
Taking Care of Our Well-Being: Attending to Ourselves, Supporting Our Trainees

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Today we will

- Be introduced to the holistic concept of wellness and a wellness assessment instrument
- Discuss some wellness strategies
- Learn about connection and communication skills as a means of supporting trainees/students



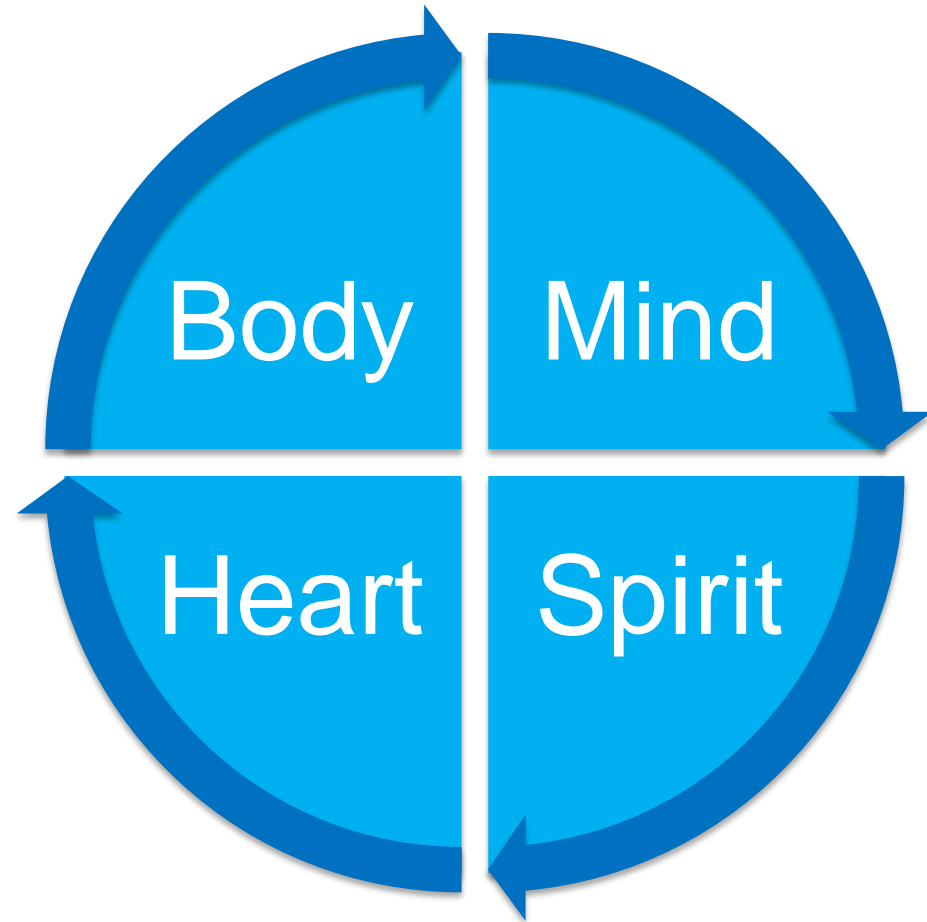
Part I - Wellness

To do well, we have to be well.



Wellness

All the things we do and don't do, to maintain our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.





Part A.

OITE Holistic Wellness Assessment

So, how are you doing?

Never 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 Always



Wellness Assessment - Body

Never 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 Always

- I am getting enough sleep (7-9 hours).
- I am eating balanced, nutritious meals.
- I avoid excessive use of caffeine.
- I avoid excessive use of alcohol and others drugs of abuse.
- I am getting regular exercise (at least 3 times a week).
- I am getting regular health care for myself.
- I take care of myself when I am sick, need rest, or just need a break.



Wellness Assessment - Mind

Never 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 Always

- I avoid getting caught up in perfectionism.
- I focus on the present vs. rehashing the past or worrying about the future.
- I avoid negative or deceptive self-talk.
- I practice self-affirmations and positive self-talk.
- I avoid judging myself compared to others.
- I give myself time to explore and learn about new things.
- I am open to counseling as a tool to maintain and improve my health and wellbeing.



