

Wellbeing – 1st October 2021

KAREN FOLEY: Welcome to Student Hub Live for our Friday Night Social. My name's Karen Foley. I'm hoping many of you know me, but there might be some new people here today. So let me explain broadly the madness that will follow tonight. So tonight is our social. It's the end of our Freshers' Week.

We do have some specific events next week. And in fact, we've got a whole programme of activities to support you and your studies throughout the academic year. But tonight is a time for celebration, for food, for dance and for quizzes because we think that that's how to have the best Friday evening ever as OU students.

Now, for those of you who may be new to this sort of setup, you'll see that there's a Chat option. You can chat. And I'm going to introduce HJ, who's manning the Chat Desk, in addition to some wonderful colleagues there who are also helping him. So do make the most of this opportunity to answer - sorry, to ask any questions that you'd like the answers to, but also to talk to other people.

Now, sometimes we'll be doing other stuff. So you might not want to chat and that's absolutely fine too. And in fact, you can change the interface so that you can maximise or minimise the Chat as best suits you. There's also a Pin button.

So if the Chat's moving quite quickly, then you can pin that so that you can go and see any things. And we'd love to know where you are. So we've got a map there. You can just open that, click on where you think you are on the country, and then close the map. And then you'll also see where everyone else is too.

We'd also like to know what you're studying. Now, with these Word Clouds that have three things in them, you need to put three things in the boxes or the results don't submit. So if you could only think of one or two things or, in fact, you know the module that you're studying, just pop that in and put a full stop or a cross so that your results will contribute to the lovely Word Cloud that will follow.

We've got heaps of multi-choice questions, and tonight's first focus is going to be on food. So we'd like to know what sorts of things you'd like to eat. And we'll bring those up in just a moment as well. But for now, if you let us know what you're studying, whether you're new to the OU or not, then that would be super.

Now, I know that while many of you are new, we also have lots of continuing students here tonight. And we really thank that because this is a really important part of being a community. It's not just about the students on your module, but it's about the academics and the other students who may be ahead or behind you. And we really try to encourage that sort of contact between people, which is why we have these events. So do make the most of that as we go through tonight's show.

So Andrew says it's, it's the last Freshers' Week within the OU. So it's very bittersweet, which, which is really sad. But it's probably likely that you'll just go on and do a master's or something, Andrew, as happens to all the best of us. So you never know. It may not be, but you're very welcome to our events in the future as well. So HJ, let me come to you first and see how everyone at home's doing. What's going on?

HJ: So we're doing really well in the Chat. We're getting set up for tonight's social, which is really exciting. And we've got people hailing from everywhere. Andrea's hailing from the Lake District. Catherine's from Dumfries. Linda's from Stratford. Powell's from Luxembourg. And Georgina from Orkney.

So we've got watchers from all over and so glad that you could join us today. And it's not just about joining. If you want to sit back and relax, you can. If you want to join in, that's what the Live's Chat for because everything and anything goes in the Live Chat, whether we're talking about how we're setting ourselves up for tonight or if you want to put any of your thoughts, comments or questions to one of our fantastic guests.

And my word, I'm jealous of what everyone's setting up with. Laura's got Jaffa cakes and gin. Zoe's got coffee and Cherry Coke, which seems a bit of an odd mix. I hope it's not together. Bethany has got a sours ready.

Laura's in it with the red wine, and Laura's all stocked up with a whole gin cupboard and eight boxes of Jaffa cakes. So I don't think she'll run out before tonight or hopefully not.

KAREN FOLEY: No. No. Well, there's a lot of mixes going on there. I hope, literally, as you say, not HJ. But we're going to find out a lot more about these things.

But with that in mind, I think we should have a little competition. So, to win some of our awesome Student Hub Live merchandise, like these gorgeous books, and we've got pens, and we've got lots of lovely little Post-It notes here. So to get a nice pack of our stationery, I think we'll let Simon judge who has the best and worst food concoction that they've ever eaten and survived.

So for example, if you've had a whole bottle of Bailey's but not quite, you know, felt so good afterwards, that probably wouldn't count. But other things that you've got, good or bad, do write those in the Chat. HJ will have, have a few for Simon to choose from towards the end. And then, you could get one of our lovely stationery packs in the post for you.

