

# Intro to Wellness

## Student Workbook

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**Mississippi State University Student Counseling Services**  
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*This workshop and its materials were adapted from  
Cal Poly Counseling Services' Anxiety Toolbox and Getting Unstuck programs.*

# Welcome!

Welcome to **Wellness U**! Wellness U is a collection of workshops with the ultimate goal of providing you with knowledge and skills to increase your overall well-being and meet your goals. The Wellness U Workshop Series has several parts:

- **Stress and Anxiety 101** helps participants understand the effects of stress and anxiety by learning about the fight, flight, or freeze response and the differences between motivational and unhelpful stress/anxiety. Participants will also learn a basic skill for anxiety management: grounding techniques.
- **Changing Unhelpful Thoughts** introduces participants to a cognitive behavioral strategy for challenging unhelpful thoughts. Participants will be able to identify unhelpful thinking styles, learn alternative responses to unhelpful thinking, and become more aware of their ability to challenge and change thinking patterns.
- **Intro to Wellness** introduces participants to concepts of dimensional wellness and how to increase their overall wellness.
- **Intro to Mindfulness** is all about mindfulness, its benefits, and how to practice mindfulness in day-to-day life.
- **The ABZzzzzs of Sleep** helps participants improve the quantity and quality of their sleep by learning about sleep hygiene.
- **Relationships 101** introduces participants to healthy versus unhealthy relationships, ways to manage conflict, and how to set boundaries.
- **Test Anxiety** helps participants understand the components of test anxiety and introduces them to a skill to minimize the symptoms of anxiety.
- **Intro to Tai Chi** presents participants with the opportunity to learn about a traditional Chinese form of exercise which emphasizes breath and body movement and can be useful in reducing stress and anxiety as well as improving joint flexibility, stability, and muscular strength.

By the end of this series, you will have received a lot of information and, at times, it may feel overwhelming. Remember that like any skill (e.g., learning to ride a bike), the skills you will learn in **Wellness U** take time and practice to master. At times, you may encounter obstacles and/or find it difficult to integrate these skills into your daily life. That is okay, it is a normal part of the change process. As with all change, it is important to practice as much as you can, even after encountering setbacks.

Think of your practice of these skills as a form of “mental health hygiene.” At the outset, it may seem tedious and you may question why you need to practice these skills so often. Similar to brushing your teeth, daily practice prevents a buildup of stress over time. The more you practice and use these skills as part of your daily routine, the less tedious they may seem because they simply become a regular part of daily life.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### Why have I been referred to Wellness U?

Our clinicians recommend participation in Wellness U after meeting with you because they think you can benefit from it. We strongly believe that if you fully engage in Wellness U and practice these skills, you will see the benefit of attending. And we have the research to back this up – since 2016, students have consistently rated these workshops as helpful. Wellness U also helps support your innate resilience by recognizing your autonomy; in other words, we know that students have the ability to address many of their concerns independently in a supportive environment. In fact, some students may get what they need from Wellness U alone. Others may benefit from Wellness U as well as other services, such as Let’s Talk (informal consultation), a support group, group therapy, or individual therapy.

### What if I don’t feel comfortable in groups?

Many people feel anxious about participating in a group. Wellness U is structured and curriculum-driven, like an academic class. You are not required to speak to the entire group if you do not feel comfortable doing so. The facilitators respect each participant’s right to share only what they are comfortable sharing and never require you to share sensitive information about yourself.

### What if I have an urgent need to see a clinician during Wellness U?

Simply let the facilitator or Student Counseling Services’ front desk staff know and they will facilitate you getting the help you need.

### Why do you recommend practice outside of the workshop?

The focus of these workshops is on building skills; in order to achieve that goal, regular practice is essential. The more you practice, the more you may find you get out of these workshops. The assignments are for you and only you, in the service of your own personal growth. You will not be required to provide your responses at any time during this workshop; however, there will be opportunities to ask questions or share if you do feel comfortable.

