

December Wellness Newsletter

Foreword: Each month, we feature a different wellness topic for which we provide insights and a variety of multimedia resources. For the month of December, we would like to share thoughts and strategies for **responding to emotional triggers**. Check out the links provided to explore more! For our **December Wellness Giveaway**, we plan to raffle FIVE Cacoco Drinking Chocolates from Coracao. More info below.

Responding to Emotional Triggers

Martha Kahlson shares: "The winter holiday season is and has long been a time of emotional triggers for me since I do not have a home base or nuclear family to spend the holidays with. I am grateful, however, to have developed many skills and tricks over the years that help me deal with emotional triggers so that I can have a healthy and fulfilling time during the holiday. First, I focus on being my own best friend during the holiday season and setting my intentions for the holiday ahead of time. I think about what would feel the most nurturing and fulfilling and plan ahead of time to help me follow through. I like to plan special trips and activities for myself, such as camping, hiking, travel, or a special home-cooked dinner. Setting the ambiance is also very important to me, so I enjoy decorating my apartment with a tree, lights, stocking, and a few wrapped presents to myself under the tree. Despite these measures, emotional triggers still arise, especially within relationships, in which case I have **three go-to strategies** to help me deal with them in a healthy way.

- First, I have a few dependable, calm and wise friends on speed dial who always serve as great listeners and advisors during conflict or difficult times. A voice conversation (as opposed to text) is essential, and seeing their face, even if through a screen, is ideal.
- Second, guided and other styles of meditation help me tremendously to cope with and process emotions in a healthy way. The RAIN method is particularly helpful for me, and I always end a session feeling more at peace than when I started ([here's](#) one of my favorite 10 minute guided RAIN meditations).
- Lastly, turning off all screens, putting my phone in the other room, and taking a few hours of private time for myself initially feels like a struggle, but eventually really helps ground me. My favorite way to do this during the winter holidays is to sit by the tree with a fantasy novel and a mug of hot eggnog.

Remember that whatever emotions you are feeling are real and valid, and it is important to acknowledge and allow them. However, also remember that you have the power to choose what experience you want to create for yourself."

Responding to Emotional Triggers

Logan Leak shares: "As it draws closer to the holiday season, I become excited as I realize that I will soon be able to spend time with my family without having to worry about the stresses associated with school. However, I must always remind myself of the differences between the university community and my hometown that I will undoubtedly encounter upon my return. As a gay man, I thrive at school, which fosters an extremely welcoming community for LGBTQIA+ identifying individuals, but my hometown is a little more closed-minded. Amongst other micro- and macroaggressions, I remember having a slur yelled at me as I walked down a street in my hometown while holding hands with my boyfriend. Since then, I've felt as if I need to be on high alert and cover my sexuality while I'm home. To deal with this, I take time to decompress by engaging in some of my hobbies, which include knitting, doing crossword puzzles, and baking. If I am in the mood to process my thoughts, I will also spend time journaling and reflecting on any upsetting interactions I experience. I try to shift the narrative by wondering what may have led someone to engage in a certain action instead of what is wrong with me. This helps to boost my confidence in my own identity and allows me to focus on being present with my family to soak up all of the good things associated with the holiday season."



Shelly Rasnick shares: "While the holidays are so often portrayed as a time full of joy and love, as someone living with anxiety (and someone prone to be a people pleaser), I find myself dreading the season and its pressures. For me, it can be a time filled with competing family demands, gift pressure/needless spending, and interactions with some people (and their opinions) that are difficult to manage. This year, the health and safety measures with the pandemic have not made things any easier as it has added new disappointments to try to navigate.

Some strategies I **try** to practice to keep myself collected through the holidays include:

- **Saying "no"** - I've spent years traveling all over, trying to see everyone, and attending every possible holiday commitment. That approach rarely makes me happy and I never seem to make everyone else happy either. I've been focusing on setting clear boundaries and holding myself to them, even when it means causing others some disappointment.
- **Practicing gratitude** - While there are things that bring me stress, there are so many more to feel gratitude about. If I find myself in a negative funk, I take a few moments to write out a few things I am truly grateful for and can reflect back on it whenever I need to find a little joy.
- **Self-care** - The holidays always manage to upset any routine I've been able to stick to. Instead of taking care of myself, I am prone to random sleep hours, less movement, and more food and alcohol. While I try not to deprive myself from all the treats, I also do not let go of some of the self-care strategies that I've found keep my anxiety in check. I prioritize getting enough sleep, taking time to walk my dog, practicing some yoga, and balancing out the sweets with some food that also has nutritional value.

Having a plan and some go-to strategies is one of the best things I can do to manage the uncertainty. Give yourself the permission to do what you need to for yourself this holiday season.

