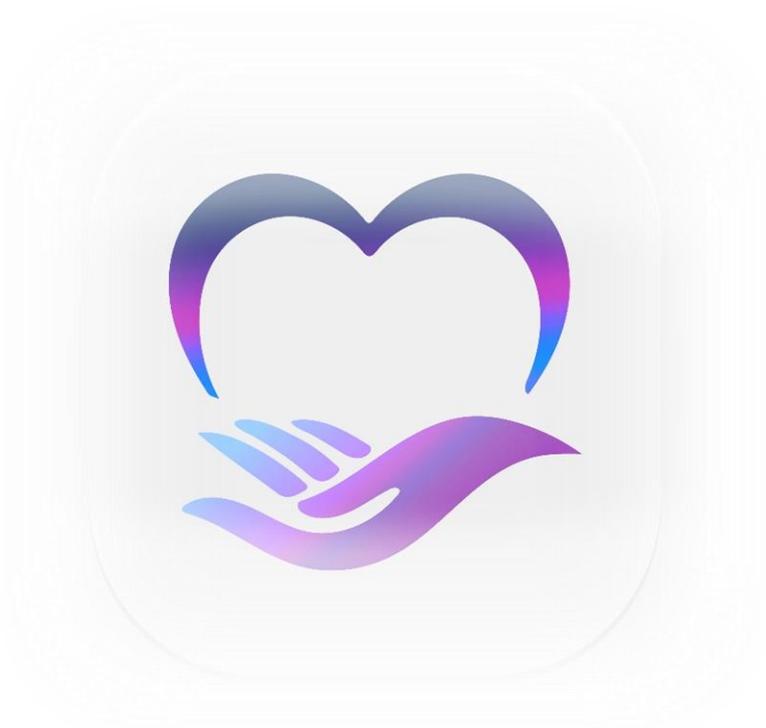


Well-Being Activities for Teaching



Positivity in Academia

[#positiveacademia](#)

By
Christa Sathish

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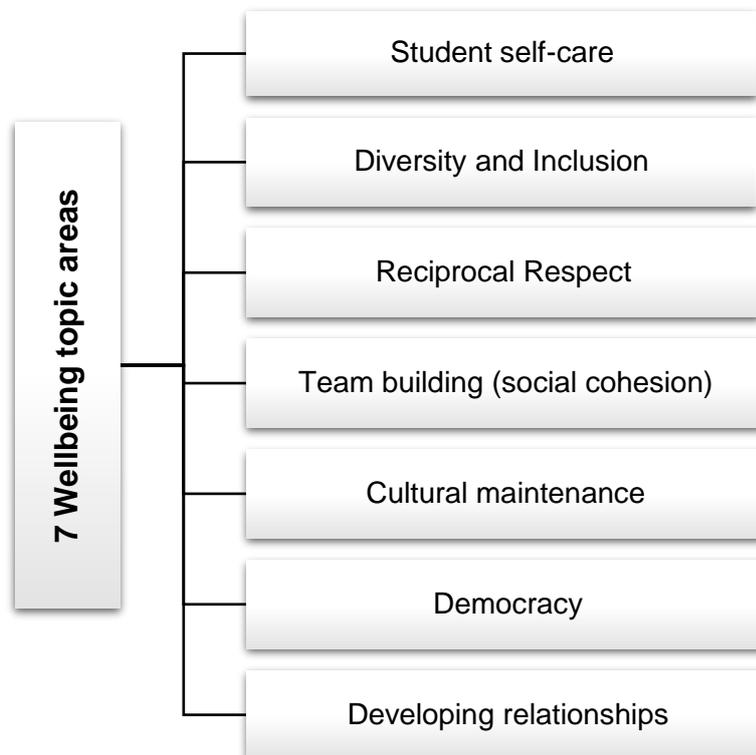
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1 Wellbeing topic areas

In this document, I present various well-being activities that I integrated into my teaching of undergraduate students. I aim to develop an awareness of societal issues as well as emphasising the need to take care of students' physical and mental well-being.

