

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.

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Mental Health Tip

September is Suicide Prevention Month!

WCC Faculty and Staff can take the free QPR training to learn ways of supporting someone struggling with thoughts of suicide. Sign up here: <https://www.qprtraining.com/setup.php>

WCC students can sign up for our Help a Friend Training [Link] to learn ways of supporting their peers through these thoughts and feelings. Sign up here: <https://www.sunywcc.edu/events/help-a-friend-training-4/> or <https://www.sunywcc.edu/events/help-a-friend-training-5/>

MHTF: Welcome & Update



Welcome

“Back to campus,” “back to normal,” “the new normal,” -- however you are referring to this time in your life as a WCC community member, we are with you! Maybe you are excited for this new chapter of reemergence. Perhaps you are feeling anxious, uncertain, or overwhelmed. However you are feeling right now, you are not alone. Change is scary and after 18+ months of isolation, fear, and loss, it is understandable that you may not feel prepared for the next phase of our Westchester Community College journey.

The Mental Health Task Force at Westchester Community College has been committed to the wellbeing of our entire campus community. As a team of faculty, staff, administrators and student representatives, we have engaged in honest and open conversations about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of our community. We assessed concerns about return to campus and brought our recommendations to WCC's Pandemic Response Team. The Mental Health Task Force will continue to assess and address College policies, procedures, and general practices as they pertain to the mental health and wellbeing of students, faculty, and staff. The title of this newsletter is no coincidence your mental health really does matter.

No matter what your role is on/off campus, student, faculty, staff member, there is an opportunity for you to connect with others and advocate for mental health awareness. Please stay tuned for more exciting initiatives sponsored by WCC's Mental Health Task Force. Check out our website at www.sunywcc.edu/MHTF for more information or connect with us by e-mailing MHTF@sunywcc.edu.

Spring 2021 Update

The Mental Health Task Force has had a busy Spring 2021 semester working on various ways to promote conversations and education around mental health. An important goal the MHTF had was to launch a website and e-mail address, which both went live in March:

Website: <https://www.sunywcc.edu/student-services/mental-health-services/mentalhealth-task-force/>

E-mail: MHTF@sunywcc.edu

The website is designed to share information specific to the MHTF with the college community. The e-mail address is meant for initiatives pertaining to the MHTF. The MHTF is excited to have these new ways of promoting mental health to our fellow Vikings.

As part of the college's 75th Anniversary celebrations, the MHTF is launching 75 tips on ways to sustain and improve positive mental health practices. This is a continuation of our “Mental Health Tip of the Month” feature and will continue throughout the college's milestone anniversary year.

Also in March, we completed the JED Campus Life Skills Inventory. This inventory allowed us to see what programs we offer that discuss various life skills, such as mindfulness and stress management, and gaps we can possibly fill with programming in the upcoming academic school year. Related to programming already in place, several support groups and trainings for students were held regularly throughout the semester, such as Healthy Relationships Group, Grief Support Group, and Help a Friend Training. For faculty and staff, the Personal Counseling Department continued their successful Supporting Students in Distress Training, with a renewed focus on how to help support students in a remote environment.

Finally, in May, the MHTF publicized free mental health crisis intervention training for faculty and staff sponsored by SUNY which focuses on how to help someone dealing with suicidal ideation. The training centers on three steps, QPR: Question, Persuade, Refer. The training takes less than an hour and results in a two-year certification.

Here's how faculty and staff can sign up:

Go to the QPR account page: <https://www.qprtraining.com/setup.php>

Enter “SUNY” in the “Organization Code” field.

Create your free training account using your @sunywcc.edu email address.

Follow the instructions to complete the training.

In the NEWS:



MICROAGGRESSIONS:

An Uncomfortable Conversation but a Necessary One

On May 25, 2021, Westchester Community College was fortunate to have J. Luke Wood, one of the leading experts in microaggressions, speak to our college community. The discussion consisted of defining microaggressions as well as discussing the framework that he developed with Frank Harris III. If you were unable to attend the presentation, we urge you to read “How to Respond to Racial Microaggressions When They Occur” written by J. Luke Wood and Frank Harris III which discusses in more detail the framework they developed, called R.A.V.E.N.

The term microaggressions was first coined in the 1970's by Chester Pierce who stated, “racial microaggressions are the subtle forms of racism that are communicated to people of color through messages that degrade and demean them.” Many cases of microaggressions occur when comments such as, “you are so articulate” or “you do not look Latinx” are directed at a person of color. What may seem to be a compliment by non-BIPOC individuals may actually be perceived as an insult to a person of color. Microaggressions are not only comments, but can be actions and/or behaviors as well such as assuming a person of color has cheated on a paper/exam because the teacher may have lower expectations of students of color. Another example of a microaggression is a store employee following a person of color while they are shopping because the assumption is they will steal items.

Microaggressions can have a negative impact on a person's mental health. In a recent article by Elizabeth Montoya (2021), she discusses the effect of microaggressions on one's health, especially mental health. Montoya states, “Microaggressions negatively affect the individual's mental, emotional, and physical health. Over time, these microaggressions create inner conflict and chronic stress; this only increases their risk for the onset of traumatic stress symptoms and depression.”

