Hello, and welcome, everyone. My name is Kaitlin Hennessy. I'm the program coordinator for WSU Global Connections. Tonight we have joining us Sara Wynne from the WSU Health and Wellness Services. And she will present on you first, Self-Care for a Balanced Life. And as many of you are already doing, you may use the chat box throughout the evening.

And you can ask questions at any point. Most of the questions will be addressed towards the end, and comment on the things discussed. Also if you have any technical issues throughout the evening please do let us know and either I or Olivia, who is also an event moderator, will do our best to help you. All right. Thank you for coming and I'm going to turn it over to Sara.

Hi, everyone. I hope you can see me Thanks for that introduction. So my name is Sara Wynne, I'm a health educator with Health and Wellness Services. And today, we're going to be talking about self-care. So to start today's presentation, I'm going to talk about some statistics from WSU about the current state of the student population and the sorts of issues that we have regarding health and wellness at the University.

So we have all of these statistics from something called the National College Health Assessment Survey that we send out every two years to all campuses and all students at WSU. And we have a response rate of around 15%, and that's where we get this information from. So it's all self-reported data. So what we found, as you can see on this screen here, is that a huge majority of students, 83% of the student population, feel overwhelmed with everything that they have to get done while they're at university. This includes life outside of university: jobs, school, work, and everything else.

I'm guessing that's why you're here, right? University can be a lot. Another 47% of our students are struggling with academics. And as a result of this, I'm feeling overwhelmed and a lot of coursework to do, we tend to cut out the sleep. And I can see that Holly Rizzo's responding to that, feeling sleepy. So 90% of students said that they attend class sleepy at least once a week. So that's a lot of students who aren’t getting enough sleep or enough quality sleep. And that can be reflected in their grades, and also in their mental health.

So as a result of these stressors, we see that 50% of students are feeling large or tremendous amounts of stress, and another 56% of students are feeling overwhelming anxiety over the last school year. So it can be a lot of things to balance, and these are some of the issues that a lot
of students are struggling with. One thing that I really like to draw attention to here is that if you're feeling overwhelmed or stressed it can be really easy to think, it's just me. I'm the only one that's having this problem. Everyone else is doing fine, they seem to have everything under control. I'm really struggling here.

But what we can see is that a large portion of our population are probably feeling the same thing as you. So there's lots of resources available that can help you, you don't have to go through this by yourself. So let's talk about some things that might be stressing you right now. I'd love to hear your comments. So why don't you type in the comment chat box what's the one thing that's stressful for you right now.

So I can see working 40 hours a week, that's a lot. Graduating coming up soon. Math, so sometimes those specific subjects we really struggle with. Becoming an adult. Yeah, we do another workshop on Coleman campus called Adulting 101. A lot of people tend to be interested in it. Getting up too early, so that's not enough sleep maybe. Full time mom. Wow, mom of seven. Research papers.

Great. So what we could see from these answers is that stress can come from a lot of areas of our life. It's often really easy for us to think of school and work first and foremost as the main stressors, but we can also have familial issues or just work in the home. There can be relationship stressors, financial stressors, just worry about the future.

So I like to think about all of the aspects of your life when we're talking about stress and when we're talking about self-care. It's not just about the academics and maybe your workload, we have to think in a holistic view of health and wellness. That's why, I Ricky, that's why I like those animals. So you can cheer up just by looking at how cuddly they are. So I appreciate that comment.

All right. So my next question for you, it's a two part question on a scale of 1 to 10, how stressed are you right now? And then what's your highest level of stress this semester? So what was your peak stress point over the course of the semester? So I can see [? Hazra ?] says, I'm not stressed. I'm at a zero. Maria is saying that she's at a two on the stress scale. Tony's currently at seven. We're getting up there. All right. During midterms we had Holly at an eight on the stress scale. We have some fives and sixes. So we have a wide range here. Midterms were greater than number 11 on the 1 to 10 scale.

So what I like to think about on this scale is just to take a sense of, well where am I right now.
Some kind of meta-cognitive awareness of your emotional regulation, but also thinking about where are you comfortable on this scale. What's a good level of stress for you where you can cope with the responsibilities and the stress that you have and still maintain productive work, right? So that's going to be different for everyone. Some people-- I'm really good, I can handle a five, six, or seven on the scale and still be productive. For other people, if they're at a three it starts to be too much stress. And that's going to change person to person.