# 8 Dimensions of Wellness



Wellness is more than health. It is living fully. We believe wellness is conscious and inclusive, self-directed and evolving, holistic and multidimensional, positive and affirming. Wellness is fueling your body, engaging your mind, and nurturing your spirit. How we think about wellness is affected by our culture and our life experiences. While all dimensions of wellness need our attention for us to truly flourish, there doesn't have to be an equal amount among all dimensions. Instead, the goal is to find a personal balance with the dimensions that are most authentic for you. You can't get there passively, it requires active awareness, acceptance, and commitment through choices you make every day no matter how small.

## Physical Wellness

Physical wellness is not merely the absence of illness, but about maintaining a thriving lifestyle. This area of wellness

includes adopting healthy habits such as routine medical exams, immunizations, safety precautions, sexually transmitted infection screenings, adequate sleep, a balanced diet, regular exercise, and more. It is also about avoiding or minimizing risky behaviors like alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Most importantly, physical wellness is about discovering what healthy habits make you feel better and suit your lifestyle and level of mobility and fitness.

## Social Wellness

Social Wellness focuses on connecting with your community and the people around you, which includes being aware of your own social and cultural background as a bridge to understand the diversity and depth present in other backgrounds. This dimension encourages taking an active part in improving your communities, connecting with others, establishing supportive social networks, developing meaningful relationships, and creating safe and inclusive spaces.

## Emotional Wellness

Emotional wellness encompasses optimism, self-esteem, self-acceptance, and the ability to experience and cope with feelings independently and interpersonally. Emotional wellness includes: practicing self-care; fostering inner resources and resiliency; finding unique ways of coping with stressors; creating satisfying relationships; empathizing with others; and being realistic about expectations and time; and knowing when to ask for help.

## **Intellectual Wellness**

Intellectual wellness encourages participating in mentally stimulating and creative activities. Improving intellectual wellness can happen in and out of the classroom. It is the ability to think critically, reason objectively, make responsible decisions, and explore new ideas and different points of view. It also emphasizes lifelong learning and inspires curiosity.

## **Vocational Wellness**

Vocational wellness involves preparing for and participating in work that provides personal satisfaction and life enrichment that is consistent with your values, goals, and lifestyle. This dimension includes taking a thoughtful and proactive approach to career planning and assessing personal satisfaction and performance in one's work.

## **Environmental Wellness**

Environmental wellness inspires us to live a lifestyle that is respectful of our surroundings. It involves understanding the dynamic relationship between the environment and people and recognizing that we are responsible for the quality of the air, water, and earth that surrounds us and in turn, that social, natural, and built environments affect our health and well-being.

Our environment and the way we feel about the environment can play a big role in how we live our lives. Examples of our environment include our social environment (i.e. bullying, fat talk, and racism), our natural environment (i.e. air, nature, and climate), and our built

environment (i.e. proximity to resources and living conditions).