I adapted the following well-being topic areas from [Gerdin et al.'s \(2021\)](#) pedagogies of social justice (e.g., care for all students, inclusion, reciprocal respect, social cohesion, social justice, understanding, building relationships, and culturally relevant). Following [Gerdin et al., 2021](#), pedagogies of social justice comprise the awareness and questioning of societal structures of oppression and power and the injustices and social inequities in the classroom environment. Therefore, the well-being activities address both the societal structures and the practices in the classroom environment. This enables the holistic support and development of students' well-being.



2 Student self-care

Self-care comprises actions that students take to improve and maintain their physical and mental well-being. This is important for students to sustainably build healthy relationships with themselves and others. Teaching about self-care may enable students to acquire skills to manage for instance stressful situations, exam pressure and it may increase their confidence.



2.1 Develop a self-care plan

- Provide a template (excel, word, PowerPoint) including categories as mind, body, and spirit.
- Ask students to think and write about how they may care for each of these categories.
- Ask students who are willing to add key findings in a virtual white board (for instance [Jamboard](#) or [Miro](#)).
- Engage students in discussions to summarise their key findings.
- Create a poster to share virtually with students. This enables the inclusion of students who did not participate or missed the class.

2.2 Self-reflection

Prompts

Provide inclusive questions. In the context of your session, prepare thought evoking prompts that address students inclusively.

Example questions:

Think about assignment X and how that you accomplished it. What went well, why did it go well, what went wrong, and how could you improve? Which steps did you take to accomplish the assignment?

Journaling

Ask students to reflect on their session using the virtual journal. This may be external or integrated into your Virtual Learning Environment.

Galleries

Ask students to develop a digital collage comprising of pictures that reflect how they feel about their course and their attitude to learning. Open a discussion for students to talk about their galleries.

2.3 Time management

Teach the Pomodoro Technique

The Pomodoro technique aims to improve productivity and allows short reflective breaks. You may provide this information to students, or you may integrate this as part of your sessions. In the case of the latter, you may teach students 5 minutes of relaxation techniques like mini meditations, stretching, or breathing. This post <https://greatist.com/happiness/40-ways-relax-5-minutes-or-less> showing 40 ways to relax in 5 minutes or less may help.

1. Plan how many pomodoros you need (1 Pomodoro = 25 mins focused work then 5 mins break)
2. Complete one pomodoro.
3. Repeat the rest of the pomodoros.
4. Student reflection.

Provide time management tips

Ask students to reflect on what time management means to them and how they manage their busy schedules. Discuss the findings on the whiteboard (for instance [Jamboard](#) or [Miro](#)). After the discussion, provide the students with the following time management tips:

1. Set goals SMART.
2. Prioritise wisely.
3. Set a time limit for tasks.
4. Take breaks between tasks.
5. Organise yourself.
6. Remove non-essential tasks.
7. Plan.

Create a poster from the whiteboard findings and the tips and make it inclusively accessible to all students.

2.4 Know your personality

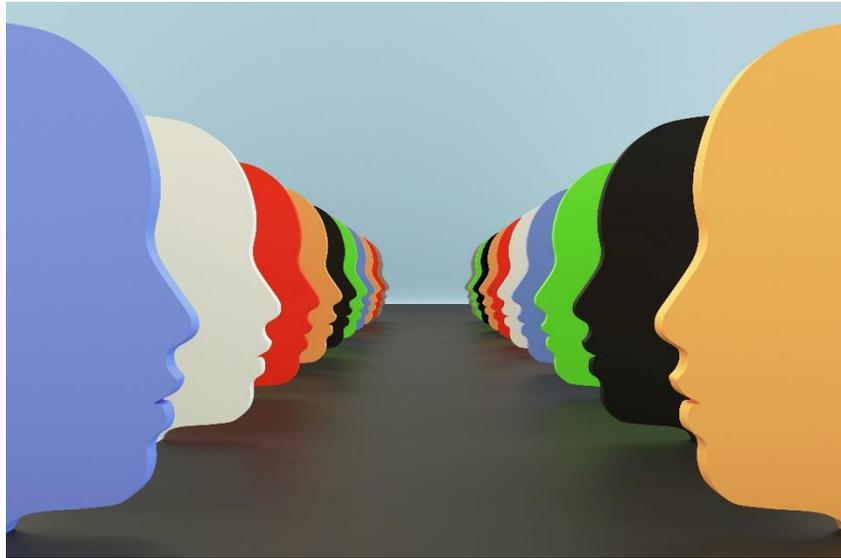
Invite students to participate in exploring their personality type: <https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>. Students get to know the strength and weaknesses, relationships, friendships, and workplace habits of their personality type. This exercise may support some students to understand themselves better. Moreover, the platform offers useful advice and provides tips to manage and maintain certain situations.

