

Using Inclusive Teaching Principles in the Classroom

A Toolkit to Support Student Well-Being and Belonging

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Introduction

For the average student, most of their time is spent in classroom settings or partaking in academic related activities (Chaudhry et al., 2024). Students who reported having positive interactions with faculty were shown to have greater life satisfaction, decreased dropout rates, an increase in soft skills, and improved personal development (Komarraju et al., 2010).

Creating a supportive culture in a classroom setting can help support and foster healthy well-being practices in academic, personal, and professional settings (Aleman & Cao, 2022). Adjustments inside the classroom regarding class structure, organization, and personalization can help students feel seen and supported through their academic journey at Columbia University. Supportive classrooms can also help build resiliency and coping skills for protecting their mental health (Mangino, 2023).



Supporting Student Well-Being in the Classroom

The [Center for Teaching and Learning](#) has a variety of [resources and guides](#) available to support you in creating an environment that promotes well-being in the classroom including the [Guide for Inclusive Teaching at Columbia](#). You may consider more information on:

- [Building Community in the Classroom](#) to help students feel a sense of belonging in your course.
- [Creating a High Trust, Low Stress Class Environment](#) in which all learners feel supported and can do their best work.
- Designing [courses](#), [syllabi](#), and [CourseWorks sites](#) that are transparent and accessible to all learners.
- Checking in with students and [collecting and responding](#) to their feedback and learning needs throughout the semester.



Understanding Trauma-Informed Pedagogy

Using a trauma-informed response in the classroom can help you better support your students' needs. There are six key principles that can help you build out best practices for your classroom.

Barnard College outlines these general guidelines for a trauma-informed response:

- Being mindful of power dynamics
- Being empathetic, open, and flexible
- Actively resisting traumatization (using trigger warnings or providing context)
- Seeking ways to promote empowerment, safety, and trust
- Redirecting to campus resources
- Taking care of yourself first



Connecting Students to Resources

An essential part of creating a classroom that is supportive of student well-being is knowing how to connect students to support when they need it. Instructors being able to identify the signs of students in distress and having them redirected can help alleviate some of that burden.

Leverage the University [Blue Folder](#) for information about how to redirect students in distress to support.

If you identify a student in distress:

- Make a plan. Figure out what approach you want to take with the student.
- Consider what to say. Think about what you want to say and how you're going to say it.
- Create back-up plans. Think about the different settings or scenarios that might arise through your conversation with the student.
- Identify your boundaries. Consider how much support you're willing to give the student, and when it might be time for you to reach out to other resources to better meet the student's needs.

Note for mandatory reporters:

If a student shares that they have experienced gender-based violence, active child abuse, or have a plan to harm themselves or others, it is your responsibility to share with the university.



Before they share:

Indicate that you are a mandatory reporter. You can offer to redirect to a [confidential source](#).



While sharing:

Ask for pause. Apologize for interrupting, but indicate that they might disclose information to you, and just want to check that they are aware you are a mandatory reporter.



After they share:

Thank the student for sharing, be transparent and let them know you are a mandatory reporter. Let them know who will get the report and who they should expect to hear from.



Navigating On-campus Resources

Does the student need immediate assistance?

The student's conduct is clearly reckless, disorderly, dangerous, or threatening and suggestive of immediate harm to self or others in the community.

Yes → Respond

If you believe a student is in immediate danger of self-harm and is in New York City, first call 911, then call Public Safety:

Morningside:
(212) 854-5555

Manhattanville:
(212) 853-3333

CUIMC:
(212) 305-7979

You observe indicators of distress but severity is unclear. The interaction has left you feeling uneasy or concerned about the student.

**Not Sure
→ Consult**

Speak with someone for consultation (24/7 support available):

**Morningside/
Manhattanville**
Columbia Health Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS):
(212) 854-2878

CUIMC
Student Health on Haven Counseling Services:
(212) 305-3400

I'm not concerned for the student's immediate safety, but they are having significant academic and/or personal issues and need some support.

No → Refer

Refer to the appropriate campus resource, using the detailed list provided in the [Blue Folder](#)

Additionally, inform their Dean of Students and [submit a report](#) to the Center for Student Success and Intervention at (212) 854-6872 or cssi@columbia.edu

A student is unsure of what support they need?

Have them make a [Health Promotion Appointment](#) with Alice!.

If you're interested in bringing Alice! to the classroom, please don't hesitate to reach out to alice@columbia.edu for more collaboration opportunities like workshops for your students.