So I see Holly said, I wanted to cry during my math midterm. I sometimes get some stress tears as well, and I once had a turn in a stats exam with my tear marks on it. So I feel for you, Holly. I am also a stressed crier. OK. So one thing I want to get across here is that stress is not always bad. So sometimes we see-- we think of stress as this terrible thing. We have to get rid of all of the stressors in our lives, but really stress can help us be productive and it can really make us feel like we're getting more things done, right? We're giving back to society more when we have some stressors in our lives.

So some science behind this is something called the Yerkes-Dodson Curve. And what Yerkes-Dodson found is that we need stress to motivate us to do work when we're under stimulated, which you can see on one side of this screen here. We tend to be really bored, we get tired easily, and we feel frustrated with our lives. So I'm not sure if you've ever had this moment, but maybe there was a couple of weeks off during the summer where you didn't have work, you didn't have school, and you thought, oh everything's going to be great it will be such a nice relaxing time. But really you get bored right away. That's because we don't have enough stress in our lives, there's no structure there. And so it's really easy for us to get frustrated and dissatisfied.

Yeah, taking time off, Ricky, for surgery can make you really frustrated and you're like, I need more things happening. So we need to have some stressors in order to motivate us. And you can see in the center of this graph on this screen is the optimal stimulation zone. So this is where we have enough stress in our lives that we're being creative. We have a good problem solving skills. We're making a lot of progress, and we feel some satisfaction with our lives because we are looking at, hey look at all that stuff that I'm getting done, right? Look at how productive I can be.

And so on that 1-10 stress scale where your optimum level of stress is, it's going to be a little different for every person. But then we get on the other side of this curve where we start to get overstimulated. There's just too much going on. Maybe that's during midterms, maybe that's
doing your taxes, it's tax season. When we tend to get overstimulated we stop being effective with our problems solving, and we make some more mistakes, some more bad choices. Here it's also easy for us to get sleepy. We're not sleeping enough so we get exhaustion, that leads to illness, lower immune system. And then we have low self-esteem as a result of feeling that we can't accomplish the things that we need to get done.

So what we want to do is find the level of stress that's best for us, what works for us. And then we want to adjust some other areas of our life through self-care and other practices so that we're able to take on more stress and still be at that optimum stimulation level. So you can train yourself over time to be able to take on more stressors but still be productive.

So we have Ricky saying in the chat here that, if I have a ton to do and it's close to the due date I'm extremely productive. So obviously, Ricky, you're working really well under pressure. You like to have those stressors in your lives to get really productive. And for some people that works well. So it's good to know where do you need to be. OK.

So my next question here is how do you deal with stress? Let's say that you're in the over-stimulation zone. You're an eight, nine, or ten on that stress scale. What do you do to cope with stress when it's presented to you? Go ahead and take your answer in that comment box. So [? Hazra ?] says, I go walking. Tony replied, my dogs are my zen. Holly says, I have to walk away, but I'm not good at allowing myself to do that. Ricky responded, tea and bubble baths. Kara likes alone and quiet time. Olivia likes hot yoga, sweating out the stress. We have reading, running, diffusion, playing with family.

Great. So we have a wide range of ways that we're coping with our stress there, and that's wonderful. We're going to go through a bunch of new tips today, but I like to go back to what works for you. So one thing I want to bring up when we're talking about dealing with stress. Oh, I have Holly say, how does throwing the computer count? I thought it was funny when I was looking for stress pictures how many pictures on stock photos showed women biting computers. I didn't know that this was a stress relieving technique, but the internet would tell me otherwise.

So one thing I want to talk about when we're talking about stress coping mechanisms or those strategies that we use to relieve stress is considering is this a helpful action or is it an unhelpful action. So sometimes we do things because they make us feel better in the moment. So these might be things like having a glass of wine to unwind. Maybe I'm stressed and sad so I'm
going to eat some ice cream, or maybe I'm going to watch Netflix for several hours and not write that assignment that's due.

Well these things are making me feel better in the moment, but they might not be helpful to my overall goals. And so a couple of questions I like to ask when I'm responding to stress is does this action move me towards a value or a goal. So if my break from stress is playing with dogs and I really value animals and that connection, that's great because it's moving me towards something I value. Same with calling my mom or calling a sister. Maybe I really value family, so those stress relieving techniques would be helpful, right? Or maybe this technique is helping address an underlying problem.