2.5 Useful links

- Pomodoro technique: <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/the-pomodoro-technique-is-it-right-for-you.html>
- Teaching about self-care: <https://educators4sc.org/topic-guides/teaching-about-self-care/>
- Self-Care 101: <https://gsafewi.org/resources/for-youth-gsas/doing-health-education/self-care-101/>
- Practicing self-care: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/payout/2017/09/19/practicing-self-care-is-important-10-easy-habits-to-get-you-started/?sh=653d4734283a>
- Videos about the importance of self-care: https://www.ted.com/playlists/299/the_importance_of_self_care
- Personality test: <https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>

3 Diversity and inclusion

Diversity and inclusion activities aim to integrate students of multiple origins, ethnicities, backgrounds, and gender into the classroom environment. The activities are intended to promote a sense of belonging and group participation. This aims to support the professional development of students' relationships and interaction with others.



3.1 Share backgrounds

1. Invite students to talk about their cultural practices, hobbies, and interests.
2. Capture their thoughts on a virtual whiteboard (for instance [Jamboard](#) or [Miro](#)) and create a poster that can be shared with students inclusively.

3.2 Flower with petals

1. Divide students into groups.
2. Provide a flower template with petals (paper or virtual).
3. Ask each student to write one unique characteristic of each group member on one petal.
4. Invite students to discuss their flowers. Emphasise the importance and benefits of what it means to be different and why this is important.

3.3 Collage of memories

1. Divide students into groups.
2. Ask the students to create a collage of a unique memory related to their course or module.
3. Invite students to present and discuss. Emphasise potential challenges and discuss how students may support and learn from each other. Also, focus on the benefits of being and doing things differently.

3.4 Thematic poster

1. Find a motivational poster related to students' motivation and strategies to successfully complete their course.
2. Collect students' reflective thoughts on a virtual whiteboard (for instance [Jamboard](#) or [Miro](#)).
3. Invite students to discuss their thoughts and emphasise the different perspectives and strategies. Encourage students to learn from each other and to accept each other's differences.

3.5 Useful links

- Diversity and Inclusion Activities: [Diversity And Inclusion Activities: Top 9 Activities For An All-Inclusive Workforce \(getimpactly.com\)](#)
- Diversity and inclusive teaching: [Diversity and Inclusive Teaching | Center for Teaching and Assessment of Learning \(udel.edu\)](#)
- Diversity and inclusion activities in the workplace: [Diversity and Inclusion Activities & Ideas for the Office in 2022 \(teambuilding.com\)](#)
- AdvanceHE: [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion | Advance HE \(advance-he.ac.uk\)](#)

4 Reciprocal respect

Reciprocal respect exists when the teacher cares for and respects the students and in turn, the students care for and respect the teacher. The development of reciprocal respect derives from the active actions of students and teachers during the sessions. The activities aim to create a collaborative classroom environment that enables students and teachers to form less hierarchical dialogues. This may benefit an inclusive and supportive teaching approach.



4.1 Brainstorm the meaning of respect

1. Ask students to brainstorm the meaning of respect. You may use a virtual whiteboard (for instance [Jamboard](#) or [Miro](#)) or flipchart paper.
2. Invite students to discuss their findings.
3. Try to conclude and define what respect is.
4. You may follow up with a mini presentation.
5. Create a poster and share it with all students inclusively.

