

## Supporting Mental Health & Well-Being in Practicum

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Practice Education Committee  
Faculty of Health  
Dalhousie University

## Mental Health:

State of your psychological and emotional well-being



Government of Canada (2015)

## Mental Health in Canada

- In any given year, 1 in 5 people in Canada will personally experience a mental health problem or illness
- By age 40, about 50% of the population will have or have had a mental illness
- Suicide is one of the leading causes of death from adolescence to middle age

Canadian Mental Health Association (n.d.)

## Mental Health in University Students

- 44% felt so depressed it was difficult to function
- 65% experienced overwhelming anxiety

Canadian Mental Health Association (n.d.)  
The Globe and Mail (2018)

## Warning Signs

- Difficulty controlling emotions
- Loss of confidence
- Absenteeism or tardiness
- Reduced productivity and/or motivation
- Learning challenges
- Difficulty concentrating, communicating, and/or making decisions



Canadian Mental Health Association (2014)  
Dalhousie University (2018)  
Holley & Pittard (n.d.)

## Supporting Student Mental Health

- Approach them
- Listen in a patient and unbiased manner
- Offer reassurance





Dalhousie University (2018)



Talk	Provide	Encourage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk about mental health and well-being</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide information about practicum stressors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage enrollment with Dal's Accessibility Office</li> </ul>

**Other Resources @ Dal**

- Dalhousie's Student Health & Wellness Centre
- *Good 2 Talk* helpline for post-secondary students

**Student Accessibility Centre at Dalhousie**

- Centre of expertise on student access, inclusion, and accommodation support
- Create accommodations plans in every program, including fieldwork settings – using the PEO model
- Available for consultation regarding students
- 902-494-2836 (office)
- 902-494-6824 (Jen Davis, OT Reg(NS))


**Student Accessibility Centre**

- Possible to provide support and modify clinical work without knowing the student's diagnosis
- Students are very concerned with the impact of disclosing on their placement, their careers, their academics and their relationship with their preceptor
- Students are often very worried about making a mistake or doing the wrong thing
- Some students have little experience with the professional world: regular feedback, professional behaviours (being on time, professional dress, speaking on the phone)
- Students may not request formal accommodations for fear of being a burden, asking for "special treatment" or being regarded as not capable

**Student Accessibility Centre**

- Create a culture of respect and acceptance for your students
- Understand that mental health is fluid for everyone and we are all rarely ever 100% well
- Students are the experts in their own health and wellness
- Build some flexibility and choice into placement in case students are struggling (while still achieving the competencies)
- Contact Student Accessibility Centre for assistance

# Confidentiality & Privacy




**Case Scenario #1**


- S-LP student
- 12-week, full-time placement
- No concerns in previous placements
- First assessment does not go well
- Observation and discussion for next few weeks

**Case Scenario #1: Discussion**

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1. What might be happening?
2. How do you think the student feels?
3. How do you think the preceptor feels?
4. What could be done to support the student?




**Case Scenario #2**


- Physiotherapy student
- 3<sup>rd</sup> placement of 5; 6-weeks in length
- 2<sup>nd</sup> week: arrives late and calls in sick
- 3<sup>rd</sup> week: forgetfulness, exhaustion, lack of interest in social interactions and personal appearance, difficulty remembering basic knowledge and clinical skills
- Preceptor plans to raise issues at midterm

**Case Scenario #2: Discussion**

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1. What might be happening?
2. What can the preceptor say or do?



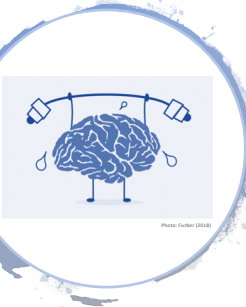
**Case Scenario #3**

- Social work student
- Currently in 6<sup>th</sup> week of 8-month placement
- Assigned several tasks, but has not completed them
- Preceptor concerned about lack of engagement/motivation
- Preceptor speaks with student, but she becomes irritable and defensive; she calls in sick the next day

### Case Scenario #3: Discussion



1. What might be happening in this scenario?
2. What can the preceptor say or do to support the student?



### Mental Fitness

Refers to state of psychological well-being

Just as important as physical fitness

Components of mental fitness:

- Emotional
- Social
- Financial
- Physical

It's the difference between surviving and thriving!

Government of New Brunswick (2019)

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