

Go Blue!

A New Student's Guide to Surviving and Thriving at U-M: Mental Health Tips



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Introduction

The University of Michigan Counseling and Psychological Services (U-M CAPS) welcomes all of our 1st year students to Ann Arbor! We are so happy you have chosen U-M. To help ease your transition to university student life, we would like to share some helpful tools. Inside this guide, you will find numerous strategies on how to navigate a multitude of dilemmas or challenges: from culture shock to time management to sleep challenges and making friends. During this coming year, you will face numerous transitions and opportunities for growth. Proceed with a sense of curiosity, patience, self-compassion, and openness to new people and experiences. You belong here and you matter. Welcome and Go Blue!

Acknowledgments

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Special thanks to our student illustrator, Jude Boudon, for their tremendous creativity and work in bringing this guide to life. The illustrations throughout the guide truly encompass the

diversity and spirit of inclusivity and equity of our U-M campus.

Thank you to our CAPS Student Advisory Board (CAPS SAB), a diverse group of undergraduate and graduate/professional students passionate about mental health. The CAPS SAB met over the course of an academic year and shared their student voices to provide vital content suggestions and personal experiences on what their first year college challenges and successes were.

Special Thanks

U-M CAPS would like to acknowledge and thank the Sommers family for their generous support of this project. We are so thankful for your support of college student mental health and your commitment to a community of caring.

For more information

Please visit caps.umich.edu for more information regarding confidential psychological support for U-M Ann Arbor students.

FEELING LOST

Orienting yourself to the U-M campus takes time. Finding your classes, getting there on time, navigating the bus system, and finding the best time to grab a meal are simply learning opportunities during your first month. Add the additional layers of coming from another country or region of the United States can also mean adjusting to the sights, sounds, and smells of a Midwestern town.



WHAT TO DO:

1. Take a big deep breath. Repeat several times. Make sure you're breathing from deep down in your belly and exhaling for as long as, or even a couple seconds longer than, you were inhaling. Remind yourself that you may feel lost now, but **you will not feel lost forever.**

2. Before classes begin, take out your campus map and find the best route. This can also include identifying the best bus routes if you're going between Central, North, South, and the Medical Campus.

3. Give yourself enough time to wander through the dining hall, explore your options and take time to mindfully savor your meal.



4. Be open to your new surroundings - mindfully pay attention to the architecture around you, the fall leaves, and the very friendly squirrels on the Diag.

FEELING OVERWHELMED

Maybe you just experienced Festifall or Northfest and talked to numerous student orgs about ways in which to get involved, met a possible new study partner, scanned your syllabi and marked off all of the due dates in your planner, gained the courage to go to office hours and ask a question, updated your family on how you've been adjusting to U-M, took the South Commuter campus bus instead of the North Commuter bus, scoured the internet about where to get your hair done and find local stores that might carry foods you've been missing from home, and trying to figure out how to fit in your work-study job with classes, socializing, and sleep. It is normal to feel overwhelmed given everything you are trying to manage. You may experience feelings of stress or overstimulation. Your mind may be distracted with anxious thoughts. You may feel as if your body is tense. Acknowledge these sensations and keep reading for some helpful tips.



WHAT TO DO:

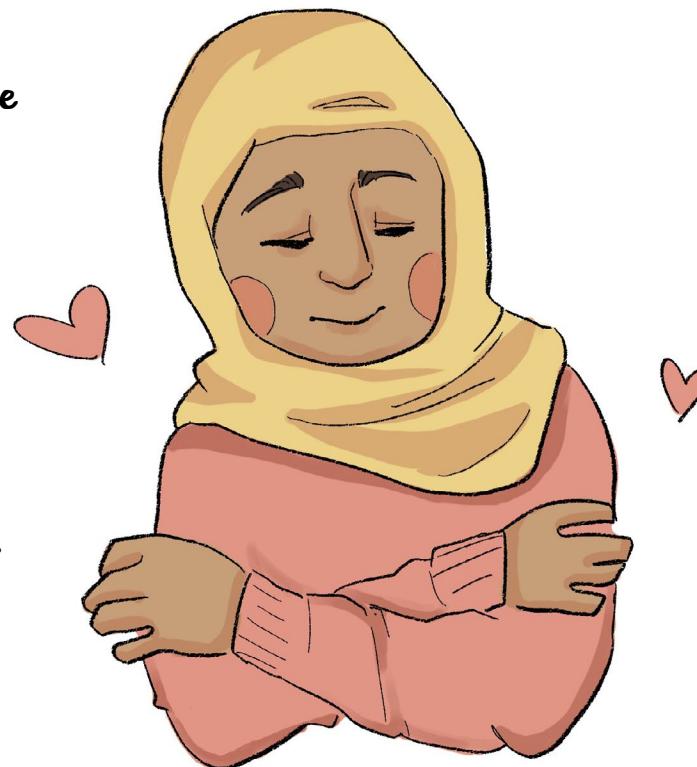
1. Take a big deep breath. Go ahead and take a few more.
2. Check in with yourself and ask how you are feeling right now in this moment.

What thoughts are going through your mind? How does your body feel? Any areas of tension? Notice without judgment. Remind yourself that what you are feeling, thinking, and experiencing in your body is valid. It is important to take time and to be kind to yourself during this new journey.

3. Ask yourself what you might need at this moment. Would it be helpful to talk to a trusted family member or friend? If you're feeling overstimulated, would it be helpful to schedule some alone time to decompress?
4. Use your senses to self-soothe and reduce the intensity of difficult emotions.

Sight - use your vision to focus on something else. Count how many places you can see a certain color in the room or focus on an object's texture.

Taste - pick out a food that you enjoy and take the time to really focus on what it looks like, smells like, how the texture feels in your mouth, how it tastes, and notice positive associations you have with that food.



Hearing - listen to sounds, any sounds. Can you hear birds outside your room or maybe the hum of traffic? Turn the volume up on a favorite song and really listen. Or if you prefer soothing nature sounds, do a search and immerse yourself in what you hear.

Touch - embrace your sense of touch by noticing how a pen feels in your hand, take a warm shower and pay attention to how the water feels on your body, stroke a soft blanket or sweater against your cheek, or play with a fidget toy.

Smell - without judgment, focus on whatever scent is in the air. Can you identify the smell? Are there smaller components associated with that smell? For easy access to a scent you find calming, put a few drops of your favorite essential oil onto a cotton ball and keep it with you in a small container.

Movement - your emotional state can be altered by your body's movements. Take a walk around the block, dance to your favorite song, slowly stretch your body or feel your heart pumping with a burst of cardio.

5. Check in with yourself again. How are you feeling? What are you thinking? How does your body feel? Repeat any of these steps or identify other possible techniques to self-soothe. Be aware of, and respond kindly to, your needs.

6. And remember it's more than okay to ask for help. Being able to share how you feel with a trusted friend, family member, advisor, mentor, coach or therapist can help ease some of your stress as well as help you identify other helpful coping strategies.