So if I am working on a different project, if I'm going for a run, these things might be helping my overall health which is addressing some other issues that I might be having. So Holly says, I feel that way if I use social media as a break from assignments. So maybe feeling that it's not as helpful because it's not moving you towards a goal or a value. Sometimes it really can be helpful, if you really value those social connections, taking small breaks to social media could be helpful. It depends on you and how much time you're spending there.

So this is something I like to come back to, and I'll talk about this later, the concept of is this response or is this action helpful or unhelpful? And just building an awareness with that. So that's going to move us on to self-care. And self-care includes any intentional action that you take in order to care for your physical, mental, or emotional health. And so self-care tends to be more of a proactive action that you're taking rather than a response to stress.

So I'd like you to comment in that chat box again how do you practice self-care. I saw there was a bit of a discussion earlier before we started this. So Ricky says, I fully intend to go to Supercuts tomorrow and have someone else wash my hair. And also Ricky had Starbucks today for some self-care. Does anyone else have self-care habits? So Holly says, I allow myself the time to workout or do yoga prior to studying. I like to get my mind in the right place before sitting down. Tony said, I had two pieces of cake for some self-care.

Gabrielle ensures I eat three meals and snacks. Kara likes to do all my cleaning first. Maria says, meditate, exercise, plan my day, take long bubble baths. Hazra likes to sweat and sweat, may be a typo, I'm guessing sweat and sweat. All right. Housecleaning is good we're saying. Yeah, so great, great examples of self-care.

So sometimes, especially in popular media, we think of self-care as treating yourself to
something nice, right? Maybe indulging yourself in that cake. However, this isn't really self-care it's more self pampering. And that can be helpful sometimes. I feel good, but I'm not really taking care of those underlying needs. So there's a difference between what you might hear retail therapy and doing practices that are important for maintaining your physical and mental health.

And so when I think of self-care I like to think of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. So before I'm going to do something like buy myself a shiny jacket, I need to address my basic needs. So things like have I eaten today. Have I slept enough? Have I had some water, right? If I haven't met those needs then any other activities I do are not going to be as helpful. I have to address those basic needs first.

Then I can move on to my psychological needs. So I'm getting enough sleep, I'm seeing the doctor and I'm eating. Then I need to make sure that I have strong social connections with my friends. I'm feeling accomplished. I'm connecting with things that I value. And then after that I can move on to the other forms of self-care that you might see. But I really like to get back to those initial needs first. Sometimes it's easy to overlook those.

So here I have self-care broken down into four main categories for how you can take care of yourself. So the first thing that we need to do is address the activities for just daily living. So this is things like brushing your teeth, having a shower, taking your medicine on time. Other things that are involved in this are making doctors appointments, going to see the dentist. So we need to make sure that we're addressing these things you have to do daily. But I'm sure that you've had those times where you just feel so busy you think, I'll skip the shower today and put my hair up in a ponytail. Or I'm just going to put on some cologne or some more deodorant no one's going to notice.

But we really do need to go back to just those daily living things and say, hey am I getting this done. Maybe if I'm feeling stressed I need to go back to those basics. Then we can look at the physical self-care needs. So these are things like sleeping, eating, drinking water, and exercising. Which a lot of you were talking about, right? Eating those three square meals a day, making sure that you're consuming vegetables and not just a quick snack on the go.

Ricky says, I never get to sleep enough. This is a really common complaint that we hear from students when we're balancing a lot on our plates. The average adult needs seven to nine hours of sleep a day, and it can be really difficult to achieve that while you're a student at
university. The only suggestion that I can give you is to prioritize in your day, to make decisions to cut out other things so that you can get to bed at 9 o'clock if that's when you need to get to bed. It can be a difficult choice to make.

So once we adjust our daily living needs, our physical needs, we can think about mental self-care. So this is an emotional self-care as well. Things that make you happy, practicing gratitude, building social circles. And then we have spiritual self-care. And spiritual self-care can be practicing a religion or meditating if that's something that you do. But spiritual self-care can also be connecting with things that you value, and we were talking about this a little bit earlier.