So with that in mind, I think let's introduce you to Simon, who is a lecturer in Sport, Exercise and Coaching from the Sport and Fitness Team. Simon, thank you so much for coming along today. How are you?

SIMON PENN: Hi, Karen. I'm good. No, it's nice to be part of the event and to meet all our new students.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Excellent. Now, Simon, we like talking about food here at Student Hub Live, and as you can see, our audience have some very, very diverse tastes. So, I was hoping that for a bit of fun, but with a bit of educational background, we could think about some of these common things that we can sometimes struggle with, like, is it better to have this or that?

And so at home, you're going to see some multi-choice questions coming up on your screen. And we'd like to know, for example, if you would prefer, for example, nuts and chocolate or blueberries. And we're going to ask Simon his opinion, and he's going to tell us a bit of stuff about this as we work through.

So Simon, our first question. Now, I've got some lovely pistachio nuts here, which, which I like eating a lot of. I shell them, and I kind of think that actually in that process it means that they're slightly less

calories per minute type thing going on. So, so - and nuts is good as, as some of your choices. What are your choices in our first category?

SIMON PENN: So when we're comparing nuts, I've got everyone's favourite, chocolate. And then I've also got some blueberries. Can we see this OK?

KAREN FOLEY: Lovely. Yep, perfect. So, which is the better choice then if we're going to have a little snack on something?

SIMON PENN: Well, all of them are good, but they all come with kind of limitations really. So nuts wins by far because nuts have a combination of lots of different nutrients that are all going to boost our concentration, our memory, our brainpower. So things like vitamin E or zinc. Zinc's very good for our memory. So nuts ticks lots of the boxes if we're looking at, OK what's going to be best to keep us alert, keep us concentrating whilst we're studying.

So the blueberries comes very close to nuts, I would say. So that has two big ingredients. So we have antioxidants, and we also have flavonoids. And these two nutrients both increase the delivery of blood to our brain. So if we're increasing the blood to our brain, we're increasing all the good stuff through to our brain. And by increasing that, then our brain function - so again, whether it's alertness, whether it's concentration, all of that, should be boosted.

And then we come on to the chocolate. So, the good thing about the chocolate is that it has cocoa in it. And the cocoa has the flavonoids in it. So again, it has that concentration-boosting nutrient. And the more cocoa you have in your chocolate, the better. So this is where we then kind of look at milk chocolate versus dark chocolate.

Unfortunately, the darker chocolate is going to be better for boosting your brain performance. The milk chocolate, maybe not so good. And there's other elements, obviously. The milk chocolate starts to have more sugar, more carbohydrates, which we're going to kind of start to talk about with some of our other kind of foods that we're going to talk about.

So all of them are OK. And the good thing about chocolate as well, chocolate tends to make us feel better. So to kind of release things in our body that help us to feel better. So chocolate's good, but it's which chocolate we choose. So yeah. So all of them have elements of brain-boosting power.

KAREN FOLEY: So they're all good, which I think we're pleased about. At home, people say, thirty-seven per cent of everyone at home says chocolate's the best. I don't know whether that's because at our workshops we tend to talk quite a lot about chocolate and less so much about nuts and blueberries.

But the thing with these nuts, Simon, is I find they're so high in fat that sometimes I think, oh, I'm not really sure. And that's why I try to minimise them. But I think we're going to come on to the fat a bit later.

HJ, I hear someone's having a fry up.

HJ: It's being fried here. I was quite hungry before I started this, but I'm actually not so sure now with some of these weird combinations. We need to know what - you need to put me back on my hunger by telling me what your good combinations are, some good recommendations, because some of these are out of, out of this world really.