Wellness Assessment - Heart

Never 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 Always

- I'm in touch with and let myself feel all my emotions.
- I reach out to others for support when I need it.
- I communicate my needs and feelings directly and honestly.
- I make time to spend with my friends and 'family'.
- I engage in activities that are fun and relaxing.
- I avoid extreme use of my phone as a coping tool/avoidance strategy.
- I demonstrate compassion for myself and others.



Wellness Assessment - Spirit

Never 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 Always

- I feel connected to something that is bigger than me – however I define that.
- I seek out resources (practices, activities, people, places) that nurture me spiritually.
- I reflect on and invest in what is meaningful to me.
- I read writings or watch media that are inspirational to me.
- I think of and care about the lives of others who are different than me.
- I allow time to just be (human *being* vs. human *doing*).
- I engage in activities that support my life's purpose.



Part B.

OITE Wellness Self-Care Plan

- As you went through the assessment questions did anything stand out for you?
- What are you pleased about in your self-care practices?
- What would you like to change?
- What are barriers to making the changes you wish to make?

My Self-Care Worksheet

Review your self-care assessment (“*So How Am I Doing?*”), which indicates what you are doing now for self-care. On this worksheet, list those self-care activities that you engage in regularly (like every day or every week) that you would like to continue doing under “current practice” within each area. Then identify new strategies that you would like to begin to incorporate as part of your ongoing self-care under “new practice” - paying particular attention to areas that you have not been addressing in the past. Finally, on the reverse side, identify barriers that might interfere with ongoing self-care, how you will address them, any negative coping strategies that you would like to target for change, and how you will change them.

<p>BODY (Physical Well-being)</p> <p>Current Practice:</p> <p>New Practice:</p>	<p>MIND (Mental Well-being)</p> <p>Current Practice:</p> <p>New Practice:</p>
<p>HEART (Emotional Well-being)</p> <p>Current Practice:</p> <p>New Practice:</p>	<p>SPIRIT (Spiritual Well-being)</p> <p>Current Practice:</p> <p>New Practice:</p>

Barriers to maintaining my self-care strategies

How I will address these barriers and remind myself to practice self-care

Negative coping strategies I would like to use less or not at all

What I will do instead



Implementing A Wellness Plan

- Date and put the plan somewhere it will be seen every day – do not put it out of sight in a drawer or notebook
- Start with one quadrant/activity – don't try to start everything at once
- Add a new activity when your first activity feels like it is well-integrated into daily life
- Continue adding new strategies in this manner



Making It a Life-Long Commitment

- Repeat a Self-Care Assessment and Plan every 2-3 months to track progress
- Make modifications to your Self-Care Plan as needed based on most recent assessment
- Recognize that wellness is an ongoing process
- Commit to this life-long journey!



Self-Care Strategies

- Breathe
- Maintain healthy behaviors, including
 - Healthy eating, adequate sleep, exercise and physical activity
- Connect with the natural world, spend time outside
- Connect with others, engage in healthy relationships
 - Avoid isolation, avoid too much time on phone or doomscrolling
 - Seek help when needed, including professional help
- Connect with yourself
 - Use supports such as journaling, mindfulness, meditation, yoga, therapy
 - Use wellness apps and other supports related to self-care such as:
Insight Timer, Calm, Headspace, CBT-I Coach, Sleep Cycle
- Practice gratitude, include things you are grateful for about you
- Practice self-compassion – be a good friend to yourself
- Keep on learning and growing
- Relax, take breaks, have enjoyment



Building a Wellness Culture

- Model wellness behaviors and priorities
- Create a supportive circle of folks interested in wellness
- Create and maintain good working relationships with your local wellness community, including mental health providers
- Encourage trainees, colleagues, staff to attend trainings on wellness and to engage in wellness practices
- Highlight the relevant wellness implications in any discussions – including scientific, academic, career topics
- **Include wellness in all mentoring conversations with trainees**



PART II - Connection

People have a universal human need to be seen, valued and heard for who they are.