## **Spiritual/Meaning Wellness**

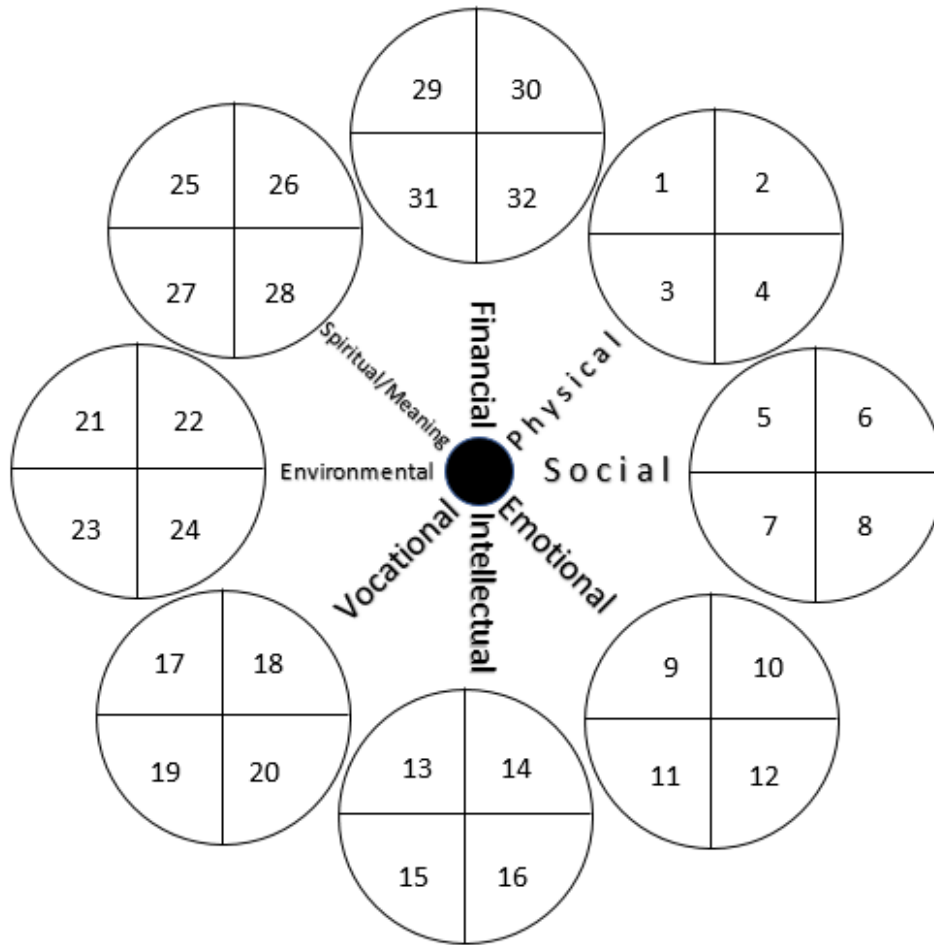
Spiritual/meaning wellness involves seeking and having a meaning and purpose in life, as well as participating in activities that are consistent with one's beliefs and values. It is more than prayer and believing in a higher being. A spiritually well person seeks harmony with the universe, expresses compassion towards others, and practices gratitude and self-reflection. When we integrate practices of spiritual wellness we are able to connect in mind, body, and soul.

## **Financial Wellness**

Financial Wellness includes our relationship with money, skills to manage resources to live within our means, making informed financial decisions and investments, setting realistic goals, and learning to prepare for short-term and long-term needs or emergencies. Part of this dimension includes an awareness that everyone's financial values, needs, and circumstances are unique.

From <https://umwellness.wordpress.com/8-dimensions-of-wellness/>

# Wellness Wheel



For each statement that is true for you, shade in the corresponding numbered block.

1. I have balanced and nutritious eating habits.
2. I exercise or engage in movement of my body at a level that is healthy for me.
3. I drink alcohol in moderation or do not drink at all, and I avoid cigarettes, vaping, and illegal drugs.
4. I get 7-9 hours of sleep nightly.
5. I have a sense of belonging / not being isolated.
6. I am able to resolve conflicts in my relationships in a healthy way.
7. I am aware of and am able to respect my own and others' boundaries.
8. I have satisfying social interactions with others.
9. I am able to feel and name my emotions, and I express them in a healthy way.
10. I am able to self-soothe when I am troubled or distressed.
11. I have a sense of control in my life but I am also able to adapt to change.
12. I practice compassion for others and for myself.
13. I am satisfied with the amount of time and energy I commit to educational development.
14. I regularly attend my classes.
15. I know how to calculate my GPA.
16. I have a growth mindset (vs. a fixed mindset) regarding my intellectual capabilities.
17. I am aware of steps that need to be taken to enter my chosen occupation.
18. I have a mentor.
19. My work environment supports my wellness.
20. I am engaged in full-time/part-time/internship/volunteer work.
21. I do not litter.
22. I consciously conserve energy (electricity, heat, light, water, etc.) in my place of residence.
23. I regularly spend time outdoors.
24. I practice recycling.
25. I am aware of my values and have a sense of my beliefs/principles/morals/ethics.
26. My behavior is consistent with my values and beliefs/principles/morals/ethics.
27. I have a sense of meaning and purpose in my life.
28. I engage in some type of spiritual/meaningful growth practice (meditation, praying, attending worship services, journaling, etc.).
29. I have a budget.
30. I am aware of my debt and have a plan for managing it.
31. My values around money are consistent with my behavior.
32. I have financial plans for the future.