Because of the challenges faced by people of color every day, Wood and Harris (2020) “developed the R.A.V.E.N.–a framework that is particularly useful when responding to microaggressions that occur in public (physical and online) spaces. The R.A.V.E.N. is a five-step approach that entails 1) Redirecting the conversation or interaction, 2) Asking probing questions, 3) Values clarification, 4) Emphasizing your own thoughts, and 5) offering concrete next steps... The R.A.V.E.N. is not intended to be a sequential process but rather a framework to guide thinking and actions to disrupt racial microaggressions when they occur. The framework also works best when actions and statements are unconscious in nature and not intentionally racist as the latter requires a direct and stern response.”

Wood and Harris believed that individuals would benefit from the R.A.V.E.N framework to consider what they might do when either experiencing or witnessing microaggressions. Otherwise, most are likely to do nothing. “Microaggressions are harmful, so don't be a bystander... do something.”

How to Respond to Racial Microaggressions When They Occur

May 5, 2020: by J. Luke Wood & Frank Harris III
<https://diverseeducation.com/article/176397/#>

[The Effects of Microaggressions on One's Health – Morning Sign Out at UCI](#)
March 9, 2021: by Elizabeth Montoya s

Upcoming Events: Fall 2021



For Students

- **[Navigating the New Semester](#)**
Tuesday, August 24, at 2:00 p.m.
- **[Helping a Friend Training](#)**
Wednesday, August 25, at 1:00 p.m.
- **[Navigating the New Semester](#)**
Thursday, August 26, at 4:00 p.m.
- **[Relationships Group](#)**
Every Tuesday at 5:15 p.m., starting September 7
- **[COPING: Mental Health Support Group](#)**
Every Thursday at 6:00 p.m., starting September 9
- **[Wellness Screening](#)**
Wednesday, September 22, at 11:30 a.m.
- **[Wellness Screening](#)**
Thursday, September 23, at 4:30 p.m.
- **[Navigating the New Semester: A Follow Up- Wed. Sept 29th at 11:30 AM](#)**
Wednesday, September 29, at 11:30 a.m.
- **[Parenting Students Workshop](#)**
Wednesday, September 29, at 5:30 p.m.
- **[Success from Head to Toe- Thurs. Oct 7th at 4:30 PM](#)**
Thursday, October 7, at 4:30 p.m.
- **[Help a Friend Training](#)**
Wednesday, October 13, at 11:30 a.m.
- **[Stress Management Toolbox- Wed. Oct 27th at 11:30 AM](#)**
Wednesday, October 27, at 11:30 a.m.
- **[Help a Friend Training- Thurs. Nov 18th at 4:30 PM](#)**
Thursday, November 18, at 4:30 p.m.
- **[Stress Free Finals Week- Dec. 6th - Dec. 10th](#)**

For Faculty/Staff

- **[Employee Wellbeing Support with NY Project Hope](#)**
Thursday, September 2, at 4:00 p.m.
- **[Supporting Students in Distress Training](#)**
Thursday, September 16, at 4:00 p.m.
- **[Employee Wellbeing Support with NY Project Hope](#)**
Thursday, September 16, at 4:00 p.m.
- **[Employee Wellbeing Support with NY Project Hope](#)**
Thursday, October 7, at 4:00 p.m.
- **[Supporting Students in Distress Training](#)**
Thursday, October 21, at 4:00 p.m.
- **[Employee Wellbeing Support with NY Project Hope](#)**
Thursday, October 21, at 4:00 p.m.
- **[Employee Wellbeing Support with NY Project Hope](#)**
Thursday, November 4, at 4:00 p.m.
- **[Employee Wellbeing Support with NY Project Hope](#)**
Thursday, November 18, at 4:00 p.m.
- **[Employee Wellbeing Support with NY Project Hope](#)**
Thursday, December 2, at 4:00 p.m.

Mental Health Tip of the Month



As the summer begins to wind down, it is time to think about switching gears into back-to-school mode. This time of year typically brings excitement as well as feelings of anticipation, worry and even stress, particularly as our community continues to grapple with the challenges we endured during the pandemic. Here are a few tips to keep in mind to set yourself up for success in the coming school year.

- **Create a routine** – setting up a daily routine can help organize and manage your time.
- **Prioritize sleep** - good sleep habits help maintain physical and mental health. Getting plenty of sleep can reduce the effects of stress on the body and help boost the immune system.
- **Eat a healthy diet** - including fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains. Healthy food can boost your energy levels, ability to focus and memory function.
- **Check in with a campus counselor** - WCC provides an amazing support system for students. Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- **Stay connected with others** - Get involved with student clubs, sports or activities. Social connection can decrease anxiety and depression and help us regulate our emotions.
- **Practice mindfulness** - Activities such as meditation and deep breathing are proven to be helpful in managing stress.
- **Reward yourself** - Whether this is your first or last semester or somewhere in between, you made it here. You are on the right pathway to reach your goals. .

Send Us Your Tips

Are there certain things you do to help your mental health? What do you do for self-care? How do you show yourself some self-compassion? We want to hear from YOU: students, faculty, AND staff.

In honor of the 75th anniversary of Westchester Community College, the Mental Health Task Force is collecting mental health tips from faculty, staff, and students. Our goal is to collect 75 mental health tips to be published in an upcoming newsletter.

Please submit your tips here: : [75 Mental Health Tips Submission Form](#)

We are excited to learn more mental health tips from everyone.

Contact us at MHTF@sunywcc.edu