Talking with Trainees

- Trainees may face challenges that could impact their current functioning and future development, including:
 - Academic and career stressors
 - Personal and life stressors
 - Contextual stressors, i.e. pandemic, marginalized identity
- A trainee may be hesitant to discuss their concerns until they feel that they will be safe and treated with respect and that what they have to say will be acknowledged
 - Differences in relative positions of power are a factor
 - Building a trusting relation over time may have a beneficial effect
- When we take over or dismiss their concerns, we may shut down the conversation, deprive trainees of growth
 - “Whoever does the work, does the learning”



This Stuff is not Familiar, Yet

- Dealing with mental health challenges, having wellness conversations may be unfamiliar and uncomfortable
 - Scientists, Program Administrators are not typically trained in it
 - They tend to be problem-solvers and doers, more comfortable in the hard sciences than the “soft sciences”

- Ways to develop knowledge and skills to handle this
 - Recognize that these are learnable; you just may not be there yet
 - Get trained in the content and on the skills (T3 on 7/20 7/21& 7/23)
 - Find opportunities for facilitated practices (T3 on 7/22 & 7/24)
 - Find a “mental health mentor,” coach or consultant - just as one would for other elements of one’s professional development
 - Find peer support from others in similar roles at your institution
 - Build an extensive network of referral sources of people who are trained professionals to whom you can send trainees



Communication – It Takes Two

- The **expressor** communicates their message through speech, tone of voice, facial expressions and body language
- The **listener** takes in what is being expressed through words and nonverbal modalities
- The listener may respond to what is said through a further exchange of words and/or through actions, moving the conversation forward. They are then functioning as an expressor.

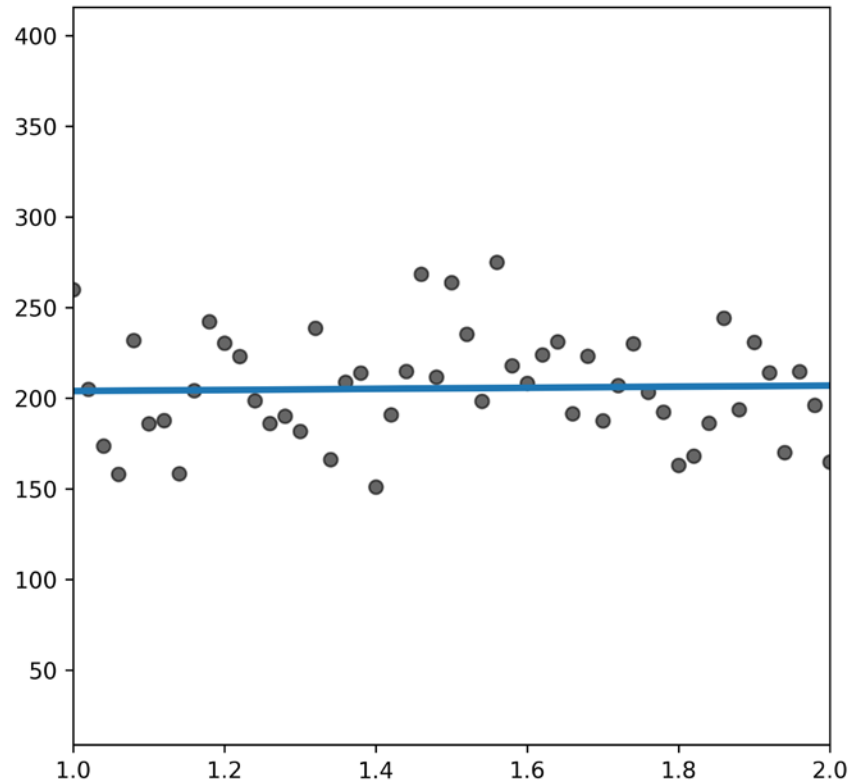


Types of Listening

- **Reflective Listening**
 - Seek to understand the speaker's ideas, words, meaning
 - Offer your understanding back to the speaker for confirmation
- **Active Listening**
 - Listen as above
 - Respond effectively
- **Empathic Listening**
 - Listen as above
 - Respond in ways that help them feel validated and understood
- **Appreciative Listening**
 - Listen for enjoyment of the experience
- **Critical or Evaluative Listening**
 - Listen to evaluate, analyze and critically respond