# My Wellness Goal

1. I plan to improve my wellness by...

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2. This is important to me because...

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3. My first step in this process will be...

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4. An anticipated barrier to my goal will be ...

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5. I will overcome this barrier by...

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6. I will share my plans with \_\_\_\_\_ (trusted and supportive person in my life) by saying:

“ \_\_\_\_\_ ”

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7. I will review my progress toward this goal on \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

8. I will reward myself for making progress toward my goal by...

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# Tips for Physical Wellness

## 1. Get regular exercise / healthy body movement

- **Find an enjoyable activity.** Exercise doesn't have to be boring. Choose a pleasurable activity, like playing badminton or doing yoga. Aim for fun, not more work.
- **Start small.** Commit to 10 minutes of exercise a day or add exercise to your daily routine (like walking to school or doing push-ups in your room).
- **Get outside.** The sun provides a mood "pick me up" of its own, producing serotonin in the brain. Take a walk outside or go swimming.
- **Schedule it in.** It's easy to skip exercise when we don't plan. Put it in your phone as part of your daily to-do's and celebrate when you check it off.
- **Mix it up.** To avoid feeling bored with exercise, try a number of different activities.
- **Team up.** Ask others to do team activities or find an exercise buddy



for accountability and to increase social interaction.

- **Minimize equipment.** Equipment can be expensive. Identify activities that don't require you to have equipment or facilities, like walking, running, or dancing.
- **Follow your energy.** If your energy fluctuates throughout the day, try to plan to exercise when your energy is at its peak. Alternatively, exercise when feeling sluggish for an energy boost.



2. **Prioritize Sleep.** Allow yourself 7-9 hours nightly for sleep and practice good sleep hygiene (attend our ABZzzzs of Sleep Workshop for more info).

3. **See your medical provider.** Get regular check-ups, including immunizations and screenings for STIs.

4. **Eat a balanced diet and stay hydrated.**



Eat a balanced diet with plenty of vegetables and fruits and drink water.

5. **Minimize alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.**

6. **Take prescribed medications as prescribed.**



# Tips for Social Wellness

## 1. Maintain Healthy Relationships (See our Relationships 101 workshop for more info)

- ☐ Share your feelings honestly.
- ☐ Ask for what you need from others.
- ☐ Listen to others without judgement or blame. Be caring and empathetic.
- ☐ Disagree with others respectfully. Conflicts should not turn into personal attacks.
- ☐ Avoid being overly critical, angry outbursts, and violent behavior.
- ☐ Expect others to treat you with respect and honesty in return.
- ☐ Compromise. Try to come to agreements that work for everyone.
- ☐ Protect yourself from violent and abusive people. Set boundaries with others. Decide what you are and aren't willing to do. It's okay to say no.
- ☐ Learn the differences between healthy, unhealthy, and abusive ways of relating

## 2. Make Time for People

It's easy to get so focused on your work that you don't spend time with your family, never go out with your friends and isolate yourself from your community. We're all about being focused on your business, but it shouldn't be at the expense of your relationships. This sort of sacrifice will only hurt you in the long-run; there's no point

being successful if it makes you lonely and isolated.

### To find new social connections:

- ☐ Join a group focused on a favorite hobby.
- ☐ Take a class to try something new.
- ☐ Try yoga, tai chi, or another new physical activity.
- ☐ Join a choral group, theater troupe, band, or orchestra.
- ☐ Help at a community garden or park.
- ☐ Volunteer at a school, library, or hospital.
- ☐ Participate in neighborhood events.
- ☐ Join a local community group.
- ☐ Travel to different places and meet new people.

