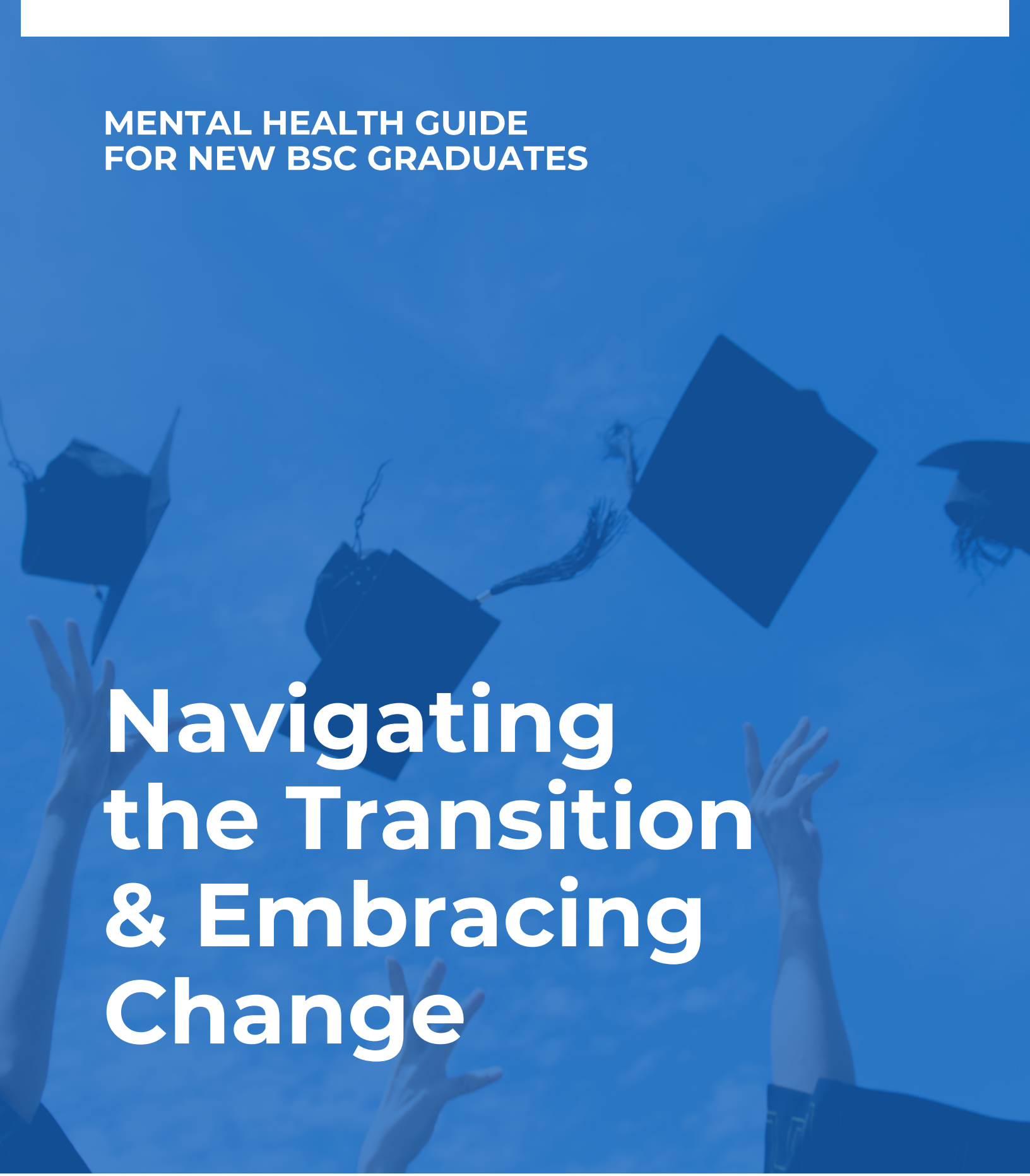
MENTAL HEALTH GUIDE
FOR NEW BSC GRADUATES



Navigating the Transition & Embracing Change

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Faculty of Science

Faculty of Science
Embedded Counselling

Congratulations!

