

For Dental Faculty:
Wellness Framework
University of Toronto Faculty of Dentistry



The objectives of this document include:

- i) Develop an overarching framework for wellness specific to the University of Toronto Faculty of Dentistry encompassing resources for students, staff, and faculty.
- ii) Describe the goals and guiding principles for wellness at the Faculty of Dentistry.
- iii) Create a greater understanding of the different facets of wellness including academic, physical, social, lifestyle, emotional, financial, and spiritual wellness that contribute to the overall wellbeing of our individuals.

Vision

- The vision for the Wellness Working Group is to foster, promote & integrate a culture of wellness and support at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Dentistry in order to provide a safe, healthy, inclusive work and school environment for all students, staff, and faculty.

Mission

- Develop a wellness framework to gain a holistic view on health and wellness at the Faculty and identify areas with need and interest for improvement
- Review resources available on wellness initiatives in order to help strengthen and improve upon current wellness initiatives
- Implement and promote new wellness initiatives at the Faculty and monitor the outcomes and results of the initiatives
- Facilitate group discussions on wellness initiatives, solicit and review feedback from Faculty, staff, and students on wellness initiatives at the Faculty

Guiding Principles

The Faculty of Dentistry is committed to:

- 1) Creating awareness surrounding wellness in our program(s) and addressing areas that can be transformed to improve wellness and foster and promote a positive experience for all.
- 2) Encouraging members to pursue safe, healthy, and balanced lifestyles.
- 3) Embracing a holistic view of health and wellness, recognizing that this is individual specific and encompasses many facets of wellness including the academic, physical, social, lifestyle, emotional, financial, and spiritual wellness.
- 4) Integrating the principles of health and wellness into all aspects of the program, including the curriculum, extracurricular and social events, and other learning experiences beyond the program.
- 5) Collaborating with the University of Toronto to encompass and promote all resources already available through the main campus.
- 6) Promoting resources that are easily accessible for students, staff, and faculty to improve their own wellbeing.

These are the facets of wellness:

Intellectual Wellness

Individual characteristics of intellectual wellness include:

- The perception of being internally energized by an optimal amount of intellectually stimulating activity
- Learning because you want to – not because you are told to
- Completing the work assigned with proficiency
- Learning through varied experiences – lectures, labs, clinic, hospitals, outreach programs
- Growing intellectually, maintaining curiosity about all there is to learn, valuing lifelong learning, and responding positively to intellectual challenges
- Expanding knowledge and skills while discovering the potential for sharing your gifts with others

Examples of intellectual stressors:

- Understanding the process and attaining tenure/continuing status
- Maintaining a part-time faculty position and private practice
- Maintaining competitiveness for grant application
- Dealing with negative course evaluations
- Dealing with students who are struggling academically
- Dealing with students who are cheating
- Lack of time/Overwhelming course loads
- Lack of mentorship
- Expectations from faculty and staff
- Interactions with faculty or staff
- Balancing clinic demands with didactic demands
- Lack of communication from senior administrators regarding work expectations
- Unclear job description
- Lack of support in job role
- Efforts not valued
- Lack of career development opportunities
- Frustration with technology or software (Axium)
- Communication demands/expectations – contacting students, immediate responses to emails

Physical Wellness

Individual characteristics of physical wellness include:

- A perception and expectation of physical health that is maintained by exercising regularly and eating properly
- Eating healthy and nutritious meals
- Getting regular physical check-ups
- Getting adequate sleep at night
- Limiting the use of substances such alcohol and caffeine
- Avoiding the use of harmful substances such as tobacco or illicit drugs

Examples of physical stressors:

- Inadequate physical health leading to lack of energy and ability to perform daily activities
- Risk of percutaneous injuries and acquiring infectious diseases in dentistry
- Body pain and eye strain from working in uncomfortable and awkward positions
- Injury or physical disability
- Pregnancy
- Stress related to the health of friends or family members
- A new diagnosis, either physical or psychological
- Inadequate access to health care, support, or resources for self or others
- Management of chronic or episodic health conditions

Social Wellness

Individual characteristics of social wellness include:

- A perception of having support available from family, friends, or co-workers in times of need and a perception of being a valued support provider
- Being comfortable with and liking yourself as a person
- Interacting easily with people of different ages, backgrounds, races, and lifestyles
- Contributing time and energy to the community
- Communicating your feelings, developing friendships, recognizing a need for “fun” time in your life
- Engaging with mentors to plan for future decisions
- Budgeting and balancing your time to include both responsibilities and relaxation