So if you really value the environment, and that's a really important thing for you, and maybe going for a walk outside and unplugging is a spiritual practice for you. For other people, if family is really important to you it can be a spiritual experience, just have a day with your children and really focus on spending time with them. So I encourage you to think about what are your key values. And you don't have to think about being necessarily a religious person in order to be a spiritual person and access that health value.

So Hazra saying that medication is really important for me. Yeah, that's necessary. We really have to treat ourselves for all of our health needs. So at this point I want to pause and just see if you have any questions about what I've talked about so far. So about stress, stress coping mechanisms, or the premise of self-care, before I get on to some self-care tips. Are there any questions at this point? You can type them into the chat.

So Ricky says, it sounds like self-care might be having your routine that you stay to at times. Holly asks, how would you address the guilt of taking time for this? I feel horrible guilt, so that's a great question, Holly. And this is something that we see, especially from women, but from all people. The guilt for taking time for yourself. What I really want to encourage you to do is say that if you are not taking the time to make sure that you are physically, emotionally, and mentally well then you won't be working at a prime level, right? Things will start falling off in other areas of your life. And so if you want to be your most productive, happy, and engaging self, then you need to take care of yourself. When we start to neglect our self-care other things start to fall off and we're not engaging with other people as well.

So if you're valuing your performance at your work, your performance in your classes, or your time with your family you need to think about investing some time into yourself in order to give
the best back to them. Maria says, I just started prioritizing myself and I did not feel guilty at all. My family gets a better me. Ricky says, it allowed me to step away and do something enjoyable to help keep balance. Hazra agrees. So, yeah, that's great. Holly says, I do an adult ballet class once a week, and I'm horrible but it's so fun and different. That's great, Holly. I love some different ideas for ways that you can engage with the community and get exercise, too.

All right so for the next about 20 minutes here I'm going to give you some ideas for how you can practice self-care in your lives creatively. And I see some great ideas here. Hazra says, I spent five minutes for my quilting. Quilting, that's a great activity to do. So I'm going to cover some activities here, and then we will have a little discussion again at the end. Feel free to continue talking in the chat as we go through and I'll try to check in with that.

So the first self-care practice I want to talk about is deep breathing. And this can be really helpful, especially when you're high up on that stress scale. Maybe you're feeling some anxiety or some panic and you need to calm yourself down in the moment. A great way to do that and practice some mindfulness is by bringing attention to your breath and I really love this technique it's called the take five breathing technique. It's often used with children, but it's helpful for anyone who's experienced some emotional distress.

So what you're going to do with this technique, as you can see on this screen, is you take the index finger of one hand the pointer finger of one hand and you start at the base of your palm. You're going to take a deep breath in while moving your finger up your hands to the tip of the finger. And then I'm going to breathe out and move my finger back down to my palm. Again for the next finger. You can follow along at your own pace. At the end of five breaths you should be feeling a little more calmer, and a bit more centered as well.

If you need to, you can practice it again. Take another five. Sometimes when we encourage people to do deep breathing it's easy to get distracted and start thinking about other things. The addition of the finger on your hands, that extra sensory there, can help center you and focus on that breath. So I encourage you if you're feeling anxious, overwhelmed, nervous about something, and you need to practice breathing just take that finger in your hand. It doesn't have to be obvious, you can do it silently to yourself and just bring your breath back in. That's going to help calm your emotions, and allow you a bit more time to get ahold of things.

My next tip here, which I saw some people talking about in the chat, is cleaning. So cleaning has been proven in multiple studies to help you relax. It gives you more dopamine, which is a
happiness hormone, and it relieves stress. So studies have also shown that having a messy area around you can lead to extra stress, and it leads to distraction. So if your desk area at home is really cluttered it's going to be easier for you to get distracted in what you're doing. You're going to have a hard time concentrating.

If you can keep a clean area around you, or at least a tiny area around you, you're going to feel calmer. Cleaning also helps because it gives you a little bit of exercise and it motivates you to keep moving. You can see the progress when you've found something messy and you clean it. You see that change and you can feel productive right away. So when I feel overwhelmed, like 83% of our population does, when I feel overwhelmed with the number of things that I have to do I like to start my list with a small cleaning task. Maybe I take out the garbage or I wash a few dishes or I make my bed. Then I see that immediate reaction to what I've done. I can see that I've made a difference and I feel productive. And that gets me started for the rest of my list.

