

Mission

The Mental Health Task Force at Westchester Community College is a multidisciplinary team of faculty, staff, and students who use a holistic, public health framework to assess the current culture and services related to student mental health. The Task Force's development and utilization of a strategic plan will support the goal of enhancing the quality and accessibility of mental health and wellness services, information, programs, and resources across the Westchester Community College community.

Top stories in this newsletter



Meet the MHTF - Mental Health Task



In the NEWS Are You Prepared?



Upcoming Events



Mental Health Tip

Meet the Mental Health Task Force - MHTF



The Mental Health Task Force (MHTF) at Westchester Community College uses a public health framework to address issues like mental health, suicide prevention, and substance use within the WCC community. The work of the MHTF focuses on a campus cultural shift towards education, de-stigmatization, and prevention. The framework utilized by MHTF is the JED Holistic Model.

MHTF Members

- Pat Sheehan, LMHC (Co-Chair), Personal Counseling Department
- Kristy Robinson, LCSW (Co-Chair), Personal Counseling Department
- Dr. Shawn Brown, Chief of Staff and Vice President of Strategic Operations
- Dr. Rachele Hall, Department of Student Involvement
- Dr. Ray Houston, Dean, School of Mathematics, Science, and Engineering
- Dr. Karen Taylor, Dean, School of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences
- Adam Frank, Dean, Student Life
- Ashlee Pierce, Viking ROADS Opportunity Program
- Dorothy Posada, Strategic Marketing and Communications
- Blakeley Lowry, School of Health Careers, Technology and Applied Learning
- Jade Watts, Personal Counseling Department
- Walesca Marmolejos, LMSW, Personal Counseling Department
- Sophia Piñeiro, Student Support Services
- Gianna Jimenez, SGA President 2020-2021

In the NEWS



Are You Prepared?

As a school dean I often receive emails and sometimes texts after hours, it is part of the position I hold. In early December, I received a text on a Monday night around 8:00 p.m. from an instructor explaining that she had a student who had thought about suicide over the weekend and the student was reaching out to her and what advice could I give. My immediate reaction was, "I got this, I am a member of the WCC Mental Health Task Force, I know what to do" but, I soon realized I was not prepared to handle the situation. I went to the college website and looked under Personal Counseling for the phone numbers of agencies. (Thank God, we now have Personal Counseling right on the front page, so I didn't have to search.) I talked with the professor as to whether the student was in immediate danger and if so then she should call 911. The instructor said the student's home situation was not good and calling 911 could make it worse. So, I ended up giving the faculty member some numbers of agencies that the student should call that night. The student agreed that she could and would make a call.

I know that as a school dean, I cannot be prepared for everything that comes my way, but this situation really hit home and I decided that I was never going to be underprepared again for a life and death situation. That is when I signed up for the Mental Health First Aid Training course. It is an intense training that lasts six hours and every hour was worth my time. Throughout the day we discussed types of mental disorders and read scenarios of situations and how to handle them. I learned what mental health first aid is, what mental health first aiders do, the ALGEE action plan, and to put the important phone numbers in my phone.

The Personal Counseling Department offered two of these Mental Health First Aid Courses – one in December and the one in January that I participated in – virtually of course. In my course, there were full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and staff. I thought a good cross section of people on campus. However, I also thought that we as a college, as a community who cares about our students and each other that this course should be mandatory for all. Even without the added stress of the Pandemic, there are people hurting and being stigmatized for having mental health challenges. While I hope I am never in the situation of a late-night text asking for help from a student contemplating suicide, at least now I know what to do. Wouldn't you like to be prepared also?

Karen Taylor, Ed.D.

Dean of the School of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

Upcoming Events



For Students

- [COPING: Mental Health Support Group](#)
Thursday's at 6:00 p.m. through May 13
- [Healthy Relationships Group](#)
Tuesday's at 6:00 p.m. through May 11
- [Grief Support Group](#)
Wednesday, April 14 at 11:30 a.m.
- [Help a Friend Training](#)
Thursday, April 15 at 5:00 p.m.
- [Success from Head to Toe Group](#)
Wednesday, April 28 at 11:30 a.m.
[Zoom Link](#)
Meeting ID: 947 5978 4148
Passcode: 906753

For Faculty/Staff

- [Supporting Students in Distress Training](#)
Thursday's at 6:00 p.m. through May 1

Mental Health Tip of the Month



Just Breathe

Do you ever feel as though your muscles are so tense that you sometimes feel pain? Ever suffer from "brain fog" where your thoughts may be unclear or unable to focus on the tasks at hand?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, just breathe. Did you know that simple, slow and deep breaths can help alleviate tension, pain, brain fog, and so much more? Many times, we do not realize how often we hold out breath or do not breathe properly throughout the day. Breathing properly actually helps with the lack of oxygen that can contribute to the things I mentioned above. In fact, breathing exercises can have physical and mental benefits when done on a regular basis.

The following are some of the physical benefits of breathing exercises:

- Encourages full oxygen exchange
- Reduces tension in the body
- Helps eliminate toxins from the body
- Helps reduce pain
- Boosts the immune system

The following are some of the mental health benefits of breathing exercises:

- Helps relieve stress
- Helps you to practice mindfulness and be in the present
- Promotes good sleep
- Reduces anxiety
- Helps boost mood

If you would like to feel the benefits of deep breathing for yourself, please try one of the following breathing exercises:

For all of the exercises, you can either be sitting, standing or in any comfortable position. You can have your eyes open or closed. AND they can be done anywhere and anytime!

Box Breath (4-4-4-4)

Breathe slowly in through your nose for a count of 4; hold your breath for 4 seconds; exhale the breath slowly through the mouth for a count of 4; hold your breath for 4 seconds. Repeat these steps a few times as needed but no more than 5 times.

4-7-8 Breathing

Breathe slowly in through you nose for a count of 4; hold your breath for 7 seconds; exhale the breath for 8 seconds with an open mouth. Repeat these steps as many times as needed.

Remember, when you are starting to feel some anxiety, stress, or other discomforts, just breathe. .