Examples of social stressors:

- Isolation and loneliness, with respect to family and friends
- Interactions and conflicts with other students or faculty colleagues
- Finding a supportive friend group
- Accessibility requirements that are not being accommodated
- Managing long distance relationships with families and significant others
- Relationship break-ups
- Unsupportive parents or other adult family members
- Fear of disappointing your family
- Cultural/religious expectations of family
- Loss of a loved one
- Loss of a pet
- Grief or bereavement
- Supporting others dealing with grief
- Identity-based marginalization and lack of resources for marginalized identities
- Excessive exposure to negative, frustrated, or angry people
- Coordination of schedules with spouses or significant others
- Family responsibilities (childcare, home schooling, elder care)
- Family breakdown – separation, divorce, or custody issues
- Sexual harassment/violence/aggression/intimidation/threats
- Gossip/ridicule/humiliation/bullying
- Being treated differently or unfairly
- Being ignored
- Lack of acceptance for who you are, and lack of acceptance of who I am (by me)
- Stigma or discrimination
- Language or cultural barriers
- Culture shock

Emotional Wellness

Individual characteristics of emotional wellness include:

- Possession of a secure self-identity and a positive sense of self-regard
- The ability to cope with and/or improve unpleasant mood states
- Keeping a positive attitude
- Being sensitive to personal feelings and the feelings of others
- Learning to deal with conflict
- Learning to cope with stress
- Being realistic about your expectations and time
- Choosing a commuting and livings environment that minimized daily stress.
- Taking responsibility for your own behaviour
- Dealing with your personal and financial issues realistically
- Viewing challenges as opportunities rather than obstacles
- Functioning independently but knowing when you need to ask for help

Examples of emotional stressors:

- Fear of being perceived as inadequate or incompetent
- Dealing with changes
- Inability to relax or take time out
- Sense of hopelessness
- Vicarious trauma – impact on you when someone else is traumatized
- Increased responsibility
- Lack of recognition or appreciation
- Stagnation – no opportunities for growth or development
- Fear of missing out
- Impact from criticism and judgement
- Chronic frustration or irritability
- Fear of the social, political, or economic climate of the world

Financial Wellness

Individual characteristics of financial wellness include:

- Ensuring your day-to-day financial relationships enable you to do the things that bring you balance and enjoyment
- Taking responsibility for our personal finances
- Working towards balance in how we think, feel, and how we handle money
- Understanding personal finances in order to better handle financial change

Examples of financial stressors:

- Day-to-day expenses (Groceries, Entertainment, Social activities)
- Debt repayment (tuition, private practice, home mortgages)
- Living expenses – rent, mortgage, insurance, etc.
- Transportation
- Incurring unexpected expenses
- Health expenses - insurance, prescriptions, treatments, etc.
- Planning for future expenses
- Lack of work opportunities
- Care expenses for dependents – children, parents, spouse, etc.
- Remuneration from University position

Spiritual Wellness

Individual characteristics of spiritual wellness include:

- Having a positive outlook on the meaning and purpose of life
- Being open-minded and respectful towards different cultures, religions, and beliefs
- Caring about the welfare of others and acting out of that care
- Feeling accepted by individuals with the same or different cultural values or spiritual beliefs
- Having personal values and ethics that guide decision making

Examples of spiritual stressors:

- Feeling a lack of purpose or sense of value
- Being made fun of for your religious beliefs or culture
- A lack of a support network to share spiritual expression with others

Pandemic-related Wellness (quoted from WHO: <https://tinyurl.com/y38rxnrw>) – relevant to Faculty:

Individual characteristics of pandemic-specific wellness include:

- Keep informed
- Have a routine
- Minimize newsfeeds
- Social contact is important
- Avoid using alcohol and drugs as a way of dealing with fear, anxiety, boredom and social isolation
- Take regular breaks from on-screen activities
- Use social media to promote positive and hopeful stories. Correct misinformation
- Help others
- Support health workers.
- Be kind. Don't discriminate against people who you think may have coronavirus.
- COVID-19 has affected people from many countries. Do not attribute it to any specific group.

Examples of pandemic-specific stressors:

- Lack of social events to connect, relax, and debrief
- Over-worked faculty in order to comply with pandemic protocols
- Financial struggles of clinic staff from private practice that have reduced hours
- Decreased research productivity
- Getting exposed to COVID at work/commuting