And I can see in the chat here a bunch of you are saying that cleaning really helps you, that it calms you down, and that messy houses make you anxious. So that's great if that works for you. Take note of it. Ricky says, I like the mess. Great you do you, Ricky. My next tip here is smiling. So smiling and laughing turns out makes you a happier person. I bet you already knew that, but there's some science behind it. So smiling releases a lot of dopamine and serotonin, these are happiness hormones, into your brain. And it is contagious. We're social m and so when we see people around us smiling we reflect that expression back to them.

So if you want to cheer up your workplace, just put on a smile and chances are the people around you are going to respond in a similar way. I also have up here that you can fake it. So studies have shown that if you hold a pencil in your mouth, just like you see in the slide here, it tricks your brain into thinking that you're smiling and your brain is still releasing dopamine. So you're getting that happiness hormone, even if it's not a real smile. Also, studies have shown that if you fake laugh for long enough, it turns into a real laugh. So if you're feeling down on yourself you can just go into a room, I don't suggest doing this in public, and just go ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. Eventually it's going to turn into a real laugh because you feel a little bit ridiculous. And that really gets those good hormones going. So if you need a break go ahead and laugh.

My next self care tip here is setting aside time every day to be grateful. So there are many, many studies that have shown that gratefulness, practicing gratefulness, is the best thing you
can do to improve your overall levels of happiness and satisfaction with your life. So being grateful, showing other people that you care, that you’re thankful for them makes you feel better, and it also helps build those social connections between other people. So one study at UC Davis showed that when people wrote a thank you note to someone and sent them that thank you letter they had improved mood, improved motivation, and better physical health up to six weeks later. So just that one act of being grateful improved their physical and mental health for weeks afterwards.

So I have some practices here that you can do to be a little more grateful with your life. One thing that I like to do, especially when I’m walking to work or if I’m commuting somewhere, is I go through the Grateful-–Gratitude ABC’S. So this is just where you go through the alphabet and for each letter that you hit you think of something that you’re grateful for that makes your life a little bit better. So I might say A for me it’s apples in Washington state. They’re delicious. We’re really lucky to have them here. B, there is blue sky in Coleman today and I haven’t seen that in so long. And, hey, I’m grateful for that. C, probably my cat, he’s really cute and cuddly, right? And then I go through each part of the alphabet, and it makes me think of some other things that maybe I haven’t taken the time to be appreciative of.

We can write thank you notes to the people around us. And as I said, this also helps build that social connection. And also practicing prayer or meditation is a great way to build gratitude into your life regularly. It becomes a daily practice of thinking about what’s something good that’s happened to me? What’s something that I can share and reflect on and be grateful for? And so I highly encourage you to build in this time.

OK, my next self-care step is random acts of kindness. And so it turns out there is a lot of science behind being kind, and the benefits that it gives you. So when we practice kindness we have-- this is from a study at Carnegie Mellon University-- when we practice kindness and volunteer our time we have lower blood pressure, we live longer, we have lower levels of stress, and we have stronger social connections. So this is really impacting again our emotional, social, and physical health.

So some ways that you can practice random acts of kindness is volunteering. Other studies have shown that if you can volunteer your time you have lower levels of stress in your life, and you’re able to take more stress on while being productive. So volunteering is a great way to switch that optimum level of stress into a higher amount of stress so you’re saying, I can take on more responsibilities and still maintain a good productive level of stress, of motivation. So
Ricky's saying, I volunteer 10 hours a week as a TA. That's wonderful. I also want to share Maria wrote in response to the video that, I'm a huge fan of gratitude. And I had a jar of gratitude that I put something in each day. And I read it on my birthday each year. And that's a wonderful practice Maria. I really love being able to reflect back on the year of gratitude and appreciate it. And so some really, really great things you're coming up with in the chat here.

So some other ways you can practice kindness: complimenting other people, giving truthful honest compliments is so wonderful. I like to do that when I whatever I take public transit and make it a goal of mine to compliment one stranger on public transit. It could just be a nice smile, maybe a book that they're reading, maybe the clothes that they put on. And then you can donate your time and money to a support that is important to you. So this goes back to those values again. If I'm in-tune with my values I'm moving my stuff towards things that are important to me. I'm going to be feeling better and this is going to be benefiting me more overall.

