



THRIVE TOOLKIT

A resource to support mental wellbeing on campus

The Thrive Toolkit was developed to enable the campus community to share responsibility for promoting mental wellbeing and to build a supportive community.

It is one step in helping to develop mental health literacy – the knowledge, skills and abilities for promoting positive mental health on campus.



ABOUT THRIVE

Thrive is a series of events focused on building positive mental health for University of Waterloo students, faculty, and staff.

Thrive is also a mindset that encourages you to flourish.

We can each strengthen our mental health by learning about it, thinking about it, talking about it, and discovering new skills and resources to help us Thrive all year long.



What is Thrive?

Thrive is a series of events focused on building a culture of wellbeing and normalizing mental health struggles for University of Waterloo students and employees (staff, CUPE employees, faculty). It is also a mindset that encourages one to flourish. Thrive aims to increase mental health literacy, build healthy habits and self-care skills, and create an inclusive and supportive campus environment through various events and initiatives.

We encourage everyone to share responsibility for promoting mental wellbeing on campus and have open conversations about mental health challenges.

The Goals of Thrive

1. Enhance mental health literacy
2. Build healthy habits and self-care skills
3. Foster a supportive and Inclusive Community

What is the Thrive Ambassador Toolkit?

The Thrive toolkit aims to help you understand mental health and provide tips and tricks on how you can incorporate mental wellness in your areas, faculties, units, and departments as a Thrive Ambassador.

We hope the introductory information in each chapter will help you build a base knowledge and literacy around mental health as well as spur your interest in further learning. There is a long list of resources for both on and off-campus counselling services at the end of this document.

How can my area support the Thrive event?

Please consider implementing an initiative in your area during our Thrive event. For more information and resources on how to host events, visit the [Thrive](#) website.

SOME DEFINITIONS

To help you on your journey

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?



Just like we care for our physical health, mental health should be a top priority. To be physically well, we know that we need to exercise and eat well, but what does it mean to be mentally well?

The Mental Health Continuum



Mental health has been described in a continuum model, where mental health can be measured in terms of Thriving, Surviving, Struggling or In Crisis.

- › Someone who is in the **Thriving** category will typically feel “normal”, have good sleep habits and energy. For these folks, it is important to maintain a healthy lifestyle, practice time management, and nurture support systems.
- › People in the **Surviving** category might feel symptoms of irritability and sadness; have trouble sleeping or have low energy, muscle tension or headaches; and they might start decreasing their amount of social activity. In this category, it is important to get adequate rest, food, and exercise; start engaging in healthy coping strategies; and start identifying stressors in your life.
- › Someone in the **Struggling** category might feel emotional symptoms like anxiety, anger, sadness, or hopelessness. They might experience restless sleep, fatigue, aches, and pains. People in this category might see a performance decline in work or school and might start withdrawing. It is important to talk with someone about difficulties, seek help from a professional, and reach out to social supports instead of withdrawing.
- › People in the **Crisis** category might feel excessive anxiety, extreme emotions, and depressed moods. They might be unable to fall or stay asleep but feel exhaustion and are often susceptible to physical illness. They might start avoiding social events and work or school. **For people in this category, it is important to seek professional health as soon as possible.**

HOW TO FOSTER A THRIVING COMMUNITY

In your area of the UWaterloo Community

PRACTICAL TIPS AND TRICKS

Creating a Thriving community involves more than just celebrating Thrive three times a year. There are many things we can do within our own departments and faculties to encourage our colleagues and peers to Thrive all year long.

Practicing empathy

Most people understand empathy by trying to imagine and understand what another person is going through. **Creating an empathetic environment goes beyond merely visualizing what another person might be going through.** It also involves acknowledging out loud and through practice that the people you work with, study with, or teach have multiple facets to their lives, just like you. The project, activity, or task you do with them is not the only thing that they do.

Acknowledgement can come in many factors, such as stating out loud that you **understand people come from different backgrounds and situations**, and that those situations can create hardships. **Create flexible study and work guidelines** to allow for differences in personal situations while still optimizing success for each person within your environment.