Congratulations on reaching a major milestone in your academic journey! Earning your Bachelor of Science degree is no small feat - it reflects years of hard work, discovery, resilience, and growth. As exciting as this achievement is, it's also normal to feel a mix of emotions as you look ahead to what's next. Whether you're feeling uncertain about your career path, adjusting to a new professional identity, or navigating life beyond the classroom, these feelings are completely natural. This guide has been created specifically for you, UBC Faculty of Science graduates, to help you manage transition anxiety, embrace your evolving identity, and confidently step into this next exciting chapter of your life.

1. Acknowledging the Transition

Graduation marks the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. While this achievement is exciting, it can also bring feelings of uncertainty, self-doubt, and anxiety. You may be wondering what comes next - whether it's finding a job, relocating, or redefining your professional identity.



Remember, this is a time for growth, not perfection. You don’t need to have everything figured out right away. The skills you’ve developed - critical thinking, problem-solving, and resilience - will help guide you through this transition. Take it one step at a time, and trust that your next chapter will unfold in its own time.

🔎 Exercise: Reflection on Graduation

Set aside 10-15 minutes in a quiet space. You can choose to write down your thoughts, or if writing isn't your preference, simply reflect silently in your mind.

Reflect on the following prompts:

- How are you feeling about your graduation?
- What emotions are you experiencing (e.g., excitement, fear, uncertainty)?

During times of transition, it's common to experience feelings like anxiety and shifts in identity. If you're feeling this way, please know that these emotions are completely normal and valid. Transitions can be challenging, but with the right tools, they can also be opportunities for growth and self-discovery. As you move through this guide, you'll find suggestions that may help you manage these feelings more effectively.

However, if other emotions are coming up, that's perfectly okay too. It's important to acknowledge how you feel, and if any emotion feels overwhelming, please reach out for support. You might find relief through physical activities (like exercise or a walk), cognitive activities (such as journaling), or social connections (like chatting with a trusted friend). And if you ever feel like you need additional help, be sure to check out the "Post-Graduation Resources" section of this guide, where you can find mental health support options.

Remember, it's okay to ask for help, and taking small steps toward self-care can make a big difference.

2. Understanding Transition Anxiety

What is Transition Anxiety?

Transition anxiety, sometimes called change anxiety, refers to the feelings of unease, nervousness, or apprehension that arise when facing major life changes, such as graduation. It's a natural reaction to stepping into the unknown.

Common Symptoms (“PACE”)

To help identify transition anxiety, here’s a helpful acronym, "**PACE**", which stands for Physical, Actions, Cognitive, and Emotional symptoms:

Physical

- Headaches, muscle tension, or stomach discomfort
- Nausea, sweating, shortness of breath, or a racing heart
- Trouble relaxing, even when you're trying to unwind

Actions

- Pacing, fidgeting, or feeling restless
- Trouble sleeping or feeling fatigued
- Withdrawing from friends, family, or social activities

Cognitive

- Difficulty concentrating or focusing
- Persistent worry about the future or what’s next
- Overthinking and second-guessing decisions

Emotional

- Feeling anxious, nervous, or stressed
- Sadness, hopelessness, or irritability
- Loss of interest or enjoyment in activities you once loved

Why It Happens

Graduating often means leaving behind the structure and support of university life for a more unpredictable future. For many science graduates, this shift can trigger feelings of fear or anxiety as you face new opportunities, responsibilities, and challenges. Common sources of transition anxiety include uncertainty about jobs, fear of failure, concerns about meeting expectations, changes in identity, financial stress, and the loss of familiar social support. Remember, this anxiety is a sign of growth, signaling that you're embarking on something new and unfamiliar.

🔎 Exercise: Check in with Yourself and Reflect on Your PACE

1. Take a moment to pause and check in with yourself. Find a quiet, comfortable space, close your eyes, and take a few slow, deep breaths.
2. As you breathe, gently reflect on your PACE. Are you noticing any physical, behavioral, cognitive, or emotional signs of anxiety? (You can refer to the list above for guidance.)
3. Write down the thoughts and feelings that arise during this reflection. It's important to acknowledge them without judgment, allowing yourself to be present with whatever comes up. This step is key to addressing your feelings with care and compassion.

