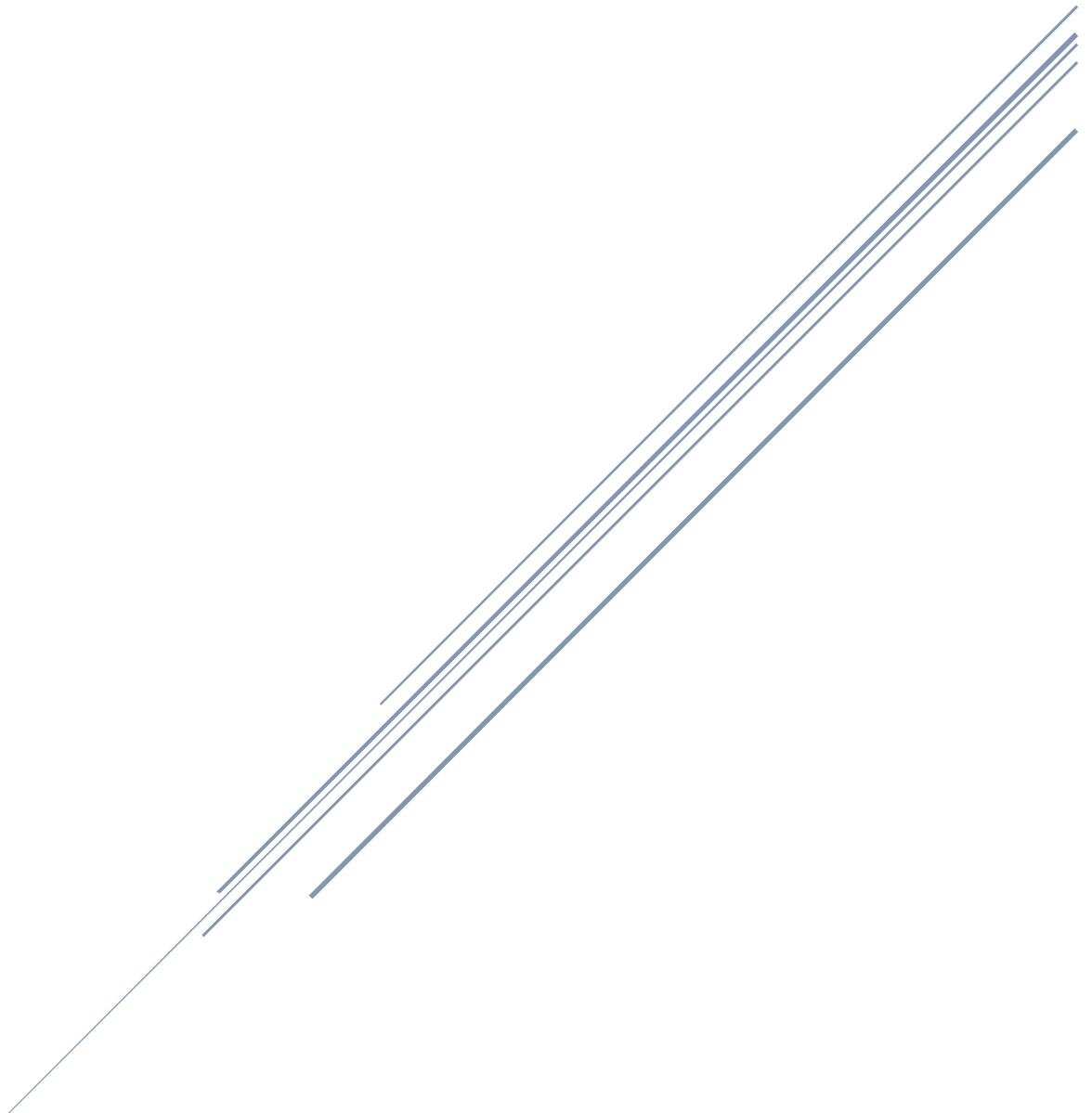


STORYBOARD STARTING A CONVERSATION ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

(Students)



BCcampus Mental Health and Wellness Project

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Accessibility Statement

This self-paced version of [*Capacity to Connect: Supporting Students' Mental Health \(Faculty and Staff\)*](#) has been developed in the [Articulate Rise](#) course authoring system. This course has been designed with accessibility in mind by incorporating the following features:

- All content can be navigated using a keyboard.
- Images have alt-text provided.
- Videos have captions and a transcript is provided.
- Information is not conveyed by colour alone.

Note: Users can zoom in, but the user experience may be compromised.

Known Accessibility Issues and Areas for Improvement

While BCcampus strives to ensure that this resource is as accessible and usable as possible, we might not always get it right. Any issues we identify will be listed below.

Accessibility Standards

[Articulate Rise publishes an Accessibility Conformance Report](#) identifying the degree of conformance with accessibility standards, including [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0](#) level AA.

This Rise course follows all guidelines found in the [BCcampus Accessibility Toolkit \(2nd ed.\), Appendix A: Checklist for Accessibility](#)

The development of the toolkit involved working with students with various print disabilities who provided their personal perspectives and helped test the content.

Course Overview



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In this course, you will learn about mental health and well-being. You will explore different mental health and wellness models and consider the language we use when talking about mental health and mental illness. You'll also examine the stress response and learn more about managing stress and keeping things in balance. Then you'll discover ways to respond in an empathetic way to other students who are struggling with stress and mental health. The course also looks at the importance of maintaining boundaries when supporting others and the value of self-care.

<https://pixabay.com/photos/torrent-river-forest-water-6583626/>

Welcome

In the video below, Jewell Gillies (they/them) and Malusi Mabeleka (he/him) provide an introduction to this course.

[Embed Introduction video]

Land Acknowledgement



<https://pixabay.com/photos/river-rocks-trees-conifer-stones-5765785/>

We start this training by acknowledging the Indigenous territories and the traditional stewards and peoples on whose lands we reside, work, live, and prosper.

We encourage you to be open to traditional ways of knowing and being as well as to honour your own perceptions, needs, and abilities to support good mental health and wellness.

Some questions to consider as you acknowledge your territory:

- What do you do as a good guest here?
- What can you do in your personal and professional roles to contribute to reconciliation?

About This Course

Life as a post-secondary student often brings exciting challenges but also change, uncertainty, and stress as you:

- Balance a busy academic schedule
- Live away from home, often for the first time
- Manage your finances
- Figure out your interests and future career

The stress of post-secondary education is felt by all students at some point, and it can be overwhelming for some. We all have a role to play in our own mental health and supporting others' mental health.

This course focuses on ways you can maintain your own mental wellness and manage stress. To help reduce the stigma that is still associated with mental health and mental illness, you will learn how to talk more openly about mental health and how to use mental health language accurately. This course will also help you develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to support other students' mental health and wellness.

Course Objectives

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Describe what mental wellness is and the importance of balance.
- Define and describe the difference between mental health, mental health problems, and mental illness.
- Use accurate language when talking about mental health and illness.
- Examine different ways we respond to stress, recognizing that stress can be a positive signal to adapt to change.
- Listen and respond to another student who is struggling and know how to refer them to appropriate resources.
- Explain the need for boundaries when supporting others and the importance of self-care.

What This Course Does Not Include

This course provides foundational training in mental health and does not cover suicide awareness, which is a very serious issue that requires more in-depth training. However, you will learn how to refer a student who is facing a mental health emergency or crisis to appropriate resources.

BCcampus has developed foundational training on suicide awareness for students called *Starting a Conversation about Suicide: Foundational Training for Students* (<https://opentextbc.ca/student suicide awareness/>). This training may be available at your institution.

Course Structure

- This course has four modules and will take approximately 60 minutes to complete.
- Each module includes ungraded, short quizzes as well as reflection questions.

Everyone is human and is touched in some way by the topics in this training. At any time, you can pause, take a break, stretch, and ground yourself. You will find other ideas and suggestions in the self-care video in Module 4.

Resources



<https://unsplash.com/photos/UZe35tk5UoA>

In the Resources section at the end of this course, you will find links to:

- A handout of the Wellness Wheel, which includes descriptions and examples of the nine dimensions of wellness.
- A handout outlining different ways we can cope with stress.
- A quick reference guide of mental health resources that includes information on how to respond to a student in distress and refer them to appropriate supports.
- A handout with scenarios of students who are feeling overwhelmed or in distress. Each scenario includes suggestions on how to respond and refer students to services and resources.
- A handout with links to videos, articles, and websites on mental health.

Module 1: Mental Health and Wellness



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/close-up-photo-of-small-waterfalls-1310016/>

Introduction

This module will explore the concepts of mental health and mental illness. You'll examine the different mental health states and the importance of using accurate language to describe mental health. You'll learn about the Wellness Wheel, which is based on many Indigenous holistic perspectives of wellness and is a good tool to help us understand when things are out of balance and affecting your mental health. You'll also consider the mental health experiences of marginalized groups and the barriers many students face when seeking help.

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Define mental health and wellness.
- Use a Wellness Wheel to explore and support mental health and wellness.
- Define and describe the differences between mental health, mental health problems, and mental illnesses.
- Use accurate language when talking about mental health and illness and when describing our emotions and experiences.
- Explain how factors like race, sexual orientation, disability, gender, and other life experiences can affect mental health and the care people receive.

Getting Started: What Do You Know?

This short quiz will help you consider what you know about mental health. Your answers aren't graded and won't be seen by anyone but you.

1. Mental health is a fixed state that stays stable over a lifetime.

True (Incorrect answer)	False (Correct answer)
-------------------------	------------------------

Correct Feedback: That's correct. Our mental health is influenced by many different factors and changes throughout our lives. We can all work to restore our mental health and wellness.