Using normalizing language can help people within your department realize that they are not alone if they are struggling or facing personal challenges.



Example text that could be added to **syllabii or email updates to students:**

"We want everyone at Waterloo to be successful and we also know that being a part of the University community has its unique challenges and stressors. During this time, it is normal to feel overwhelmed, stressed, or anxious, and experience difficulties. Please know that you are not alone. When you are faced with these challenges, reach out to your instructor, your advisors, or other services available to students through Counselling Services and Health Services."

Example text that could be added to a **staff email update:**

"We want you to be successful both at work and at home. We recognize that this is a busy time for our department, and we encourage you to contact us if you feel like your workload is becoming unmanageable or if you are struggling with work/life balance. Please know that you are not alone. We all face these challenges and there are resources available to staff including the Employee Assistance Plan and Occupational Health."

Creating a culture of personal wellness

You can build wellness into your team, department, and faculty culture by:

- Creating opportunities for your staff, colleagues, and/or students to build community and friendships:** Getting to know your peers whether in a work or school context can help people when they are struggling as it provides a point of contact for that person to talk to. Creating a friendly work and school environment also helps with wellbeing, happiness, and overall mental health. From a staff perspective, this can mean having monthly get togethers that are not work related such as a book club or paint night. From a student perspective, this can mean hosting a games night, paint night, or other non-academic focused activity that can foster a sense of community, solidarity, and friendship.

- Encouraging your staff or students to take care of their health before things get bad:** Consistently remind others about the pillars of self-care, which include sleep, eating well, exercise, taking time for yourself, and creating balance. You can do this through personal conversations between managers to staff, advisors to students, and faculty to students. You can also include these reminders in emails, newsletters, or at the beginning of lectures.
- Providing resources proactively:** Remind your staff, faculty, and students of the resources available both on and off-campus throughout the term. A list of these resources is provided at the end of this document.

Sharing failures and celebrating successes

Many people working and studying in university environments deal with imposter syndrome at some point in their career. Imposter syndrome is when you believe your accomplishments are due to luck instead of your talent, skills, and qualifications.

Proactively sharing a time that you made a mistake or experienced failure can help people in your area feel like they are not alone. It helps to normalize the idea that life is not a series of upward achievements, but instead a journey that can take you both up and down.

Conversely, when a project or milestone is completed, make sure to take time to pause, acknowledge, and celebrate people's achievements before diving into the next task or project. This shows that you appreciate their efforts and allows them to bask in the glow of a job well done.

Creating equitable environments

Equity is a shared responsibility. Given each of our intersecting identities, we all need to engage in work to unpack our privilege(s) and develop our understanding, skills, and knowledge. [Consider taking a course from the HREI department](#) to help broaden your own understanding and learn more about creating equitable environments within your working and learning spaces.



SELF-CARE

What is it and why it is important?

WAYS TO INCREASE WELLNESS IN DAY-TO-DAY LIFE



Self-care is the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's health. It involves taking action to develop, protect, and improve mental and physical wellbeing. There is no right or wrong way to care for ourselves. Self-care is unique to each individual but there are some key areas of focus.

You can use this information to talk about self-care and self-management in your unit through in person conversations, emails, newsletters, and events.

Key self-care areas and examples

Self-care activities are things people can do to help themselves achieve a better life balance. Achieving this balance can help when it gets stressful as a person's system is in a more optimal state before high stress begins.

Eat regular healthy meals

Eating regularly helps fuel your body and brain to help you get through your day-to-day commitments and gives you focus. Make sure you get three nutritious meals a day and pack yourself healthy snacks when you aren't at home.



Incorporate some movement in your day

Giving your body a break from sitting while you are studying, or working is important. This doesn't have to mean running a marathon or spending all your time at the gym. It can be as simple as taking a walk at lunch or doing stretches once every hour. Schedule this time into your day to ensure that you do it.

