



Well-being and the Online Environment

As many of our campuses shift to the on-line environment, here are some tips for supporting both student and faculty well-being “virtually”:

- **Stay healthy and charged:** We are all getting used to working from home and in isolation. Make sure both you and your students take breaks, go for a walk and stretch. You may even want to take a walk before class to mimic your previous commute! Encourage them to do the same.



- **Humanize the situation:** Make it casual and light-hearted, while acknowledging that for many it is a difficult time. Students appreciate knowing it is OK to feel stressed and anxious during this time. For example, you may want to share how you are entertaining your kids/pets/significant other during this time.



- **Stay connected:** School is important from a social perspective. Students are going to have to adjust to not seeing their friends face-to-face on a regular basis. Even in the age of social media, this can be a difficult adjustment. Help them adjust to this new reality by encouraging them to have virtual get-togethers.



- **Connect them to mental health supports:** Check in with your campus to see what internal supports are currently available and/or connect students with [telephone and online mental health supports](#), if needed.



- **Motivate your class:** Use technology (e.g. Slack, Teams, Zoom, Youtube, TicToc) to encourage joyful challenges, fun activities and connection.



- **Balance the notions of rigor and support.** While you still want to challenge and help your students grow their skills, this is the time to be flexible.



- **Address the current working from home context:** Many students and instructors may be sharing small spaces and technology with other family members, friends and children who are also working/studying from home.



- **If possible, connect with students individually:** It can be difficult to gauge how students are faring without seeing them in person, so connecting individually is very important. You can support students 1:1 in a chat, creating a safe space for students to ask their questions and get the extra help they need. Think of it as your new office hours!



- **Repeat previous lessons:** Students are adjusting to a new way of learning. Reminding them of what they learned in class may activate their memory and remind them they are still part of a learning community.



- **Be aware of your language and the tone of your voice:** Be hopeful and optimistic in your messaging, such as, “When you come back this fall ...” This will help students look forward to coming back to the campus.



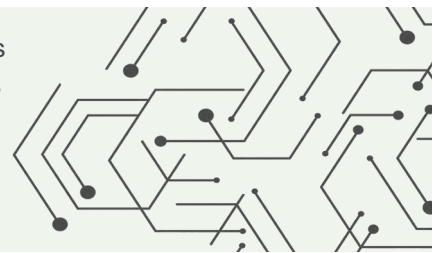
- **Connect students to each other:** If feasible, offer students an opportunity to exchange phone numbers and, for those who are interested, help them create a WhatsApp chat group. It can sometimes be difficult for a student to ask for a classmate’s phone number.



- **Don’t ignore the world around us.** If possible, talk about COVID-19 and their feelings. This is an opportunity for you to remind your students to consider the sources of their news and to be aware of the large amount of misinformation. CMHA Ontario has created a great [tip sheet](#) you can share.



- **Students may be scrambling:** Many students had to leave campus with little notice. Some may have forgotten books or other materials they need for studies. They may also be feeling lonely and isolated. Campuses may consider creating on-line communities for them to share their thoughts and feelings.



Ask how you can help:

There may be simple things you and your institution can do that will go a long way for your students.

Practice self-care:

Make sure you are also taking care of yourself. Be compassionate and realistic. We have numerous resources available [here](#).

Seek training on how you may be helpful to students:

[Morefeetontheground.ca](#) is a great resource for non-clinical staff wishing to learn how they can support student well-being by recognizing, responding and referring them to mental health services.

For many of us this is new territory, though we know many of you have been teaching on-line for years. We invite you to share with us and your colleagues some of the strategies we may have missed.

We are all in this together!

References:

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