University of Gdańsk

ACADEMIC PSYCHOLOGICAL CENTRE
A WELLBEING GUIDE



Finding Your Own Rhythm in Gdańsk

A gentle wellbeing guide for an international student

Moving abroad to study can be exciting and difficult at the same time. You are adjusting to a new university, a different culture, a busy schedule, and a colder, darker climate. The people you love may be very far away.

It makes sense if you sometimes feel lonely, exhausted, or unmotivated. You can appreciate the opportunity to study in Poland and still miss home deeply. **Both feelings can exist together.**

Invitations, not obligations

This is not another to-do list. Pick anything that feels comforting or interesting. You are allowed to do very little, change your mind, or skip an idea entirely.

1 Creativity without pressure

No skills required. Nobody is grading.

The five-minute sketchbook

Carry a small notebook. Draw your mug, your shoes, a view from the tram, or something that reminds you of home. Draw for two minutes if five feels like too much.

Even one line counts.

A deliberately imperfect drawing

Draw with your non-dominant hand, without looking at the page, or in 30 seconds. The point is not to make something good; it is to take away the pressure to perform.

A visual mood diary

Instead of writing about your day, make one tiny drawing, colour patch, or symbol that captures how you feel. There is no need to explain it to anyone.

2 Discovering Gdańsk through photography

Noticing is enough.

Find one interesting thing

Look for a reflection, an unusual doorway, warm light from a window, the sea, or a detail you would normally pass by. You do not have to share the photograph or even take one: noticing it is enough.

A small visual treasure hunt

Choose one theme and find just one example as you walk to class. No special trip is required.

- Colours
- Textures
- Light
- Familiar things
- Unexpected beauty

Two places, one feeling

Draw or photograph a place in Gdańsk that reminds you of somewhere back home. Put the two places side by side in your sketchbook.

There is room for both places in your life.

3 Staying connected to home

Both places can hold you.

A little piece of home

Choose something familiar: music, food, a scent, a photograph, or an everyday ritual. Try bringing a small part of it into your room or weekly routine.

Connection without constant availability

Consider a small, realistic ritual with someone important: a weekly call, a shared song, or one photograph from your week. Connection should feel supportive, not like another deadline.

Letters you do not have to send

Write on paper, starting with one of these:

Today, I wish I could tell you about...

Something I miss about home is...

You may keep the letter private, send it later, or turn it into a postcard.

4 Cold, dark days

Making difficult days a little gentler.

A little daylight

The change in daylight and weather may affect your energy. When possible, get a little outdoor daylight, even during a short break between classes. A few minutes can be a manageable starting point.

A simple comfort ritual

Choose what actually helps you rest:

- A warm drink
- A favourite lamp
- Comfortable clothes
- A familiar meal
- Music while you draw

You do not need to turn winter into a productivity project. Sometimes the goal is simply to make a difficult day gentler.

5 A kinder relationship with your phone

Somewhere else for your attention to go.

Your phone can connect you to home, so avoiding it completely may not be helpful. Instead, try creating a few moments when your attention has somewhere else to go.

An analogue comfort kit

Keep a pencil, small notebook, postcard, printed photo, book, or puzzle within reach. When you notice yourself scrolling without enjoying it, you can choose one of these instead.

Five minutes offline

Try keeping your phone in your bag while you drink tea or sketch. Start small and be curious about how it feels. You do not need to force yourself to continue.

just five minutes, with tea

6 When getting started feels difficult

Tiny steps count. You can stop after the first one.

~~Draw for an hour~~	→ Open the sketchbook
~~Take a long walk~~	→ Put on your shoes
~~Explore the city~~	→ Notice one interesting detail

Match activities to your energy

Low energy

- Listen to a familiar song
- Make tea
- Draw one line
- Look at printed photos

Medium energy

- Take a short walk
- Make a small sketch
- Write a postcard
- Cook something familiar

Higher energy

- Try a photography walk
- Visit a new place
- Join a creative workshop
- Meet a friend

Rest is not a failure of motivation. If you are already overloaded, less may genuinely be more.

7 Finding connection in a new city

Belonging can start small.

You do not have to make close friends immediately. Try becoming familiar with one place:

- A café
- A library
- A uni space
- A park

Recognising a place can be the beginning of belonging.

If you feel curious, look for an activity that makes conversation easier:

- Sketching
- Photography
- Language exchange
- Student club

Attending once is enough; you do not have to commit.

8 A gentle experiment for this week

One small thing. No score to keep.

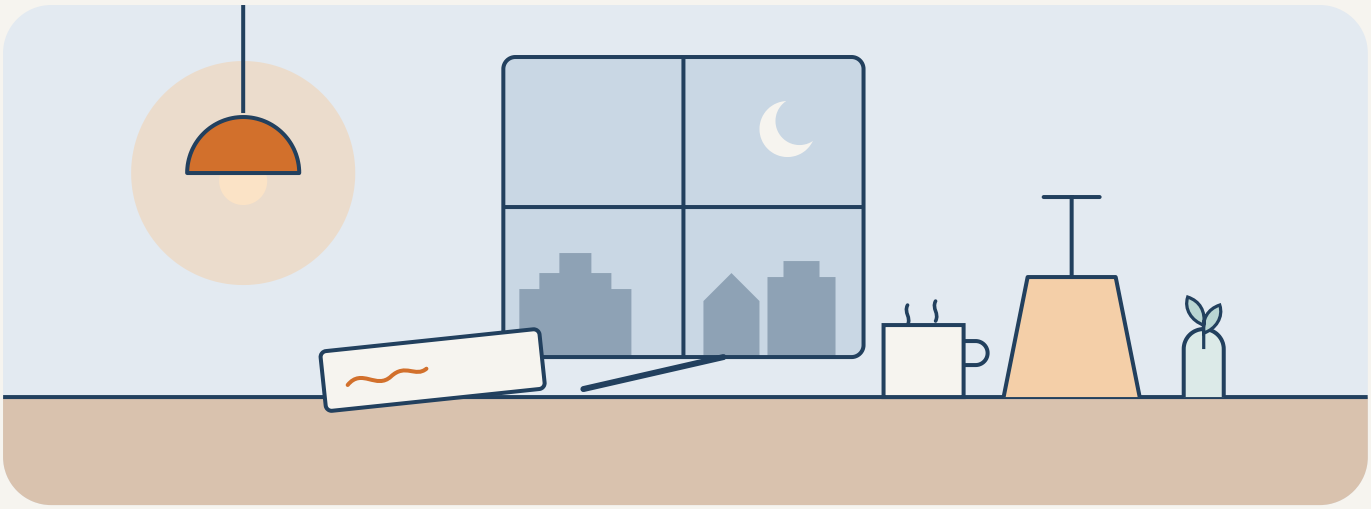
Choose one thing from this guide. Make it small enough to feel possible.

My small thing this week

At the end of the week, you might ask yourself:

- ◯ **What felt comforting, even a little?**
- ◯ **What took more energy than I expected?**
- ◯ **Is there anything I would like to do again?**

The aim is to discover what helps you feel a little more like yourself.



A final reminder

You can miss home and still build a meaningful life here.

You can be tired and still be moving forward.

You do not need to be constantly productive, sociable, or positive.

You deserve support and rest just as you are.

You do not have to work through it alone

If loneliness, exhaustion, or low mood becomes persistent or difficult to manage, you can talk with the **Academic Psychological Centre** or another trusted healthcare professional.

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