4.2 Positive commenting

1. Divide students into groups.
2. Hand each student a paper.
3. Ask the students to write their names on top of the paper.
4. Ask the students to pass the paper around in their group and write one positive comment about each member on the paper.
5. Let each student silently read their comments and ask them to preserve the list.
6. This may enable students to look at this list to boost their confidence or increase their motivation during difficult times.

4.3 Different, yet same

1. Divide students into groups.
2. Hand two sheets of paper to each group.
3. On one sheet, ask the students to list something that the group has in common (not physical appearance).
4. On the other sheet, ask each student to list two unique characteristics.

5. Open a group discussion about similarities and differences and emphasise respecting and accepting commonalities and differences.

4.4 Different strengths

1. Create a list of different strengths that students may have.
2. Ask each student to add three strengths that describe them best.
3. Ask each student to share their strengths and let them explain why these strengths are important for their studies and/or professions.
4. Ask the other students to come up with an example of how the mentioned strengths may be practiced.
5. Emphasise the importance that different skills may contribute differently toward the successful completion of work.

4.5 Useful links

- Group games: [Group Games That Teach Respect \(bizfluent.com\)](https://bizfluent.com)
- Respect lesson and activities: [Respect Lesson and Activities - The Responsive Counselor](#)
- 35 activities to teach respect: [35 activities to teach respect - The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center \(drake.edu\)](#)
- Teambuilding exercises that show respect for each other: [Team Building Exercises that Show Respect for Each Other \(careertrend.com\)](#)

5 Team building (Social cohesion)

The focus of these activities is on social cohesion. The aim is to proactively develop the interaction between students in groups. This may improve students' overall social behaviour and the development of skills required to cooperate with others in a professional environment.



5.1 Treasure chest

1. Divide students into groups.
2. Ask each student to write down one thing that they want to achieve in their life.
3. Place all contributions in a box/bag and pull out one piece one by one.
4. Invites students to discuss in their groups how each of these achievements may be reached.

5.2 Magic wand

1. Ask the students 'if you had a magic wand, what would you change in the world, and why?'
2. Encourage the whole class to discuss and contribute.
3. Emphasise acceptance of different ideas and approaches.

5.3 Island analogy

1. Divide students into groups.
2. Ask the students what they would take with them to an abandoned island and why.
3. Ask the students to create a physical or virtual collage.
4. Invite students to present their collage and encourage whole class contributions.

5.4 Birth maps

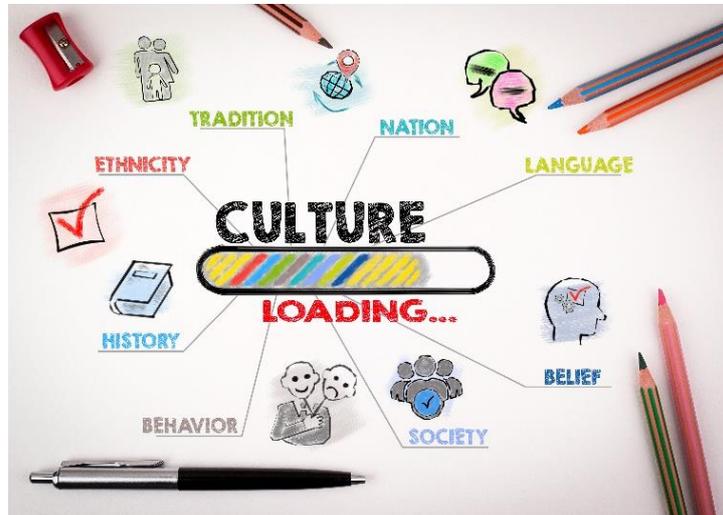
1. Divide students into groups.
2. Provide each group with a world map (physical or virtually).
3. Ask each student to pinpoint where they were born.
4. Ask how long they lived there, why they moved, and one fact or memory from their birthplace.
5. Invites students to present their map.
6. Combine all birthplaces in one map.
7. Create a poster of the map and make it accessible online. This enables students to appreciate their class members and emphasises the appreciation of diverse ideologies and backgrounds.