3. Managing Transition Anxiety

Here are some practical tips to help you manage transition anxiety and stay grounded as you move forward:

Mindfulness & Grounding Exercises

Mindfulness and grounding exercises can help calm your mind and reduce stress. Apps like Headspace, Calm, and Insight Timer offer guided meditation, breathing exercises, and relaxation techniques to help you stay present and focused.

🔎 Exercise: 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

Ground yourself with the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding exercise by following this video by Calm. This simple yet effective technique can help calm anxiety and bring you back to the present moment. Feel free to return to this video whenever you need to.

Reframe Success and Build Resilience

It’s okay not to have all the answers right now. Success is a journey, not a destination. Cultivate a growth mindset by learning from setbacks, embracing uncertainty, and growing through challenges.

🔎 Exercise: Reflect on Past Obstacles

Take a moment to reflect on challenges or obstacles you've faced in the past.

1. Think about a few significant challenges you've overcome - whether academic, personal, or social.
2. For each obstacle, jot down what you learned from overcoming it. Consider the skills you developed, such as resilience, problem-solving, or adaptability.
3. Reflect on how these skills can help you navigate the transition after graduation. How can they support you in overcoming current or future challenges as you move forward?

Treat Yourself with Kindness

Be kind to yourself during this time of change. Everyone faces challenges, and it’s important to acknowledge imperfections without harsh self-judgment.

🔎 Exercise: Practice Self-Compassion

Take a moment to check in with yourself.

1. Imagine your best friend feeling anxious about graduation and the future. What advice or reassurance would you offer them?
2. Now, apply that same kindness to yourself. How would it feel to treat yourself with the same compassion?
3. Write down your advice or affirmations for both your friend and yourself. Revisit them whenever you feel anxious or self-critical.

Focus on What You Can Control

Instead of stressing over the unknown, focus on the small actions you can take. Break big tasks- like job hunting or relocation - into manageable steps. Celebrate each achievement, no matter how small.

🔎 Exercise: External vs Internal Anxiety

Take a moment to reflect on the sources of your anxiety and stress.

1. Identify External Sources: Write down any external factors contributing to your anxiety, such as concerns about the job market, financial pressures, or societal expectations. These are factors outside of your immediate control.
2. Identify Internal Sources: Next, write down any internal sources of anxiety, such as perfectionism, self-doubt, or fears of failure. These are often within your mind and thoughts, and while they may be influenced by external factors, they are things you can address internally.
3. Focus on What You Can Control: Review both lists and reflect on which aspects are within your control, and which are not.

Go further:

- For internal sources, write down small, actionable steps you can take to manage them (e.g., practicing self-compassion, setting realistic expectations, or using positive affirmations).
- For external sources, acknowledge them and think about how you can focus on what's within your control. This might include updating your resume, networking, or managing your finances in small, manageable ways.

Create a Routine and Prioritize Self-Care

Post-graduation life can feel less structured, so creating a daily routine can help you regain stability. Schedule time for exercise, meals, social activities, and job searches to stay balanced. Plan a self-care strategy that includes physical, emotional, and social wellbeing. Check out the Indoor Nourishing Activities and Outdoor Nourishing Activities checklists from the Wellness Society for ideas.

4. Addressing Identity Shifts After Graduation

Graduation often involves a shift in how you see yourself and your role in the world. As you move from being a student to the next phase, your identity may feel like it's in flux. Here are some ways to embrace this change:

Understand Your Changing Identity

It’s normal to feel like you're losing a part of yourself as you transition away from being a student. However, this is also a time to explore new facets of who you are. You might go from being a student to a professional, a traveler, a mentor, or something entirely new. Embrace these changes as opportunities for growth and self-discovery.



🔎 Exercise: Reflect on Your Journey

Take a moment to reflect on your time at the Faculty of Science.

- What strengths have you developed during your studies (e.g., problem-solving, critical thinking, teamwork)?
- What values have shaped you as a student and as a person (e.g., curiosity, perseverance, creativity)?