Resources to Learn More

- Join OGE for a workshop on approaching difficult conversations
 - **Crucial Conversations in the Holiday Season**
 - **Thursday, December 10th, 1:00-3:00pm PT, Register [HERE](#)**
 - In this highly interactive session, consultant and negotiation coach, Jessica Notini, will lead participants through developing and practicing skills for difficult conversations. We will examine what constitutes a difficult conversation, including emotional escalation, as well as how to avoid damage to relationships and more.
- Learn about the dive reflex (a technique can help you calm down when your emotions are overwhelming) in this [article](#)
- Utilize the STOPP (Stop, Take a breath, Observe, Pull back, Practice what works) technique.
 - Explore the technique with this [worksheet](#)
 - Dr. Marissa Nunes Moreno of CAPS explains the steps in this [video](#).
- When a trigger activates automatic thoughts, utilizing [Cognitive Behavioral Therapy \(CBT\)](#) techniques may be useful.
 - The [ABC Model](#) can help you examine your reactions and beliefs that occur as a result of a trigger or activating event.
 - More articles to explore:
 - [ABC's of Resilience Work](#)
 - [ABC's of Feeling Better](#)
 - [Gaining Control A-B-C-D-E](#)
- Cultivate skills for resilience, or the ability to recover from difficulties you may face with one of the activities [here](#).



December Give-away!! This December, we plan to raffle FIVE Cacoco Drinking Chocolates from [Coracao](#). You can specify your preferred flavor with your submission.

To enter the give-away please follow this [link](#) and enter your information (<https://forms.gle/8W6PrzTn1FeutkeHA>).



Wellness Event Calendars



Stanford@Home

Explore Stanford virtually, wherever you are, or get outside and explore campus if you can. Maybe pick one thing for each day of the week - Tools for Tuesdays? Justice Fridays? -- and find others to connect with virtually.



Winter Break CA Events

Community Associates will be hosting grad-wide events throughout winter break. Check out these gift exchanges, open mic, BINGO, and more.

Virtual Well-Being Resources

Well-Being at Stanford and Vaden Health Services are actively building additions to this set of virtual resources that are designed to support your well-being. This calendar provides recurring events such as office hours, meditations, community gatherings, and yoga.

Biosciences Student Development and Wellness Events

Academic development, professional development, and wellness-related events organized by the Biosciences Office of Graduate Education and by other campus organizations.

Mind Over Money Events

Mind Over Money aims to serve as a campus-wide resource to equip students with a foundation to make informed financial decisions during their time at Stanford and in their careers and lives after the Farm. Calendar provides financial related events.

Stanford Department of Music

Calendar featuring free, virtual music events.

Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education (VPGE)

VPGE's initiatives and resources enrich students' academic experiences at Stanford by advancing diversity, preparing leaders, and positioning Stanford at the forefront of innovation in graduate education. Calendar provides fireside chats, concerts, and workshops.

Stanford Alumni Association

Learn, volunteer or socialize at an alumni virtual event. Calendar includes lectures, community, watch parties, and more.

General Wellness Resources

Study Spaces

Need a quiet study space? Thanks to GLO, students can reserve respite rooms.

Green Library also has spaces available by appointment.

Miscellaneous University Resources:

2020-2021 Stanford Student Health Matters

Community Centers (more on Community Centers)

Centers for Equity, Community, and Leadership

Office of Accessible Education (OAE)

Office of Accessible Education Registration

Well-being Coaching

Virtual Well-Being

Graduate Life Office (GLO)

Acts of Intolerance Protocol

Office of the Ombuds

School of Medicine Ombudsperson

Office of Graduate Education (OGE)

Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education

VPGE Stanford@Home

Sexual Violence On-Call University Support

Title IX Office

QSpot Online

Mind Over Money

Campus Resources for Each Flourishing Domain

Clinical Support:

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Cardinal Care/Health Net Information

Well-being at Stanford

Vaden - immediate medical help

Vaden - immediate mental health crisis assistance

Health Net: (800) 250-5226

Mental Health Network: (800) 327-0307

International Mental Health Support through

Cardinal Care

Biosciences-specific:

BioPeers (Meet the BioPeers)

Centering Black Community Needs

Stanford Biosciences - Wellness Matters

Biosciences Wellness Events

Financial Support:

Emergency Grant-In-Aid

Biosciences Hardship Fund

Graduate Funding Options

Wellness Chair Communications:

August Wellness Newsletter

September Wellness Newsletter

October Wellness Newsletter

November Wellness Newsletter

By Logan Leak (SBSA Wellness Chair), Martha Kahlson and Oscar Diaz (BioAIMs Wellness Chairs), and Shelly Rasnick (Associate Director for Biosciences Student Life and Wellness)