We've got - some of the ones we've got so far is Marmite and ice cream, chips and custard, marshmallows and roast potatoes. They are together. And I thought Tessa was onto one about a good combination, cheese and tomato sandwich, but that was just me reading it. Cheese and tomato sauce sandwich, which, ooh, I don't know. Is that on the edge? Could that work? I suppose we'll find out, but let me know some more good combinations. Get me back on track.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Guys, the thing to remember is the other day, HJ only ate toast. And he actually really needs some quite good suggestions. So please don't put any terrible ideas into his head because he has been known to eat bread with sweet chilli sauce as well. So -

[LAUGHS]

HJ: Well, I've been waiting all day. I, I didn't know what the outcome was going to be about blueberries versus chocolate. So I've saved some. And in the meantime, all I've had today is just white toast because I've been scared to have anything apart from white foods because not knowing what's best or not. But maybe that wasn't such a good idea, thinking about it.

KAREN FOLEY: I don't know. Simon, what do you reckon? I mean, I, I've gone for some lovely brown, brown bread here, which is absolutely delicious. And I'm having this actually right now, with a little bit of olive oil and balsamic vinegar. So is this brown bread better than, than white bread?

SIMON PENN: Yeah. So I've got the opposite. I'm following, kind of, the toast. I just haven't put it in the toaster machine yet. So the, the brain needs energy for it to be able to work. So the good part is that these two types of breads are going to provide carbohydrate, which is the energy. The carbohydrate gets broken down into the sugars. And that's how the brain gets the energy. So we need that energy.

The next thing is, OK, how much energy do we need? And do we need it all straight away? So the white bread is what we call refined carbs, which means it doesn't necessarily have anything to it, whereas if you look at more whole-grain-type breads or whole-grain pasta, then because they have fibre in, it slows the release of carbs.

And it's kind of similar to, if you - we go back to the chocolate, and the chocolate is what we call a refined carbohydrate, which means it has a lot of sugar, then when you eat it, for the next thirty minutes, brilliant, you've got lots of energy. And then all of a sudden, you get a big drop.

So with the white bread and the more refined carbohydrates, the kind of typical cereals and things like that, we get lots of ups and downs with our blood sugars. And if we go too high, then our body has to control that. So it's no longer thinking about what it should be doing with the brain.

So ideally, what we do is we go to the whole grains, and the whole grains, because it has some fibre, then it slows the release of those carbs, which means we have more energy. Well, the energy over a longer period of time, and we have slow releasing. And we get away from these ups and downs of too much glucose in our body.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant, OK, well that's good. We've all got that, I think. Seventy-six per cent of everyone at home thinks that wholemeal bread is better. So I think we're all on track with that. But tell us this, because sixty-four per cent of people at home think that our broccoli is better than beetroot. Now, I think this is a challenging one. So tell us more, Simon.

SIMON PENN: So, again, both of them are very good. So if we look at green vegetables, like the broccoli, then that's going to come with lots of vitamin K. And vitamin K is great for boosting our brain performance, particularly memory. So any of the green or leafy vegetables like kale or broccoli are very good.

Now, similarly, beetroot is also very good. So the idea with beetroot is, and because it's - obviously there's lots of different options with beetroot, it's all about what's called nitrate within there. And a lot of athletes now are taking beetroot or beetroot juice before they train, particularly aerobic athletes, because the nitrate then produces more oxygen within the body.

So we've got a combination of increasing the blood flow and increasing the oxygen to our brain, and particularly towards the front of the brain, which we're talking more about, kind of, this reaction time and good for students, organisation, self-control, self-monitoring.

So, they're both, both very good. I don't know if I could pick one over the other. But yeah, definitely combining the two would be great.

KAREN FOLEY: But probably not in the tomato and cheese sauce sandwich.

SIMON PENN: Yeah. I'm not sure about the cheese sauce sandwich or the - with the tomato sauce.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. No. I was drinking beetroot juice for a while, actually. And yeah, it, it had some other side effects as well, which we won't go into now. But let's talk about protein, another thing commonly used by athletes. So, we've asked people at home what they think.

And fifty-seven per cent think that, of our group, between eggs, fish and bacon that fish is the best option here. So, so tell us which is worse. I've got some lovely eggs here. I eat these most mornings, actually poached eggs on toast. I think that's lovely on some wholemeal bread. Super quick and easy.

SIMON PENN: I've got some mackerel.

KAREN FOLEY: And I'll have that for most meals, if I can. Oh, nice.

