

In Focus
Week 4 Materials

Balance and Wellness

Many students have a history of neglecting their personal health and well-being for short periods of time to complete projects or study for exams. The “all-nighter” is perhaps the most well-known example of prioritizing task completion over and above personal well-being.

Research on wellness has begun to focus not only on the personal benefits of self-care activities, but also improvements in academic and workplace productivity. There is strong evidence, for example, that sleep quality affects the retention and recall of information. It has also been shown that the ability to sustain attention and manage distractions is associated with sleep quality.

There has also been some recent research that has focused on how productivity is affected by breaks during the workday. These types of findings suggest that frequent breaks are not only a wellness activity, but also a method of improving in the quality and quantity of work.

A successful wellness plan should be integrated into your daily routine. It may be tempting to defer wellness activities whenever you are busy and this can be a viable option at times. If you do so consistently, however, you risk some of the negative outcomes that are often associated with a lack of balance in our workplaces, including low motivation, disorganization, low morale, distractibility, etc.

Some wellness activities that you may want to include in your daily routine include:

- A sufficient amount of time allocated for sleep
- A nutrition plan that includes a healthy, balanced diet
- Some type or consistent exercise or movement of your body (i.e., stretching)
- A commitment to take breaks from your work at several times per day
- Time set aside for play, recreation, hobbies, sports, etc.
- Socializing with friends and family
- Time for worship, prayer, spirituality, faith

Resources

Books:

- *The Comfort Book* by Matt Haig
- *The Self-Love Experiment* by Shannon Kaiser
- *Set Boundaries, Find Peace* by Nedra Glover Tawwab
- *Breath* by James Nestor
- *Resilient* by Rick Hanson, Ph.D.
- *Happy Not Perfect* by Poppy Jamie
- *I am here now* by The Mindfulness Project

Websites:

- Upworthy
- Tiny Buddah
- Self-Care Day
- The Positivity Blog

Apps:

- Calm (meditations, reducing stress and anxiety)
- Headspace (general guided meditations, sleep, relationships)
- Shine (motivational texts, self-improvement audio, mindfulness, improving sleep)
- Happify (reduces stress, helps identify negative thoughts)
- Pacfica (stress, anxiety, depression)
- Breathing Zone (helps you focus on your breathing)

YouTube Videos:

- SciShow Psych video on Sleep & ADHD
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Eb-0VYN0k8>
- Self-Care: What It Really Is – Susannah Winters
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBn0ETS6XDk>
- Re-train Your Brain with Self-Care – Dima Abou Chaaban
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cohKoXx4jgg>
- The Space Between Self-Esteem and Self Compassion – Kristin Neff
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvtZBUSplr4>
- Why Mindfulness is a Superpower
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6T02g5hnT4>

Other Counseling Center Resources:

- RIO workshops
- Daily Mindfulness Meditation Drop-Ins

Positive Steps to Wellbeing

Be kind to yourself

Our culture, genes, religion, upbringing, education, gender, sexuality, beliefs, and life experiences make us who we are.



- We all have bad days.
- Be kind to yourself.
- Encourage rather than criticize yourself.
- Treat yourself the way you would treat a friend in the same situation.

Movement

Being active helps lift our mood, reduces stress and anxiety, improves physical health, and gives us more energy.



- Find an activity you enjoy doing.
- Remember, you don't need to be hitting the gym daily. Any sort of movement or stretching will do!

Take up a hobby and/or learn a new skill

Increase your confidence and interest, meet others, have fun.

- Think about how you can use hobbies to recharge on your own or as an opportunity to connect with others.



Have some fun and/or be creative

Having fun or being creative helps us feel better and increases our confidence.

Enjoy yourself!

- Draw
- Sing
- Dance



Monitor what we put in our bodies

Including food, alcohol, and other substances.

- Everything in moderation!



Relax

Prioritize time for yourself.

- Allow yourself to relax.
- Find something that suits you – different things work for different people.
- Breathe



Help others

- Are you spending enough time with others?
- Have you had opportunities to engage with others in spaces outside of work and the classroom?



Balance sleep

Establish a healthy sleep routine.

- Consider what your nighttime routine looks like now
- Do you have time to decompress and de-stress before you get into bed?
- Are you getting enough hours of sleep?



Connect with others

Stay in touch with family and friends.

- How is your work-life balance?



See the bigger picture

We all give different meanings to situations and see things from our point of view. Broaden out your perspective and consider the bigger picture ('the helicopter view')

- What meaning am I giving this?
- Is this **fact or opinion**?
- How would others see it?
- Is there another way of looking at this?
- How important is it, or will it be in a year's time?
- What can I do right now that will help most?