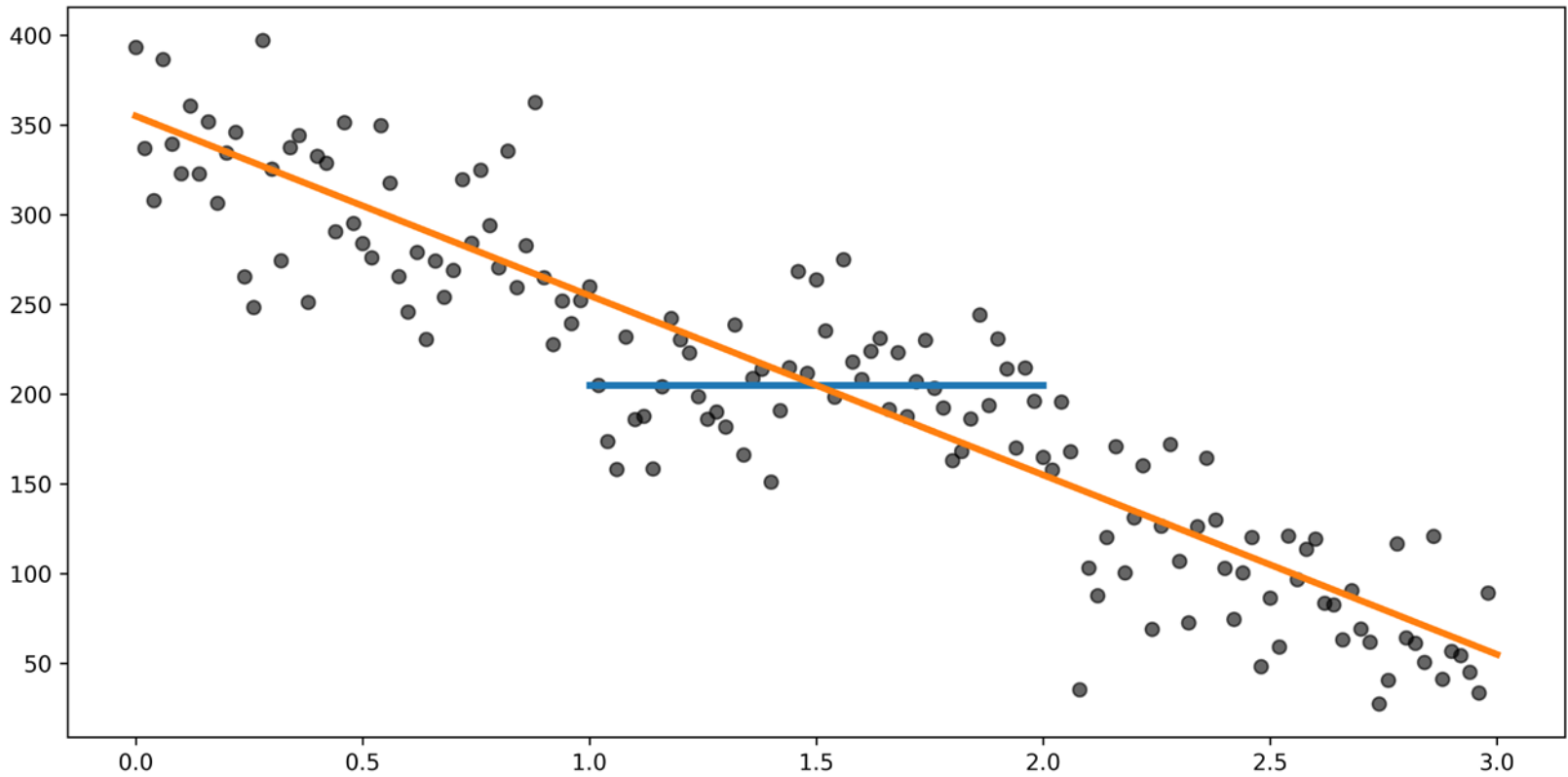


When we listen, we are gathering data





When we listen with intention and attention



we get a more complete and accurate picture.



Listen to Understand

- Listen with the intention to understand and learn
 - Give your full attention and indicate that you are engaged
 - Be *curious* to learn about what they are saying, about their lived experience. Don't assume you already know.
 - Pay attention to the whole person, not just to their scientist or scholar selves
 - Reflect back what you heard to confirm understanding
 - Encourage sharing with open-ended questions
 - Listen across differences - their personal communication style, culture or ethnicity may be different than yours