My next self-care tip is spending time with loved ones. I saw a lot of you comment on this in chat, how important it is to spend time with family and with friends. Ricky says, my mom and I chat almost daily. So a couple tips that I'm going to give you about spending time with loved ones is maybe if you connect with your friends regularly by texting them or through other social media I recommend giving them an actual phone call, maybe FaceTime or Skyping them. If we're adding other forms of communication. So being able to hear their voice or see the expressions on their face we feel more connected, and you're able to get into deeper conversations than just through the written medium.

Also if you tend to see people just in large social groups outside of the house, maybe just in classes or in busy places, I recommend taking some one-on-one time with a friend. Stay in and have a conversation. That direct connection really builds social cohesion. And finally, if your family lives nearby and you're able to, take a family fun day. I remember someone in the chat was talking about how every Sunday is just time with the family. So being one to make that a priority where you're setting aside your phone, you're setting aside the TV, and you're really concentrating on each other and is hugely beneficial to feeling like you have that social connection. Holly says, my dog and my mom's dog FaceTime each other. I absolutely love that Holly. That's what I have a picture of on this slide here is some dogs doing FaceTime. If you can't tell, I really like animals.

All right. Another tip I have here is when we are communicating with other people is to show
compassion and empathy to the people around us. So there's a difference between empathy and sympathy. Sympathy is feeling bad for someone, pitying someone, saying, oh that's too bad. Empathy is connecting with the emotions of other people and finding similarities between each other. So even if I haven't gone through exactly what you're going through, I can empathize with your emotions, with your reactions to it. This becomes really important, especially when you have disagreements with the people around you.

So it's easy to say, I don't understand where you're coming from and just dismiss people's reactions. With empathy we have to say, well every action is an honest human reaction. It's normal, and I have to be able to connect with that in some way. So empathy builds connection and it builds compassion for other people. We need to look for those similarities, not for the differences. So maybe if you're arguing with someone, for example, this could be in a class. It could be with a friend. It could be something happening in your family, and you don't agree with their side of the argument. You can say, well, I don't agree with what you're saying but I understand that you're frustrated right now. I understand that you're feeling angry, not feeling heard. And I know that that doesn't feel very good, so I'm going to work with you to find a solution.

If I can connect with those similarities, those underlying emotions, it's a lot easier to find concord between people. It's actually really easy to find the similarities, and we want to build social cohesion. So having social connection with people is the number one factor for happiness and life satisfaction. It's also one of the biggest protective factors for mental health. So if you have strong relationships with other people, you're much less likely to suffer from mental health issues, also from physical health issues. That social connection is so important. And so we can build that by having that direct conversation, and by showing compassion for others around us.

All right. My last tip that I'm going to leave you with, I'm going to describe in a little more detail. Holly says, since I started working from home after moving to a new city, I realized how important social connection is the hard way. That's a great point, Holly. And I've seen this happen with many of my own friends. When you moved to a new city or you start working from home you don't have that built in connection of seeing people everyday at an office, seeing people in class every day. And so it can be difficult to build those direct personal connections with people.

So Gabrielle says, I work from home full time as well, it's tough. Ricki says, I had the option of
not working, but I decided I needed to for social interaction or human interaction. Kara says, it's hard for moms with small children. Yes, social isolation for new moms is a really big issue. And so it's important to find those groups where you can go out and meet people who have those similarities. It can be difficult, I'm not trying to say it isn't. But it's important to have interaction with peers. So any way that you can, even if it's on chat rooms online and you're connecting with people and sharing ideas. But ideally, face-to-face connection is really important.

So Kara's suggesting find some mom groups like stroller strides. Great suggestion, Kara. All right. So my last tip here about self-care is practicing mindfulness. We have a whole webinars in mindfulness that my coworker Victoria recorded a couple of weeks ago. And that's available on the Health and Wellness web page. It's also available on the YouTube page for WCU Global Connections. So if you want more information about mindfulness than what I covered briefly here, you can see a whole hour long webinar on that. Ricky attended it, she said it's a really good webinar.

So mindfulness is a bit of a cultural term right now. And I've seen some Buzzfeed listicles from mindfulness, and things on Huffington Post. That's when you know it's kind of hit that cultural zeitgeist. But sometimes we think that in order to be mindful you need to do yoga and meditate every day for hours and be a vegan, and it's not really any of those things. So simply mindfulness is just paying attention to yourself in the moment, to your actions, your reactions your emotions and doing that in a non-judgmental way moment to moment.