5.5 Useful links

- 20 quick team building activities: [20 Quick, Fun & Cheap Team Building Activities - WorkStyle](#)
- 15 small group team building activities: [15 Small Group Team Building Activities & Exercises for 2022](#)
- 8 5-minute team building activities: [8 quick 5-minute team-building activities to improve productivity - \(careerarc.com\)](#)
- 23 5-minute icebreaker games: [23 Exciting 5-Minute Icebreaker Games for Work \(tinypulse.com\)](#)
- 5-minute team building activities: [5 Minute Team Building Activities For Work: #1 List in 2022](#)

6 Cultural maintenance

The activities aim to maintain and develop students' cultural integrity and identity to support their academic and professional successes. The focus of the activities may be on cultural, religious, and gender differences but may depend on the specific needs of the student cohort.



6.1 Cultural background collage

1. Divide students into groups.
2. Ask each student to search and find a picture that shows their cultural background.
3. Ask the students to create a physical or virtual collage of the pictures.
4. Invite students to present their collage.
5. Encourage whole-class discussion. Emphasising differences and similarities between the cultures and the need to accept everyone equally.

6.2 Map cultural heritage

1. Provide a virtual or physical map.
2. Ask each student to pinpoint the location of their cultural heritage.
3. Ask each student to name three interesting facts about their cultural heritage. You may want to use a virtual whiteboard (for instance [Jamboard](#) or [Miro](#)).
4. Combine maps and facts and provide a poster accessible to all students.

6.3 Combination of values

1. Divide students into groups.
2. Ask each student to contribute with three values deriving from their cultural background. You may ask students to use a virtual whiteboard (for instance [Jamboard](#) or [Miro](#)) or paper.
3. Ask the students to create a poster that represents the combination of values.
4. Ask the students to think about why all values matter.
5. Invite the students to present their posters and encourage whole-class discussions.

6.4 Embrace festivities

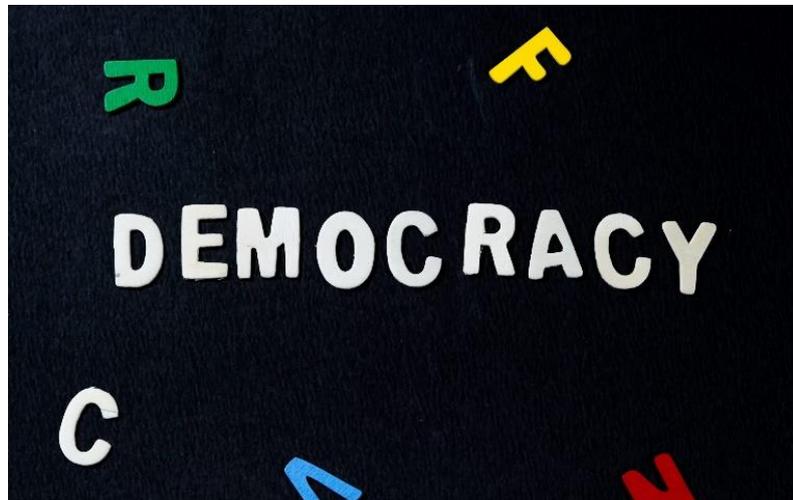
1. Ask each student to name 1 important festival in their culture and when that it is celebrated.
2. Combine all festivals in a virtual calendar and remember and inform students during the week of that specific festival.
3. Ask the specific students to explain how the festival is celebrated, and why it is important.

6.5 Useful links

- Cultural Awareness and Competency Development in Higher Education: [Cultural Awareness and Competency Development in Higher Education \(wabash.edu\)](https://www.wabash.edu/center-for-cultural-awareness-and-competency-development/)
- Importance of culture in education: [The Importance Of Culture In Education - Team One](#)
- Does culture influence learning styles in higher education: [\(26\) \(PDF\) Does culture influence learning styles in higher education? \(researchgate.net\)](#)
- Creating culturally responsive classrooms: [Diversity in Higher Education: Creating Culturally Responsive Classrooms - HIGHER ED CONNECTS](#)

7 Democracy

The activities aim to develop fairness and trust in the classroom environment. The focus is on sharing the power and emphasising that each student has a voice and view to be heard. The activities aim to encourage and enable students' skills to ask questions or challenge ideas constructively.



