

10 IDEAS FOR EMBEDDING EVIDENCE- BASED WELLBEING PRACTICES INTO STUDENTS' ACADEMIC LIVES

Faculty and staff have asked, “What can I do to help my students better survive and thrive in college?”

Here are a few ideas drawing on wellbeing research and emerging best practices.

Research shows that cultivating mindfulness deepens understanding of course material; increases creativity, insight, concentration, attention; and increases mental health and psychological wellbeing with greater connection, generosity, and compassion for others.

—*Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning*, 2013

1. **Build wellbeing and stress management strategies into your syllabus.** Giving an extra assignment/exam and letting students drop their lowest score promotes learning and reduces anxiety. Include wellbeing and stress management information and resources on your syllabus. ([See UMN Syllabus Requirements Policy, B.8](#))
2. **Offer “conversation cards” with prompts for a first office visit with your new students.** You might include topics like academic interests, hobbies, learning styles, or concerns. Some students, especially first-generation college students, aren't sure what “office hours” are. Introduce the concept—you could even use the term “student hours”—so they know this is a time when they can talk with you outside of class.
3. **Begin class with two minutes of focused breathing.** Or include another mindfulness practice. [Breathing Bubbles](#) are a great resource for focused breathing.

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4. **Build a gratitude positive psychology practice into class**—two to five minutes. The Grateful app is one tool you can use with your students.
5. **Promote healthy sleep and its academic and life benefits.** Avoid midnight deadlines and aim for daytime course communications. Discuss or incentivize students' pursuit of a week of good sleep.
6. **Add a course assignment researching an evidenced-based practice that fosters mental health and wellbeing.** Discuss or incentivize exercising at the Regional Fitness Center, walking for 15 minutes, or spending 30 minutes in nature.
7. **Use the Don't Cancel That Class initiative when out of town.** Schedule workshops via the Office of Academic Success webpage: Mindfulness 101, Strategies for Everyday Wellness, Stress Management 101, and Healthy Relationships.
8. **Embed a UMN Learn to Live module on depression, stress, social anxiety, or sleep in your course.** Students can complete assessments, learning modules, and work with a coach via the confidential online program. (code: UMN)
9. **Let students know how to access free, confidential campus mental health and physical health resources.** Make students aware of the *Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences policy* and how to access support and verification.
10. **Model good health and wellbeing practices.** Talk about ways that you manage stress, take breaks, pursue hobbies, enjoy life, and recharge.

Find links to many helpful resources at morris.umn.edu/morrisletsthive

Morris Let's Thrive is a holistic model infusing evidence-based mental health and wellbeing practices, skill building, information, and resources into University of Minnesota Morris students' curricular and co-curricular lives. Through attention to the seven dimensions of wellbeing, it provides tools to cultivate a balanced and fulfilling life.

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