

## Take Steps to Help Reduce Student Stress

April is Stress Awareness Month. With most of the semester behind and finals coming quickly, there are undoubtedly stressors students are facing. This article focuses on ways faculty can help support students through implementing stress reducing tactics in class.

Dr. Brittany Helmbrecht, CSC Campus Wellness Officer and Associate Professor, indicated that a key stressor for most students is procrastination; indicating many stay up late to complete tasks that are due by the 11:59 pm deadline. Helmbrecht suggests that one thing faculty may consider implementing to support students and help prevent late night homework sessions is by moving up assignment deadlines to 10 pm or sooner. By moving up the timeline, it encourages students to complete tasks sooner and prioritize rest at a reasonable time.

An article published in Inside Higher Ed recounts how a professor [created a Zoom poll in Canvas](#) course shell. Each day students ranked their mental health 1 (low) – 10 (high) anonymously using the poll. The instructor shared the poll results with the class immediately. The check-ins were mostly for interpersonal connection and transparency with the students. The instructor also updated their attendance policy to allow for up to four mental health days per semester. The caveat being that students must check in with the instructor PRIOR to using their mental health day. The excused absence did not change the due dates on assignments or quizzes. The use of a mental health day also required the student to have a one-on-one check-in with the instructor after the second and fourth occurrences. During the check-ins, the instructor would also provide additional campus resources with the student. The instructor indicated they found that students used their absences intentionally and came back more prepared to learn.

Dr. Mays Imad published an article in Inside Higher Ed that offers suggestions for a [tiered structure of stress reducing tactics](#) faculty can implement before fall courses start. The process includes steps to take before the semester starts, at the beginning of the semester, and throughout the semester.

[Vanderbilt University recommends](#) faculty consider implementing the following tactics in their course design: staggering due dates, employ check-ins with students on course-long assignments, allow students to have one “do over” that provides students with an opportunity to correct missed test questions or resubmit a revised paper draft for partial credit, create rubrics for assignments, provide meaningful feedback to students on graded work, and clearly articulate communication practices and preferences.

Purdue University has a [Steps to Leaps](#) program that is focused on enhancing and improving holistic well-being. They have different resources available, one of which is a [stress management module](#) with a [workbook](#) that can be integrated into courses. [The University of Florida](#) and [University of Tennessee-Knoxville](#) have similar lesson plans on stress management that can be incorporated into courses.

While it is important to be mindful of student stress, it is equally important to make sure that faculty and staff are also attentive of their own stress levels throughout the semester and especially during peak periods, such as the end of term. [CSC's student counselors](#) collaborated to put together the following suggestions for self-care stress management(below).

# SELF-CARE IDEAS

- = I've tried it  
 = I want to try it

QUICK TIPS	SENSATIONS & SELF-SOOTHING	INDULGE
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Scroll through photos of happy memories on social media	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Use scented oils, lotions, candles, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Send yourself a bouquet at work
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Step outside and spend a few moments in nature	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Put on fuzzy socks <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Apply a heating pad to your neck	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Plan (and take!) a vacation
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Complete a (not-too-difficult) task that you've been putting off	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Heat your towels or bathrobe in the dryer	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Buy yourself that thing you've been wanting, but not something you would normally buy for yourself
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Tell someone how you're <i>actually</i> feeling instead of saying "fine"	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Use shower steamers (alternative to bath bombs!)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Redecorate your workspace
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Do something playful	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Chill your face lotions/products in the fridge before using	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Spend a night at a hotel, order room service, and relax!
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Stretch	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Repetitively tap chest or shoulders	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Take the day off work or school and spend it in a park
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Replace self-defeating thoughts with optimistic reframes	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Walk with a book balanced on your head	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Upgrade your cell to the latest model
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Wink at someone	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Drink cucumber or fruit-infused water	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Buy a piece of furniture that makes you happy
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Keep fresh flowers in your office/home or wear them in your hair	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Put something cold on your forehead	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Declutter your life or hire someone to haul junk that's taking up space
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Use your favorite pens to write	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Go to an aquarium and watch the fish	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Treat yourself to a facial, massage, or other relaxing spa treatment
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Share your self-care plans with someone and brainstorm new ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Relax in a sauna <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Go an entire day without speaking	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Buy yourself a new outfit
	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Buy and use colored lightbulbs in different rooms	