7.1 Debating

1. Divide students into groups.
2. Provide them with a topic related to their module or session.
3. Split the groups into pros and cons.
4. Ask the students to debate the topic.
5. Ask the students to combine their findings.
6. Invite the students to reflect on their session and present their facts.

7.2 Useful links

- Debate activities in the classroom: [Debate Activities in the Classroom \(linkedin.com\)](https://www.linkedin.com)
- Imaginative ways of organising debate and discussion: [Activity Ideas: Imaginative ways of organising debate and discussion | Advance HE \(advance-he.ac.uk\)](https://advance-he.ac.uk)
- 200 best debate topics for college students: [200 Best Debate Topics For College Students 2020 - PapersOwl.com](https://papersowl.com)
- Education debate topics: [350+ Education Debate Topics 2022 - Elimu Centre](https://www.elimu.com)

8 Developing relationships

The activities aim to develop the relationship between students, their peers, and the teacher. The focus of the activities is on knowing the students, self-reflection, and care.



8.1 Introduce your friend

1. Divide students into pairs.
2. Ask students to introduce their partner focusing on hobbies, interests, career ambitions, background, strengths, and weaknesses...
3. Invite the students to introduce their partners to the whole class.

8.2 Non-academic turn and talk

1. Divide students into groups.
2. Provide students with questions.
3. Ask the students to turn to each other to answer the question.
4. Ask the students to create a poster of the answers.
5. Ask the students to reflect on their experiences and their approach to questioning their peers.

8.3 Just like me game

1. Divide students into groups.
2. Ask each student to tell a fact about themselves.
3. Let the other students respond if that fact is true for them too. If not ask the students to elaborate on why this may not be true for them and how their experiences differ from each other.
4. Give each student a chance to tell a fact.
5. Ask the students to combine the facts and present the similarities and differences to the whole class. Emphasise acceptance of all.
6. Explore if there is a fact that accounts for all students in the session. Discuss the result with the whole class.

8.4 Fun facts

1. Ask each student to note down on a sheet of paper a fun fact about themselves.
2. Put all sheets in a bag or box. Pull out sheet by sheet and see if the students can identify to who each fun fact belongs.
3. Create a poster of fun facts about students and teachers and share it with the whole class.

8.5 Useful links

- 8 relationship building activities: [8 Quick Relationship Building Activities - The Inspired Educator \(the-inspired-educator.com\)](https://the-inspired-educator.com/8-quick-relationship-building-activities/)
- Building positive student-teacher relationships: [Activities To Build Relationships With Students | Move This World](https://www.move-this-world.com/activities-to-build-relationships-with-students/)
- 16 relationship building activities and games for groups: [16 Relationship Building Activities, Games & Ideas for Groups \(teambuilding.com\)](https://teambuilding.com/16-relationship-building-activities-games-ideas-for-groups/)
- Building rapport with university students in an online context: [Reflections on building rapport with university students in an online context | BERA](https://www.bera.ac.uk/reflections-on-building- rapport-with-university-students-in-an-online-context/)

9 General rules

- Students are free to opt-out-of any discussions.
- Make sure to integrate and tailor the activities inclusively. Emphasise that some students may not feel comfortable talking about certain issues. It is important to provide multiple ways in order that all students have a chance to participate. I always provide alternatives such as online, paper, written instead of spoken or even email.
- It is important to summarise the task outcomes (no matter how short the tasks are). Students particularly like posters that they can store online.
- The tasks are best conducted prior to the main session. These tasks seem to motivate and encourage students' engagement during class time.

10 Poster example

Positive Time Management

Getting my assignments done in plenty of time so I have time to relax and spend time with my friends and family

Getting things done to a high standard

Create a weekly timetable to plan out your week effectively

Being able to work towards more than one deadline

I am not really good in my time management. I always leave things for the last minute and then rush to get everything done.

I need to make sure to relax before I go to sleep so that I can turn my head off from the assignment

I want to work towards better time management skills this year.

Plan ahead of time

Make a to-do list everyday, make sure I don't stress myself