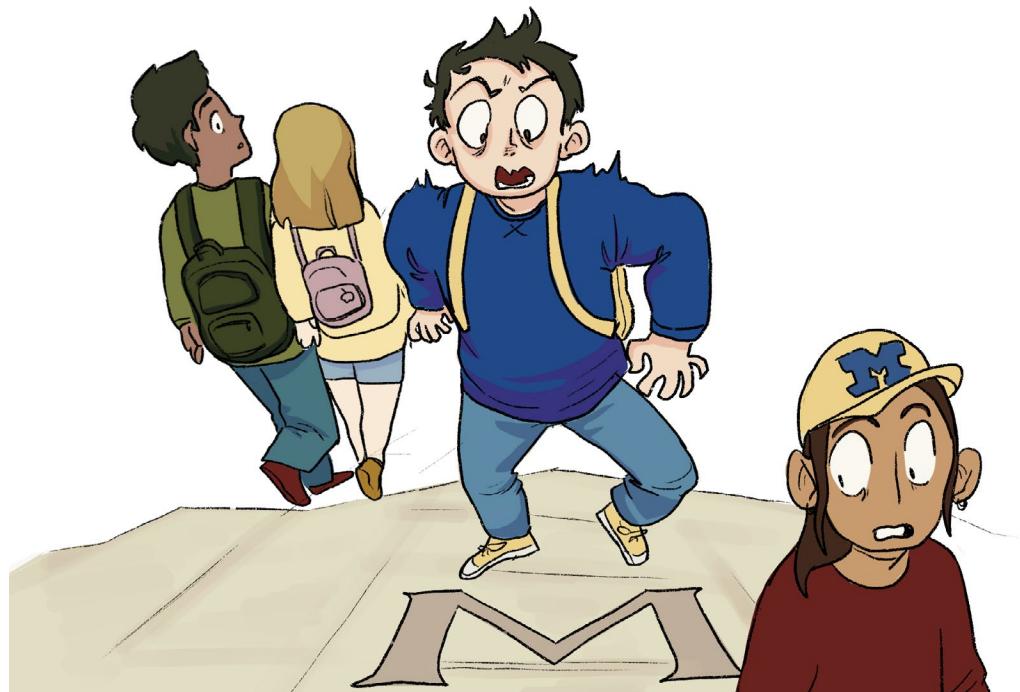
7. Take a break and play an enjoyable video game either on your own or with online friends. The Computer and Video Game Archive at the Duderstadt Center has plenty of new and retro games to choose from, just remember to bring your MCard.



CULTURE SHOCK

You have bravely left the comfort of your home and community, and entered this new community with its own culture. "Don't step on the block 'M' or you will fail your first blue book exam" and "Kiss your partner under the West Hall arch on your 21st birthday and you will stay together forever" are among common folklore and social practices that make up this vibrant college campus. The Michigan campus culture evolves each semester with the addition of new members to the community, just like yourself.

Welcome! We are grateful to have you, as you will enrich this place.



Yet, you may experience anxiety about being in this new, unfamiliar place and feel nervous about learning cultural expectations and norms. You may also wonder about how to be your authentic self in this diverse campus culture. It is also possible you may not like or accept parts of the campus culture, and you may question how to navigate that experience without feeling alienated. You are not alone in these experiences.

WHAT TO DO:

- 1. Know that adjustment to campus culture is not linear or quick.** You will likely experience a “honeymoon” phase when you first arrive on campus because you are excited and curious about your new environment. However, anxiety and frustration may build over time when you start to encounter challenges or discomfort in the new environment. Use some of the following strategies to emerge from the phase of anxiety and frustration to a phase of adaptation.
- 2. Give yourself compassion and patience to experience the anxiety and frustration that may come with culture shock.** Remind yourself it is not easy to adapt to a new place. Think of it as if you were traveling on vacation to a new part of the world. There are going to be parts of the travel that are inspiring and cool, and parts of the travel that are frustrating and exhausting.
- 3. Participate in community events.** For instance, you can attend residence hall floor meetings, go to student organization events, attend an athletic event or see a show at the Power Center. At these events, you will be able to interact with others in the community. Connection with others is an important part of getting adjusted to a new culture.

4. Explore and observe the campus environment. Spend time on the Diag, take the Blue Bus to North campus, study at the Trotter Multicultural Center, and eat in different dining halls. Immersing yourself in different spaces will help you get familiar with the campus culture.

5. Learn something new from the abundance of culture around you. Because of the many unique individuals like you, there is no shortage of cultural experiences to engage in and learn from on-campus. Be open to meeting people from different cultures, try a new restaurant downtown, and attend events hosted by different social or cultural groups.

6. Share your cultural background and practices with those you trust and care about.

Adapting to the campus culture involves feeling as if others know you for who you really are. For example, let your roommate know you are celebrating a specific holiday or going to a particular event, and maybe invite your roommate and friends to a social or cultural event on-campus or at home.

7. Stay grounded and remember that your cultural background is a valid and important piece of this mosaic of our campus culture. Stay connected with cultural elements that make you feel like your authentic self.



For instance, you can join groups on campus where you can feel supported and engage in cultural practices familiar to you. Relevant groups on-campus may include groups on ethnic or racial identity, gender and sexual orientation, nationality, professional affiliations, interests, sports, religion, Fraternity and Sorority Life, and others. You can also stay connected to groups at home via social media.

8. Advocate for change in the campus culture.

As you observe and learn about the campus, you may realize there are aspects of the culture you hope to change. Be a part of the change process with others on campus.

Your voice is vital for the campus culture to be healthy and welcoming to all.



IMPOSTER PHENOMENON

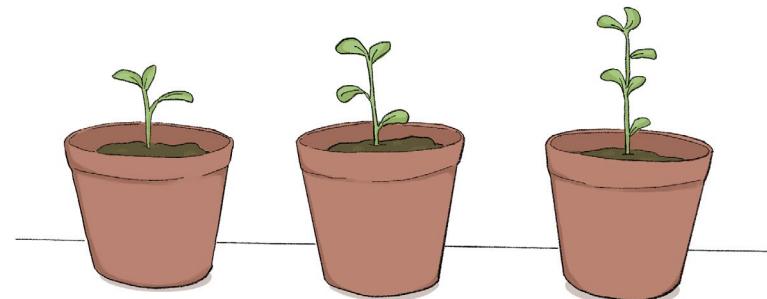
Do you hate making mistakes, being less than fully prepared, or not doing things perfectly? Do you worry that people will find out that you're not as bright and capable as they think you are? Do you tend to feel crushed by constructive criticism, seeing it as evidence of your ineptness? If you answered yes to any of these questions you might be experiencing something called the Imposter Phenomenon. Imposter Phenomenon is the belief that, despite outstanding academic and professional accomplishments, you are not bright and have fooled anyone who thinks otherwise.