Acceptance: 'It is what it is'

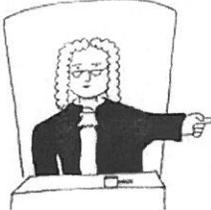
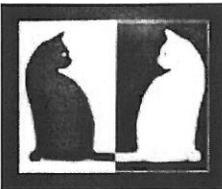
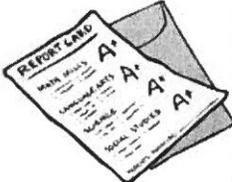
We tend to fight against distressing thoughts and feelings, but we can learn to notice them and stop that struggle.

- Some situations we just can't change.
- We can surf those waves rather than try to stop them.
- Allow those thoughts and sensations just to be – they will pass.



Unhelpful Thinking Habits

Over the years, we tend to get into unhelpful thinking habits such as those described below. We might favour some over others, and there might be some that seem far too familiar. Once you can identify your unhelpful thinking styles, you can start to notice them – they very often occur just before and during distressing situations. Once you can notice them, then that can help you to challenge or distance yourself from those thoughts, and see the situation in a different and more helpful way.

 <p>Mental Filter When we notice only what the filter wants or allows us to notice, and we dismiss anything that doesn't 'fit'. Like looking through dark blinkers or 'gloomy specs', or only catching the negative stuff in our 'kitchen strainers' whilst anything more positive or realistic is dismissed</p>	 <p>Judgements Making evaluations or judgements about events, ourselves, others, or the world, rather than describing what we actually see and have evidence for</p>
<p>Mind-Reading Assuming we know what others are thinking (usually about us)</p> 	<p>Emotional Reasoning I feel bad so it must be bad! I feel anxious, so I must be in danger</p> 
 <p>Prediction Believing we know what's going to happen in the future</p>	 <p>Mountains and Molehills Exaggerating the risk of danger, or the negatives. Minimising the odds of how things are most likely to turn out, or minimising positives</p>
<p>Compare and despair Seeing only the good and positive aspects in others, and comparing ourselves negatively against them</p> 	<p>Catastrophising Imagining and believing that the worst possible thing will happen</p> 
 <p>Critical self Putting ourselves down, self-criticism, blaming ourselves for events or situations that are not (totally) our responsibility</p>	 <p>Black and white thinking Believing that something or someone can be only good or bad, right or wrong, rather than anything in-between or 'shades of grey'</p>
<p>Shoulds and musts Thinking or saying 'I should' (or shouldn't) and 'I must' puts pressure on ourselves, and sets up unrealistic expectations</p> 	<p>Memories Current situations and events can trigger upsetting memories, leading us to believe that the danger is here and now, rather than in the past, causing us distress right now</p> 

Finding Alternative Thoughts

Unhelpful Thinking Habit	Alternative more balanced thought
Mental Filter 	<i>Am I only noticing the bad stuff? Am I filtering out the positives? Am I wearing those 'gloomy specs'? What would be more realistic?</i>
 Mind-Reading	<i>Am I assuming I know what others are thinking? What's the evidence? Those are my own thoughts, not theirs. Is there another, more balanced way of looking at it?</i>
Prediction 	<i>Am I thinking that I can predict the future? How likely is it that that might really happen?</i>
 Compare & despair	<i>Am I doing that 'compare and despair' thing? What would be a more balanced and helpful way of looking at it?</i>
Critical self 	<i>There I go, that internal bully's at it again. Would most people who really know me say that about me? Is this something that I am totally responsible for?</i>
 Shoulds and musts	<i>Am I putting more pressure on myself, setting up expectations of myself that are almost impossible? What would be more realistic?</i>
Judgements 	<i>I'm making an evaluation about the situation or person. It's how I make sense of the world, but that doesn't mean my judgements are always right or helpful. Is there another perspective?</i>
 Emotional Reasoning	<i>Just because it feels bad, doesn't necessary mean it is bad. My feelings are just a reaction to my thoughts – and thoughts are just automatic brain reflexes</i>
Mountains and molehills 	<i>Am I exaggerating the risk of danger, and minimising the evidence that says it's most likely to be okay? Am I exaggerating the negative and minimising the positives? How would someone else see it? What's the bigger picture?</i>
 Catastrophising	<i>OK, thinking that the worst possible thing will definitely happen isn't really helpful right now. What's most likely to happen?</i>
Black and white thinking 	<i>Things aren't either totally white or totally black – there are shades of grey. Where is this on the spectrum?</i>
 Memories	<i>This is just a reminder of the past. That was then, and this is now. Even though this memory makes me <u>feel</u> upset, it's not <u>actually</u> happening again right now.</i>

A	B	C
Activating / Triggering Event (Situation)	Beliefs	Consequences
<p>What was happening just before I started to feel this way?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was I doing? • Who was I with? • Where was I? • When was it? 	<p>Thoughts and/or images</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was going through my mind at that time? <p>Meanings and interpretations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did this say or mean about me? • What could happen? 	<p>Emotions</p> <p>Physical sensations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did I feel in my body? <p>Behaviors: actions and urges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did I do? • What did I feel like doing?

COPING THOUGHTS WORKSHEET

Distressing Situation	New Coping Thought
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	