## 3. Practice assertive communication.

Express your feelings

Ask for what you want

Say no to what you don't want

## 4. Engage with your social network (and social media) in a positive way that builds you and others up.

## 5. Build in digital media breaks and seek out face-to-face connection.



Adapted from

<https://www.nih.gov/sites/default/files/health-info/wellness-toolkits/social-wellness-checklist.pdf>



# Tips for Emotional Wellness

## 1. Practice self-soothing

### SELF-SOOTHING

Self-Soothing is a quick and effective way to reduce the intensity of negative emotions.



#### Sight

Low lighting  
Soothing colors  
Sleeping masks  
Coloring books  
Pinterest Collages

#### Touch

Soft things  
Cuddle things  
Massage  
Hot/cold shower  
Heated/weighted blanket



#### Sound

Calming noise  
ASMR videos  
Nature sounds  
Guided meditations  
Binaural beats

#### Smell

Aromatherapy  
Fresh air  
Candles/incense  
Comforting smells

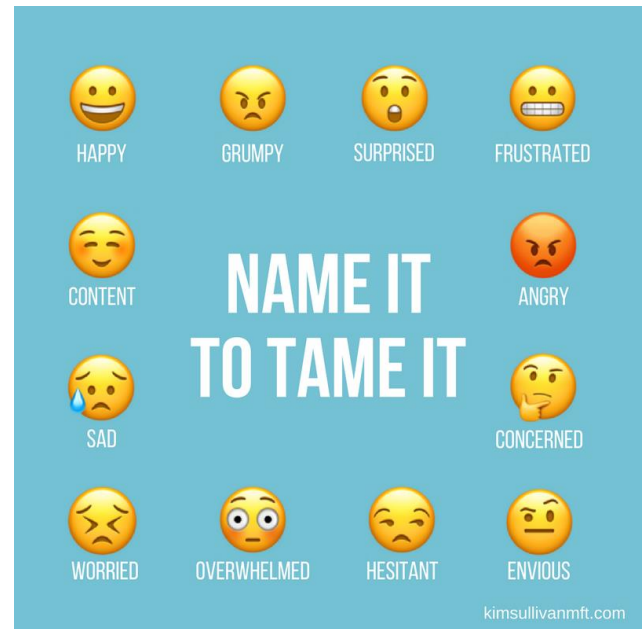


#### Taste

Strong flavors  
Warm drinks  
Eat slowly  
Nostalgic flavors

[www.blessingmanifesting.com](http://www.blessingmanifesting.com)

## 2. Practice naming your emotions



## 3. Practice compassion and self-compassion

### #PracticeSelfCompassion

1. think of someone you love with all your heart, beyond all measure and reason
2. PAUSE: close eyes and see their face: let them catch that look of love in your eyes?
3. now imagine them in deepest knowing of their own mistakes, flaws, and shortcomings
4. would you give them another chance?
5. and a harder thing—imagine: you were someone you loved like that
6. PAUSE: see that moment
7. what would an act of self-compassion look like today?



#SmallThingsMatter #PatternsMatter

# Tips for Intellectual Wellness

## 1. Do Stimulating Mental Activities

Keeping your mind engaged is just a matter of finding the right activities. You can do classic activities like logic puzzles, crosswords or sudoku. But you can also have conversations with people who challenge you intellectually or read books that offer you new ideas.

## 2. Always Keep Learning

Lifelong learning is essential for intellectual wellness. It doesn't matter so much what you learn — just pick something that interests you. It could be reading about a subject that you want to learn more about or teaching yourself a new skill. Learning something new engages your brain like nothing else, forming new connections as your knowledge grows.

## 3. Learn How to Study /Speed Read

MSU's Learning Center has classes and support.