It can be experienced internally as feelings of inadequacy, chronic self-doubt, and feelings of intellectual fraudulence. It is estimated that 70% of people experience Imposter Phenomenon at least once in their lifetime, making it extremely common. Studies also note that individuals who hold marginalized identities (First Generation students, BIPOC, women, people with visible and invisible disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ folks, for instance) are more likely to have these feelings than people with more privileged identities. Maya Angelou, Neil Armstrong, Sonia Sotomayor, and Michelle Obama have all said that they have felt like an imposter. You are not alone. This is part of our universal human experience. And look at you! You made it to the University of Michigan! You are a rockstar and you belong here.

WHAT TO DO:

1. **Rewrite the script.** Normalize that these thoughts and feelings are common and that you will grow more adept at navigating them over time.
2. **Reframe failure.** Failure is part of any learning process. Anytime you take a risk there is a chance of failure but there is also an opportunity to learn and grow through experience. Exposing yourself to risk takes some of the fear out of failing.



3. Rewire self-doubt by challenging your thoughts. When you have thoughts of “I’m a failure” or “I’m a fraud,” provide an alternate thought to counter them, such as, “Although I may feel like a fraud right now, I am confident in my abilities to learn and trust my capacity to grow.” Thoughts are not facts. Thoughts are simply thoughts.

4. Cease comparisons. Respect your own journey. We can’t compare our Chapter 1 to someone else’s Chapter 10. Keep a mental note of your own accomplishments to remind yourself of your wins. Having those accomplishments, or loving words from a friend, or an inspirational quote ready to go, in a mental “smile file,” can help interrupt negative comparisons.

5. Validate your emotions. Your emotions are real. Be willing to sit with them, accept them, and allow them to come and go, like a wave. It is important to remember that you are not your emotion.



6. Practice Self-Acceptance and Self-Compassion. Do the best you can where you are right now. Believe that you belong even if you're struggling. Name Imposter Phenomenon when negative thoughts arise and use the T.H.I.N.K model* to see if a thought is constructive or destructive. Practice forgiveness for mistakes and for not knowing enough. Affirm your strengths and show yourself kindness.

You are worthy.

You belong.

You have done hard things before. You can do this.

*See Appendix (page 83) for more information on the T.H.I.N.K. model.

LIVING WITH ROOMMATES

You have come from living at home, and likely had established roles and a sense of familiarity with your family. Norms were formed over time about who did what, and it was likely comfortable to ask a sibling or family member to do their share. You also may not have had household responsibilities growing up, and may be navigating a newfound level of independence. Different norms and expectations can often bring about conflict. For example, living with a roommate may be challenging because they may have different perspectives about what a tidy space looks like, or have tidiness low on a list of priorities. Conflict is an opportunity to grow your communication skills and establish a comfortable environment in a space being shared with a roommate.



There may also be many expectations about what a roommate relationship will be, but truth is all roommate relationships look different. You and your roommate may appear to ‘click’ initially, or you may feel like you are living with an acquaintance or even a stranger, and yet it is natural for relationships to evolve over time. Trust the process and avoid judging yourself for what the relationship is like now.

WHAT TO DO:

1. Take time to reflect on and explore what your expectations are or were about the roommate experience. Once you have an idea of what you expected, you can more clearly share it with your roommate.
2. Ask them what home is like for them. Share your needs about what you would hope the shared space to be like.
3. Try to experience your roommate relationship as it is; remember it is normal for relationships to take time to develop, avoid judgements about what your relationship will be like in the future.
4. Put yourself out there! Sometimes you or your roommate may wait for the other to initiate a hang-out. You can break the cycle and propose conversation over coffee, a shopping trip or going to the movies together.



Think back to old friendships and choose anything that has helped form bonds for you in the past.

5. Have a conversation about your shared space, discuss your expectations and needs, and find common ground to make living together as comfortable as possible. A few examples of what to broach in this conversation can be deciding what chores need to be done, frequency of chores and assigning roles.
6. Consider establishing ground rules for the shared space and discuss things such as your schedules, wake/sleep times and having friends or people you are dating over.



7. Be kind to yourself! Remember that coming to college comes with so many expectations about relationships, and yet the real deal may be very different to what we have learned to expect from others' experiences, be it people we know or what we see in the media. Your experience is normal and valid!

MAKING FRIENDS

Whether you've moved to U of M from 10 minutes down the road or from 10,000 miles away, you will encounter thousands of new people in college. You and other first-year students will be feeling uncertain in this new environment, having left treasured friendships at home and wondering how to rebuild your social support network. Fortunately, there are many opportunities to build connections on campus. But the truth is, making friends is work (fun and meaningful, but still work). For most, making friendships does not happen overnight or even in the first few weeks of college. Give yourself time to get to know others and for others to get to know you. In time, you will have a pal (or two or more).

WHAT TO DO:

1. Be compassionate and patient toward yourself in this process of making friends.

Recall that the last time you made a new friend was probably at least a couple of years ago, so you have the skills to do so but it just may need to be refreshed.

2. You are not alone in this struggle of making friends. Each fall, hundreds of students come to CAPS with this concern.



The more you connect with other first-year students, the more you will learn that each one of you is facing your own unique challenge with adjusting to the social environment.

3. Manage your expectations for new friendships. The depth of friendships you begin to develop in the first few weeks or months of college will not be the same as the depth or closeness you had with friends from home who you'd known for many years. In time, you will have close friendships, but it won't happen immediately.

4. Try not to get discouraged if a social interaction does not go well or get as deep as you would like. Remind yourself that you will have other opportunities, and remember to be kind to yourself.

5. Take chances in initiating social interactions with your roommate, classmate or someone in a club you are in. It can be any type of interaction. For example, something spontaneous such as walking to your next class, floor meeting, or back to the residence hall together, or something planned like getting together for lunch on a weekend, going to a campus event or trying out a group fitness class together at the Rec Center.

6. Prepare for the possibility that not every person you interact with is going to be a close friend.



In college, you will have the opportunity to develop different types of social interactions. For instance, your partner in a class project may only be a partner in the project, and not someone you end up building a friendship with. It is okay and common to have different levels of friendships and closeness with people on campus.



7. Show others you are open to interacting with them even in small, welcoming gestures. With so much uncertainty in a new environment, everyone is probably looking for a sign to connect with one another. For example, say “Hi, how are you?” to your floormate as you pass them or offer gum to the person who sits next to you in class.

8. Join a club/sorority/fraternity, get an on-campus job, participate in volunteering or get involved in intramural sports or your cultural/religious communities. As you become more involved in these different groups on campus, you will begin to see the same people regularly and build closer connections with them, maybe even a friendship or two.

9. Parties and sporting events are prevalent on this campus. Some people find friendships here. But if you have different interests and want to seek friendship elsewhere, go forth and do something else to build friendships. This campus is a big place - you do not have to change who you are to make friends.

10. Organize a study group for one of your challenging classes. You can commiserate over the content, ace the test, and possibly, make a friendship! But even if a close friendship does not develop, give yourself kudos for taking the initiative to connect with others.

11. Be curious and keep an open mind. You might find a friendship at a place or with a person who you may not have expected to. Possibilities are everywhere.

