



# WELL-BEING AND MENTAL HEALTH IN GRAD SCHOOL

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# GRADUATE SCHOOL OFFICE OF WELL-BEING (GROW)

Helping graduate and professional students build skills to better address the challenges of graduate school that impact their well-being.



# What Does GROW Do?

Our goal is to equip you not only to **succeed** in graduate school, but also to **grow** through it and **thrive** beyond it.

- Workshops that help increase your capacity to manage stress, help avoid burnout, protect your priorities, and more.
- Leadership Fellows Program – Fellows build leadership skills and implement change-oriented projects that improve the well-being of the grad student community.
- Community Groups, e.g. Dissertation Community Groups
- Connecting students to relevant offices/programs on campus



PAUSE

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What does well-being look like to you?

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What are well-being habits that you already practice?

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What are current challenges to your well-being?



IS THIS WELL-BEING?

# CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

What does a “healthy” person look like to you?

- We all have culturally-informed biases about what well-being looks like.
- We often project that bias onto people from our own and other cultures.
- We each have wisdom about well-being.
- Not everything I talk about will fit for you and you get to decide that.

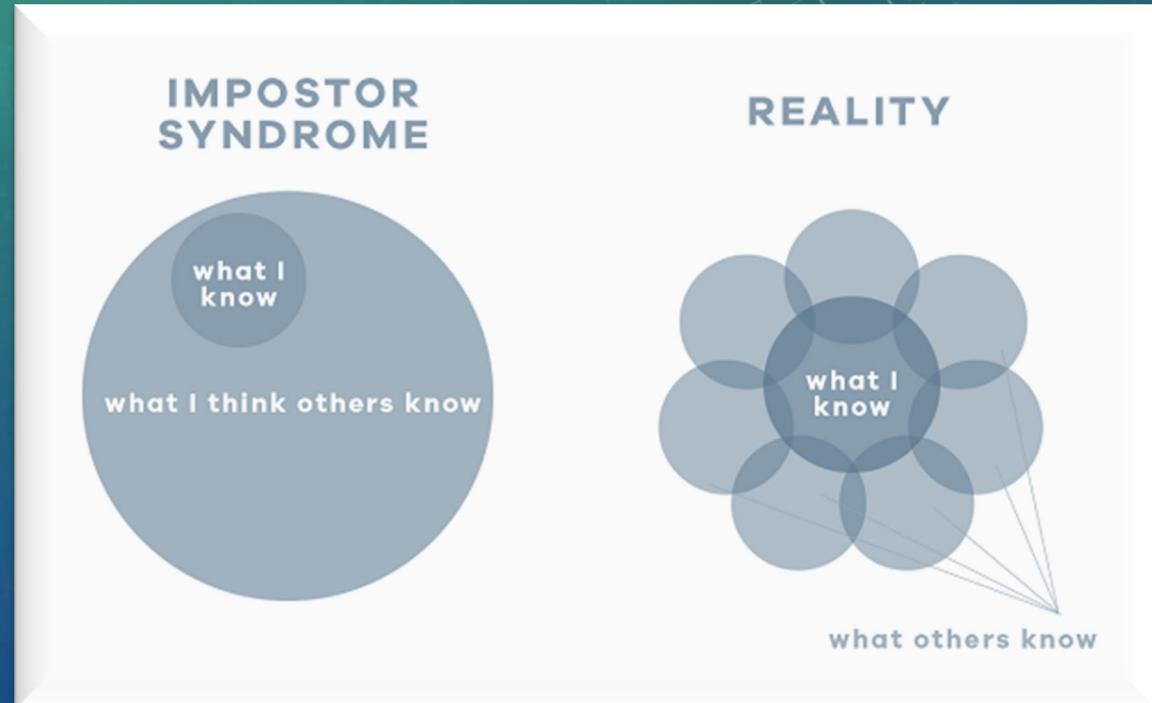
There will never be a consistent set of well-being practices that work for everyone forever. The goal is to know yourself and keep adjusting!

# THE GRADUATE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE



# PRESSURE POINTS IN ACADEMIA

- A culture designed to be critical
- The positioning of “experts” and “non-experts” in a hierarchical relationship
- The human tendency to compare ourselves to others, exacerbated by a competitive, status-based environment
- Valuing of only certain products as proof of expertise
  - Peer reviewed publications vs. professional experience
  - Tenure vs. any other status
  - Discipline-specific currency (grants, patents, contracts, etc.)
- Hustle culture that makes breaks feel like laziness or a risk you can't afford





GRIM, BUT...

Growth is possible! You can  
learn life skills that protect  
your well-being!

