



# Mental Health Transition Planning for College & Post High School Living

If you are in need of Spanish interpretation services, it will be available in the Library Classroom, for live interpretation.



The presentation will begin shortly.

# Wellness: Skills & Habits for Post-High School Success

MENTAL HEALTH TRANSITION PLANNING

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## Plan for tonight

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- Brief overview of general goals and challenges for all young adults transitioning to post-secondary life
- Think about post-secondary environments
- Use college as an example of a transition path
- Discuss planning and preparation for students with existing mental health needs

*Be quick but don't hurry...*

John Wooden

## Primary themes

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- Young Adulthood is a distinct developmental period that culminates in healthy interdependence
- Your child has unique gifts, needs, and strengths
- College and other post-high school endeavors represent an important transition
- Transitions are most successful when they are intentional and predictable
- Mental health is a critical part of a post-high school transition

Let's be honest...

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What have you learned about your child?

What themes have school personnel noticed?

What do mental health professionals know about how young adults experience the transition from high school to greater independence?

First year...of what?

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Freedom (from)

Responsibility (for)

Choices (about)

Young adulthood is the period during which we transition from being largely dependent on and accountable to others—parents, teachers, coaches—to being in charge of and accountable to ourselves. We become the primary solvers of all our problems—whether or not we created them.

## Interdependence as a goal

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Interdependence is the state of balancing independence with our responsibility to others and being in relationships marked by mutuality.

## Preparing for Success by Embracing Failure(s)

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PARENTS: what is the hope that you have for your child's life? (1 sentence)

Identify benchmarks and waypoints based on that outcome

**Helping young adults develop a growth mindset is critical.** A growth mindset is the belief that your basic qualities are things you can develop through your efforts—that you may be naturally better at some things than others, but you can get better at anything with work, resources, and support. (C. Dweck)



## Moving toward interdependent adulthood

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- College is not the only thing...just the most popular
  - In 2021, 62% of high school graduates immediately started college (70% of female graduates and 55% of male graduates) –US Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Think of “steps” as phases or periods, not tasks or moments
- Being intentional means thinking about the direction--not the distance--of the next step



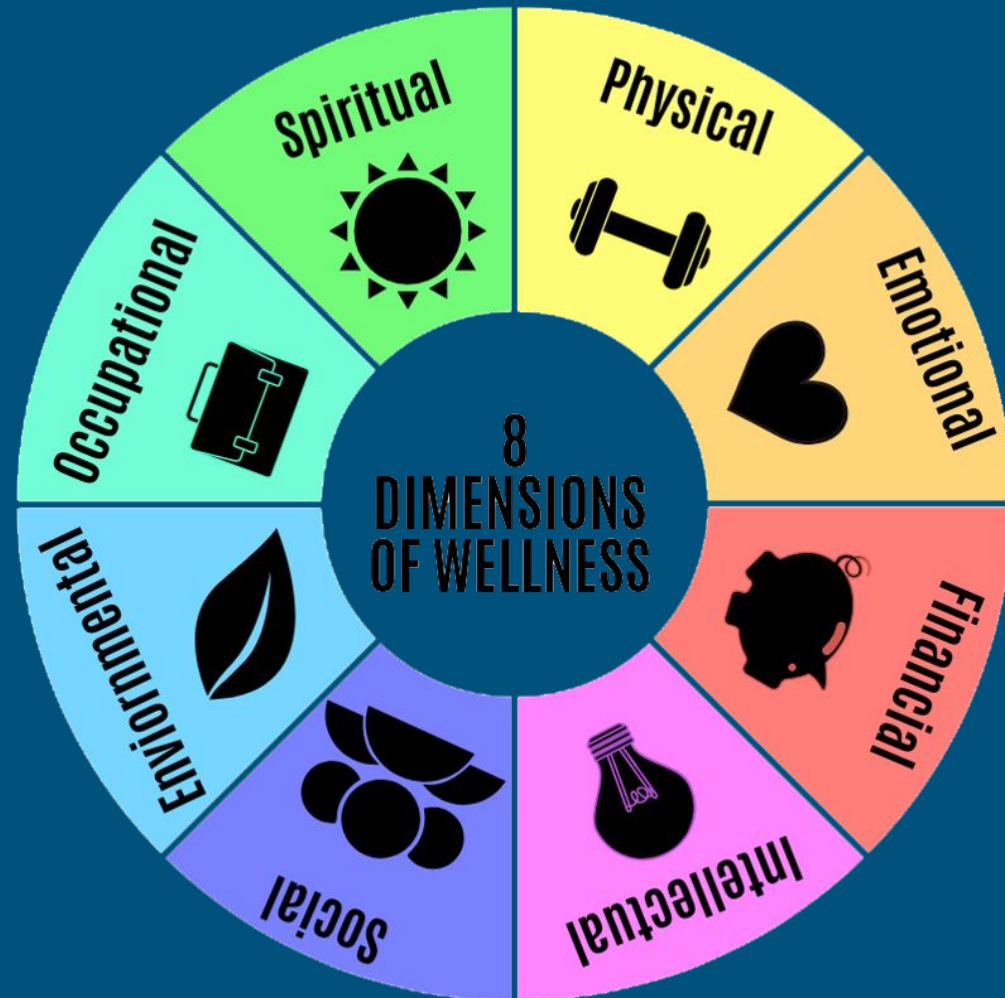
Your child is unique



from your perspective

# What is Wellness?

Having access to and using adequate knowledge, skills, abilities, and resources to live in a balanced way that results in successful management of life's challenges and opportunities.