12. Think of making friends in college as an opportunity to start fresh and try some new skills. If you have not been successful in making friends in the past, you might see this clean slate in college as a time to learn some strategies to make friends and try it out. Be compassionate and patient with yourself as you try these new strategies.

SHYNESS

U of M is a large campus, full of diverse people, and during your first year, learning how to communicate effectively with others may be a brand new adventure. Students come to campus with varying social skills. For some, it may be easy to talk and connect with others, while for others this may be more difficult, especially if you experience shyness. For those who experience shyness, you may feel nervous, uneasy, uncertain and/or apprehensive in social situations. You may not know what to do or say when attempting to interact with other students, professors, graduate student instructors, University staff, or people you don't know particularly well.



This can be influenced by family and/or cultural norms and values and identity group membership (e.g., age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion/spirituality, citizenship, socio-economic status). Misinterpretations regarding communication styles, body language and expression may vary depending on an individual's varied social identities and cultural backgrounds. Other variables influencing shyness include: personality traits, limited practice in making friends, experiences with bullying, trauma, and/or other concerns (i.e., social anxiety, autism spectrum).

Students who are shy may overestimate the probability that others won't interact with them, overestimate the degree to which they will be embarrassed when interacting, and underestimate their ability to cope when feeling embarrassed, ashamed, or criticized. You may not believe you have the ability to overcome these challenges. However, giving yourself space, time, and patience to practice social and communication skills, will help you feel more confident and empowered during interactions.

WHAT TO DO:

1. Remember your strengths. Make a list of the strengths you possess (i.e., good listener, loyal, caring for others, strong attention to detail). If you have difficulty coming up with examples, enlist the support from a trusted friend or family member. Read through your list when you're not feeling as confident. This will serve as a reminder of all you have to offer as well as the strengths you possess when interacting with others.

2. Be compassionate with yourself as you practice new skills. Trying to overcome your shyness and learning new skills isn't easy and may result in self-criticism. Give yourself grace and patience during this journey. Treat yourself as you would treat a friend. Remember you are not alone, many students experience shyness. Staying in the present moment instead of beating yourself up for the past or worrying about the future can be helpful.

3. Know that your shyness is a part of you but that it does not have to define who you are as a person. Understand your shyness and be curious as to when it is present. What might you need when your shyness feels very present? Maybe a deep breath? Perhaps a gentle reminder that others experience shyness? Or possibly reviewing your list of strengths?

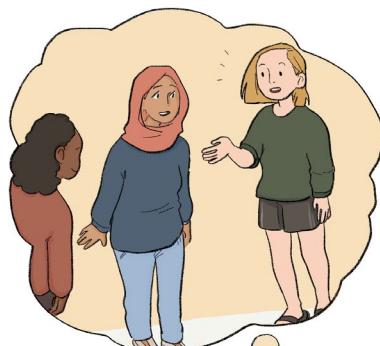
4. Examine the costs and benefits of your beliefs/thoughts. As mentioned earlier, you may make assumptions about how others will interact with you based on your thoughts/beliefs about yourself (which may be more negative). Using the T.H.I.N.K. model*, take a good look at your thoughts and assess if these thoughts will help you reach your goals and be successful.

5. Use rational coping statements. Practice statements that will help you focus on the reality of the situation. Some examples include: "I've done this before so I know I can do it again." "This may seem difficult now, but it will become easier and easier over time." "[I can be anxious and still focus on the task at hand]." "As I start to interact, my shyness and anxiety may decrease."

*See Appendix (page 83) for further information on the T.H.I.N.K. model.

6. Establish social interaction goals.

You may start this process by thinking about/listing situations where you are most shy or anxious (i.e., talking to someone you find attractive). Once you have your list, create goals to work through these situations. You may want to start with an easier goal (e.g., smiling at a stranger as you walk to class) and then build your confidence as you work your way towards more difficult goals (e.g., introducing yourself to someone you find attractive).



7. **Imagine success.** Visualize a situation where you may be shy and then think about being confident in that situation. Try to do this frequently and for different situations. Use this as a mindfulness tool by engaging your senses: What do you sound like? What do you look like? What does this feel like?

8. **Try not to compare yourself with others.** The more you compare yourself to others, the more you may feel inadequate, which may increase your shyness. Remember, comparisons are often based on idealized versions of people, as opposed to remembering that everyone has challenges.

9. **Practice is key.** Anxious thoughts are normal when starting this process. Remember to breathe and stay in the present moment. Choose an environment you feel comfortable in to begin practicing (e.g., library, computer lab, bubble tea shop). Put yourself out there and initiate a conversation. Start with eye contact and a smile. Say, “hello, how are you?” Balance talking with listening and focusing on what the other person is communicating. Try to display open, friendly body language. Eye contact, facial expressions, body posture, physical distance, voice (volume, pace and tone) and physical gestures contribute to nonverbal communication. Keep in mind that nonverbal communication is often influenced by culture and that everyone’s perceptions of body language may be different. Remember that this is a journey. Keep practicing and be kind towards yourself as you build your skills.

COMPETITION

Competition can be a healthy and helpful part of life. It can keep us focused and motivated when presented with new challenges. We tend to admire fierce athletic competitors and celebrate their successes with them. (What's more fierce than a Wolverine!) However, sometimes we get so focused on the competition that we lose sight of why we're doing what we're doing. Competition becomes problematic when it causes you distress and to feel negatively towards yourself.



WHAT TO DO:

1. It can be helpful to reflect on how competition tends to show up in your life. Some people welcome competition in their daily lives; others only feel competitive in certain domains, like when they are playing board games, around their siblings, in athletics, at exam time, etc. When is competition helpful to you? When does it get in your way?
2. Competition can come in many forms. Keep in mind that sometimes we can be our toughest critic and our fiercest competition. Or we may have people on the sidelines who are not rooting for us in the way that is the most supportive.
3. Remember that you only see how people present themselves to the outside world and not what inner challenges they are dealing with. This also means that we see everyone's highlights on social media, not their outtakes.
4. Set fair and realistic expectations and work towards meaningful goals.
5. Clarify what your values, priorities and goals are. Make sure that your choices are aligned with those goals rather than someone else's.