SIMON PENN: I've got some nice streaky bacon.

KAREN FOLEY: And some bacon. Lots of fat on that bacon there, isn't there?

SIMON PENN: So, eggs, eggs have everything, everything we need. So they've got vitamins in there. They've got nutrients in there. So two key nutrients within there called selenium and also choline. And both of those are brain boosting. So it's the full egg. So we can't start splitting the eggs. So eggs are very good.

And the choline, that's involved in kind of boosting the performance. That's also in the bacon. So bacon, strangely, has some brain-boosting performance powers. But like we talked about earlier, we've then got to look at the fats.

So within nuts, we have good fats that are going to help. And within bacon, we've got too much kind of saturated fat. So too much of the unhealthy fat, which isn't necessarily going to help our health, not necessarily our brainpower.

The interesting one, like most of them have said, fish, particularly oily fish, is very good because oily fish, we've got omega 3. And so omega 3, there's about eight per cent of the brain is made up of these long-chain omega 3 fatty acids.

So by eating this oily fish, we're almost kind of helping to replenish some of the fats that are within our brain, to kind of help our brain health. So fish, yeah, fish is very good. Eggs are excellent. Bacon is OK - some brain-boosting performance power, but not as much as the other two.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Now Susan mentions here something that we've actually spent quite a lot of time discussing over the years, that beetroot brownies are absolutely awesome. And I'm a massive fan actually of avocado cake, and courgettes are also good in cake. And so you can combine a lot of these things together.

I think after much discussion HJ, we once concluded that cabbage was perhaps one of the only vegetables that we wouldn't recommend putting in cake. But yes, there certainly are lots of options, aren't there?

HJ: Oh, yeah. Plenty. We've been talking about a few of them, and I'm really pleased that I've got back on track with some nice options to - that I can have a think about. Augusta's been having sushi and white wine. That sounds like a nice combo. Geraldine, fish and chips. You can't go wrong with that classic. Rochelle's on my side, toast is good.

And Olivia's a fan of the meal deal, just classic British combination, isn't it? Whatever you have, you can't go wrong with the meal deal. And Andrew has kebab meat, onions and pepperoni on pizza. It sounds like a nice combo as well. Especially if you had a long week, sometimes you've just got to stock up, I think.

And Laura has roasted beetroot off her allotment, which sounds really good. I do think if you grow it yourself, it always tastes better. But I am not growing much these days. So I haven't got too much experience of that. But I think when Simon's ready, I have whittled down my top three for - not very scientifically. But I have whittled down my top three for best combinations and our maybe weirdest, and most odd food combinations.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, we shall look forward to those. And poor old Rebecca's got a baby on the way and could eat beetroot all day. So some unwanted cravings going on here for people at home as well. So we've got two more. Let's whiz through the coffee or green tea, Simon, because most people are saying green tea all the way. And I think that's possibly a fairly self-explanatory one.

SIMON PENN: Yeah. So again, for boosting performance or brain performance, both are going to work because the caffeine is going to help to keep us more alert and keep us more focused. The problem with that is what happens after that. So it takes so long for caffeine to come out of the body.

So quite often, we tend to have one cup of coffee, and then that will stay, it will peak, the caffeine, after about an hour. And then it will stay at that level, and it will take after about six hours - you still have half of that caffeine inside your body.

So if you imagine an hour or two later, you've had another coffee, your layers of coffee and caffeine have just gone up and up. And that's quite often why we don't sleep very well at night, if we've had too much caffeine.

So green tea also has another nutrient in there called L-theanine. And this is very good for kind of boosting our brain performance. So this is why it kind of trumps the coffee, really. So we have brain-boosting performance in the theanine. But then we also have kind of a stress management. We have that kind of relaxation nature of green tea or kind of more fruit and herbal teas associated with the more relaxation state. So, both of them could work. We just need to avoid not having too much caffeine.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. Very important. And also late at night. Now, last but no means least, I think we've all got some of our alcoholic drinks here. I've gone for some nice red wine, in fact, in a really gorgeous bottle. Seventy-six per cent of people at home also say that wine is a much better choice than the old beer. So Simon, what do you think?