Sleep well for success

Give your mind and body a time to rest each day. Getting a regular seven to nine hours of sleep per day is an essential part of self-care. Set yourself up for success by refraining from studying or working in your bed. Instead, develop sleep rituals, limit naps, and set up your room for optimal sleep which includes lighting, noise, and comfort considerations.

Practice stress management

Deep breathing, stretching, yoga, guided imagery, and meditation are some ways to reduce the physical symptoms of stress and induce relaxation. There are many free apps available to help you with these practices, including Headspace, the Calm app, and Down Dog Yoga.

Examining and being aware of your thoughts and feelings can help deal with emotional symptoms of stress and point your mind to more constructive ways of thinking.

Make connections

Set aside time to connect with friends, family, or other communities that are important to you. Whether this is calling your parents to catch up, getting a quick coffee with a friend, volunteering, or engaging with your religious community; creating social connections help us feel engaged, valued, and connected to the world.

Do things that give you joy

Find something that gives you joy and make sure you prioritize your time to do it within your week. Whether it is sewing, painting figurines, playing a musical instrument, playing a board game with friends or family, or biking. Whatever it is, do it consistently and often.

Take care of your spiritual health

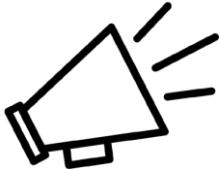
Spirituality is an integral part of life for many individuals. What is less known is how spirituality can be a coping mechanism to manage stress and the strong positive impact it can have on one's health and well-being. Spirituality is most often associated with religion or meditation. It can also mean connecting with what is meaningful to you in a way that enriches your spirit. For many, spirituality is about finding a higher purpose in life and helping humanity. Read the article on [Spirituality and Your Health](#) as a starting point.



SELF-ADVOCACY

Speaking up for your needs

ADVICE FOR HOW TO TALK ABOUT SELF-ADVOCACY



When you are struggling, it can feel like your requests and concerns are unimportant and it may be hard to speak up. What can you do to make your voice heard? Be your own advocate.

According to healthyplace.com, “Being a good self-advocate means taking personal responsibility for your own life - putting yourself back in charge and staying there. Speaking out means insisting that others respect your rights and treat you well.” Believing in yourself and your needs is the first step to putting your self-advocacy into action.

Write it down

Before you ask for something, think about what it is you want and need. Write it down if you need to, create a few drafts of how you want the conversation to go, and even take the final draft in point form with you. That way, when you approach the person you are making the request of, you’ll have a clear and concise plan for what you want to say.

Even if the subject matter of your request is serious, try to approach the conversation in a positive and organized manner. An article from mentalhealthrecovery.com suggests, “How you say something often makes a greater impression than what you say. State your message clearly



and simply. Tell the person exactly what it is that you want. Explain why you need it.” Even if the conversation doesn’t go the way you had hoped, feel proud that you tried to make a positive change in negative circumstances and take notes for how you’ll handle the situation in the future.

Setting boundaries

In any relationship, whether it is a work colleague, a friendship, or a romantic relationship, you need to practice self-advocacy to stand up for your needs. You may hesitate to disagree with the other person because you are afraid to make the other person unhappy, but honouring your own feelings is important. Keeping your thoughts to yourself can lead to feeling resentful of the other party.

Communication is one of the key components to any healthy relationship. Setting clear expectations and boundaries is important to successful social relationships.

Resources

- [Speaking out for yourself: A self-help guide](#)
- [How to Self-Advocate](#)
- [How to Keep Healthy Boundaries With a Friend in Need](#)

RESPONDING TO A PERSON IN DISTRESS

Steps to take

PRACTICAL TIPS AND TRICKS

Everyone goes through ups and downs in their life and people handle their challenges in different ways. Sometimes you may notice someone is struggling with their mental health and want to help, but it can be hard to know how, or if you should reach out to them.

When trying to help someone, it is important to remember the limitations of your own knowledge. While it is perfectly normal for you to want to help the person who is struggling and offer advice, you are not a counsellor and should not feel like you need to be. Remember there are many resources on campus where you can direct a person.