6. Allow yourself to define success more broadly than just academic achievements.

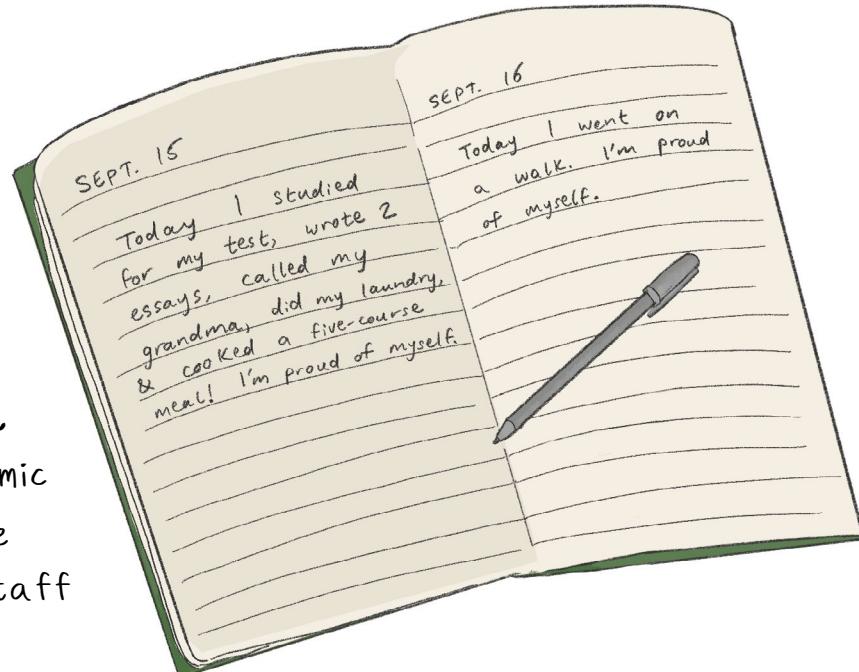
7. Pursue a growth mindset. For example, if you are disappointed by the grade you got on an exam, look at what you can learn from how you prepared for it to help you do better on the next exam. A growth mindset also means recognizing, and giving yourself credit for, your effort -- not just for the outcome.

8. Coach yourself through challenges with supportive and encouraging words. No one wants to play for a coach who just yells insults.

9. Celebrate your wins, big and small.

10. Set boundaries as needed, like proposing that you and your friends don't talk about grades after exams (or at all).

11. Find the support you need to be successful at UM. Go to office hours, talk to your academic advisor, and reach out to others who feel safe to talk to -- remember that UM faculty and staff want you to thrive.



12. Remember that some classes, like “weed outs” or those graded on a curve, are designed so that not everyone can earn top grades.
13. Give yourself time to adapt to the environment at UM. The competitive spirit within your school or major may feel familiar to some and brand new to others. It may take time to find your people and to figure out how and where you fit in best.
14. Ensure that every week includes at least one activity that you enjoy and/or are good at. That helps us stay positive, confident, and more prepared to take on new challenges.

CONFLICT WITH OTHERS

Your first year in college can be a time of transition, independence, and excitement, but can also be a time of stress. Living with a new roommate, joining new student organizations, and changes in your relationships with family and high school friends can all lead to challenges in navigating the expectations each of you have for each other. Conflicts can arise for a number of reasons and how you and the other person decide to handle them can impact your relationship. Here are some suggestions for having conversations about disagreements with family, friends, and roommates.



WHAT TO DO:

1. Identify what you're frustrated about and stick to a couple of specific examples. Try to have a clear idea of what you would like to change. It might be helpful to write these down so you can stay on track during your conversation.

2. Pick a good time and place to have challenging conversations (i.e., don't have the conversation when you're both angry, in a hurry to get to class, or having lunch with a group of friends).



3. Think about your goal for the conversation. This could be asking the other person to change their behavior, preserving the relationship and reducing conflict, or taking a stand about something that matters to you. Your actions might change depending on your goal in a given situation.

4. Remember that people handle conflict in different ways: our social identities, our upbringing, and our values all impact the way we set boundaries or have disagreements. There is no "right" way.

5. Ask for what you need and want in the relationship, be willing to hear what the other person needs and wants as well. Compromise, negotiation, and collaboration are important parts of resolving conflict. For example, you might say to a friend, "I know that you're really busy with finals and that's making it hard to respond to my text messages. Could we schedule a time to text or FaceTime?"

6. Set clear boundaries and ask for them to be respected. Be willing to respect the other person's boundaries in return. You might say, "I'm willing to let you borrow my clothes but can you

ask first?" or "but you need to ask first."

7. When you have a conversation, use "I" statements in the format "when you do/say _____, I feel/think _____. This helps the other person understand how their actions affect you.

8. When having the conversation, avoid attacking or judging the other person - this can lead to more conflict. For instance saying "when you leave all your dirty dishes in the sink I feel frustrated because it's messy" is easier to hear than "stop being lazy and wash your dishes."

9. Be direct, clear, and specific if you can.

This can be difficult to do, but it lets the other person know what you need. Instead of saying, "maybe you can look at your section of the group project soon," you could say, "[I know you're busy but please complete your intro section on the group project. We need that finished before we can do the other sections.]

10. Remember that it can be normal to experience some amount of conflict when returning home from college - your relationship with your family and friends will change over time and what you need and want as a first-year college student will be different than when you were a



freshman in high school. Remember that it's okay to set some boundaries with family. For instance, you might say, "Mom, it's really important to me that I have some privacy so I can talk to my friends" or "Can we have a conversation about curfew? I'd like to stay out a little later with my friends."

11. **Navigating conflict with a professor or advisor can be challenging because of the power they hold.** If the recommendations above don't seem to work, try speaking to another professor you trust. The Office of the Ombuds can also be helpful when navigating conflict with the University.

12. **Remember that this might be an ongoing conversation - don't put pressure on yourself to solve a conflict all at once.** You and the other person might need to politely remind each other of some of the new boundaries you've set.

13. If you see the other person making the changes you asked for (for instance, turning off the lights earlier so you can get to bed on time), **thank them!**

14. **UM's Office of Student Conflict Resolution is a great resource for resolving conflict with others.** They offer consultations and conflict resolution services, and have a helpful list of tips and tools on their website.

FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS

The number of students who are the first in their immediate family to attend a 4-year college is on the rise, increasing year after year. While this can be an amazing, exciting opportunity, it could also feel simultaneously foreign, confusing, and overwhelming. You might wonder: "how do I register for classes?", "what does it mean for a professor to hold office hours?", "will I be able to support my family while living apart from them?" or "is it possible to have a job with my demanding major?". Not only might it feel exhausting to navigate an entirely new landscape without being able to draw upon the experiences of parents/caregivers who have already been through it; it can also feel scary to return home during semester breaks and notice shifts in the ways you relate to friends and family who might not understand what being a first-gen student means.



Fortunately, there have been many first-gen students who have come before you and have helped lay the groundwork on how to have a successful college experience.

WHAT TO DO:

1. **Time-manage and prioritize:** This is true for any and every college student. If there is one word of advice that we can impart on you all, it would absolutely be to time-manage and prioritize. With that said, there are some unique factors that you might be up against as a first-gen student. Since first-gen students tend to have multiple responsibilities that they hold, such as jobs, caring for family, and learning a new system; the balls that you're juggling can easily become overwhelming. Identify the obligations that are most pressing and important, and make sure that you devote ample time to them. In addition to the responsibilities that take precedence (whether class or a job), do make sure to also schedule time to take care of yourself and do things that you enjoy. Whether it is a night out with friends, a walk through the Arb, or concert from your favorite artist, it is essential to take care of your holistic wellness.