SIMON PENN: Yeah, I agree. And I reach for the wine rather than the beer. It tends to be, again, if we go back to our sugars that we talked about with our white breads, then the high amount of sugar may give you an initial buzz. But then you're going to have drops. So your blood glucose levels are going to kind of go up and down and peaks and troughs, whereas the wine, there's less carbohydrates in the wine.

So I'm diabetic. So I can't have beers without having to take insulin, whereas wine, I can drink wine without having to inject. So if we think about our levels of blood glucose, wine's going to be better for that, which means our mood, how we're feeling, is all going to be better for our ability to study.

Again, similar to caffeine, we just need to watch what happens next. If we like the wine too much, then the next day, we're going to feel awful. We're not going to feel like looking at the books. So we need to think about planning our study ahead. And if we're taking alcohol, maybe a study break.

KAREN FOLEY: And certainly not going through a whole eight-hour essay while drinking the wine because it tends not to make any sense, from experience of a friend. So HJ, I think you've got some options for Simon to consider from our weird combinations little fun quiz. What have you got?

HJ: So top three weird combinations that I've picked out today are from Asher. And Asher says my weird combinations are tuna sweetcorn pizza and cornflake and ketchup sandwiches. Angela's contribution is Kendal Mint cake and pickles with Cava.

And, oh, I think I've got mixed up. Oh, there we go. So one shoutout was Natasha, who's helping us in the Chat, who said ice cream and balsamic vinegar. But I don't think she's actually tried that. I think that's just pulling my leg there.

But I think it's Patrick's marshmallows and roast potatoes is my third for that one. So Asher's cornflake and ketchup sandwiches, Angela's Kendal Mint cake and pickles with Cava, and Patrick's marshmallows and roast potatoes for probably the weirdest combinations.

KAREN FOLEY: Simon, what are you going to go for?

SIMON PENN: Wow. Out of the three, I was looking forward to the ice cream one. But as that got withdrawn, I would probably go in the middle. So the Kendal Mint cake and the Cava, although the Kendal Mint cake is full of sugar because it's made for the walkers up near the Lake District. But, it sounds the best combination.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. OK, thank you, Simon. So send us in your address to studenthub@open.ac.uk and we'll whiz you out some stationery. HJ, what about the other option?

HJ: So for our best combinations, and this was really hard, because it did make me feel a bit better after seeing all these weird ones. But Laura said wholemeal bagel, smashed avocado, smoked salmon, poached egg and cracked black pepper. Sounds like amazing brunch combination to start today.

Andrea says, lentils and spinach is a wonderful mix of protein and fibre and always a good combination. I always like spinach with garlic. That's what that made me think of.

And Victoria's contribution is tick-tock pasta, cherry tomatoes, mushroom and cream cheese. You put it in the oven, and then when the pasta is done, mix all together, and apparently it's amazing. And my mouth is already watering thinking about that combination.

KAREN FOLEY: Simon, which do you think is the best combination out of those healthy choices?

SIMON PENN: Well, I'm going to have to go for the first one because we've got the wholemeal bread, we've got the eggs, we've got avocado. So we've got those kind of nutrients that are rich in there. So yeah, I think number one gets, gets most of the things that we've talked about boosting brain performance.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Excellent. So also, please then send us your address and we'll pop some stationery in the post to studenthub@open.ac.uk. Simon, that's been absolutely wonderful. Thank you so much. I've thoroughly enjoyed eating all of these props. And I hope you go and enjoy eating all of yours too. Are you going to hang around for some dancing?

SIMON PENN: I think I'll stick to the eating rather than the dancing.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Fair enough. That's fine. OK. Well, lovely to have you on the show, Simon. Thank you so much for coming along. And I hope you've all enjoyed that. We're going to have a short video break now. Guys have been asking a little bit about what the campus is like in Milton Keynes.

I haven't been there for quite some time now. But when I last did and my hair was considerably shorter, I interviewed Dan Weinbren, who wrote a book on the history of the OU, about some of the interesting places on campus. So here's one of our campus tour videos, and we'll be back for some dancing in just a moment. See you then.

[MUSIC PLAYING]