When responding to someone needing support, it is important to understand the following steps:

1. Recognize the indicators of mental illness
2. Respond to the person in a way that is appropriate to the situation at hand and the existing relationship you have with that person
3. Refer the person to the appropriate resources so that they can access the services available

Recognizing the signs of someone who may be struggling

There are many different signs of mental health concerns, including: a sudden disinterest in

or absence from classes or work, patterns of perfectionism, deterioration in physical appearance, excessive fatigue, noticeable self-harm marks, unusual inability to make eye contact, statements indicating distress or intent to self-harm, difficulty controlling emotions, sudden social withdrawal, and expressions of hopelessness.

Responding to a person who is struggling

- Meet in a private place where you won't be interrupted
- Express your concern in a positive tone and point out specific behaviours that concern you
- Ask how things are going for the person
- Listen with empathy and without judgment, encourage them to elaborate
- Remember, opening up can be difficult and emotional for both you and the person you are speaking with
- Avoid promising to keep the person's concerns a secret. If the person expresses something that may indicate a safety risk, you should always contact someone else who can help.
- Ensure you let the person know about the different options to get help



Where to refer people on campus

For urgent student concerns during office hours, contact Counselling Services (519-888-4567, ext. 32655) or Health Services (519-888-4096).

The following resources can be reached 24/7:

- [EmpowerMe](#)
- [Good2Talk](#) (1-866-925-5454)
- [Here 24/7](#) (1-844-437-3247)
- [Grand River Hospital](#) (519-749-4300)
- [UW Police](#) (519-888-4567 ext. 22222)
- See the end of this document for a larger list of resources

For staff or faculty concerns, contact:

- [Occupational Health](#) 519-888-4567 ext. 40538 or 519-888-4567 ext. 40551
- [Employee Assistance Program](#) 1.800.663.1142
- [Here 24/7](#) (1-844-437-3247)
- [Grand River Hospital](#) (519-749-4300)

How to respond to a distressing email

- Validate the person's concern.
- Inform them of the available resources and helplines. Provide a link to [Campus Wellness](#) or [Occupational Health](#) and ensure them that the services are confidential.
- If you think a student may be at risk of harming themselves, strongly encourage them to go to the hospital and contact someone they trust in person.

Mental health training options

Counselling Services offers a broad range of suicide intervention and mental health training programs. Our goals are to raise campus mental health awareness, reduce mental health stigma, and support early intervention for those in need within our Waterloo campus community. Visit the [Campus Wellness website](#) for more information about training.



UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS

How intersectionality and stigma affect mental health

[LEARN ABOUT BARRIERS TO HEALTH EQUITY](#)



Social Determinants of Health

Mental Health is influenced by a variety of factors including environments, social and economic conditions, and life experiences.

In Canada, the social determinants of health include:

- Income and Income Distribution
- Education
- Unemployment and Job Security
- Employment and Working Conditions
- Early Child Development
- Food Insecurity
- Housing
- Social Inclusion
- Social Safety Net
- Health Services
- Geography
- Disability
- Indigenous Ancestry
- Gender
- Immigration
- Race
- Globalization

1 in 5

NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO WILL EXPERIENCE A
MENTAL HEALTH CONCERN IN THEIR LIFETIME

40%

NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITH ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION
REPORTED NOT SEEKING HELP DUE TO STIGMA

Source: CAMH

There is strong evidence that the factors can help promote positive mental health. The three most significant determinants of mental health are social inclusion, freedom from discrimination and violence, and access to economic resources.

Stigma

Stigma is when someone is viewed in a negative way because of a characteristic or personal trait. People with mental health concerns often face negative attitudes and beliefs from themselves, their community, or the institutions they are a part of, which can lead to discrimination, both direct and unintentional.