So we're going to delve into that a little bit more, but mindfulness is just a practice of being aware of where you are right now, what you're experiencing, and saying, this experience as normal and valid and not going to judge myself for it. I also see that Kaitlin added that link, the URL link to the mindfulness YouTube video. So you can watch that webinar in the chat. So we have some benefits of mindfulness. These benefits include intellectual benefits, so improved memory and focus. Better focus, you're faster at processing things. You have more meta-cognitive abilities, and it also can improve your social and emotional wellness. So you get more life satisfaction, less social anxiety, better emotional regulation. So just being aware of where you're at, knowing how high up on that stress scale you are, having a better work life balance.

And then practicing mindfulness regularly also can improve your physical health. So it's going to improve your immune functioning. You get sick less, you have less symptoms of
depression. You're less likely to have weight gain, and actually your muscles repair faster. So there's a whole bunch of benefits to practicing mindfulness, not just emotional ones that we've tended to think of. Mental benefits, also physical and intellectual ones.

So I'm going to give you a tip here for how you can incorporate mindfulness into your life regularly day to day. And we call this just mini doses of mindfulness. So the first thing that you have to do is just check in with yourself. And I usually do this when I'm doing an unhelpful action or response. So we were talking about this earlier when we were looking at coping mechanisms to stress, and I said some are helpful and some are unhelpful responses. Ricky says, according to the internet women like to bite things. That's right, Ricky. That's why I have this picture in here. I was googling road rage and I found another woman biting things. Hey, try out this stress coping mechanism, see if it works for you. I'm not sure how helpful it is. And Hazra says, I do not bite.

So to practice mindfulness, if you can catch yourself doing one of these unhelpful responses like biting the steering wheel while you're experiencing road rage, the first thing you have to do is just acknowledge, hey, this is unhelpful. So I kind of have this mindfulness alarm goes off in my head. It goes ding, ding, ding. Sara, this isn't the best way that you could be reacting right now. The next thing I want to do is just acknowledge and label the emotions that have brought me there. So why am I reacting in this way? What are my underlying emotions? So if I'm feeling road rage, maybe I'm saying, well, I am frustrated because I wasn't expecting this amount of traffic. And I'm feeling angry because that person just cut me off. And I'm anxious or nervous because I may be late for this appointment I have to go to.

So if I can label each of these emotions that allows myself to really feel them. So that's step two, allow yourself to experience those emotions without judgment. So in this situation I'm driving my car, I'm biting my steering wheel, and I'm saying, oh, hey hold on a minute this isn't helpful. OK, I'm feeling angry, I'm feeling frustrated. That's normal. It's OK. So I'm allowing myself to feel that anger and friction without chastising myself for being a bad person, right? I'm not saying, hey, Sarah stop acting this way. You're overreacting, I can't believe you. That's judgmental. Instead I'm saying, OK, you're feeling frustrated. That's normal.

Then what I want to do is move on with that knowledge. So maybe if I've been practicing mindfulness a lot I have enough emotional regulation that I just take a few deep breaths. I do that hand breathing thing, and then I can say, OK good I got the anger out. I'm no longer angry. Maybe it's not that easy for me, and I can't just let go of my emotions. But if I'm aware
of them, that's going to help inform the rest of my day. So then when I go to my next meeting I
give myself five extra minutes to get there so I'm not anxious. Maybe before I respond to my
partner when I'm talking to him, I take a deep breath so I don't accidentally snap at him.

If I know my emotional state I can show a little more compassion to myself and to other people
throughout the day. And so I'm going to check in with the chat here. Kara says, I sometimes
tell my husband that I need some downtime first if I'm stressed when I get home, but not to
take it personally. That's great. Let's see Hazra says, when I'm angry at home I told my
husband to ignore me. Yeah. So that's great emotional regulation of saying, I'm angry right
now and I just need a little space to get these emotions out. That's the first step, right, of
acknowledging where am I at, and then adjusting your reactions from there.

