

Teaching Strategies to Promote Student Wellbeing

With the support of the [Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund](#), we spearheaded the Teaching Practice & Student Mental Wellbeing project, where we engaged students, faculty, instructors, and staff alike to participate in our quest to identify and promote teaching practices that are conducive to improving student mental health and wellbeing. We would like to share with you a list of teaching strategies that were identified as instrumental to promoting student wellbeing:

Fostering Connections

Student wellbeing is supported when students feel a sense of connection with their instructor. As an instructor you can support **the student-instructor relationship** by:

- Introducing yourself
- Learning & using student names
- Having short, informal conversations with students
- Sharing personal anecdotes
- Allowing students to call you by your first name
- Smile 😊

Students indicated that both learning and wellbeing is supported when they have a strong peer network.

Instructors can **support peer connections** by:

- Having icebreakers at the beginning of the term
- Incorporating group work, labs, discussion groups, tutorials, field trips into the curriculum whenever possible
- Aim for repeated contact among student, for example, by maintaining the same groups throughout term
- Encouraging students to attend relevant community events

Supporting Student Learning

Students learn best when they are motivated to learn. Student motivation is enhanced when students find value in what they are learning, students enjoy the learning process, and students believe that they can succeed. You can enhance help students find **value in the material** they are learning by:

- Offering choices in assignments – for example, allowing students to choose the topic of their assignments, the weighting of assignments, etc.
- Explaining why a topic is important and relevant
- Connecting topics to the “real world” – for example, sharing practical applications of theories
- Connect students to community through community events, inviting guest speakers
- Using hands-on or applied learning
- Showing students where to learn more about a topic

Students generally prefer **an engaging and interactive learning process**:

- Show your passion and enthusiasm for the subject
- Incorporate humour as appropriate
- Using multi-media such as short videos, demonstrations, etc.
- Encourage students to ask questions, and ask students questions
- Provide opportunities for in-class discussions, in-class practices, and review sessions
- Encourage internships and community-based projects

Students wellbeing is supported when they are learning effectively. You can support this by **delivering the material effectively**:

- Using active teaching methods
- Using simple language and providing clear examples
- Explaining concepts in multiple ways

- Moving at a pace that is appropriate to the student

Student wellbeing is supported when they are focused on learning the material instead of trying to understand the mechanics of the course. You can support them by **structuring the course effectively**:

- Setting exam/assignment due dates early
- Providing detailed course syllabus
- Sharing all course-related material in one place
- Providing practice problems (with solutions)
- Indicating exam topics & format
- Sharing grading expectations (i.e. format for assignment, grading rubric, examples of an “A” paper)
- Having smaller, more frequent assessments instead of a few large assessments
- Avoid group marks

You can also **support student learning outside the classroom** by:

- Providing timely and detailed feedback
- Connecting students to campus resources such Learning Commons and suggesting study techniques
- Being accessible outside the classroom and encouraging students to attend office hours
- Soliciting feedback from students
- Providing thorough notes to students
- Offering review sessions

Supporting the Whole Student

Students learn in the context of their lives. Instructors can promote student wellbeing by **acknowledging, respecting and supporting other aspects of a student’s life**. You can do this by:

- Ensuring that the workload is reasonable
- Offering flexibility in the grading scheme or deadline extensions so that a bad day doesn’t destroy a student’s chance of success. This is further supported by clearly communicating your practices.
- NOT requiring proof of a crisis for deadline extensions
- Reminding students that their marks do not determine their worth
- Set deadlines to encourage work-life balance

Everyone experiences a mental health challenge at some point. You can support student wellbeing by **openly discussing mental health and wellbeing** with your students.

- Sharing general information about mental health and wellbeing with students
- Sharing campus resources available
- Asking students: “how are you doing?” “How is your schedule?”
- Invite students to talk with you
- Checking in with students who appear to be struggling
- Discussing your own wellbeing
- Addressing campus issues

A **safe classroom climate** is one where students will not feel judged for making a mistake or holding a different opinion from the professor or their classmates and where students can participate in a way they are comfortable. You can foster a safe classroom climate by:

- Establishing a relationship based on trust with the students
- Ensuring that discussions allow space for different perspectives and opinions
- Allowing students space to make mistakes
- Using inclusive language and examples
- Allowing students input into how the class is structured
- Respecting student autonomy
- Allowing multiple forms of participation. For example, online discussions or office hours
- Acknowledging the university can be scary to incoming students

For more information, please visit our blog at <https://blogs.ubc.ca/teachingandwellbeing/>