2. **Take advantage of the resources:** being a student at the University of Michigan means you have much more than access to just a top-tier education. It means that you are also entitled to utilizing the plethora of resources available to all enrolled students. Whether it is seeking writing support at Sweetland, joining a therapy group at CAPS, attending a mock interview at the University Career Center, or connecting with the Study Abroad Office to learn about programs of study you can pursue overseas; the resources really seem limitless. Most importantly, there is a First Generation Student Office that provides a myriad of opportunities and connections to meet

plenty of student needs.

3. Build community: Much like the wealth of academic and supportive resources already built into the fabric of the university community, we are fortunate to have over 1600 clubs and organizations at UM. There is everything ranging from acapella troops, to community service organizations, to identity-based groups—there really is something for everyone! Find your people—the ones you connect with, share similarities with, and learn from. We often operate best when we have a community of others behind us, leaning on them for support and guidance when needed.

4. Communicate your needs: As a first-gen student, you will likely have unique needs that not every other student will have. You might need access to additional resources such as an academic coach, internship interview tips, and coaching around learning the new “language” of the higher education system and culture. Not everyone will be aware of what you know or don’t know, need or don’t need. As such, it is important to be able to share with others what your needs are. This includes not only friends, roommates, and classmates, but also faculty, staff, and administrators. Take a deep breath and approach your professor after class and share that you are unsure how to navigate the graduate school application process and are interested in learning from them.



5. Remember to ask questions: Much like communicating your needs, it is important to ask questions when you are unsure of the answer. Even those who have parents who went to college are navigating an entirely new environment, so it is absolutely expected that you will have questions! And do trust that there really is no such thing as a “stupid question”. All questions are valid. If you are unsure whether there are additional scholarships that you can apply for, schedule an appointment with the Financial Aid Office. If you are wondering what classes might make you a competitive candidate for law school, ask your advisor during your semesterly meeting. The short of it is that knowledge really is power, and we won’t gain any without seeking it out.

6. Lean into your strengths and resiliency:

Many first-gen students come into their college experiences with multiple strengths and a lot of resilience. You’ve already made it this far, so please be sure to remember that when the going gets tough. As the first in your family to attend college, you likely have the autonomy and flexibility to set your own path and to help pave the way for those that come after you. Additionally, your adaptive nature and ability to learn quickly will serve you well throughout your time here at UM. Please be sure to lean on your strengths liberally!



7. Share your experiences: We know that guidance and mentorship is one of the most important things for first-gen student success in college. In addition to finding yourself a mentor or group of supporters via networking and building community, it can be helpful to pay it forward. This is a great way to support, mentor, and guide others, while simultaneously learning from those experiences as well. It can be helpful to share your unique challenges, experiences, and strengths with your non-first-gen friends and classmates, as well as eventually identifying a first-gen underclassman to take under your wing. It is important that your voice be heard and is used to help shape the groundwork that is being laid for others to come.

RACE-BASED TRAUMATIC STRESS

Stress is a natural response and a signal that your body is adjusting to specific changes in the environment. Marginalized groups may experience higher levels of stress due to factors associated with identity and discrimination. This is referred to as minority stress.



In addition to racism, marginalized communities may experience microaggressions, fear, violence, and other harmful behaviors. According to Derald W. Sue, microaggressions are “The everyday slights, indignities, put downs and insults that people of color, women, LGBT+ populations or those who are marginalized experience in their day to day interactions.” Microaggressions occur in several forms:

- » **Microassaults:** Also referred to as “old fashioned racism,” microassaults are “explicit racial derogations characterized primarily by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions.” They are conscious, deliberate, and often shared in private amongst those who are believed to feel similarly. Examples of microassaults include but are not limited to are: believing and voicing that White is superior and people of color are inferior; not accepting interracial interactions; displaying signs of racism and hate.
- » **Microinsults:** These are “characterized by communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person’s racial heritage or identity.” Microinsults are subtle and said to communicate hidden messages to people of color. They can be verbal and nonverbal. Examples of microinsults include but are not limited to are: assuming that someone is in the space because of affirmative action/race/quota; a student of color not being acknowledged by a White professor.
- » **Microinvalidations:** These are “are characterized by communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color.” Examples of microinvalidations include but are not limited to are: commenting on how “well” someone speaks English; saying things such as: “[I do not see color. We are all one race. It’s a joke.]”

If you are a part of a marginalized group, know that these experiences are not uncommon. This may result in you experiencing a decline in your overall level of functioning, and feeling as if you are in a hostile environment, due to inequitable treatment. Furthermore, your reactions to these many experiences may affect you emotionally, cognitively, behaviorally, and socially.



Racial Distancing

1. **Alienation:** Believing that you are being rejected and/or excluded by the dominant group because of your racial identity
2. **Racial Affiliation:** The need to connect with others that share your racial identity
3. **Intersectional Racism:** Believing that negative interactions are directly connected to your racial identity and other identities (intersections)
4. **Racial Isolation:** Removing yourself from situations that may display covert and/or overt racism, as a means of self-preservation

Robert T. Carter (2006) identifies race-based traumatic stress injury as a significant degree of emotional pain that accompanies racism, and is demonstrated through “racial harassment or hostility, racial discrimination or avoidance and/or discriminatory harassment, and aversive hostility.” Experienced trauma may be expressed through anxiety, anger, rage, depression, low self-esteem, shame, and guilt. A research study conducted by Harris et al (2018) identified 13 ways people of color respond to racism:

Denial

5. **Apologism:** Excusing acts of racism and identifying them as not being impactful
6. **Minimization:** Not acknowledging the significance of racist acts (e.g., making them small)
7. **Normalizing Racism:** Seeing racism as a normal behavior (e.g., "It has always been this way.")

The Paradigm Shift

8. **Healthy Curiosity:** A White person shows genuine interest in learning about race related experiences
9. **Interracial Connectedness:** Determine if establishing interracial connections are worth it (e.g., Do you have supportive connections?)
10. **Interracial Avoidance:** Purposely avoiding spaces that could result in people of color experiencing harm, intentionally or unintentionally, at the hands of White people

Coping

11. **Suppression:** Not acknowledging/ignoring racist behaviors
12. **Social-Emotional Support:** Access your support system to obtain "emotional support, empathy, and guidance"
13. **Spiritual Identity Management:** Ground yourself in helpful beliefs and values as you process experiences surrounding race.

WHAT TO DO:

1. **Recognize that systemic/institutional racism is not your fault.** Just in case these terms are not familiar, systemic/institutional racism is racism that is purposed to prevent

people of color from having equitable access and treatment because of their racial identity. Institutional racism is “the systematic distribution of resources, power and opportunity in our society to the benefit of people who are white and the exclusion of people of color.” Although the voices of those who choose to remain complicit and/or not educate themselves on the issues may appear to be louder, you are not alone in wanting change. You are NOT less than! You ARE worthy of equitable treatment!