Incorrect Feedback: That's not quite right. Our mental health is influenced by many different factors and changes throughout our lives. We can all work to restore our mental health and wellness.

2. Every year, how many people will experience a mental health problem or illness?

- a) About 5% of people
- b) About 10% of people
- c) About 20% to 25% of people (Correct)
- d) More than 50% of people

Correct Feedback: That is correct. About 20% to 25% of people will experience a mental health problem or illness each year.

Incorrect Feedback: That's incorrect. About 20% to 25% of people will experience a mental health problem or illness each year.

3. People with a mental illness only experience poor mental health.

True (Incorrect answer)	False (Correct answer)
-------------------------	------------------------

Correct Feedback: That's right. People with a mental illness can and often do experience good mental health.

Incorrect Feedback: That's not quite right. People with a mental illness can and often do experience good mental health.

4. When are people at highest risk for developing mental illness?

- a) In their middle school or early high school years
- b) In their late teens and early twenties (Correct)
- c) In their mid-thirties
- d) In their sixties

Correct feedback: That's correct. People in their late teens and early twenties are at highest risk for developing mental illness.

Incorrect Feedback: That's incorrect. People in their late teens and early twenties are at highest risk for mental illness.

What is Mental Health?



<https://pixabay.com/photos/people-talking-men-male-1164926/>

The Public Health Agency of Canada defines mental health this way: "The capacity of every individual to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance their ability to enjoy life and deal with challenges. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections, and personal dignity." (Public Health Agency of Canada, n.d.)

Mental health is essential to overall health and influenced by many different factors. We can all work to restore our mental health and wellness.

What Contributes to Mental Wellness?

Many factors influence our mental wellness as the Wellness Wheel model below illustrates. The Wellness Wheel aligns with many Indigenous traditional perspectives that view individuals holistically, recognizing that wellness means balancing the physical, emotional, academic/career, social, creative, spiritual, environmental, financial, and intellectual aspects of your life.

The Wellness Wheel, created by Jewell Gillies from the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nation in B.C., can be used in different ways. You may choose to explore all nine aspects now or select a few to consider. You may continue with the course and return to it later. You may also download a copy from the Resources section. There are no right or wrong ways to use it.



(Wheel with hot spots)

Select each + button on the wheel to explore the different dimensions.

Physical wellness: Taking care of your body through physical activity, nutrition, sleep, and mental well-being. For example:

- Engaging in some form of physical activity every day for at least 30 minutes
- Eating a variety of healthy foods
- Getting an adequate amount of sleep every night (7–9 hours)

Emotional wellness: Making time to relax, reduce stress, and take care of yourself. Paying attention to both positive and negative feelings and understanding how to handle these emotions. For example:

- Practising mindfulness
- Starting a gratitude journal
- Paying attention to self-talk and shift toward positive self-talk
- Tracking emotions daily to look for patterns and possible triggers

Academic/career wellness: Expanding your knowledge and creating strategies to support continued learning. For example:

- Setting up academic goals
- Creating a study schedule and plan ahead
- Connecting with a mentor to further your understanding of career ideas
- Reviewing your short- and long-term career goals regularly to make sure you are on track

Social wellness: Taking care of your relationships and society by building healthy, nurturing, and supportive relationships and fostering a genuine connection with those around you. For example:

- Making an effort to keep in touch with individuals who are supportive
- Practising active listening skills
- Joining a club or an organization to meet new people
- Being mindful of commitments you make – knowing your limitations (don't spread yourself too thin)

Creative wellness: Valuing and actively participating in arts and cultural experiences as a means to understand and appreciate the world around you. For example:

- Playing an instrument or make music
- Engaging in the visual arts
- Trying creative writing
- Engaging in creativity through movement (dance)

Spiritual wellness: Taking care of your values and beliefs and creating purpose in your life. For example:

- Volunteering
- Meditating
- Expressing gratitude

- Practising forgiveness and compassion for yourself and others

Environmental wellness: Taking care of what is around you. Living in harmony with the Earth by taking action to protect it and respecting nature and all species. For example:

- Spending time in nature
- When possible, travelling by walking, riding your bike, or taking public transportation
- Recycling and composting
- Using reusable water bottles and shopping bags

Financial wellness: Learning how to successfully manage finances to be financially responsible and independent. For example:

- Creating and maintain a budget
- Paying your bills on time
- Packing your lunch to limit how often you eat out
- Meal planning before grocery shopping

Intellectual wellness: Being open to exploring new concepts, gaining new skills, and seeking creative and stimulating activities. For example:

- Trying a new activity at school or in the community
- Exploring things that you are curious about
- Reading and writing for pleasure

Using the Wellness Wheel

In this video, Jewell and Malusi discuss different ways you can use the Wellness Wheel to support your health and well-being.

[Embed Intro to Traditional Healing Practices video]

Mental Health and Mental Illness



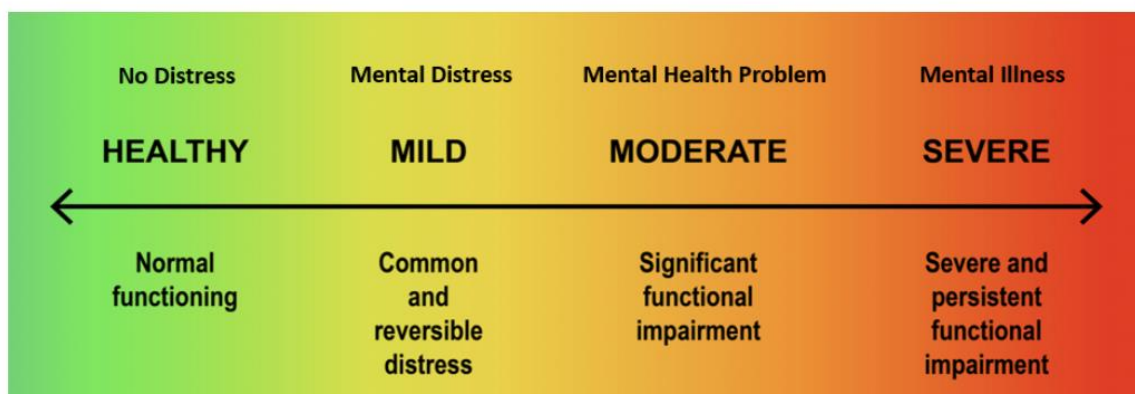
<https://unsplash.com/photos/dGxOgeXAXm8>

Below are two mental health models that illustrate different mental health states. It's important to understand these different states because they will be managed or supported differently.

Mental Health Continuum

The Mental Health Continuum is one way to think about our mental health. We all experience changes in our mood, changes in our level of anxiety – from life stressors or from crises – and those changes can be considered on a spectrum or a continuum.

Select the + button to learn more.



Text for hotspots

Healthy (No distress)

- We have times when our health is good, we can cope with whatever comes our way, and we can do the things we need or want to do. We would describe that as healthy functioning.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking back to the Wellness Wheel, this is when everything is mostly in balance in our lives.
<p>Mild (Mental distress)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We all have times when we feel down, stressed, angry, or overwhelmed. These feelings are common and to be expected at various times. These feelings usually pass – they are reversible. A person may just need someone to talk to and to be reminded that they are resilient and have other strengths, even though they may be struggling in one part of their life.
<p>Moderate (Mental health problem)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health problems arise when a person faces a larger stressor than usual. This might be the death of a loved one, a relationship breakup or financial pressures. A person with a mental health problem experiences a disruption in their ability to function: trouble sleeping or eating, withdrawing, having negative thoughts about life. This person may need extra help, such as counselling and support from family, friends, and their community. Medication or long-term psychotherapy is usually not necessary.
<p>Severe (Mental illness)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental illness arises from a complex interplay between a person’s genetic makeup and their environment. A mental illness (also called a mental disorder) is a medical condition diagnosed by a trained health professional using internationally established diagnostic criteria. For example: anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). People with mental illnesses will require care from properly trained health care providers.

Dual Continuum Model

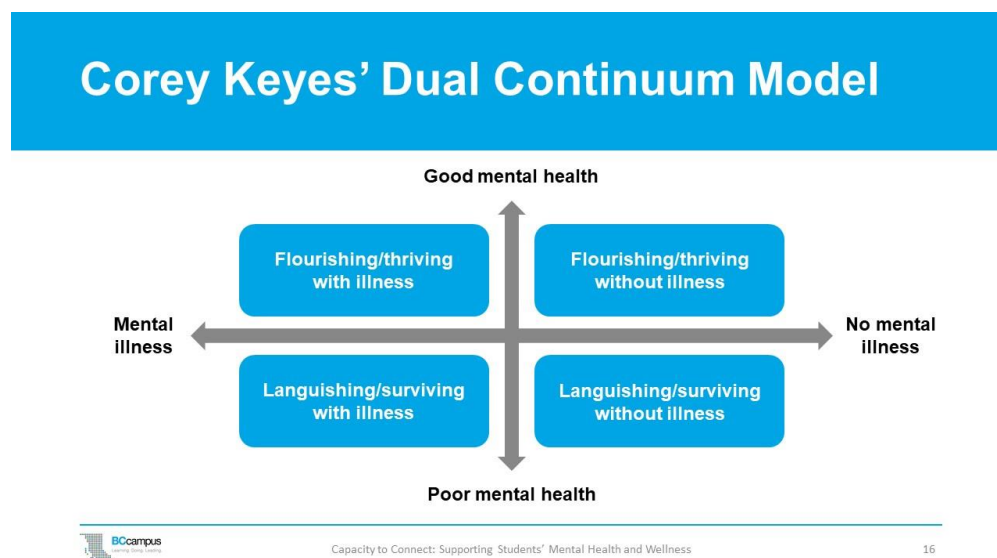
Mental health is more than the absence of mental illness. It includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

It is influenced by many factors, and it affects how we handle the normal stresses of life and relate to others.

The Corey Keyes Dual Continuum Model below illustrates the intersections of mental health and mental illness.

It shows how a person diagnosed with a mental illness can have good mental health and be flourishing and thriving. Likewise, a person can be languishing or experiencing poor mental health but not be diagnosed with a mental illness.

Select the **+** button on each quadrant to learn more.



Text for hotspots	
People flourish or thrive while living with mental illness.	People flourish or thrive while living without mental illness.
People languish or survive while living with mental illness.	People languish or survive while living without mental illness.

Using Mental Health Terms Accurately



<https://pixabay.com/photos/people-students-university-campus-6027028/>

When we talk about mental health and mental illness, we sometimes use words loosely and interchangeably so that they can start to lose their true meaning. Sometimes we use mental illness terms to describe mild stress, and this is inaccurate.

Consider the following sentences. Are the emotions expressed in an accurate way?

"All my friends are going out tonight, but I have to study for my final exam. I'm so depressed!"

☐ Yes

☐ No

"I'm having a panic attack because I have three papers due next week."

☐ Yes

☐ No

"I've just colour-coded all my books and files because I am so OCD!"

☐ Yes

☐ No

"I have so much going on in my life that I'm totally ADHD."

☐ Yes

☐ No

"That exam was so hard and stressful it gave me PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder)."

☐ Yes

☐ No

It's very common for people to use mental health terms in everyday speech despite these terms having precise meanings that are tied to specific clinical diagnoses of mental illnesses.

We need to use words carefully. For example:

- Depression is not the same as having a bad day.
- Having a panic attack is not the same thing as feeling afraid.
- OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder) is not the same as being organized.
- ADHD (attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder) is not the same thing as being hyperactive.
- PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) is not the same as feeling upset or stressed about an exam.

It's important to find and use words that accurately describe our experiences. Feeling sad, overwhelmed, or nervous is different from living with a clinical condition.

Common Mental Health Terms



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/person-holding-orange-pen-1925536/>

Because it is so important to recognize mental health conditions for what they truly mean, below is a list of some of the more common terms heard on a post-secondary campus, as well as their definitions.

These terms and definitions are adapted from the American Psychiatric Association, 2013 and are based on information from the DSM-5, a manual developed primarily in the United States. Other classification systems for mental health conditions include the ICD (global), the CCMD (China), and the GLDP (Latin America).

Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Body signals or sensations that are generally unpleasant and often linked with thoughts that make a person feel apprehensive or fearful.
---------	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person with anxiety will often also think that bad things may happen even when they are not likely to happen.
Anxiety disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with an anxiety disorder will experience things like mental and physical tension about their surroundings, or apprehension (negative expectations) about the future, and will have unrealistic fears (see anxiety). • It is the amount and intensity of the anxiety sensations and how they interfere with life that makes them disorders.
Attention deficit hyper-activity disorder/attention deficit disorder (ADHD/ADD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mental disorder that is usually lifelong and is associated with a delay in the brain maturing and how it processes information. • People with ADHD usually have varying degrees of difficulty paying attention, and may be impulsive or overactive • This disorder often causes problems at home, in school, and in social situations.
Depression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression is more than just sadness. • People with depression may experience a lack of interest and pleasure in daily activities, significant weight loss or gain, insomnia or excessive sleeping, lack of energy, inability to concentrate, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide.
Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A type of mental disorder in which people experience persistent unwanted and recurring thoughts (obsessions) and/or persistent and unwanted repetitive behaviours (compulsions).
Panic attack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sudden experience of intense fear or psychological and physical discomfort that develops for no apparent reason and that includes physical symptoms such as dizziness, trembling, sweating, difficulty breathing, or increased heart rate.
Panic disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person with panic disorder has panic attacks, expects and fears the attacks, and avoids going to places where escape may be difficult if a panic attack happens. • Panic disorder can be effectively treated with psychological therapies or medications.
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mental disorder that can happen to people who experience an extremely scary, painful, or horrific event in which they felt scared or helpless and during which they were in danger of death or severe injury. • People who develop PTSD will have flashback memories of or nightmares about the event and will avoid things that remind them of it. • PTSD can be effectively treated with psychological interventions or medications.

Personal Use of Mental Health Terms



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/a-men-and-women-working-together-7869021/>

This video explores ways to be mindful when using mental health terms.

[Embed Personal Use of Mental Health Terms video]

Mental Health Statistics



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/26346696@N02/33898761790/in/photolist-243Avfr-213DfWz-u1x5T-Kz5bL3-23CVjUW-ZHALBS-YRLUuW-2koMDXn-23ELqUZ-2jach2T-25sSUuQ-TokDpb-4Tjki4-24g9mu8-bvcFs7-guWBQg-ZjP5Zf-2hAjVoQ-EapdV2-575Qpz-24HEPPt-28Me4cs-D6dXGZ-2jB8geN-2ek13qG-Hu5Ltx-Hu5LAB-2mAfNGh-MnngDD-2jy8nXp-YuaPYC-75toHv-YsaVrR-dk5WzT-G2Zv86-icgCFN-TDw1Sb-4JhPQ6-2axtS1B-2g4jEDP-ydhd-89w12F-hZdFP-7rec9K-2Q2CWy-2maw8gG-2g9v1QP-2g9v1PX-2g9vsxw-2g9v46T>

Every year, about one in five people will experience a mental health problem or illness. (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2012)

(Quote imposed over picture if possible)

People in their late teens and early twenties are at the highest risk for mental illness; in these years, first episodes of psychiatric disorders like major depression are most likely to appear (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2012).

According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, only one in three people (and only one in four children or youth) who experience a mental health problem or illness say that they have sought and received services and treatment.

There are many people who need treatment and support who are not seeking help.

Marginalized Groups and Mental Health



<https://unsplash.com/photos/ABGaVhJxwDQ>

When we talk about mental health, we also need to be aware of factors like race, sexual orientation, social class, age, disability, and gender and the unique life experiences and stressors that accompany them.

Some students face inequality, discrimination, and violence because of their race, gender orientation, or disability, and students who are marginalized often experience greater mental health burdens and face more barriers to accessing care.

As well the ongoing trauma that marginalized groups experience in their everyday lives and through institutions and services may affect how, when, and where they choose to look for support. For example, Indigenous people have historically had negative experiences with education and healthcare services due to residential schools. For this reason, they may be hesitant to access this kind of support.

When we become aware of systemic discrimination and the oppressions that marginalized groups face, we can work to provide a culturally safe environment for all students, where they feel respected, valued, and heard.

International students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are living far from family and friends. • May have very high tuition fees and be struggling financially. • May feel pressure to succeed academically. • Could struggle with language and adjusting to a new culture. • May be from a culture in which mental illness is stigmatized and very rarely discussed. • Do not always know of the support systems available to them.
Indigenous students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are often living away from a community that shares the same culture and spiritual beliefs. • Have likely faced racism and discrimination. • May be the first generation to pursue post-secondary education. • May miss their home, family, Elders, and community. • May live with the impacts and ongoing trauma of residential schools and other colonial policies. • May lack trust in educational and health care institutions due to negative or traumatic experiences.
LGBTQ2S + (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit) students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May experience homophobia, transphobia, negative stereotypes, and rejection when they openly express who they are. • May have unique and complex health needs. • Often lack trust in health care institutions due to negative or traumatic experiences. • Are at a much higher risk for mental health disorders, substance abuse, and suicide (U.S. Department of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, n.d.). • May experience increased stress navigating mundane and daily experiences such as safely using the

	bathroom or being referred to by the correct pronouns.
Students with a disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face challenges because people are often not aware that disabilities include physical, cognitive, sensory, mental health. • Often experience barriers and difficulties with accommodations and accessibility. • May have to combat negative stereotypes, bias, and discrimination.
Racialized students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have likely faced racism and discrimination multiple times in their lives. • Often experience microaggressions or subtle, everyday interactions that demean or put down a person. • May lack trust in educational and healthcare institutions due to medical racism and negative or traumatic experiences.
Socio-economic status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students from lower-income families are especially vulnerable to financial uncertainties and pressures. • Many are frequently juggling work with classes and can't rely on financial support from their families. • High costs of rent make it hard to find appropriate accommodation so worry about being homeless is a significant concern. • They may be the first person in their family to attend a post-secondary institution and may have very little knowledge of the resources available.

What We Need to Keep in Mind



<https://pixabay.com/photos/people-girls-women-students-2557396/>

While educating ourselves about mental health is an important component of supporting others, it is also important to learn more about your own unconscious biases and the impacts of systemic discrimination and historical oppression.

We need to understand and acknowledge oppressions faced by Indigenous people, people who are LGBTQ2S+, people with disabilities, and people from racialized and other marginalized groups. It is helpful to know the campus and community resources for students from marginalized groups.

Connecting an Indigenous student with someone from Indigenous services or introducing an LGBTQ2S+ student to a pride centre can help to reduce feelings of isolation and help students feel heard and supported. You'll learn about supports and referrals in the next module.

By providing a culturally safe environment, we can all play a role in ensuring that each student feels that their personal, social, and cultural identity is respected and valued.

Module 1: Knowledge Check

1. Consider what you've learned in this module and select statements that are true.

- ☐ Mental health is a fixed state that doesn't change. (Incorrect)
- ☐ A person can live with mental illness and have good mental health. (Correct)
- ☐ Mental health is essential to overall health and influenced by many factors. (Correct)
- ☐ About 1 in 5 people will experience a mental health problem or illness. (Correct)

Correct feedback: That's correct. Mental health changes over time. Mental health is essential to our overall health and is influenced by many factors. About 1 in 5 people will experience a mental health problem or illness. People living with mental illness can have good mental health.

Incorrect feedback: That's not quite right. Mental health changes over time. Mental health is essential to our overall health and is influenced by many factors. About 1 in 5 people will experience a mental health problem or illness. People living with mental illness can have good mental health.

2. The Wellness Wheel: (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Can be used to diagnose mental illness. (Incorrect)
- ☐ Aligns with many Indigenous traditional perspectives that view individuals holistically. (Correct)
- ☐ Identifies a person's temperament. (Incorrect)
- ☐ Helps visualize areas of life that are in and out of balance. (Correct)
- ☐ May remind people of their strength and resilience. (Correct)

Correct feedback: That's correct. The Wellness Wheel aligns with many Indigenous traditional perspectives that view individuals holistically, recognizing that wellness means balancing many aspects of our lives. It can help us see areas of balance and imbalance but also reveal our resilience. It's not a diagnostic tool for mental illness or a person's temperament.

Incorrect feedback: That's not quite right. The Wellness Wheel aligns with many Indigenous traditional perspectives that view individuals holistically, recognizing that wellness means balancing many aspects of our lives. It can help us see areas of balance and imbalance but also reveal our resilience. It's not a diagnostic tool for mental illness or a person's temperament.

3. Consider these statements and select the ones you think are accurate:

- ☐ Feeling upset after a bad day is the same thing as feeling depressed. (Incorrect)
- ☐ OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder) is not the same as being organized. (Correct)
- ☐ People who fidget and move around have ADHD. (Incorrect)
- ☐ Feeling upset and stressed about an exam is the same thing as having a panic attack. (Incorrect)

Correct feedback: That's correct. Depression, ADHD, and panic attacks are specific mental health diagnoses and are not the same thing as feeling sad, needing to move around, or feeling upset and stressed.

Incorrect feedback: That's not quite right. Depression, ADHD, and panic attacks are specific mental health diagnoses and are not the same thing as feeling sad, needing to move around, or feeling upset and stressed.

4. Most people experiencing a mental illness receive treatment and services.

True (Incorrect answer)	False (Correct answer)
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Correct feedback: That's correct. Only one in three people (and only one in four children or youth) who experience a mental health problem or illness say that they have sought and received services and treatment.

Incorrect feedback: That's not quite right. Only one in three people (and only one in four children or youth) who experience a mental health problem or illness say that they have sought and received services and treatment.

End of Module 1

In this module, you learned about concepts of mental health and mental illness as well as different models of mental health. In this section, you will review the key concepts learned. You'll also find some reflection questions we encourage you to consider before moving on.

You must select the boxes on the left to continue to the next module.

- ☐ Mental health is the capacity of every individual to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance their ability to enjoy life and deal with challenges.
- ☐ The Wellness Wheel aligns with many Indigenous traditional perspectives that view individuals holistically, recognizing that wellness means being in a state of balance across many dimensions.
- ☐ Mental health models, like the Mental Health Continuum and the Dual Continuum, help us to differentiate between different mental health states. It's important to understand these differences because different mental health states should be managed or supported differently.
- ☐ People living with mental illness may have good mental health and people with no mental illness may have poor mental health. The Dual Continuum Model helps us understand how mental health, mental illness, flourishing, and languishing interact.
- ☐ Using mental health terms accurately is important and we can all strive to find the right words to describe our experiences.
- ☐ Inequality, discrimination, and violence because of race, sexual orientation, disability, or other life experiences impact mental and physical health, creating mental health burdens and barriers to accessing care.

Reflection



<https://unsplash.com/photos/RETiioUKRZw>

- What thoughts have come up as you learn about the impact of mental health issues on post-secondary students?
- As you think about students you know, what stresses might be specific to certain groups?
- How do you see your role in creating culturally safe environments for everyone at your institution?

Module 1: References and Attributions

References

Public Health Agency of Canada. (n.d.). Mental health and wellness. <https://cbpp-pcpe.phac-aspc.gc.ca/public-health-topics/mental-health-and-wellness>

U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). *Healthy people 2020: Lesbian, gay, and transgender health*. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-health>

Attributions

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Dual-Continuum Model © BCcampus is based on the conceptual work of Corey Keys and a diagram created by Canadian Association College University Student Services and Canadian Mental Health

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Mental Health Continuum Model is based on the University of Victoria continuum of mental health, which is adapted from Queen's University continuum of mental health and the Canada Department of National Defence continuum of mental health.

Module 2: Let's Talk About Stress



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/water-flowing-down-on-mossy-rock-2957464/>

Introduction

In this module, you'll learn about stress and how it can help you meet the challenges of life as a post-secondary student. You'll also explore the role of resilience and discover practical ways to take charge of your health and well-being.

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Explain how stress can be helpful.
- Describe how stress interacts with your ability to perform.
- Explain the role of resilience in mental health and wellness.
- Identify steps for managing stress and maintaining your overall health.

Rethinking Stress



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/indian-woman-and-man-writing-posters-at-table-in-light-office-4308164/>

One of the most common challenges students face is stress.

However, the stress response is normal. It's a signal to your body to prepare for challenges, which are all part of learning and growing.

Each time we adapt to a daily stressor, we develop the skills to be more resilient and cope with stress the next time.

In other words, you can make stress work for you and help support your growth and resilience.

Why Stress Is Good For You

This short video from *Scientific American* shows how stress can be viewed as helpful.

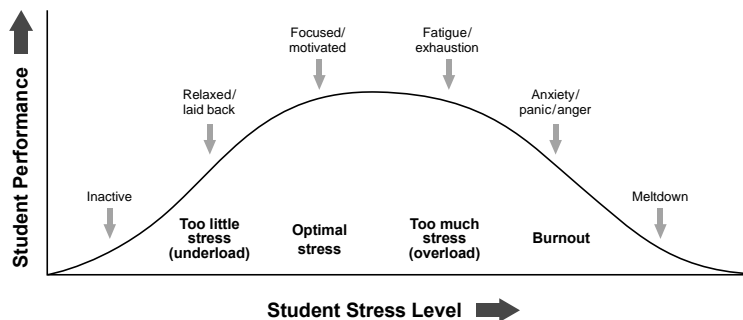


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlAl_FN3r0k

The Stress Curve

It can be helpful to consider how stress levels interact with our ability to perform.

Select the + to learn more about the different parts of the Stress Curve.



+ Inactive: Stress is low but so is our performance. We may be bored.

+ Relaxed/laid back: Stress is still low, but we start to feel more alert and focused.

+ Focused/motivated: This is the optimal balance between stress and performance. We are motivated and we feel capable of dealing with the demands of life.

+ Fatigue/exhaustion: Performance demands have become too high or have been going on for too long. We become fatigued and experience a cascade of stress hormones that can wear us down.

+ Anxiety/panic/anger: We are overwhelmed by stress, which can affect our health, relationships, work, and general enjoyment of life.

+ Meltdown: Prolonged stress can often lead to burnout, serious illness, or mental health problems.

The Stress Curve shows us that a certain amount of stress can be helpful. In the following sections, you'll learn more about ways to keep stress levels in the optimal zone – as well as what to do if stress becomes overwhelming.

The Role of Resilience



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/people-holding-hands-7111462/>

Resilience means being able to adapt to life's challenges and setbacks.

Resilience is	Resilience is not
Being able to adapt to challenges and setbacks	Avoiding difficult situations
Noticing when stress appears and taking steps to manage it	Ignoring the challenges we face

When something is out of balance in our lives or we're experiencing stress, resilience helps us to shift back toward balance and mental wellness.

The Stress Curve helps us recognize that some stress can be a good thing. The Wellness Wheel, which we looked at in Module 1, can help us recognize what might be causing stress or pressure in our lives. It also reminds us of our own resilience and strengths; while we may be struggling in one area, we may be doing well in many other areas.

Traditional Health Practices

In this video, Jewell shares some traditional healing practices of the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation (Ukwana'lis, Kingcome Inlet, B.C.).

[Embed Traditional Practices video]

Making Stress Work for You

How can we help ourselves and others who are experiencing the stress response?

The Wellness Wheel helps us to identify what might be out of balance and causing us stress. There are also three important steps to remember when we want to make stress work for us.

Select each number below to learn more.



1. Here are some ways to reframe stress and make it work for you:

- Think of stress as a signal for your body and brain to adapt to changes in your environment and prepare for a challenge: “My body and brain are getting me ready to face this challenge” or “I am getting ready for an important task.”
- Identify the source of your stress response. Refer to the Wellness Wheel to identify what may be out of balance.
- Make a plan. Use past experiences or brainstorm new ways to approach a difficult situation. For example, if your studies are the source of your stress response, access support and resources to develop your learning strategies.
- Discuss the situation with friends and family and ask for help, if needed.
- Apply your solutions to the problem.

2. We can learn to develop and apply good coping strategies to help us before, during, or after a stressful experience. These strategies include:

- Considering solutions to the problem.
- Connecting with your social support.
- Practising healthy habits for sleeping, eating, and physical activity.

There are also things you can do on a daily basis to help you feel ready to face the various challenges in school, work, and life. For example:

- Focus on getting enough sleep.
- Fuel up on healthy foods.
- Exercise – walk, stretch, go to the gym, dance, or do yoga.
- Make time to unwind: listen to music, draw, read, garden, laugh with friends. There are many possibilities.
- Stay connected or get involved: call friends or family, volunteer, join a club.

3. This box breathing exercise is a good stress-reduction technique. It can help bring your heart rate back to normal, so you feel a little more relaxed. Here's how you do it:

If possible, sit and close your eyes. If it's not possible to sit, you can just focus on your breathing to calm yourself.

- Step 1: Inhale (preferably through your nose) for a count of four.
- Step 2: Hold your breath for a count of four. You're not trying to deprive yourself of air; you're just giving the air a few seconds to fill your lungs.
- Step 3: Exhale slowly through your mouth for a count of four.
- Step 4: Pause for a count of four before breathing again.

Repeat this process as many times as you can. Even 30 seconds of deep breathing will help you feel more relaxed and in control.

You might want to explore apps such as Headspace, Calm, and Insight Timer that provide guided or unguided mindfulness options.

Taking Charge of Your Health

This video describes five simple steps you can take to support your overall health and wellbeing.

[Embed Taking Charge of Your Health video]

Module 2: Knowledge Check

1. Stress is a signal that: (Select all that apply)

- ☐ You can't do a task. (Incorrect)
- ☐ Your body is preparing to meet a challenge. (Correct)
- ☐ Parts of your life may be out of balance. (Correct)
- ☐ You aren't managing your overall health. (Incorrect)

Correct feedback: That's correct. We all experience stress no matter how healthy we are. Stress is a signal to your body to prepare for a new challenge. However, stress can also be a signal to check in on our lives, perhaps using the Wellness Wheel, to see what parts are in or out of balance.

Incorrect feedback: That's not quite right. We all experience stress no matter how healthy we are. Stress is a signal to your body to prepare for a new challenge. However, stress can also be a signal to check in on our lives, perhaps using the Wellness Wheel, to see what parts are in or out of balance.

2. Resilience helps us to: (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Avoid difficult situations. (Incorrect)
- ☐ Adapt to challenges and setbacks. (Correct)
- ☐ Notice our stress and take steps to manage it. (Correct)
- ☐ Ignore problems in our life. (Incorrect)

Correct feedback: That's correct. Resilience means being able to adapt to life's challenges and setbacks. When we're experiencing stress, resilience helps us to shift back toward balance and mental wellness.

Incorrect feedback: That's not quite right. Resilience means being able to adapt to life's challenges and setbacks — not avoid or ignore challenges. When we're experiencing stress, resilience helps us to shift back toward balance and mental wellness.

3. What core strategies help people maintain good overall health? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Activities that give you a sense of purpose, such as helping others
- ☐ Good nutrition
- ☐ Sleep
- ☐ Strong social connections
- ☐ Exercise

Correct Feedback: That's correct. Research shows that all five strategies can help us attain and maintain physical and mental health.

Incorrect Feedback: That's not quite right. Research shows that all five strategies can help us attain and maintain physical and mental health.

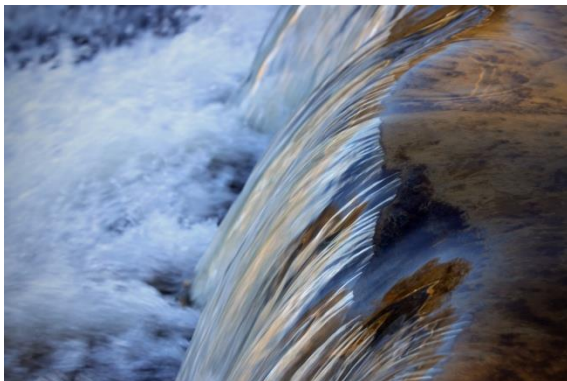
End of Module 2

In this module, you learned about the role of stress and ways to manage stress to maintain good health. In this section, you will review the key concepts learned. You'll also find some reflection questions we encourage you to consider before moving on.

You must select the boxes on the left to continue to the next module.

- ☐ The stress response is normal — it's a signal to your body to prepare for challenges, which are part of learning and growing.
- ☐ When we adapt to a stressor, we develop the skills to be more resilient and cope with stress the next time.
- ☐ The Stress Curve helps us recognize that some stress can be a good thing.
- ☐ The Wellness Wheel can also help us recognize what might be causing stress or pressure in our lives. It also reminds us of our own resilience and strengths.
- ☐ Resilience means being able to adapt to life's challenges and setbacks.
- ☐ To make stress work for you, it's helpful to (1) reframe stress as a signal to adapt, (2) apply effective coping strategies, and (3) try different stress-reduction techniques, such as box breathing.
- ☐ Research shows five core strategies help us maintain good health: sleep, exercise, good nutrition, strong social connections, and activities that give you a sense of purpose, such as helping others.

Reflection



<https://unsplash.com/photos/RETiioUKRZw>

- How have your ideas about stress changed?
- What strategies could you use to manage your stress effectively?
- Are there ways you might encourage your peers to engage in activities that help them manage stress and maintain good health?

Module 2: References and Attributions

References

Ohrnberger, J. Fichera E., & Sutton, M. (2017). The relationship between physical and mental health: A mediation analysis. *Social Science and Medicine*, 195. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.11.008> (CC BY 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>))

Attributions

Why Stress Is Good for You – Instant Egghead #40 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZIAI_FN3r0k) by Scientific American (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_xYMXx_-mAzheKyEtwCAQ). Standard YouTube License.

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Module 3: Helping Other Students



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/long-exposure-photo-of-river-near-trees-2745262/>

Introduction

This module looks at how to respond empathetically to a person who is stressed or in distress. You'll learn steps for supporting and referring students to appropriate resources, while maintaining healthy boundaries. The module also looks at what to do if a student doesn't want help.

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Describe the role of empathy when responding to someone in distress.
- Describe how to respond empathetically.
- Identify support services on campus and in the community where you can refer a student.
- Explain what to do if a student won't seek help.

The Role of Empathy



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/man-and-woman-sitting-together-in-front-of-table-951290/>

Think back to times when you were mildly or moderately distressed and reached out to others for support. What did you find helpful in their responses?

When reflecting on this question, you may discover that empathy is key to a helpful response. The role of an empathetic listener is not to “fix” the person or tell them how to respond. Instead, it is to listen and try to help them find appropriate support.

This short video from well-known sociologist Brené Brown demonstrates how to respond in a helpful and empathetic way.



(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ewgu369Jw>).

Responding Empathetically



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/thoughtful-diverse-female-students-on-staircase-5538313/>

There are no scripts for responding empathetically. Instead, you'll want to:

- Be yourself and be authentic – and this can include being honest when you're not sure what to say.
- Listen without judgment. Often it's not the things we say that make the difference, it's the things that we allow others to say that makes room for life-affirming options to come forth.
- Know that just being there, giving support, and offering a listening ear can help create a turning point for a peer who is struggling.

Steps to Take When Helping Others

When others are experiencing stress, there are some steps you can take to help support them:

1. Listen actively.
2. Respond with empathy and understanding. It helps to normalize stress as part of the university experience.
3. Ask an open-ended question to help the other person process and understand their situation. (This is to help the person better understand their own situation, and not necessarily for you to better understand).

These first three steps may be all that are required. Sometimes connecting with someone else, feeling heard and understood, and having an opportunity to verbalize their struggles is enough to help a person move ahead.

But a person might need some help in identifying the next steps. In this case, you may want to review some coping strategies (refer to the Wellness Wheel for ideas) and identify the next steps (such as talking to a counsellor).

Referring to Support Services

Often a few minutes of effective listening are enough to help another student feel cared about. But sometimes another student's problems are more than you are able to help them with.

It is important to remember that you are not expected to solve another person's problems, and you are never expected to be a counsellor. Post-secondary institutions have a range of services and supports for students and the province also has a number of mental health and crisis lines.

Below are some of the services available throughout the province at most campuses.

Campus Support Services	Provincial Support and Crisis Lines	Provincial Supports for Indigenous Students
<p>Counselling services help students manage personal, academic, and life concerns.</p> <p>Campus security helps coordinate responses to student emergencies and crises.</p> <p>Indigenous student centres offer programs, mentorship, and a gathering place. They may</p>	<p><u>Mental Health Support Line:</u> 310-6789 (no need for area code)</p> <p><u>Here2Talk:</u> 1-877-857-3397 (a 24-hour phone and chat counselling support for B.C. post-secondary students.) Services are also available through their website and their app.</p>	<p><u>KUU-US Crisis Response Services:</u> 1-800-588-8717 (1-800-KUU-US17) – provides culturally safe support, 24/7, for Indigenous people in B.C.</p> <p>The <u>First Nations Health Authority</u> website lists Indigenous resources.</p>

<p>have an Elder available to talk to students.</p> <p>Health services offer health and mental health care for students.</p> <p>International student services help students with personal or academic issues, study and work permits, and visa applications.</p> <p>Accessible learning centres provide services, coordinate academic accommodations and act as a resource for the community.</p> <p>Financial aid helps students needing financial support for their education.</p> <p>Campus crisis line – Some larger universities may have a crisis line; otherwise, see the provincial crisis lines listed in the next column.</p>	<p>B.C Suicide Line: 1-800-784-2433 (1-800-SUICIDE)</p> <p>Crisis Services Canada: 1.833.456.4566 (24 hours; no long-distance charge) or text 45645 (available 4 p.m. to 12 a.m. ET)</p>	
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If you are concerned for a student's immediate safety

If it's an emergency, such as the student has taken pills, is experiencing psychosis, or is a danger to themselves or others, **call 911 and campus security or follow the procedures required by your institution.**

If it's not an emergency, but you are concerned about another student, you could offer to help the student access support services. You may also offer to walk them to counselling services or provide information about provincial support and crisis lines.

Students may feel intimidated about visiting a healthcare professional for the first time. Here are some ideas you can share with them about what to do before an appointment.

Appointment with a Counsellor

- Before you go to your first appointment, spend some time thinking about your goals and what you would like to work on in the session. It's okay if you don't know what you want to work on. Your counsellor can help you figure it out.
- Here are some sample goals for the session:
 - Learn new ways to cope with anxiety

- Explore ways to manage stress
- Improve communication in relationships
- Explore meaningful career paths

Appointment with a Doctor or Nurse (Health Services)


For your first appointment, make sure you bring the following:



- Your BC Services Care Card or other provincial health care card if you have one (if you're a Canadian student)
- Insurance documents if you have them (if you're an international student)
- Your vaccination history if you have it
- Any other relevant medical documents

Understanding Your Role

It's not always easy to understand your role in supporting students.

You may still have some concerns about your role and boundaries. Review the table below to learn more.

 <p>https://www.pexels.com/photo/pensive-hispanic-female-standing-near-friend-with-sheet-of-paper-with-schedules-6140474/</p>	<p><i>Does this training make me responsible for solving other students' problems?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are not expected to take responsibility for solving another student's problems. • Sometimes just listening to a person who is overwhelmed or in distress and then reminding them of resources on campus can be very helpful. • You can play an important role in helping others, but only if you feel comfortable doing so while maintaining your own boundaries.
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 <p>https://www.pexels.com/photo/thoughtful-ethnic-man-in-earbuds-writing-in-diary-on-armchair-7129056/</p>	<p><i>I'm still worried about my ability to support other students. I once tried to help someone, and it went badly. What can I do so this doesn't happen?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's difficult to support another person if you feel your efforts were not successful. • Reflecting on what you've learned through this course may help you feel more confident about your skills. • You can also discuss your concerns with a trusted friend or even a counsellor if you feel that would be helpful.
 <p>https://www.pexels.com/photo/ethnic-lady-using-computer-in-street-6084479/</p>	<p><i>What about support for my own mental health and well-being?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We may face challenges around our own mental health and well-being at some time. • You can use the information in this course to help manage your stress and support your own mental health. • Don't hesitate to seek out support as needed through campus and community resources or, if necessary, a crisis line. • The self-care video in Module 4 may also be helpful.

Practice Scenarios

In this section, you are invited to select one or two practice scenarios to complete. The scenarios will help you consider different responses to a student in distress.

Use these scenarios to reflect on what you've learned and thought about options when responding to and referring to students in distress. These practice scenarios have been created by B.C. post-secondary students who were engaged in the [BCcampus Mental Health and Wellness projects](#).

Scenario 1: Student Struggling to Balance Academics and Social Life



<https://unsplash.com/photos/NcWNzEAD7Fs>

Jesse, a student you've gotten to know, shows up to class after not coming for a couple of weeks. You notice that Jesse looks tired, isn't wearing appropriate clothing for the cold weather outside, and looks like they may not have showered in a while. After class, you approach them to ask how they're doing. Jesse tells you that they are hungover from a weekend of drinking, and you notice that they are clammy, sweaty, and breathing quickly while they talk. They add that they don't want to be in school, but they're under a lot of pressure from their family to be there. The only part of the school they enjoy is the social aspect.

What Would You Do?

Here are some ideas for supporting this student. Select those that you would try. (There are no wrong answers.)

- ☐ I'll say how much I appreciate their honesty and willingness to share what is going on.
- ☐ I can mention that it's hard to balance academics and a social life, particularly if you aren't enjoying your classes very much.
- ☐ Maybe I could suggest they talk with a counsellor about what they're going through?
- ☐ I think I'll offer to reach out if I don't see them in class next week.

What Would You Say?

The cards below show different responses that people might give to the student. Decide if the response is helpful or less helpful. Then select the card and move it to the appropriate section.

- I understand not wanting to come to class; it is a lot of pressure. (H)

- Can I help you connect with a counsellor on campus to talk about the pressure? (H)
- Would you find it useful to visit the learning centre to discuss your courses? (H)
- It sounds like you drink a lot. Are you an alcoholic? (LH)
- Don't worry so much; you'll grow out of this phase of your life. (LH)

Making a Difference

This student is showing signs that they are struggling. Helpful responses for this scenario focus on reaching out and listening empathetically to Jesse. It's less helpful to suggest they're an alcoholic or minimize the very distress this student is feeling by saying they'll grow out of this phase.

If Jesse seems interested, you could suggest they consider accessing additional supports, such as connecting with counselling services or visiting the learning centre for help with coursework. You could also offer to check in with them later.

Scenario 2: Student Triggered by Lesson Content



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/wocintechchat/25392519213/>

You are in class when the instructor begins talking about Canada's residential school system and the abuse and forced assimilation of Indigenous children. As the lesson closes and people start to leave, you notice that Eli, a usually gregarious Indigenous student, is sitting quietly and appears to be wiping tears from their eyes. When you approach Eli, they tell you that their grandmother was in a residential school, and they found the lesson very distressing.

What Would You Do?

Here are some ideas for supporting this student. Select those that you would try. (There are no wrong answers.)

- ☐ I can ask if they'd like to share their story, but I won't push for details if they say no.
- ☐ I could suggest we contact Indigenous student services for further support.
- ☐ I could offer to help them contact the professor about adding content warnings to this material.
- ☐ I can sit quietly with them and be available to listen if they want to talk further.

What Would You Say?

The cards below show different responses that people might give to the student. Decide if the response is helpful or less helpful. Then select the card and move it to the appropriate section.

- If you feel comfortable, would you like to talk more about what you're feeling? (H)
- Can I assist you in accessing Indigenous services for more support? (H)
- If you'd like, I can talk to the instructor about providing content warnings. (H)
- A lot of groups have been oppressed. (LH)
- Well, that was a long time ago, and it didn't happen to you. (LH)

Making a Difference

We can all play a role in listening to and supporting Indigenous people who may live with intergenerational trauma from Canada's residential school system. Helpful responses for this scenario focus on listening without insisting that Eli share specific details. It's less helpful to imply that the impacts of the residential school system are all in the past or to compare their experiences to other groups.

You may want to acknowledge this student's resilience and resistance while also asking if they need any assistance accessing other supports such as an Indigenous student centre. You could also offer to talk to the instructor about providing content warnings for the course material.

Scenario 3: Student Going Through a Breakup



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/diverse-friends-sitting-at-cafe-table-7388862/>

During the semester, you've been working on a project with Leslie, who is upfront about being genderqueer and uses they/them pronouns. Until recently, Leslie has completed their portion of the work on time. Now Leslie has missed meetings, is hard to get hold of, and has submitted subpar work. When you ask if everything is okay, Leslie admits they are going through a bad breakup. They are having difficulty concentrating, they aren't sleeping well, and they are drinking a little more than usual. Leslie tells you they are thinking about dropping out and don't know what to do.

What Would You Do?

Here are some ideas for supporting this student. Select those that you would try. (There are no wrong answers.)

- ☐ I'll let Leslie know I appreciate their honesty about the struggles they're facing.
- ☐ I'll ask if Leslie is willing to talk with a counsellor about what's going on.
- ☐ I can suggest Leslie connect with our LGBTQ2S+ services as the staff are friendly and supportive.
- ☐ I can offer to brainstorm ideas for how to complete the project in a more flexible way, so Leslie isn't so stressed.

What Would You Say?

The cards below show different responses that people might give to the student. Decide if the response is helpful or less helpful. Then select the card and move it to the appropriate section.

- Is there anything we can do to ease your stress around this project? (H)
- Would it help to talk to a counsellor about what's going on? (H)
- Have you connected with the LGBTQ2S+ support services? (H)
- I'm sure you'll have no problem meeting someone new. (LH)
- Can't you just get over it and move on? We have deadlines to meet. (LH)

Making a Difference

Learning to navigate intimate relationships, including breakups, can be difficult. Listening empathetically to Leslie is important as is reminding them of their capabilities and resilience. Helpful responses for this scenario focus on offering to be flexible to ease their stress and suggesting support services. Leslie might benefit from some extra support available LGBTQ2S+ services or through counselling services. It's less helpful to minimize Leslie's suffering or suggest they just need a new relationship to feel better.

Scenario 4: Engineering Student Who Is Very Anxious



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/close-friends-guarreling-in-light-room-near-window-6383213/>

Your classmate Ash usually sits at the very back of your engineering class and keeps to themselves. Today Ash arrives late and must take a seat at the busy centre of the lecture hall. The students around them are talking loudly. Ash appears to become anxious, frantically shuffling their body. Then, they hastily grab their belongings and run out of the class, sweating profusely. You follow them to see how they're doing. When you talk to Ash, they tell you that they were just anxious and needed to get out of the room to relax.

What Would You Do?

Here are some ideas for supporting this student. Select those that you would try. (There are no wrong answers.)

- ☐ I'll tell Ash how much I respect their willingness to discuss their anxiety, especially given the stigma about mental health problems.
- ☐ I can ask if they know about the different mental health support services available to them.
- ☐ Maybe I could ask if they would like to sit beside me during class?
- ☐ I'll ask if they need more support and if they say yes, I'll offer to walk them over to counselling services.

What Would You Say?

The cards below show different responses that people might give to the student. Decide if the response is helpful or less helpful. Then select the card and move it to the appropriate section.

- You seemed to have an uncomfortable reaction in class. Are you doing okay now? (H)
- This program can be stressful. I'm here if you want to talk about anything. (H)
- How about we try and sit together next class? I can save you a seat. (H)
- You must have social anxiety. Are you taking any meds for that? (LH)
- It's a bit weird to run out of class, but I guess it works for you. (LH)

Making a Difference

Technical fields like engineering may appear to be emotionless environments to many students, but all students need support sometimes. Helpful responses for this scenario focus on reaching out, asking how Ash is doing, and letting them know you're available to talk. It's less helpful to label their feelings, ask if they are taking medications, or suggest their behaviour is weird.

If Ash indicates that they're feeling like they can't cope with all the pressure or says anything that concerns you, you could suggest they connect with student services for support and information on coping strategies for dealing with all the stresses of being a student. You could also offer to walk over to student services with them, but you should take your cue from them. If Ash says they're fine and they don't share anything else with you, that's okay.

Scenario 5: Transgender Student Feeling Unsafe in Class



https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bNw3TNwCzB_7Dt3jfd30J--6f3uB49fO/view

Alexa, a transgender student, approaches you after a LGBTQ2S+ meetup on campus. Alexa tells you that one of their instructors refuses to call them by their name and has said that “preferred names” are optional as per school policy. Alexa feels disrespected and humiliated by the instructor during class, and when they do attend class, they sit in the back and don't participate very much. Alexa explains to you that they need to do well in the course so they can get into a particular program. Alexa expresses feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and frustration during your conversation.

What Would You Do?

Here are some ideas for supporting this student. Select those that you would try. (There are no wrong answers.)

☐ I can acknowledge how hard it is to be disrespected for being one's authentic self.

- ☐ I can ask if they'd like to visit counselling services or the LGBTQ2S+ services for additional support.
- ☐ Maybe I can connect Alexa to some groups that will help them advocate with the professor.
- ☐ I'll let them know that there are crisis lines available if they are ever feeling overwhelmed and in need of immediate support.

What Would You Say?

The cards below show different responses that people might give to the student. Decide if the response is helpful or less helpful. Then select the card and move it to the appropriate section.

- How can I help? I hear that you're feeling sad and hopeless, and I'm concerned. (H)
- You are valued, and there are people and services to support you through this. (H)
- Maybe I can speak to the student union on campus about what to do next. (H)
- I'm sure the instructor was not intentionally trying to misgender you. (LH)
- Just ignore the professor. You can wear dresses if you want. (LH)

Making a Difference

You don't need lived experience to listen and respond empathetically to another student. Helpful responses for this scenario focus on acknowledging Alexa's feelings, letting them know they are valued, and showing respect for their strength and resilience. It's less helpful to minimize how Alexa is feeling or try to explain the professor's actions. Commenting on how Alexa can dress is also not helpful; being a transgender person is not about a person's clothing choices. If appropriate, you could also remind Alexa of services on campus that provide extra support and offer to support them in their advocacy.

Scenario 6: International Student Who is Unable to Pay Fees



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/unsatisfied-multiethnic-couple-having-conversation-on-stairs-6147241/>

Kiran, an international student you know from classes, tells you that they're not able to pay all their fees for the semester and that they didn't get any kind of financial aid. Their parents are not able to send money because their business is not doing very well. Kiran mentions that their course load is so heavy and overwhelming already that they don't see how they would be able to also fit in a part-time job as well. Kiran is really upset and appears to be on the verge of tears when they talk to you. They are worried they'll have to drop out and say they feel helpless and very stressed.

What Would You Do?

Here are some ideas for supporting this student. Select those that you would try. (There are no wrong answers.)

- ☐ I can let them know that it's OK to approach their instructors to discuss a better school-life balance.
- ☐ I'll ask if they'd like help contacting financial aid.
- ☐ It sounds like they aren't aware of the support available through the International Student centre. I'll suggest we walk over there.
- ☐ Since finances are so tight, maybe I can suggest tapping into some community resources like food banks.

What Would You Say?

The cards below show different responses that people might give to the student. Decide if the response is helpful or less helpful. Then select the card and move it to the appropriate section.

- I can understand that this is very stressful and heartbreaking for you. (H)
- Have you visited international student services? I can walk you over. (H)
- I have some ideas for helpful campus services. Can I share those? (H)
- So how much money does your family make and how much were they sending you? (LH)
- Try getting a job. Your grades may suffer but that's not the end of the world. (LH)

Making a Difference

International students may face many challenges as they complete their post-secondary degrees, including struggling with a lack of money. Helpful responses for this scenario focus on acknowledging the student's pain as well as sharing ideas for support services. It's less helpful to ask about the specifics of their financial situation or to push them to take a specific action like taking on a new job.

If Kiran is open to the idea, you could suggest they visit different campus support services such as an international student centre, financial aid, a community food bank, or even counselling services.

When a Student Doesn't Want to Seek Help



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/woman-wearing-brown-shirt-inside-room-3029699/>

Sometimes a student may not want to see a counsellor or isn't interested in seeking help. Below are some steps to take. Keep in mind that if you are a student employee (teaching assistant, mental health ambassador) at your post-secondary institution, your role may mean you are required to follow specific procedures and protocols.

1. Consider safety: Is anyone (the student refusing help, other students, members of the community) at risk of immediate harm?

If yes, seek help through campus security, 911, or other emergency services available on campus. You can also share your concerns with a counsellor or someone who can help ensure safety. You should never assess the risk yourself – consult, refer, and if the risk is imminent, contact emergency services or follow the procedures set out by your institution.

2. If there is no risk of immediate harm, keep in mind that ultimately it is the individual's right to choose whether to seek help. Your role is to listen empathetically and if appropriate, help the individual to identify culturally appropriate services they might want to access later. Recognize and respect that an individual's experiences of trauma and marginalization may affect where they feel comfortable seeking support.

Finally, remember that individuals are resilient and often come to their own solutions or find their own supports when they are ready.

Privacy



(<https://www.pexels.com/photo/diverse-couple-with-colorful-dyed-hair-7389096/>)

Everyone has a right to health care privacy.

If you help another student access counselling services and are hoping to find out what happened, it is up to the student to give consent to release information.

Module 3: Knowledge Check

1. An empathetic response requires you to help solve another student's problem or concerns.

True (Incorrect answer)	False (Correct answer)
-------------------------	------------------------

Correct feedback: That's correct. Responding empathetically means listening carefully and letting the person know they are being heard.

Incorrect feedback: That's not quite right. Responding empathetically means listening carefully and letting the person know they are being heard.

2. You are talking with a student who seems to be in great distress. There is no risk of immediate harm, but you are concerned. What steps can you take to support this student? (Select all that apply):

- ☐ Offer to walk with the student to counselling services. (Correct)
- ☐ Ask if they would like help contacting support resources (e.g., international student services, LGBTQ2S+ services, or another appropriate student service). (Correct)
- ☐ Give them information about provincial support and crisis lines. (Correct)
- ☐ Call 911 or campus security. (Incorrect)

Correct feedback: That's correct. If there is no immediate risk, you do not need to contact 911 or campus security. However, it may be helpful to offer to contact support services, walk them over to counselling services, or give them information about provincial support and crisis lines.

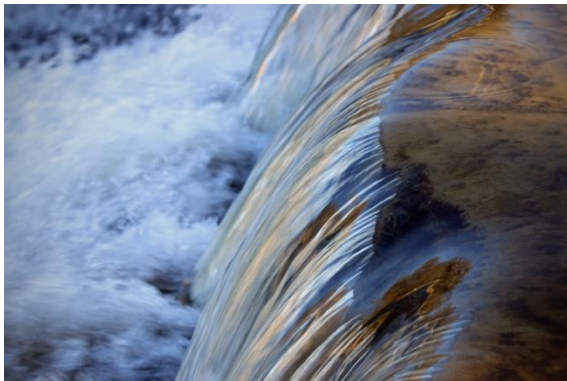
Incorrect feedback: That's not quite right. If there is no immediate risk, you do not need to contact 911 or campus security. However, it may be helpful to offer to contact support services, walk them over to counselling services, or give them information about provincial support and crisis lines.

End of Module 3

In this module, you learned about responding empathetically to a student in distress and how to refer that person to support services. In this section, you will review the key concepts learned. You must select the boxes on the left to continue to the next module. You'll also find some reflection questions we encourage you to consider before moving on.

- ☐ Responding empathetically to a student in distress means listening with care and without judgment. Your role isn't to fix or counsel a student, but rather to listen and try to help them find appropriate support.
- ☐ When others are experiencing stress, you can support them by listening actively, responding with empathy and understanding, asking open-ended questions, reviewing the Wellness Wheel for coping strategies, and identifying key next steps.
- ☐ There are many services on campus and in the community where you can refer students for support.
- ☐ Students in distress have a right to refuse help. If there is a risk of immediate harm, contact campus security or 911, or follow the procedures required by your institution. Otherwise, remember that students are resilient and often figure out their own solutions.

Reflection



<https://unsplash.com/photos/RETiioUKRZw>

- Do you feel comfortable reaching out to support a student in distress? Is there any discomfort?
- Where can you seek support or advice for any questions you might still have?

Module 3: Attributions

Brené Brown on Empathy is an RSA Short:

<http://www.thersa.org>

Voice: Dr Brené Brown

Animation: Katy Davis (AKA Gobblynnne) www.gobblynnne.com

Production and Editing: Al Francis-Sears and Abi Stephenson

Scenario: Student struggling to balance academics and social life

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Scenario: Student triggered by lesson content

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Scenario: Student going through a breakup

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Scenario 4: Engineering student who is very anxious

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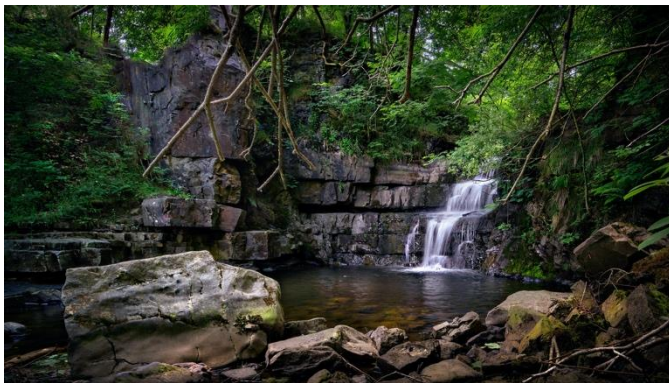
Scenario 5: Transgender student feeling unsafe in class

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Scenario: International student unable to pay fees

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Module 4: Maintaining Boundaries and Practising Self-Care



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/waterfall-in-forest-1493832/>

Introduction

In this module, you'll consider how to maintain your own boundaries and be aware of your limits when you support other students. You'll also think about the role of self-care in supporting mental health and wellness.

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Identify signs that you may have overstepped your boundaries and need to pull back.
- Explain the importance of consulting with others if you are unsure about a situation with a student in distress.
- Describe the role of self-care in helping to maintain balance and wellness in our lives.

Maintaining Your Own Boundaries



<https://www.pexels.com/search/person%20alone%20outdoors%20water/>

When helping other students, it is important to maintain your own boundaries. That means recognizing what you can and can't do given the limitations of your role, and being clear with others about what you are able to do for them.

It's not always easy to establish boundaries and set limits. The list below describes feelings that may be signs that you you've taken on too much while trying to support a student in distress:

As you read this list, think about which of these resonate with you.

- You feel overly responsible for the student.
- You often think about how to solve the student's problems.
- You think the problems the student brings are more than you can handle.
- You feel stressed out by the student's issues or behaviour.
- You feel pressure to solve the student's problems.
- You feel uneasy or have a gut feeling that the student is not okay despite the student denying it.
- You see a pattern repeating itself in your interactions with a student.
- You find yourself avoiding the student.
- You feel anxious or angry when the student approaches you.

When you notice any of these responses within yourself, it may be time for you to consult with others and access your own support. Know your limits and ask for help if you are overwhelmed; you are not responsible for solving the person's problems on your own.

Consulting with Others

You can consult with campus counsellors, support services, or faculty and staff if you're unsure about how to handle a situation. You can also call a crisis line if you have serious concerns about a student.

You should consult others when you:

- Are concerned about another student's safety or well-being but are unsure how or whether to intervene.
- Are uncertain about how to respond to a student who you think may need help.
- Continue to be concerned about a student who has declined help.

Taking Care of Yourself



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/beverage-book-break-breakfast-531639/>

Take a minute to think about the Wellness Wheel introduced in Module 1. The wheel can help you identify what parts of your life are in or out of balance. It can also help you consider ways to take care of yourself.

Remember the tips on ways to make stress work for you:

1. Reframe stress as a signal to adapt.
2. Apply effective coping strategies.
3. Try different stress-reduction techniques, such as box breathing.

Supporting a student in distress, and even thinking about mental health in general, may bring up complex thoughts or feelings. This video discusses how to take care of yourself whenever the need arises – after supporting a student, when you feel overwhelmed, or when your life feels out of balance.

[Embed Self-Care Video]

Module 4: Knowledge Check

1. What are signs you may not be maintaining good boundaries when helping a student (Select all that apply):

- ☐ You feel pressure to solve the student's problems. (Correct)
- ☐ You feel anxious or upset when the student approaches. (Correct)
- ☐ You keep thinking about the student's problems outside of work hours. (Correct)
- ☐ You find yourself in a pattern of trying to help the student. (Correct)

Correct feedback: That's correct. All these are signs that you may need to step back, consult with others, and practice self-care.

Incorrect feedback: That's not quite right. All these are signs that you may need to step back, consult with others, and practice self-care.

2. You should only consult with others if a student refuses to seek help.

True (Incorrect answer)	False (Correct answer)
-------------------------	------------------------

Correct feedback: That's correct. You should consult with others any time you are unsure about how to respond to a student or when you have concerns or need support yourself.

Incorrect feedback: That's not quite right. You should consult with others any time you are unsure about how to respond to a student or when you have concerns or need support yourself.

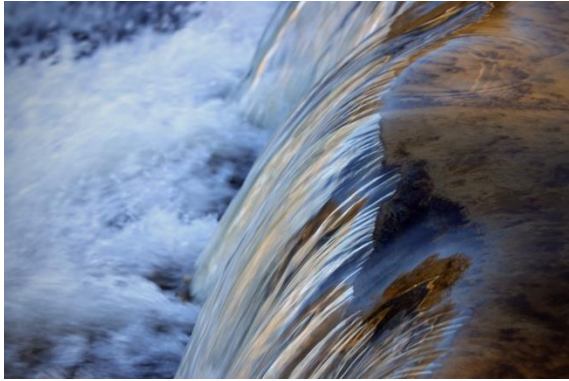
End of Module 4

In this module, you learned about the importance of maintaining boundaries and signs that you've taken on too much when supporting another student. In this section, you will review the key concepts learned. You must select the boxes on the left to continue to the course summary. You'll also find some reflection questions we encourage you to consider before moving on.

- ☐ Maintaining boundaries means recognizing what you can and can't do, given the limitations of your role, and being clear with others.
- ☐ Signs that you may be taking on too much include feeling overly responsible for the student, worrying about them often, feeling pressure to solve their problems, and feeling angry or upset when the student approaches you for help.
- ☐ Always refer students as appropriate and access your own support when needed.

- ☐ Remember that self-care is an important part of mental health and wellness. It's difficult to support another person if you are feeling out of balance or overwhelmed.

Reflection



<https://unsplash.com/photos/RETiioUKRZw>

- Can you recognize the signs when you've taken on too much trying to help a student? These signs are different for each person.
- How can you move back into balance and maintain good boundaries?
- What self-care practices support your own mental health and wellness?

Course Summary



<https://pixabay.com/photos/waterfall-forest-river-lake-wild-5336674/>

In this video, Jewell and Malusi explore how mental health and wellness are the foundations for our capacity to connect with other students as well as friends, family, and our community.

[Embed Closing video]

Resources



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/photo-of-river-with-calm-waters-1578749/>

You may find the following resources useful when supporting a student in distress or for continuing your own education in mental health and wellness.

Handout 1 is a two-page PDF of a Wellness Wheel worksheet, which gives descriptions and examples of the nine dimensions of wellness.

Wellness Wheel: <https://opentextbc.ca/capacitytoconnect/wp-content/uploads/sites/343/2021/04/BCcampus-wellness-wheel-worksheet-final-colour.pdf>

Handout 2 offers strategies for managing stress.

<https://opentextbc.ca/oerdiscipline/wp-content/uploads/sites/378/2021/11/Handout-2-Coping-Strategies.pdf>

Handout 3 is a quick reference guide of mental health resources that includes information on how to respond to a student in distress and refer them to appropriate supports.

<https://opentextbc.ca/oerdiscipline/wp-content/uploads/sites/378/2021/11/Handout-3-Mental-Health-Resources.pdf>

Handout 4 provides scenarios of students who are experiencing stress. Each scenario includes suggestions for responding to the student and referring them to resources.

<https://opentextbc.ca/oerdiscipline/wp-content/uploads/sites/378/2021/11/Handout-4-Scenarios-and-Responses.pdf>

Handout 5 provides links to videos, articles, and websites on mental health.

<https://opentextbc.ca/oerdiscipline/wp-content/uploads/sites/378/2021/11/Handout-5-Videos-and-Other-Resources.pdf>

Handout 6 provides key points and reflection questions in Starting A Conversation About Mental Health (for Students).

Acknowledgements



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/macro-photography-of-water-waves-355288/>

The self-paced Starting a Conversation About Mental Health (Students) course was developed under BCcampus's Mental Health and Wellness Projects from funding by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training and guidance from an advisory group of students, staff, and faculty from B.C. post-secondary institutions. The purpose of the projects is to provide access to education and training resources to support post-secondary students' mental health and wellness.

This resource is one of a series of open education resources on mental health (<https://bccampus.ca/projects/wellness/mental-health-and-wellness/>) for the B.C. post-secondary sector.



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Advanced Education
and Skills Training

This self-paced course is based on BCcampus's resource Starting A Conversation About Mental Health: Foundational Training for Students. For more information about the authors, contributors, and advisors of that training resource, see <https://opentextbc.ca/studentmentalhealth/chapter/authors-and-contributors/>.

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Attribution Statement

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Acknowledgements for Self-Paced Course

This self-paced course was adapted, developed, written, and reviewed collaboratively by the Project Development Team. The Student Team wrote the original scenarios from which the practice scenarios for this course were adapted. Members of the Project Advisory Group reviewed the materials and provided feedback on using the materials in an online, self-paced format. The Pilot Project Team provided opportunities for students to pilot the completed modules and give feedback.

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BCcampus is grateful to the eight post-secondary students who wrote scenarios and provided feedback for the synchronous Starting A Conversation About Mental Health resource (<https://opentextbc.ca/studentmentalhealth/>), from which this course was adapted.

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The students' biographical information can be found in Appendix 6 of the resource (<https://opentextbc.ca/studentmentalhealth/chapter/authors-and-contributors/>).

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