So I'm going to be another example of how I practice these mini doses of mindfulness,
because this is something I've been working on personally in my life since learning these
things through work. So I'm from a big city and sometimes the small town life can be a little
irkson to me. The other day I was at a coffee shop and there was one person ahead of me in
line at the coffee shop. And I thought, great, I'm just going to go and get a drip coffee and this
should take two minutes and I'll be on my way and be at work in five minutes flat. So easy.

And instead the person in front of me had a conversation with the barista, and they were
talking about a home renovation for the person in front of me and what they were doing to
t heir home. And I was sitting in line tapping my foot, arms crossed, getting really frustrated
because this person was having a conversation with another person.

And I thought, oh, Sara ding, ding, ding maybe your reaction is not warranted right now. And
so I was able to try to tap into those underlying emotions and say, why are you frustrated,
right? Well, because it's taking two minutes longer than you thought it was going to take. Is this
a big deal? Not really. And so I was able to acknowledge my frustration, and then release it.
So by the time I got up to get my coffee from the barista I could just have a pleasant
conversation and not be snarky to that person.

And so just by having some awareness of my emotional state I was able to make a better
action, right? So when you practice mindfulness you're able to separate your emotions from
your actions. So rather than just having a reaction to your emotion and having that be entirely
dependent on your emotions, you can say, OK, this is what I'm feeling. These feelings are
valid, but I'm choosing to take a different action. I'm choosing to acknowledge these emotions,
and then make a different choice for how I’ll act in this moment. And that's a great way to build those mindfulness skills and your emotional regulation skills.

OK. So as a bit of a summary for today, self-care is important. It's vital that you put this first, you take care of yourself physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually. And what works for you in self-care is going to be different than any other person. So what I like to do is make a list of what are some practices and actions that I can take that are helpful for my self-care, that make me feel better, more grounded. And then I have that list that I can go back to when I'm feeling those moments of being stressed or overwhelmed.

So today we covered a bunch of different ideas for self-care both in the chat and in my presentation. What I want you to do right now is just write down, in the chat if you can, write down three actions that you can take to practice self-care that maybe you had not thought of before. So a new action that you can take to incorporate into your self-care routine. So go ahead and write those into the chat. Ricky says sleeping, reading, and hugs from my husband. I like those all, too, Ricky. And hair washing at Supercuts.

It's great you can do you can do that self indulgence, too, sometimes. If we're hitting those basic needs, go ahead and treat yourself to something nice. So Kaitlin says walk, garden, and times with friends. Great, that social connection, getting outside. Hazra says talk to select people. So those social connections, gardening, reading. Tony wrote sleeping, walking hanging with family and dogs. Great.

Maria says acknowledging my feelings. I love that, Maria. Eating good for me food and laughing. Yeah, great ideas. Holly says, I need to allow myself to not feel guilty. That's right, Holly, putting yourself first is important. And if you have children, it sets a great precedent for them, right? You're showing the example that valuing yourself and your own time is really important. Gabrielle says, spending more time with my aunts and cousins, continuing to eat my balanced meals, and continue to spread positivity and helping out when I can. Yeah, great suggestions.

I love all those examples that you're giving. So what I encourage you to do after this webinar today is just go home and make a list of some practices that are helpful for you. And then in those moments when you feel like I need a little jump start, I want to do something nice for myself, you can look back on that list. And maybe something nice for yourself is cleaning the kitchen, and that's OK because it's helping you.
So if you have any questions after this presentation is finished, we have another five minutes where I can answer questions. But if you have questions after that feel free to email me. The email is up here, it's HWS.Programs@wsu.edu. And then either myself or one of my colleagues from Health Promotion responding to you. Also, if you want more health care tips on self-care or mindfulness or a variety of other holistic wellness topics, you can like us on Facebook. So WSU Coug Health on Facebook. We post a bunch of cute gifts of little animals, and then attached to those are great tips on how to manage your stress, get more sleep, other health related tips.

So in the last five minutes here if anyone has some questions before we wrap up the webinar, feel free to type those into the chat. So Kaitlin asked, what do you suggest for integrating time management with self-care. Great question, I Kaitlin. I like to make a to do list and prioritize. So I need to judge for myself what's most important right now. And if I can have all of the things I need to get done on a to do list it's easier for me to choose which things are most important. And maybe those things are school assignments that I have to get done. Maybe what's most important right now is getting eight hours of sleep, because I'm severely-- I'm really sleepy from the night before. So I can make those prioritizations if I have it all written down.