Stigma can result in negative effects, such as:

- A reluctance to seek help
- Fewer opportunities in school, work, or social activities
- Bullying, violence, or harassment
- Lack of understanding from friends, co-workers, or family
- Isolation
- Internalized self-beliefs regarding future success or happiness

How to reduce stigma in your area or department

- Educate yourself and your department about mental health; including, the signs and symptoms of mental health concerns, how to respond to people in distress, how to care for your mental health, and what resources are available to your community.
- Normalize mental health struggles by talking about mental health on a regular basis, sharing your own experiences, and sharing stories about other people in your community who have experienced challenges.
- Examine your own beliefs and attitudes. What beliefs do you have about mental health? How do they affect how you interact with your peers, colleagues, and family members? Be conscious of your word choices, as our words can have both a positive and negative impact.
- Support people who come to you with concerns. Providing a safe and supportive environment can encourage people to take the first step towards reaching out for help.

Resources

- [Addressing Stigma from CAMH](#)
- [Stigma and Discrimination](#)

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

On and off campus

FOR STAFF, FACULTY, AND STUDENTS

Student Resources

- [Campus Wellness - Counselling Services](#) - 519-888-4567 ext. 32655
- [Campus Wellness - Health Services](#) - 519-888-4096
- [Empower Me, Mental Health Resources](#) - 1-833-628-5589
- [Good2Talk](#) - 1-866-925-5454 - Post-secondary Student Helpline
- [Here 24/7](#) - 1-844-437-3247 - Waterloo Region Helpline
- [UW MATES](#) Peer support program
- [Glow Centre - Peer support for the LGBTQ2+ community](#)
- [The Women's Centre](#)
- [Accessibility Services](#)

Faculty and Staff Resources

- [Occupational Health](#) - 519-888-4567 ext. 40538
- [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) - 1-800-663-1142

Resources Applicable to Staff, Faculty and Students

- [Here 24/7](#) - 1-844-437-3247 - Waterloo Region Helpline
- [Crisis Services Canada](#) - 1-833-456-4566 or by text 45645
- [Non-emergency Waterloo Regional Police Services](#) - 519-653-7700
- [Grand River Hospital](#) - 519-749-4300
- [St. Mary's Hospital](#) - 519-744-3311
- [Kitchener-Waterloo Sexual Assault Support Centre](#) - 519-741-8633
- [Centre for Mental Health Research and Treatment](#)
- [Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion Office](#)
- [Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office](#)
- [Qualia Counselling Services](#) - 1-844-380-3228
- [Delton Glebe Counselling Centre](#)
- [KW Counselling Services](#)
- [Wellness Together Canada - Mental Health and Substance Use Support](#)
- [Hope for Wellness Indigenous Peoples Helpline](#) - 1-855-242-3310



Workshop and Training Opportunities on Campus

- [Counselling Services Workshops and Groups](#)
- Workshops and therapy groups on a variety of subjects including anxiety management, depression, creating sustainable habits, and much more.
- [Counselling Services Prerecorded Seminars -](#)
Prerecorded video seminars on topics like Stress Management, Sleep Tips and more.
- [Counselling Mental Health Training Opportunities](#)
- Training on responding to people in distress, responding to people with thoughts of suicide, and de-escalating difficult situations
- [Organizational and Human Development Workshops](#)
- [HREI Education and Training](#) - Training to facilitate understanding, address discrimination and harm, influence, and advance systemic changes towards making the University of Waterloo an equitable and safe(r) place where everyone can thrive.
- [Centre for Teaching Excellence](#) - Training on Supporting Student Mental Health, as well as resources on creating positive learning environments.

Other Resources

- [A compiled list of videos](#) on topics such as Stress Management, Self-Care, Resiliency, Self-Compassion and more.
- [A compiled list of mental health apps](#) available for various strategies; including Meditation, Sleep, Anxiety, Depression, and Safety apps.
- [A compiled list of Podcasts](#) on mental health; including motivational, anxiety and depression, self-care, disordered eating and body image, human behaviour, happiness, and mindfulness
- [A compiled list of Services](#) available on and off campus.
 - [Indigenous Student Resources](#)

Thrive Resources

- [Thrive Events](#)
- [Thrive website](#)

UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO



UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
200 UNIVERSITY AVE. W., WATERLOO, ON, CANADA N2L 3G1