## 4. Make frequent contact with your academic advisor.

## 5. Go to class, like Dr. Keenum says.

## 6. Form a study group.

## 7. Join an honor society or academic club. Check out OrgSync!



# Tips for Vocational Wellness

## 1. Have a Plan for Your Career

It's impossible to plan your career from start to finish, as you never know where life will take you. But having a general vision for your career can help you make sure that you don't get stuck in an unfulfilling job that you're only doing for the money. Furthermore, having a larger vision will help you maintain motivation if you are in a job you dislike, knowing that you're working toward a future occupation that's more in line with what you want to do.

## 2. Check out MSU's Career Center!

## 3. Think Beyond Money

You deserve to be paid well for the excellent work you do, but you should also make sure that you don't let money blind you to the other aspects of your job that matter more for life satisfaction. If you're doing a job that doesn't align with your values, is boring, or is excessively stressful, it will start to wear on you after a while. It's possible to put up with a bad job in exchange for a large paycheck, but we don't recommend it. Over the long term, it will harm other dimensions of wellness, particularly your emotional, spiritual and physical wellness.



# Tips for Environmental Wellness

## 1. Get Outdoors

Being out in nature can help you feel more at peace, not to mention boosting your mood. Sunshine and fresh air do wonders for your mental health, and being outside is also a chance to bring some physical activity into your day. You don't even have to get outside of the city to experience the benefits of the outdoors. Just walking around in a local park will work as well.



## 2. Live Sustainably

Sustainable living means being aware of how the things you do and the products you consume affect the earth. It can start with activities such as recycling and extend into reducing your overall resource consumption. For example, you might bring your own reusable bags to the store or replace your paper towels with cloth ones.

# Tips for Spiritual/Meaning Wellness

## 1. Practice Self-Reflection

Regular self-reflection will help you monitor whether your daily actions are in line with your larger beliefs. You can do a variety of activities, but the one we most strongly recommend is keeping a journal. Daily journaling will help you track patterns in your thoughts and feelings, as well as clarifying and reaffirming what your beliefs are.

**2. Connect with others.** MSU has several faith-based and non-faith-based organizations.

## 3. Try Meditation

It doesn't have to be long or elaborate, either. Just taking a few minutes each day to sit still in silence and clear your mind will give you a greater sense of peace and a higher degree of focus.



# Tips for Financial Wellness

## 1. Minimize Student Loans (When Possible)

Many college grads end up taking out more student loans than they need. Student loans aren't always avoidable but you should do everything in your power to take out minimal loans. If you do take out student loans, make sure you know how much you are taking out and what type of loans you have.

## 2. Spend Less Than You Earn

One of the most powerful money moves in the history of time is spending less money than you earn. When you have an excess of cash each month you can invest in your future and make purchases without the stress of taking on debt.

## 3. Create a Budget

A budget is a very powerful tool. When you create a budget and track your spending you have insight to where your money is going and where you need to cut back. Living on a budget doesn't mean you can never have any fun, it means the fun you do have won't prevent you from paying the bills.



## 4. Make a Plan to Tackle Debt

If you do have debt, you need a plan of attack. There are a couple ways you can go about paying down debt but you should ultimately pick whichever method keeps you motivated. In order to create a solid financial future you need to attack your debt head-on as early as possible.

## 5. Be Smart about Credit Cards

Credit cards can be good financial tools in the sense that they help you build your credit score if used wisely. They can also be very dangerous. Limit the number of credit card accounts you open and always pay your balance in full each month.

## 6. Create an Emergency Fund

Emergency funds are essential for optimal financial health. You never know when your car will break down or when you'll have an unexpected bill. If you're working on paying down debt, start a small emergency fund. Once you pay off your debt and start earning more money, you can increase your emergency fund.

## 7. Know What Insurance You Need

There's insurance available for practically everything under the sun. As a college student it's important to know what types of insurance you need. If you're not married and don't have any children then you probably don't need life insurance quite yet. However, you do need health insurance, auto insurance, and renters or homeowners insurance. It's important to set these things in place so that you're protected.

## 8. Create Savings Goals

You have a lot of financial goals. Think about your future now and create goals to work toward. If you think you'll be purchasing a car, start saving for that. Try to save as much cash as you can for those big purchases.