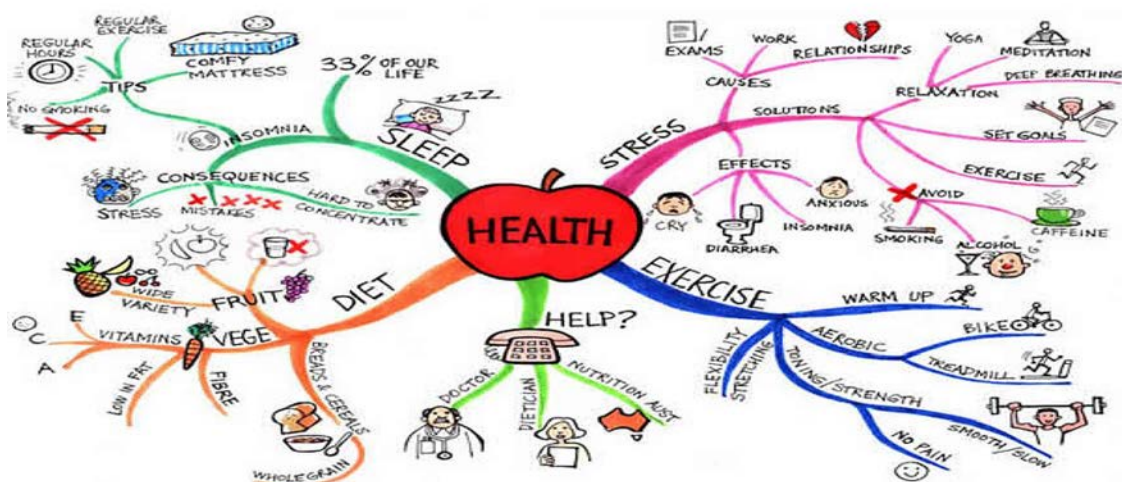# Mind Maps

Mind mapping is a useful technique that puts structure to the common process known as "brainstorming". With brainstorming, we encourage ourselves to think of as many ideas about an issue as possible in order to expand our thinking. Mind mapping enhances and provides structure to this process.

Principles of Mind Mapping

1. Decide on a <u>central idea, problem</u> or <u>subject</u> and place this at the centre of a piece of paper (or on a whiteboard);
2. Allow subordinate, related ideas to radiate out from the central idea like a "branch" radiates from a tree Be clear about the key idea and the most important subordinate branches. For example, if "holiday" was the key idea, one branch might be "things to take", another "method of transport", another "things to do" and so on. By contrast, if your key issue is refined as "things to take *on* a holiday" this would lead to a very different set of radial connections (toiletries, clothes, money, camera equipment, etc);
3. Each subordinate idea is given a key image or word that is drawn or printed on the radial line;
4. For each branch, provide ideas of lesser, but related importance. These are represented as "twigs" of the branches;
5. Relevant ideas are given as "nodes" on the branching structures (these can be linked or placed close together to show their connection);
6. Typically, mind maps are highly coloured with different colours used to help to consolidate memorisation of the key ideas in a map (it can help to remember a "green" branch as representing a particular set of concepts, for example).
7. Logos, photos and diagrams can be used to further enhance the pictorial quality of a mind map and to enhance memorisation.

An example of a mind map on the general topic of "Health" is provided below.

The Uses of Mind Maps

In the university context, mind maps are useful in several ways:

- To focus your research for assignments (i.e., to narrow down things you need to look for);
- To help to solve problems;
- To develop a structure for an essay or report (to work out what to cover);
- To assist with remembering content (for an exam or test).

Mind maps can be as detailed and as stylised as the occasion demands. A variety of softwares are available to assist with the mapping process. Examples of other mind maps are given below. Google 'Mind maps ' for more in your subject area. (See also our helpsheets on **concept maps** and **argument maps**.)