2. Take care of yourself. Engage in activities that allow you to feel connected to who you are. Have occasional “check-ins” with yourself, assess your needs, and identify how your needs can be met. This could include attending to different dimensions of wellness:

- » **Emotional:** Take part in activities that engage your senses (e.g., cook and/or eat your favorite food; listen to your favorite song; watch your favorite movie).
- » **Intellectual:** Participate in activities that allow you to use your knowledge and skills (e.g., reading; crossword puzzles; Sudoku; debates).
- » **Physical:** Seek out physical activity, mindful nutrition, and adequate sleep.
- » **Spiritual:** Connect to what gives you a sense of meaning and purpose (e.g., prayer; meditation; volunteering; nature).



- » **Environment:** Your social and natural surroundings can impact your overall wellbeing. If there are things, within your control, that are “contaminating” your environment, consider ways to make things healthier for you (e.g., recycle; garden; avoid littering).
- » **Financial:** Finances tend to be a common stressor among individuals. Although financial situations vary, it is never too early or too late to attend to your financial wellness. This could include establishing a budget, starting a savings account, creating an emergency fund, shopping at thrift stores, and dining out less.
- » **Social:** Establishing meaningful connections and a sense of belonging defines social wellness. This includes having and maintaining a support network. Examples of how to begin building a support network include considering making space for genuine connection with others, setting healthy boundaries, and joining student groups/organizations.
- » **Occupational:** Engaging in work that aligns with your interests and values is likely to result in satisfaction. Additionally, having a work/life balance, relationships with coworkers, seeking support when needed, and stress management contribute to overall occupational wellness.

3. Access your social network. Challenging times may lead you to withdraw due to certain fears and concerns. However, do not forget that you have people who are willing to support you. Friends, family, and affinity groups are a good way to ensure that you have social support. Any form of communication can help to remind you that you are cared for (e.g., text, phone, and video chat).

4. Empower and encourage yourself. Words are powerful! It is important to monitor and counter the negative messages that we are exposed to. Verbalizing affirming and empowering statements to remind yourself of who you are will allow you to have some control over your narrative (e.g., “I am worthy”).

5. Unplug. Social media is an outlet that allows us to stay connected with the world. However, it can also be a source of stress. Consider unplugging to give yourself a mental break and sense of relief and connect with others in different ways (e.g., phone; text; videoconference).

6. Social Action. Your experiences are valid and should not be minimized. If social action is a passion of yours, there are many ways for you to engage and voice your concerns. Before addressing the steps, poet Lindsay Young said: “Resistance is NOT a one lane highway. Maybe your lane is protesting, maybe your lane is organizing, maybe your lane is counseling, maybe your lane is art activism, maybe your lane is surviving the day. Do NOT feel guilty for not occupying every lane. We need all of them.”



Below are ways to engage in social action (from “[12 Ways to Engage in Social Action Without Going to a Protest](#)”):

- » Attend a Town Hall meeting
- » Engage civically (call your senator, sign petitions, vote)
- » Donate money
- » Support those on the ground
- » Educate and read
- » Call out the behavior of racists
- » Listen and empathize with people of color
- » Practice self-care
- » Be joyful and hopeful
- » Pick up the digital pen

- » Support marginalized-owned businesses
- » Create

Additional steps include:

- » Write down your experiences and identify the changes you would like to see. Be specific.
- » Meet with individuals that have influence (e.g., department leads).
- » Take care of yourself. Social action can be empowering and exhausting. Having the support of others and allowing yourself to rest when needed is necessary.
- » Say something when you see something. Do not disregard the impact that can be made through speaking up. If you are a witness to racism, discrimination, microaggressions, or other acts of injustice, make it known.
- » This is a process. As much as you would like things to happen immediately, this may take some time. Know that the work you are doing matters, even though the desired results may be slow.
- » Take advantage of the resources on campus: [MESA](#); [Trotter](#); [Spectrum Center](#); [CAPS](#)
- » Most importantly, find what works for you!



7. Seek help. Microaggressions and minority stress have a significant impact on mental health and overall wellbeing. From close family and/or friends to mental health professionals, there are multiple ways of seeking the ideal support for you.

Please refer to the Appendix (page 83) for more information on advocating for anti-racism.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Time management is a skill we can all learn and practice. You may not have had the opportunity to really practice this skill because your daily schedule was created for you during high school by teachers, coaches and caregivers. Learning how to manage your current responsibilities like getting up for and attending class, identifying which student orgs to join, finding time for laundry and eating meals throughout the day, communicating with your roommate about a clean-up schedule, and connecting with old friends and seeking out opportunities for new ones can make adjusting to college challenging.

It's important to remember that our time management skills will change and adapt as we move through life. Things that may have worked for you in the past may not work as well in the present or even in the future. As life continues to change, so will the skills you use to cope. This is expected and okay.

WHAT TO DO:

1. If you can complete a task in less than five minutes, do it as soon as it comes to mind. For example, writing a quick email to a professor or advisor, making your bed, requesting maintenance in your dorm, doing a survey, etc.

2. Have a written out or typed schedule. Google Calendar, your U-M student planner, or a wall calendar/list are some options. Some people like to plan for every minute of their day while others appreciate a general overview of their day or week. Some people find it helpful to have different visual cues for their different responsibilities (e.g. work schedule vs. academic schedule) or a single calendar that tracks all their responsibilities. Figuring out what works for you may take some experimentation and flexibility - so try out different methods and see what happens.

3. Prioritize. Organize the things you need to get done by order of importance. You get to decide which tasks are high, medium, or low priority. Consider prioritizing things based on your values. For example, start with things you **need** to do, such as coursework and part-time/full-time jobs, student organization meetings, exercise, sleep, meals, etc. Then look at things you **want** to do, such as watching your favorite show, supplemental research projects, playing a video game.

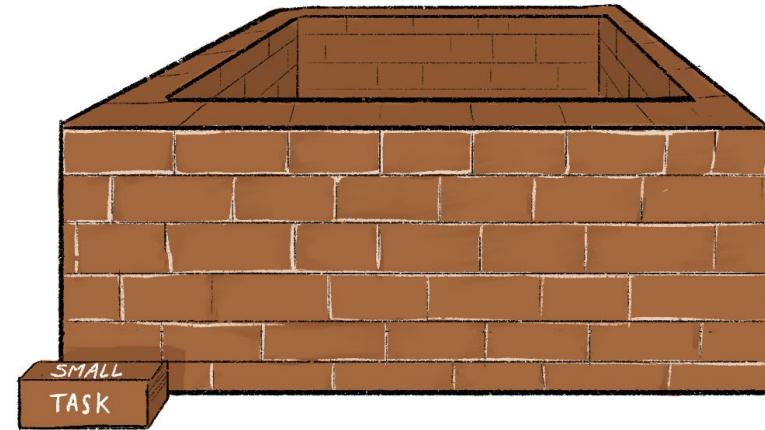
4. There are different ways to multitask. Some people find it easier to group similarly themed tasks into chunks and some people prefer to switch between responsibilities more frequently throughout the day. Experiment with different ways to multitask and see what works for you.