Focus on the Trainee

- Keep the focus on them, on where they are at the moment
 - Allow them to express, either verbally or nonverbally, whatever emotions may be coming up for them,
 - Acknowledge, validate difficult emotions
 - Allow pauses and time for them to gather their thoughts
 - Allow time and space for them to get to any parts that may be hard to talk about
 - Do not immediately share a story as this discounts *their* experience
 - Do not jump into problem-solving/fix-it mode too quickly, if at all



Helpful Listener Responses

- Be mindful of how you come across in words & expression
- Show appreciation for their trust in you
 - “Thank you for sharing that.”
- Acknowledge the difficulty or challenge of their experience
 - “That must have been really hard for you.”
 - “I’m so sorry that happened to you.”
- Express genuine interest in them
 - “Tell me about the career workshop you went to.”
- Express confidence in them
 - “I really think you can do this; you’ve handled hard things before.”
- Keep the door open
 - Open-ended - “Feel free to come back to talk again.”
 - Scheduled - “Let’s meet again next week, or sooner if you need to.”



Responses That Further Conversation

- Use open and nonjudgmental language
 - Instead of “Oh, you shouldn’t feel...,”
Try, “It is reasonable to feel ... about the review”
 - Instead of “Why in the world did you do that?”
Try, “Can you share your reasoning with me?”
- Be honest and kind, especially when saying hard things
 - “I know this is hard to hear, but it’s important that we discuss what happened.....”
- Help them explore their cognitive distortions
 - “What evidence supports those assumptions? What evidence contradicts them?”
 - “I’m wondering how else you might think about what happened?”

Moving Towards Action

- Remember that not all problems can be solved
 - Nonetheless all experiences can be validated
 - Damage mitigation may be possible
- Help trainees determine any solutions
 - Tap into their own strengths and experiences - “What are some things you’ve done in the past that might help here?”
 - Encourage the use of resources - “Is there any one there that might be helpful?”
- Help trainees determine how do better in the future
 - “What do you think would be a better way to handle this next time?”
 - “We all make mistakes; the key is to learn from them. What might you learn from this?”
- Support trainees in owning the solutions and taking action steps
- Determine what your responsibilities are – and are not
 - Boundaries are essential – but they may be drawn differently for emergency or even urgent situations vs more routine situations



Sometimes We Have to Step In

When a student is having a mental health or life crisis:

- Evaluate the situation
 - Gently ask direct and clarifying questions if possible
- For a psychiatric or medical emergency immediately make appropriate emergency referral
 - Call 911, health crisis line, school's mental health resources,...
 - Call their support person if appropriate
- If it is a nonemergency urgent situation, address the moment, not the underlying stresses
 - Call in resources as appropriate
 - Help them calm and ground themselves
 - Use listening and responding strategies learned today



Making Referrals to Mental Health Services

- Depending on your role/position it may be appropriate for you to make referrals to mental health services, counseling, psychotherapy
 - It may be more appropriate for a PI to make referrals to a school advisor, student health services or EAP than to a therapist
- Be aware of your own feelings and views on mental health services
- Be scrupulous in respecting their privacy regarding all aspects of this
- Ask the trainee about any resources that they are familiar with or have considered
- Discuss what referral options you are aware of that might be relevant
 - Explain what the resources is and what it isn't
 - Normalize counseling as another tool in our wellness tool box
 - Explore barriers they may have to using the resource
- Develop practical strategies with them, help them come up with a plan
 - Outside resources for effective help
 - Accommodations at the workplace or school
- Specifically follow-up with the trainee



Resources

- Know your institutional and community resources
- Important Hotlines
 - Crisis Text Line: text CONNECT to 741741
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
 - 1-800-273-8255
 - On-line Chat: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>
 - LGBTQ: Trevor Project
 - <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>.
 - Text START to 678678
 - Substance Abuse: SAMHASA Hotline: 1-800-662-HELP
 - Trans Lifeline
 - <https://www.translifeline.org/>
 - 877-565-8860



Resources

Understanding Counseling

- <https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/faq/im-nervous-about-starting-therapy-is-that-normal>
- https://www.huffpost.com/entry/11-things-you-must-know-about-starting-therapy_b_12088830
- <https://www.buzzfeed.com/hnigatu/a-beginners-guide-to-starting-therapy>

Communication

- Stone, D. Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most
- Nichols; M. The Lost Art of Listening: How Learning to Listen Can Improve Relationships
- Brown; R. Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead
- Faber, A and Mazlish, E. How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk