



Wellbeing in Action

How Occupational Therapy Faculty are Enhancing Student
Educational and Clinical Preparation Experiences

Interface 2025

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COLLEGE of PUBLIC HEALTH & HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Key Takeaways

- A scaffolded student preparation coaching and modeling approach with performance-based assessment equips student resilience.
- Students are receptive to wellbeing activities and support through their professors and in their classes.
- Optimizing UF Wellbeing services and resources in the classroom can assist students' initiative to invest in their own self-care.

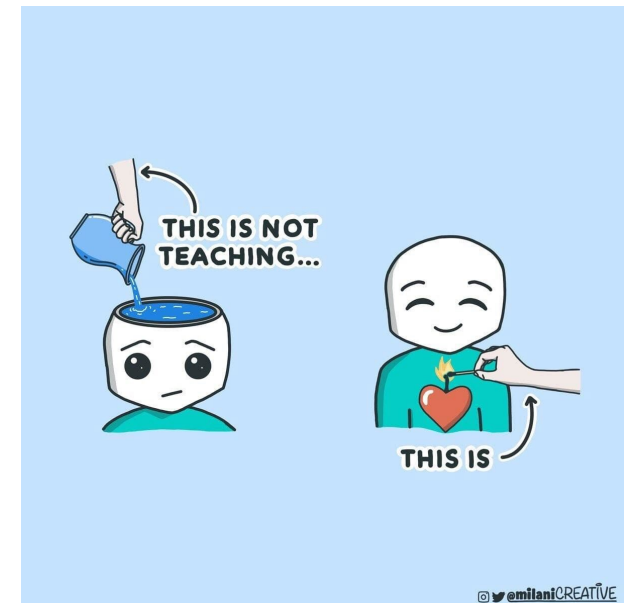


A lush green forest scene with tall trees and sunlight filtering through the canopy. A semi-transparent gray box with a thin white border is centered on the screen. Inside the box, the number '2' is displayed above the word 'Hold'. A small red circular icon is positioned on the right edge of the box.

2
Hold

CONSCIOUSWORKS

What well-being ingredient(s) do you currently incorporate?



Occupational therapy (OT) is a holistic healthcare profession that focuses on enabling individuals to engage in activities that promote physical, emotional, and social well-being.

(AOTA, 2020; AOTA, 2025)



(2022) Bazyk, S.

OT Practitioners work with individuals and groups to develop skills, strategies, and habits that support overall wellness, including stress management, self-care, and participation in leisure activities.

Class @LakeWauburg



Occupational Therapy



Being able to do the things you need and want to do improves physical and mental wellness, wellbeing, and overall life satisfaction.

An individual's ability to engage *with* and *in* their physical and social environments,

regardless of disease, illness, or impairment, enhances health and wellness.

An individual's ability to participate in meaningful occupations -

the things they *want to do*, *need to do*, and *have to do* - contribute to health, wellness, identity, and sense of purpose.

Occupational therapy practitioners prioritize an individual's ability to participate in meaningful everyday activities through...

...assessment, intervention, activity analysis, universal design, environmental modification, environmental aides, assistive technology,

adaptive equipment, and cognitive, behavioral, biomechanical and biopsychosocial approaches to function and performance.

Participation requires person centered care and effective problem solving.

Occupational Therapy is a healthcare profession that optimizes participation across the lifespan.

As students prepare for real world professional work experiences, it is essential to understand the influence faculty and instructors have on teaching, modeling, and promoting student wellness and wellbeing.

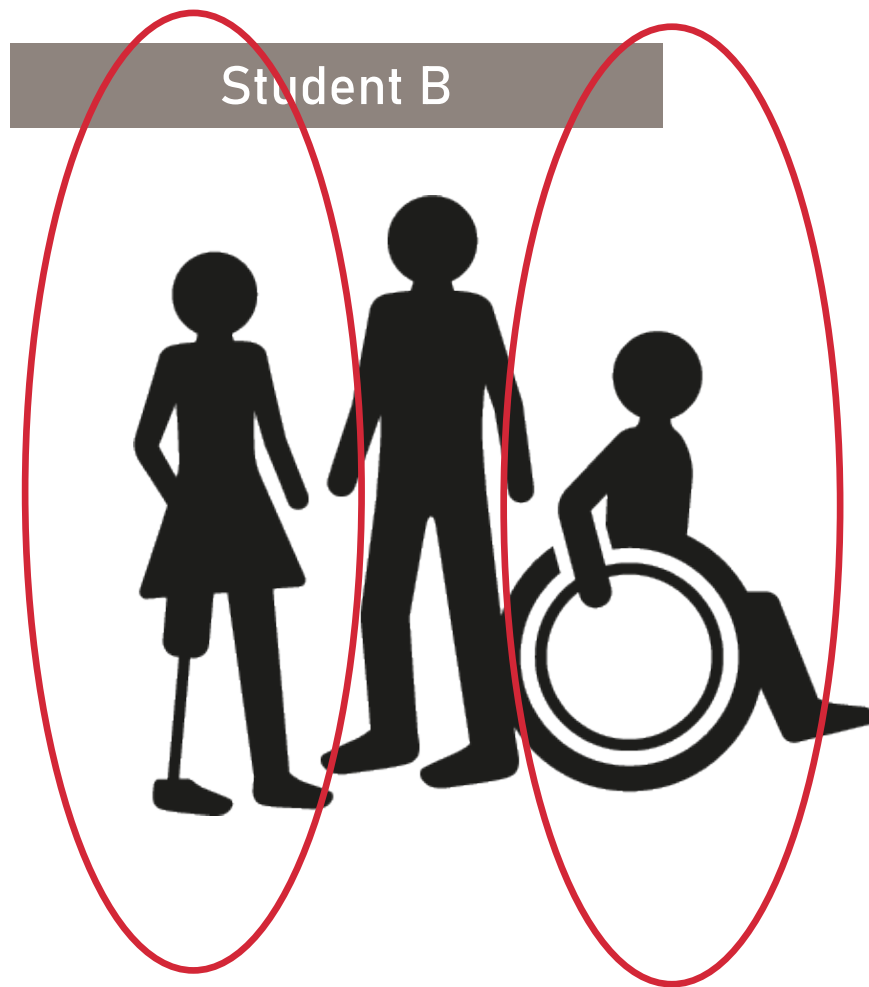
Students were invited to create materials for use beyond the classroom.



Student A



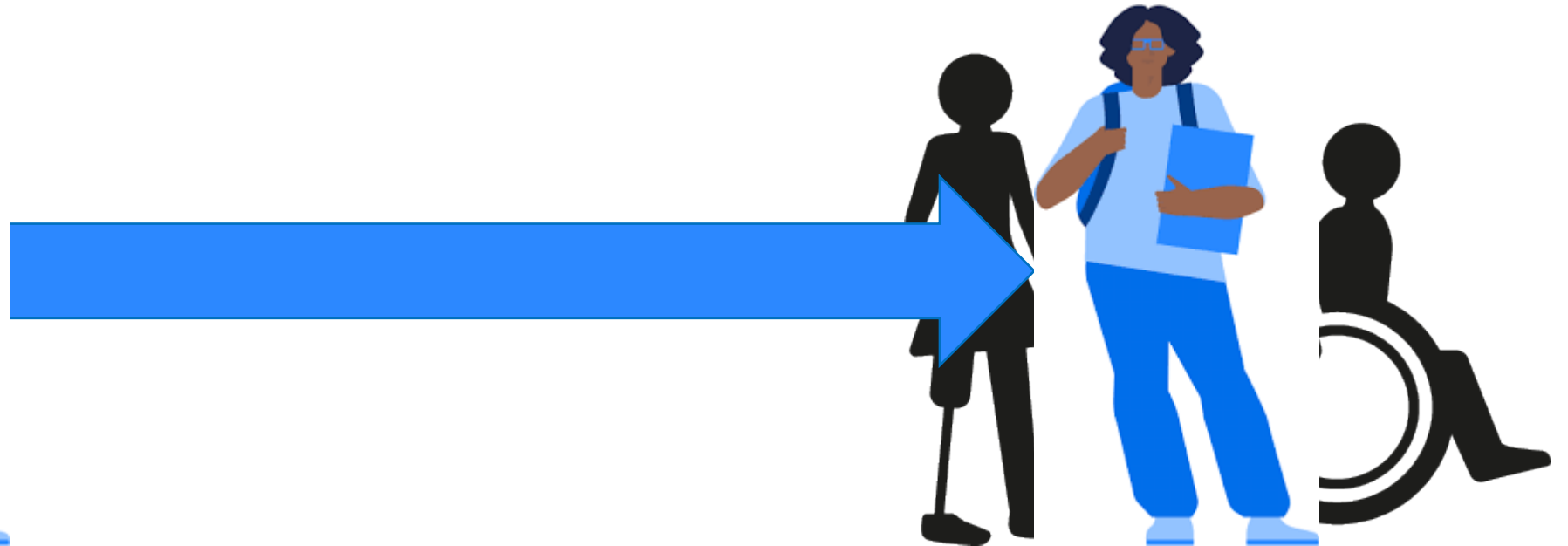
Student B



Student A



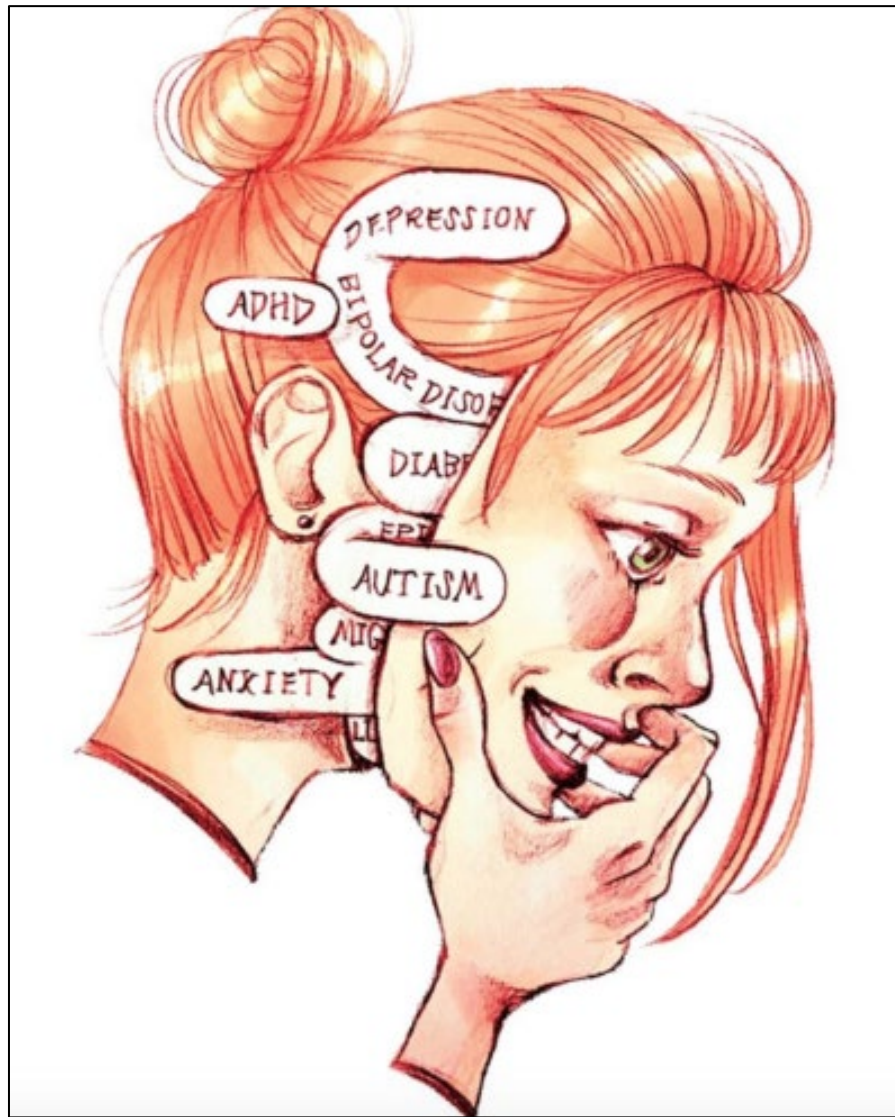
Student B



A supportive learning environment means applying strategies to meet universal mental health and well-being learning needs of our diverse student population.



<https://www.personalizedcause.com/blog/invisible-disability-awareness-week/>



**“We have over 8,000 students registered with accommodations...around 39%
have mental health diagnoses.”
Jenna Gonzalez UF DRC Director**



Enhancing University Student Experience: Identifying Student Awareness Process Improvements Across Lifelong Wellbeing Services

Leah Sink, OTS; Jenna Gonzalez, Ed.S; Becky Piazza OTD, OTR/L, BCPR

In a survey of 1,434 incoming students at the University of Florida in 2023 (Boren et al., 2023),

- **46%** of students had **moderate or above level of psychological distress** in the last 30 days
- **63%** of students reported concern with 4 or more academic impediments
- Over **50%** of students rated their top 5 academic impediments as:
 1. finding an internship
 2. career planning
 3. academic rigor
 4. procrastination
 5. stress

“...far too many students at all levels of their education and in all fields of study are not achieving a level of wellbeing that will enable them to thrive in an academic setting and reach their full potential”

(National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine et al., 2021, p. 4).





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BACKGROUND

Due to the high prevalence of diagnosed mental health conditions, it is important for university and college campuses to have accessible mental health and wellbeing resources because “without proper support, college students are at risk for a variety of both immediate consequences (e.g., academic impairment, substance use, suicide) and longer-term ones (e.g., stop-out, drop-out, and lower lifetime earning potential)”^{26,39}

Under the **Division of Student Life at UF** there are offices dedicated to supporting student Lifelong Wellbeing. These offices include:

- Campus Assistance & Resources for Empowerment (CARE)
- Counseling and Wellness Center (CWC)
- Disability Resource Center (DRC)
- GatorWell
- RecSports





Department of Occupational Therapy

Enhancing University Student Experience: Identifying Student Awareness Process Improvements Across Lifelong Wellbeing Services

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82.26% of students identified that they were only **somewhat confident or less than somewhat confident** in their ability to know the difference between the services

The top ways students learn about resources are through Preview/Student Orientation (17%), Social Media (15%), Professor/Syllabus (14%), and Tabling (13%)

Students identified they are **most receptive** to learning about the services through their **professors and/or classes**

Student Overall Well-being

In clinical settings, OTPs play a crucial role in promoting wellness by:

- Improving cognitive function and processing speed
- Developing emotional regulation and coping skills
- Facilitating social participation and relationships
- Promoting healthy habits and lifestyles

As instructors, it is essential to facilitate mechanisms that support student overall wellbeing and regulation of the nervous system. This can be achieved by:

- Creating a safe and supportive learning environment
- Encouraging selfcare and stress management practices
- Providing opportunities for mindfulness and relaxation
- Fostering a growth mindset and promoting resilience
- Encouraging open communication and expression of emotions

Student Overall Well-being

Instructors can implement strategies to support student nervous system regulation, such as:

1. **Intentional use of strategic written and verbal communication**
2. Incorporating movement and exercise into the curriculum
3. Providing regular breaks and opportunities for relaxation
4. Encouraging students to engage in activities that promote calm and focus
5. **Modeling self-care and stress management practices as a role model**

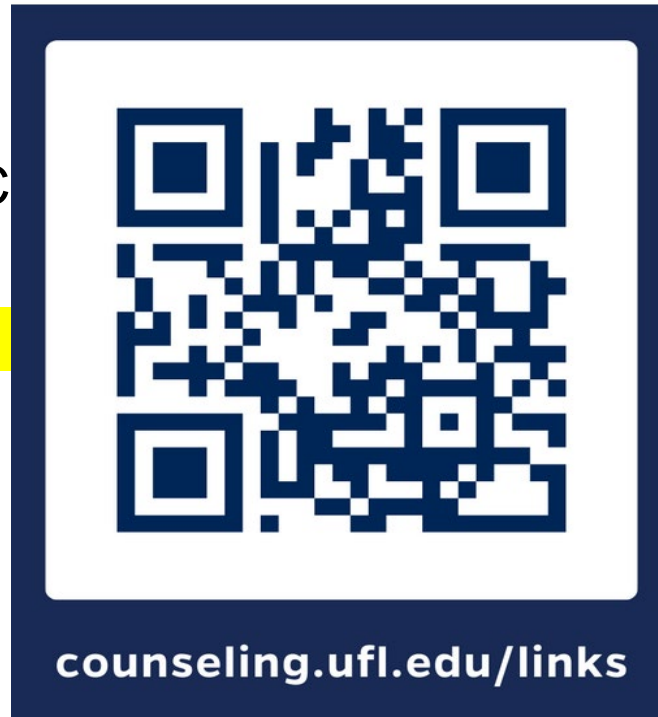
By prioritizing student wellbeing and nervous system regulation, instructors can create a supportive learning environment that promotes academic success **and** prepares students for the demands of real-world professional practice and work.



Optimize Your Resources

Canvas

- Pre-set announcements to share quotes, innovative or inspirational messages
- Messages to students after assessments
- Announcements of RecSports and CWC opportunities
- **Subscribe to CWC newsletter**



Classroom Culture

Padlet QR code on screen before class (www.padlet.com)

Mentimeter projected as students walk in (www.mentimeter.com)

Discussion Thread of favorite songs: Play music as students walk in

Get up and Move (group) activities

Take the class outdoors (Lake Wauburg)

Consider walking office hours

Extra Credit assignment: attend a CWC, CCC, or other UF extracurricular activity

Consider group AI exploration to express ideas (art!)

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles

- Everyone gets 1.5 x for exams
- No penalty for one day late assignments
- Templates/examples
- Multiple assignment submission formats

<https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>

Spring 2025

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Nice to Know Info:

Optimize your Counseling and Wellness Center Resources!

De-Stress Fest Spring '25: Playful Escape - Reconnect to Recharge

The UFCWC invites you to DeStress with us this finals season through playful escape! This weeklong event is filled with nostalgic, joy-filled activities designed to help you reconnect with your inner child, take a break from stress, and recharge yourself. Whether you're staying afloat with us at our ice cream kickoff, or building with Lego's at the library, there's something for every student. Join us for play, creativity, and relaxation—because sometimes, the best way to de-stress is to reconnect with your inner child.

Let the play begin! 🎈



Treat Yourself Table

Monday, April 21 | 9AM–4PM



Reitz Colonnade

Test your wellness knowledge with trivia and try hands-on stress relief activities. Discover simple tools to support your mind and body, from breathing techniques to grounding exercises.



The DeStress Lounge

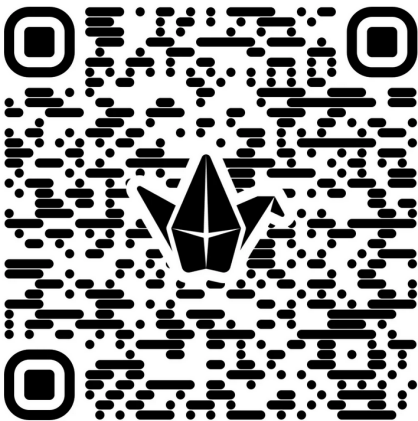
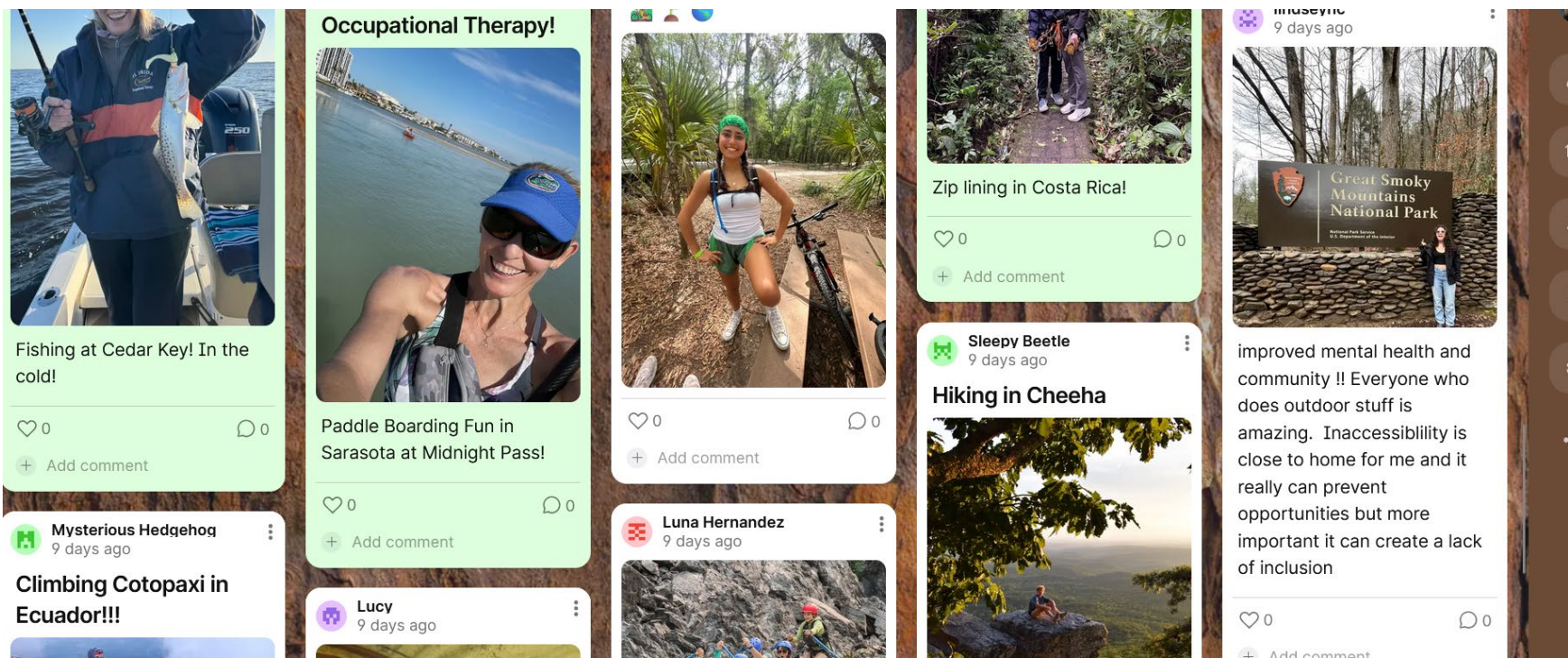
Tuesday, April 22 | 10AM–12:30PM



Library West

Need a quiet moment? Relax in our cozy lounge filled with calming lights, fidget toys, plush pillows, and soft music. Want to get creative? Stop by the Lego Lounge to build a mini-figure and let your imagination play.

Padlet





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Standing tall and standing wide: Body positions have effects on how people feel

May 26, 2022



In a recently published meta-analysis in *Psychological Bulletin*, a team of psychologists from Germany and the United States collaborated to shed light on the possible physical, behavioral, and psychological effects of power poses and other body positions. Initial studies on power posing indicated that engaging in expansive body positions will raise testosterone levels, lower cortisol levels, and increase risk taking. A number of these studies received a lot of media attention when they

Good morning future colleagues!
You will do great today!

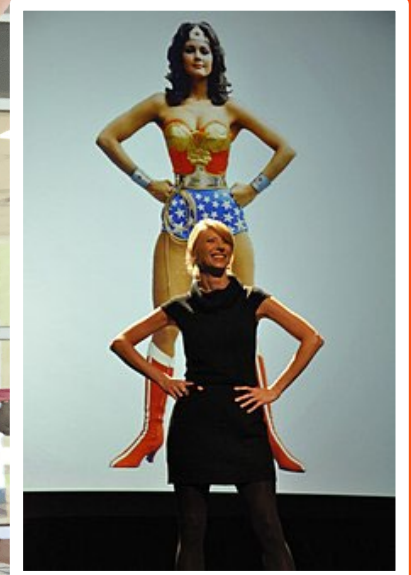
1. **Positive Self Talk** (no words of doubt or fear!)
2. **Power Pose** (2 minutes for calm confidence!)
3. **Thankfulness** (Appreciation for how much you've learned already and for the wonderful peer colleagues you are learning with!)

Remember to arrive dressed in professional attire as outlined by our UF OTD Student Manual: UF polo shirt, UF ID name badge worn above your waist, and professional dress pants/scrubs/skirt (please do not wear shorts, jeans or athletic attire for competency).

Practice makes progress! Practice makes better!
Dr. Piazza



Power Pose



“... People who observe their bodily expression may experience a change in their self-evaluations and may also behave differently. Thus, taking a certain body position could be a first step in increasing positive self-perceptions and a basis for further stabilizing these perceptions with cognitive behavior techniques.” (Körner et. al., 2022)

Name	How It's Done	How to Use	Time Needs
One Word Check-In	Either face to face or in an online chat, ask each student to state one word that summarizes their mood	Consider the overall mood of the class. Would 1 moment of 2 deep breaths help ease the anxiety of the class? Would 1 min reflective essay help elevate the mood?	Low
Weather Forecast	Ask students to describe their mood in meteorological terms. Is it sunny? Torrential downpour? Take a moment to consider how to help the class focus on the day's session	Consider the overall mood of the class. Would 1 moment of 2 deep breaths help ease the anxiety of the class? Would 1 min reflective essay help elevate the mood?	Low
Red Light/ Green Light	<div data-bbox="63 946 374 1066" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Provide students with a red and green index card for the semester. Before each session begins, ask students to show their card with the following in mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red card = I feel unprepared for class today • Green card = I feel prepared for class today 	<p>If there are many red cards, investigate if instructions need to be clearer, or if studying skills need to be reviewed.</p> <p>Possibly the workload in another class is mitigating students' ability to attend to your class. <i>Would an assignment extension help?</i></p>	Low to medium depending on red cards

LAKE WAUBURG

TEAM BUILDING & CHALLENGE COURSE

<https://recsports.ufl.edu/locations/lake-wauburg/reservable-spaces/>



RESERVABLE SPACES





CENTER FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION AND EDUCATION (CORE)

<https://recsports.ufl.edu/>

<https://recsports.ufl.edu/locations/center-for-outdoor-recreation-and-education-core/>

<https://recsports.ufl.edu/outdoor-recreation/adventure-trips/>



Resilience for Clinical Experiences

Students who attended resilience workshops, shifted their understanding of problems being out of their control to focusing on taking initiative and managing the challenge, an example of growth mindset (Delany et al., 2016).

Three-part resilience module training created

OT Learning Support: Resiliency

WELCOME to the **Resiliency Module**. This module will take you through the steps to learn to *withstand and adapt to adverse events*. The first step is to identify personal stressors in your life and your response to those stressors. Then in step two, you will explore different resilience strategies and choose which ones you may want to practice. In the third and final step, you'll be able to implement those strategies and reflect on how it went. Once you have completed all three steps, you will receive the **Resilient Student Badge**. The **Resilient Student Badge** may be required for a course, utilized on your portfolio or resume, or can be completed to improve your well-being. Whatever the reason may be, I am glad you are here! Now, click **Step 1: Identify Personal Stressors and Responses** below to begin.

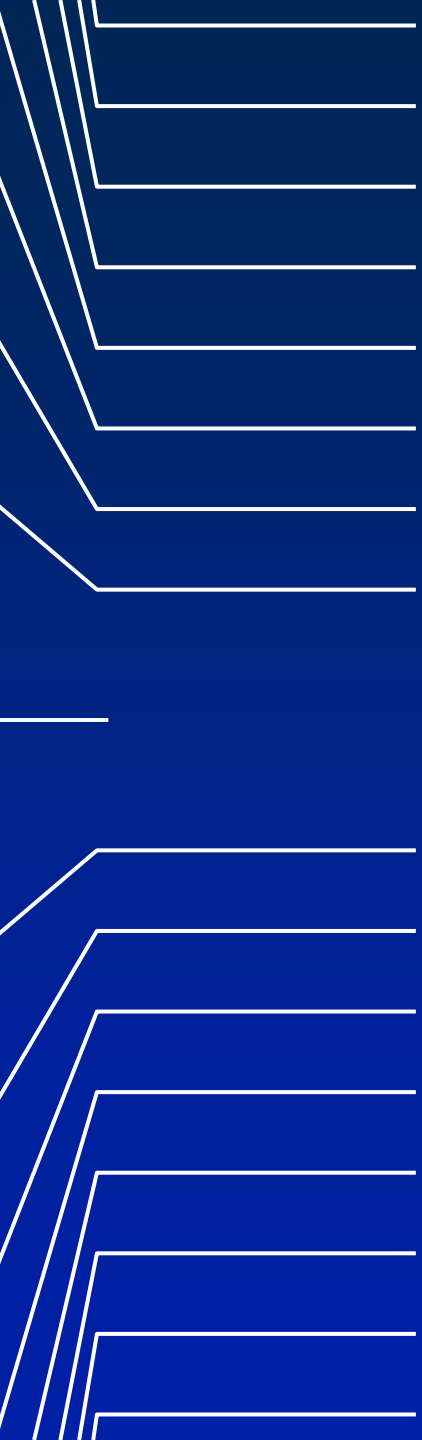
[Step 1: Identify Personal Stressors and Responses](#)

[Step 2: Exploring Different Resilience Strategies](#)

[Step 3: Trial the Resilience Strategies and Record What Happens](#)

UF

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Outcomes of Study on Occupational Therapy Students' Use of Resilience Strategies on Fieldwork

Most reported strategies used: emotional regulation, breathing, positive self-talk, and resilience mindset.

Students used these strategies daily and weekly.

Students most often used these strategies when they were overcome by emotion and when in a challenging context.

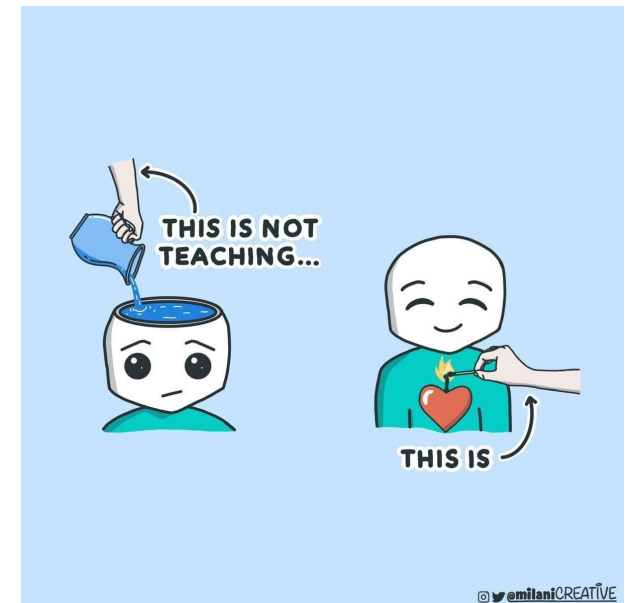
Emotional Regulation:
Modulating feelings and
responses to mitigate stress
and anxiety.

Breathing: Breathwork used
to modulate stress
responses. Common
examples include box
breathing, deep breathing,
and pursed lip breathing.

Positive Self-Talk: Utilizing an
optimistic inner monologue or
giving voice to thoughts that
encourage self-confidence.

Resilience Mindset: Utilizing
resilience strategies intentionally
to support flexibility,
adaptability, problem-solving,
building confidence, and
advocating for oneself.

What well-being ingredient(s) do you need to incorporate?



Helpful Wellness and Wellbeing Resources

- UF Counseling & Wellness Center (CWC): <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>
- UF CWC Mindfulness Resources: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/resources/mindfulness/>
- UF CWC Faculty & Staff Lounge <https://counseling.ufl.edu/resources/facultylounge/>
- UF CWC Suggested Apps: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/resources/apps/>
- UF CWC Talks: The College Mental Health Podcast:
<https://counseling.ufl.edu/outreach/cwctalks/>
- Conscious Works Box Breathing – 1 minute: <https://youtu.be/n6RbW2LtdFs>



Helpful UF HR Worklife Wellbeing Resources

- <https://worklife.hr.ufl.edu/wellness/>



Introduction to Mindfulness

UF departments may request a one-hour introductory workshop, with the option of adding four supplementary 45-minute sessions for those interested in establishing a regular practice.

[VISIT RESOURCE](#)



Resilience & Emotional Well-being Toolkit

Our Resilience and Emotional Well-being Toolkit provides resources to support individuals in navigating some of life's most common challenges.

[VISIT RESOURCE](#)



Take 10

Take taking 10 minutes out of your day to work on health and wellness goals. Explore resources to get you started!

[VISIT RESOURCE](#)

Helpful UF HR Worklife Wellbeing Resources

- <https://worklife.hr.ufl.edu/wellness/>



Grief and Coping with Loss Workshop

In an attempt to normalize grief and share some valuable information and resources, this on-demand workshop tackles grief and how to cope with loss.

[VISIT RESOURCE](#)



Guided Meditation Sessions

UF and UF Health experts lead these recorded guided meditation sessions, which are roughly 10 minutes in length and aim to provide a sense of calm and overall well-being.

[VISIT RESOURCE](#)



Health Education and Literacy Program

Learn how to use health information to your advantage and become an advocate for your own health in this 30-minute on-demand webinar.

[VISIT RESOURCE](#)



Healthy Lifestyle Program

A series of six sessions exploring different parts of creating a healthy lifestyle. Each session will focus on a specific health topic.

[VISIT RESOURCE](#)

References

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The Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

<https://www.cast.org/>

The goal of UDL is **learner agency** that is purposeful & reflective, resourceful & authentic, strategic & action-oriented.

