affects participation & productivity in ELSA
- What can ELSA do?
- Group activity
- Conclusions

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HOW TO RECOGNISE SIGNS THAT SOMEONE MAY BE STRUGGLING

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How to recognise signs that someone may be struggling

- **Behavioural changes –** less communication, avoiding social interactions, losing interest in activities;
- **Emotional changes –** irritability, anxiety, sadness, unusual reactions;
- **Changes in performance –** missing deadlines, difficulty concentrating, struggling with usual tasks;

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HOW TO LISTEN.

HELPFUL VS. UNHELPFUL RESPONSES

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How to listen. Helpful vs. unhelpful responses

Unhelpful responses:

- **Minimising:** *"It's not that serious."*
- **Comparing experiences:** *"Other people have it worse."*
- **Giving unsolicited advice:** *"You just need to manage your time better."*
  "You should see a professional."
- **Making assumptions:** *"You're probably just stressed."*

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How to listen. Helpful vs. unhelpful responses

Listen actively. Give them your attention without interrupting.

Helpful responses:

- **Validate their feelings:** *"That sounds really difficult."*
- **Ask open questions:** *"How have you been feeling lately?"*
- **Offer support without pressure:** *"Is there anything I can do to help?"*
- **Respect their privacy & avoid sharing personal information without a justified reason.**

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HOW DOES MENTAL HEALTH AFFECT PARTICIPATION & PRODUCTIVITY IN ELSA?

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WHAT CAN ELSA DO?

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What can ELSA do?

- Prevent excessive workloads
- Encourage open communication
- Promote a supportive leadership culture
- Improve access to support
- Reduce stigma

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GROUP WORK

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Group Work

Alex is a 21-year-old law student and an active ELSA officer. Alex is ambitious, enjoys being involved in ELSA and wants to build a successful legal career.

However, this week is particularly overwhelming.

Alex has an important university presentation worth **30% of the final grade**, several academic deadlines, an internship opportunity, personal commitments and an upcoming ELSA event.

Alex is the **Head of the Organising Committee (OC)** for an ELSA event taking place on Saturday. The event is expecting approximately 80 participants, and several important organisational tasks remain unfinished.

Alex has been saying yes to almost everything because they don't want to disappoint anyone.

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Group Work

You are Alex's **support team.** Organise the upcoming week so that Alex can fulfil the most important responsibilities without completely sacrificing their health and personal life.

Create a weekly plan and classify each task using one of these four decisions:

1. **DO** (Alex will personally complete the task.)
2. **DELEGATE** (Another person will take responsibility.)
3. **RESCHEDULE** (Negotiate another time or deadline.)
4. **DROP** (Accept that the task or opportunity will not happen.)

Be realistic. You can't place two tasks at the same time & **you can't assume that every task will be completed**.

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Group Work – reflection

What are you prioritising, and **why**?

What are the **consequences** of such a schedule?

If Alex were your friend, how would you help?

How could Alex avoid getting into this situation?

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CONCLUSIONS

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Thank you!

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