# Protection vs Support

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## College is NOT Normal

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Surrounded by peers with roughly same amount of knowledge, skill, and wisdom

Full of new opportunities and novel experiences

The structure seems familiar...but it's very different

Feels like a safe situation...but maybe isn't

MOST graduates are not prepared for immediate post-secondary success because they lack the skills and habits required to navigate the challenges posed by post-secondary life.

# Challenges

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- Financial Stress
  - Family issues
- Fit (Unhappiness, Majors)
- **Medical/Mental Health** as many as 1 in 7 leave college for these concerns
- Academic Preparation
- Other

## MYTHS

- None of my classmates have the problems that I have (“no one will understand,” “school can’t help,” etc.)
- Accommodations are only for students with physical or learning disabilities
- I am cheating or taking short-cuts if I take prescription medication or ask for extensions for work. (“I shouldn’t need help to do this...I never needed help before”)

## FACTS

- 25-40% of students meet the criteria for a diagnosis of a mental health issue during their college years. Leading issues are *depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, eating disorders, addiction*
- Many mental health diagnoses qualify you for academic accommodations
- College can be challenging and fun **and** it is more rewarding when everything isn’t a battle. Using available resources supports success in college and leveling the playing field is smart!

# Exploring Fit for Students with Existing Mental Health Needs

## THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

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- College environment
  - Size
  - Location
  - Community
- Resources
  - Health Center/Counseling Center
  - Student Services
  - Office of Disabilities/Accommodations

- Questions:

Peer support groups? Off-Campus Resources? Crisis Hotline?



## PREPARE THYSELF

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- Build resilience in advance
  - Skills
  - Growth Orientation
  - Hope
  - Resources
- Have high hopes and **realistic expectations**

# TRANSITION PLAN

- If it isn't broken...
  - Look to replicate and adapt the current plan—invest effort in improving areas that are weak or inconsistent
  - Identify which things the student should be in charge of and which (if any) parts should be maintained by parent/guardian
  - Medication
  - Psychiatry
  - Therapy
  - Positive Lifestyle
- Any changes that you'd like to make *for* college, make *before* college!

## TRANSITION IMPLEMENTATION

- 6 Months Prior: Schedule a series of psychiatry and therapy appointments to prepare for transition
- 3-6 Months Prior: Identify Resources at College
  - Campus Resources
    - Health Center
    - Counseling Center
    - Accommodations
    - Resident Assistants/Resident Directors
  - Psychiatrist, Therapist, Pharmacy, Emergency
  - Complete Housing Application (honestly)
  - “What If?” Plan Created

## ESTABLISH HABITS & PATTERNS

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- Daily Living

- Sleep
- Eating
- “Healthy Choices”
- Study
- Engagement

- Communication

- Who?
- What?
- How?
- How Often?

Possible warning signs: “It’s fine.”  
“Don’t worry about it.” “I’ve got it.” 👍💪

# TRANSITION IMPLEMENTATION

- **1 Month Prior through Enrollment: Engage New Resources**
  - Schedule initial appointments
  - Complete FERPA & HIPPA forms
  - Review academic and financial policies
  - Finalize family communication plan
- **First week: Establish Practices & Relationships**
  - Introduce yourself to faculty & staff
  - Have discussion with roommate about lifestyle needs
  - Follow family communication plan
- **Third week: Review Progress & Celebrate Success**
  - Review previous commitments
  - Explore sustainability

# Homework

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Write a letter to your child about your commitments to them. Include your observations about their character, your concerns and hopes for their near-term future, and the role that you hope to play as they make this next transition. Discuss it with someone who knows you well and can be your accountability partner. Put this letter in a secret place so that you can read it to remind yourself of your role or when you need to prepare for a difficult conversation with your child.

Have a conversation with your child about tonight. Ask them questions about their concerns for the upcoming transition. Ask probing questions, listen deeply, reflect back what you hear. Let them know about your “fortune cookie hope” for their life. Feel very awkward. Repeat often.

# RESOURCES

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**National Center for Education Statistics**

**NAMI.com**

**Dearpennfreshman.com**

**mentalhealthamerica.net/whats-your-plan-college-mental-health-disorder**

**Search “Freshman College Mental Health”**

Feel free to contact me with any individual questions:

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