# IDENTIFYING MENTAL HEALTH CONCERN

**People come to counseling with:**

- Something that is “diagnosable”
- Something that is disruptive to functioning
- Preventative concerns
- An event or situation that is causing distress
- Something that would benefit from a neutral third party’s opinion

## SIGNS OF DISTRESS

- Radical change in behavior
- Sadness, loss of interest in activities
- Poor concentration and motivation
- Anxiety, preoccupation with worries, **irritability**
- Frequent absences from classes or work
- Disturbance in appetite and/or sleep
- Increase of alcohol or drug use
- Self-harm behavior
- Talking about death or suicide

# CAPS SERVICES

In crisis: call CAPS (517) 355-8270 and press 1 to talk to a crisis counselor ANY time

Not in crisis: click on this link to "[Schedule Now.](#)" You will fill out a very brief survey and will schedule an intake appointment online. At that intake appointment, a therapist will work to understand your concerns, provide support, and identify the next steps that will be most helpful or appropriate to address your concerns.

- Zoom/in-person therapy and psychiatry sessions for students in Michigan
- Referral coordination to community mental health providers
- Support groups (some just for grad students, most open to grad students)

# CAPS GROUPS JUST FOR GRAD STUDENTS

## **Graduate Student Support Group (virtual)**

This is a weekly supportive space where graduate students can gather and empower one another through shared experiences. Mondays from 9:00-10:00

## **Lavendar Rain (virtual)**

This graduate student support group will freely explore the experiences of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. Wednesdays 2:30-4:00pm

# OTHER MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

## Employees Assistance Program (EAP)

- 6 free counseling sessions for benefits-eligible grad students <https://eap.msu.edu>

## MSU Couple and Family Therapy Clinic (<https://hdfs.msu.edu/outreach/couple-family>)

- Happy to see individuals for anxiety, depression, etc., not just relationship concerns
- Sliding scale for MSU students - \$15 per session (less than most copays)

## Can also find community providers on your own:

- MSU has a curated list of local practices/therapists: <https://msu.thrivingcampus.com/>
- Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists>

# WELL-BEING SERVICES

## Health Promotion (serving all MSU students)

- Wellness coaching: a free, three-month program offered at no cost for MSU students to help improve wellbeing, boost confidence, and achieve personal goals.
- Spartan Resilience Program: transforms counseling-based skill-building into accessible media formats

## Health Promotion for Faculty and Staff (serving all MSU employees)

- Worklife Wellbeing Workshops
- Mindful State: an emerging university-wide, collaborative initiative to help Spartans develop or strengthen their mindfulness practices



# SKILLS FOR WELL-BEING



## 1. REFLECT OFTEN

- What are current sources of stress for you? Sometimes listing them can be validating.
- What are sources of relief or rest for you? Have you been able to take advantage of them lately?
- If nothing changes, how long do you think you'll be able to sustain your current level of activity?
- Are you seeing any signs of distress that may need to be addressed?
- Would someone who knows you very well agree with your assessment? Sometimes, we are the last ones to know how stressed out we are and how our stress is impacting others.
- What is ONE thing that would be an investment in your wellbeing that you could do today?

## 2. SLOW DOWN

### **Handheld Assertions**

- Identify four or five words that can help you to return to a place of motivation, focus, peace, etc. *I can do hard things. I will not give up. This too shall pass. I got myself here.*
- Call out each word as you touch your thumb to each finger on the same hand. Can also link breath.

### **3-2-1**

- What are 3 things you can see – 2 things you can hear – 1 thing you can feel

### **Breathe on Purpose**

- Attend to your breathing while you are reading or writing or sitting in a meeting/class/workshop



### 3. PRACTICE COMMUNITY-CARE

“In a society where the norm is the prioritization of the self over the collective, coming together in community is an act of resistance against dominant narratives that center individualism.”

Sambile, 2018

# COMMUNITY-CARE

- VENTING: Talk through stressors without the need to fix anything.
- PROBLEM SOLVING: Ask for feedback and advice.
- ACCOUNTABILITY: Tell each other what you're planning to do and check in on each other.
- WORKING TOGETHER: Find some “study buddies” and go somewhere to work together (on personal goals, too!).
- DISTRACTIONS: Go hang out, watch a movie, play a game, etc.
- CELEBRATING: Help each other make a big deal out of our successes.

◀ Unapologetically seek the kind of support you so easily offer to others!



- Practice new skills when under a small source of stress to build capacity.
- Try new combinations of simple strategies.
- Something is better than nothing.
- Try not to force yourself into a “best practice” that doesn’t work for you. Even the ones I just shared.
- Be a friend to yourself.

## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

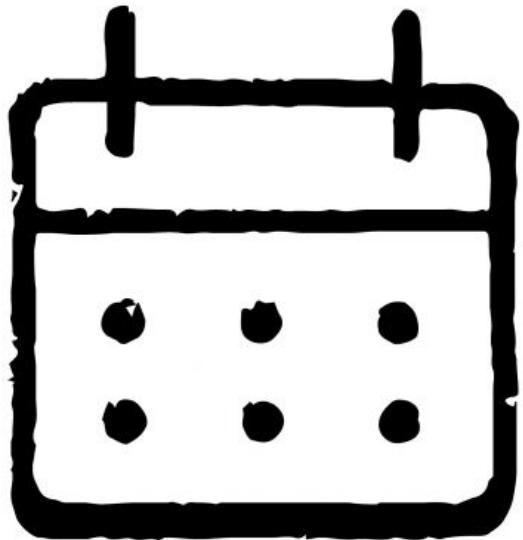
“Rest is a form of resistance. It is a way to reclaim our bodies and our time, to push back against a world that profits off our exhaustion.”

Tricia Hersey, author of *Rest is Resistance*

# QUESTIONS



# UPCOMING GROW WORKSHOP



**Well-Being and Graduate School: The Key to your Success.** Learn practical tips to help you manage your health and well-being while advancing your academic and professional goals.

- Tuesday, Oct 1 from 4-5pm (in person at 110 Chittenden Hall) Register [HERE](#).
- Wednesday, Oct 2 from 6:30-7:30pm (virtual) Register [HERE](#).



## UPCOMING GROW EVENTS

### **Navigating Difficult Conversations**

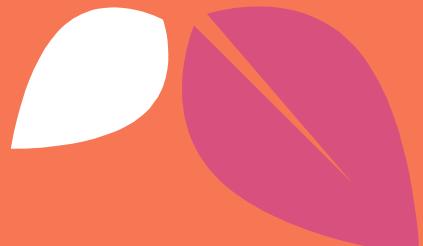
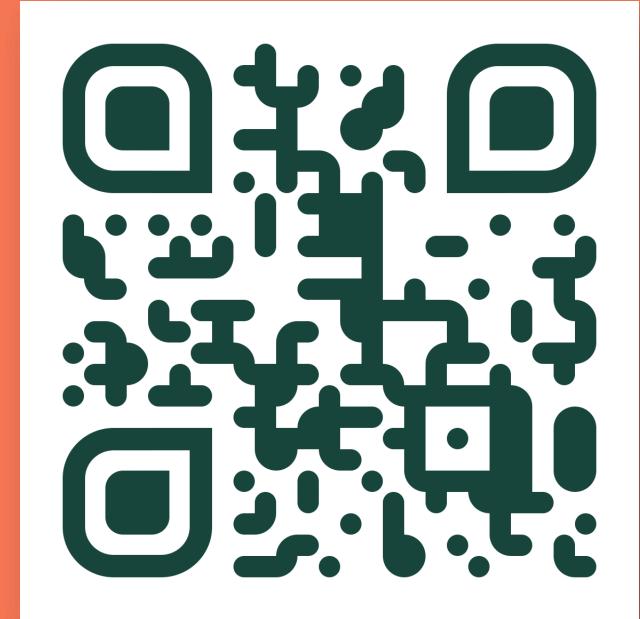
Friday, October 10, 12-1pm.

### **Bounce Forward: Strategies for Resilience and Recovery**

Monday, November 3, 3:30-4:30pm.

### **Get Stuff Done with GROW**

Co-working sessions Tuesdays from 2-4pm Sept 9-Oct 7



# CONNECT WITH GROW

Meg Moore: [akehimeg@msu.edu](mailto:akehimeg@msu.edu)

Website: <https://grad.msu.edu/GROW>

Instagram: @msugrow

Facebook: @msugradwellness



Sign up here to get a quarterly newsletter with program details and well-being resources.

# WELL-BEING RESOURCES

GROW has a list of [resources](#), arranged by well-being domains (physical health, mental/emotional health, occupational and financial well-being, and more.



The Council of Graduate Students (COGS) has a [list of resources](#) that includes academic and research support, learning communities, legal services, and more.

[List of resources on iTeach](#), put together with international graduate students in mind but helpful for anyone new to MSU.

# THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

**Supporting graduate student success through  
professional development opportunities**

- Career Development
- Research Skills
- Teaching Development and Support
- Community Engagement
- Leadership Development
- Well-Being Programs and Resources
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advocacy and Support Programs