Journaling or discussing these questions with a trusted friend, family member or mentor can help you gain clarity and appreciate your growth. Write down your thoughts and take a moment to celebrate how far you’ve come.

🔎 Exercise: Identity Mapping Exercise

Create a visual map of your identity as a student and how you envision it after graduation.

1. Start by identifying different aspects of your identity that are important to you (e.g., academic achievements, personal values, friendships).
2. Reflect on which parts of your identity you want to keep, which ones you want to evolve, and which you might want to leave behind.

This exercise can help you set new, exciting goals – whether personal, career-focused, or creative – that align with the person you are becoming. Begin with small steps and build from there.

5. Build Your Support System

Navigating life transitions is easier when you have a support network. Here are some ways to stay connected and ensure you have the support you need:

Stay Connected with Friends

Graduation doesn't mean leaving behind your friends. Stay in touch with your classmates, professors, and the people who have been part of your journey. Maintaining meaningful relationships during this time of change can provide comfort, encouragement, and valuable perspectives as you move forward.

Seek Professional Support

Therapy or counselling can be an invaluable resource for managing transition anxiety and processing the emotions that come with major life changes. Career advisors can also offer guidance on job searching, career paths, and next steps. Whether you turn to an alumnus, a professor, or a mentor in your field, having someone to provide advice and share experiences can make the transition smoother. If you ever feel overwhelmed, don't hesitate to seek help - reaching out is a sign of strength, not weakness.

6. A Note of Encouragement

Transition anxiety is completely normal, and it’s okay not to have everything figured out right away. There’s no single “right” way to navigate this change, but with time, patience, and self-compassion, you’ll find your path forward.

Remember, it’s perfectly okay to ask for help, take things at your own pace, and allow yourself the space to grow.

Good luck as you embark on this exciting new chapter. You've got this!



"Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can."
- Arthur Ashe

Post-Graduation Resources

Counselling Resources

UBC Counselling Services

Graduating UBC students who are currently working with a counsellor at UBC Counselling Services can continue to receive brief counselling support for up to three months after the completion of their last course. Additionally, any graduating student can access wellness advising sessions for up to three months after their final course, where they can explore available wellbeing resources and support options tailored to their needs and preferences.

Faculty of Science Embedded Counselling Program

Graduating UBC students who are currently working with the Science Embedded Counsellor can continue to receive brief counselling support for up to three months after the completion of their last course.

AMS/GSS Health & Dental Plan

If you're enrolled in the AMS/GSS Health & Dental Plan, you're eligible for up to 100% coverage for psychotherapy services from a licensed psychologist, registered clinical counsellor, or a therapist with a Master's degree in Social Work, until the end of the policy year (typically August 31 for students who started in September). Not sure where to start? Attend a Wellness Advising session at UBC Counselling Services or visit this webpage.

Reduced-Cost Counselling Options

This is a list of lower cost counselling options in Vancouver and surrounding areas, regularly updated by a local counsellor, Megan. Please note that UBC does not endorse specific professionals in the community.

Private Sliding Scale Counselling Options

This is a list of slide scale counselling options in Vancouver and surrounding areas, regularly updated by a local counsellor, Megan. Please note that UBC does not endorse specific professionals in the community.

Extended Health Plan and Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Options

If you are employed by a company that offers an Extended Health Plan or an EAP, you may be eligible for additional support.

Extended Health Plans often cover counselling services and mental health support, which can help with the cost of individual therapy or other wellbeing services. In addition, many employers provide an EAP, offering free and confidential counselling services to employees and their families.

Be sure to check with your employer or HR department for details on coverage, eligibility, and how to access these services.

Mental Health Resources

MindHealth BC

Take an online assessment and find a variety of resources to support your mental health.

Here to Help BC

Explore resources related to mental health and substance use, including informative sheets and workbooks.

Career Resources

UBC Career Centre

Recent graduates are eligible for one-on-one appointments at the UBC Career Centre for up to 12 months following their program completion date.

Alumni UBC

As a UBC alumnus, you can take advantage of a variety of career development resources, including online webinars, discussions, networking opportunities, coaching, and advising.