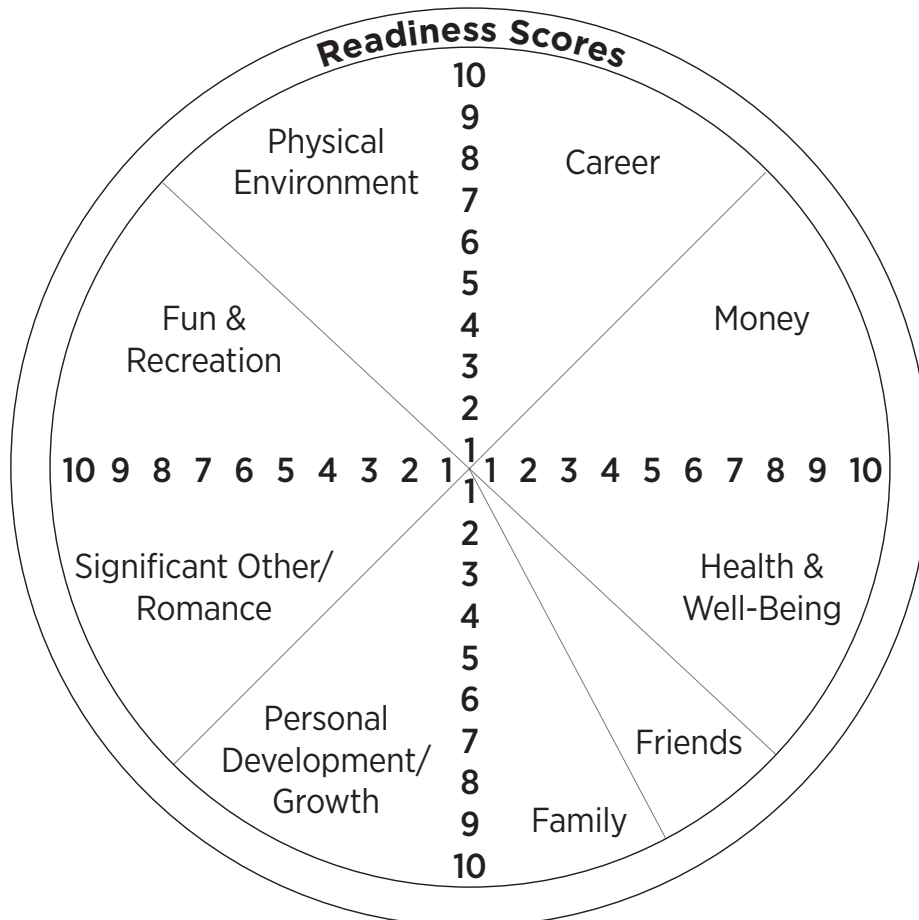
Supporting Instructor Well-Being

Taking care of yourself first is essential to being able to support students. Try these few tools to support your own well-being through different practices.

Well-being Inventory:

Rank your level of satisfaction in each area of your life using the Personal Life Wheel tool. The closer you are to 10, the more fulfilled you feel. Once you have marked your number in each area - connect each number forming a new perimeter for your circle.

- How smooth or bumpy is your life?
- Are there areas of your life that need attention?
- What areas of your life are you willing to address now, soon, or later?





Supporting Instructor Well-Being

Boundary Setting:

- Communicate availability with students
- Define digital availability- potentially include in email signature
- Set expectations for yourself
- Schedule times to take care of basic needs like eating, water, breaks
- Schedule blocks during the day

Coping skills:

- Daily movement
- Sleep
- Nutrition
- Mindfulness exercises
- Recognize what gives you energy and what takes away energy

Resources:

- Leverage the [Office of Work/Life](#) for:
 - Mental and Emotional Well-Being
 - Well-Being in the Office
- Review benefits through the [Employee Assistance Program](#).
- Consider resources available from the [Center for Teaching and Learning](#).

References

- Aleman, L., & Cao, M. (2022, November 9). Fostering Academic Wellbeing in the Classroom. *MIT Teaching + Learning Lab*. <https://tll.mit.edu/fostering-academic-well-being/>
- Chaudhry, S., Tandon, A., Shinde, S., & Bhattacharya, A. (2024). Student psychological well-being in higher education: The role of internal team environment, institutional, friends and family support and academic engagement. *PLOS ONE*, *19*(1), e0297508. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0297508>
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