5. Break up bigger projects into smaller tasks and try to do a few reasonable tasks per day. It is easy to feel the pressure to finish everything at once, especially with deadlines and exams. The more we try to pack our schedule, the more overwhelmed and scatterbrained we may feel. So, make each task specific and concrete. For example, instead of saying, “I’m going to write my Econ paper tomorrow,” break this up into, “Tomorrow I’m going to write the outline for my entire Econ paper and then do the research for two of those sections.” For more tips on breaking projects into attainable goals, see SMART Goals diagram in the Appendix (page 83).

6. Don’t be afraid to experiment! Remember, you are learning new things about yourself. So don’t be afraid to try different techniques and experiment. For example, if you’re a morning person, try to schedule more time-consuming tasks first thing in the morning, because that is the time of day you have the most energy. Learning these things about yourself is the best way to find out what works and what doesn’t work for you.

7. Factor in sleep, eating, and self-care when planning your schedule. When creating your schedule, you may forget the importance of getting the right amount of sleep and food in addition to time for fun activities. It’s important to take care of your overall wellbeing too.



8. Remind yourself that it is okay to say “no.” Many people find it hard to turn down social, academic, occupational, and other opportunities. You may not want to feel like you are missing out or disappointing others. While it may be difficult, practicing saying “no” and knowing your boundaries/values may help you manage stress and feel less overwhelmed by your responsibilities.

9. Work-life balance is important. Finding work-life balance is not always easy, especially when adjusting to college. Finding joyful and fun activities helps you re-energize and refuel so that you are able to be more productive. So, whether it's planning social events in advance or leaving room in your schedule for down-time with friends, don't forget to add these into your calendars.

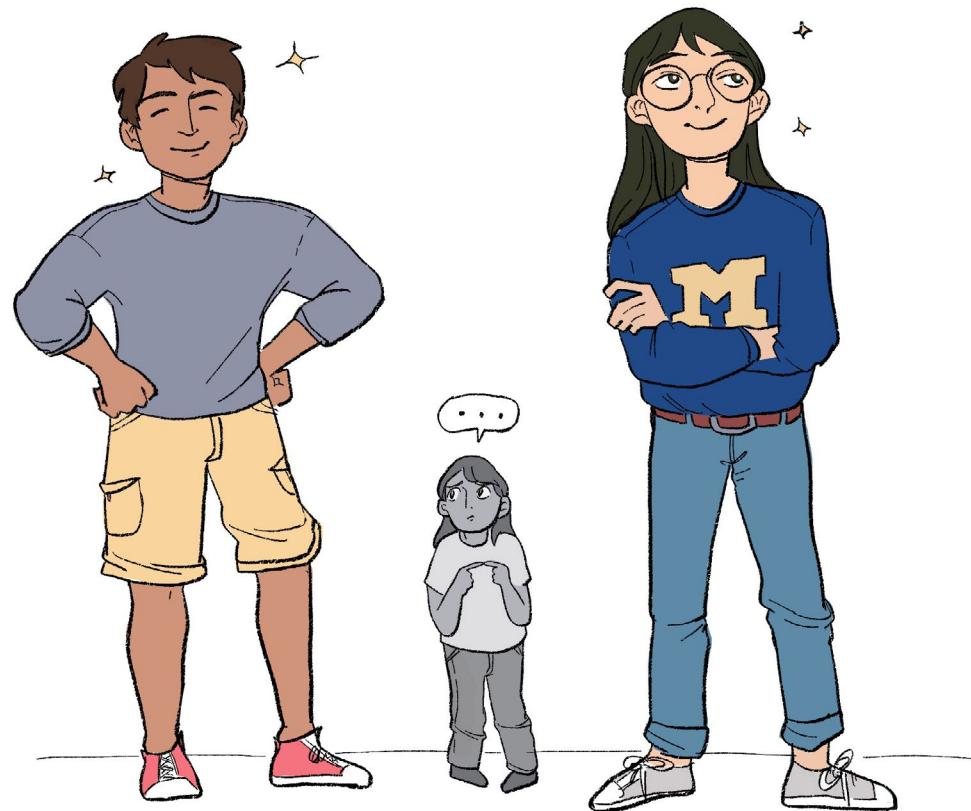


10. Anticipate procrastination and plan for it. Procrastination is not uncommon. You know yourself best, which means you can anticipate when and how you might procrastinate during stressful times. Try to plan alternative “safeguards,” such as working in the library, turning off your phone/computer, studying alone or with others.

11. Be kind and compassionate with yourself. Be realistic in how long tasks will take, make time to do things that you enjoy that aren't “productive,” and avoid beating yourself up if you end up procrastinating, running out of time, or making a mistake. It happens to everyone and is an opportunity to grow and learn more about yourself.

PERFECTIONISM

You may experience internal and external pressure to be a “leader and best” at the University of Michigan or believe that everyone around you was valedictorian of their high school, had perfect ACT and SAT scores, and maintained a 4.0 GPA. It is okay to have high standards and it is also important to identify if perfectionism might be negatively affecting your thoughts and feelings of success. Did you know that there are two types of perfectionists? One is adaptive and the other is maladaptive.



1. Adaptive Perfectionist: Individuals with high goals, standards, and expectations. Adaptive perfectionists are more self-compassionate toward themselves when they encounter obstacles.

Essentially, adaptive perfectionists are “leaders at their best.”

2. Maladaptive Perfectionist: Individuals with high goals, standards, and expectations. However, maladaptive perfectionists are more self-critical when they encounter obstacles. Maladaptive perfectionism is also associated with feelings of anxiety and depression.

WHAT TO DO:

1. **Set realistic goals and include smaller, achievable steps.** Using SMART goals can be helpful (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound).*

2. **Embrace mistakes.** They are opportunities to learn and grow. Mistakes are part of the human experience and show that you have the courage to try new things and seize new opportunities.

3. **Listen to and acknowledge your emotions and use positive self-talk/affirmations.** Utilizing compassionate thinking can result in better outcomes. One way of using self-compassion is to validate your struggles and gently acknowledge how you are feeling or thinking. For example: “Although I may feel unsuccessful right now and feel frustrated, I am confident in my abilities to learn and trust in my capacity to grow.”

*See Appendix (page 83) for more information on SMART goals.

4. Re-adjust your personal standards so they are flexible and helpful, not rigid and unrealistic. By setting more realistic goals, you will gradually realize that “imperfect” results do not equal failure.

5. Focus on the big picture instead of getting caught up in the small details. Celebrate what you’ve done well and highlight your successes instead of only focusing on your mistakes.

6. “Life’s a journey, not a destination.” Savor and enjoy the journey towards a particular goal. This may help the process feel less stressful and more satisfying.

7. Relax and be more spontaneous. Take regular breaks to stretch, explore your surroundings, and incorporate breathing exercises.

8. Confronting your fears and encountering imperfect situations can result in decreasing anxiety, discomfort and frustration. Identify situations that make you uncomfortable (e.g. fear of making mistakes in front of others) and then create opportunities in which you approach your fear instead of avoiding it.

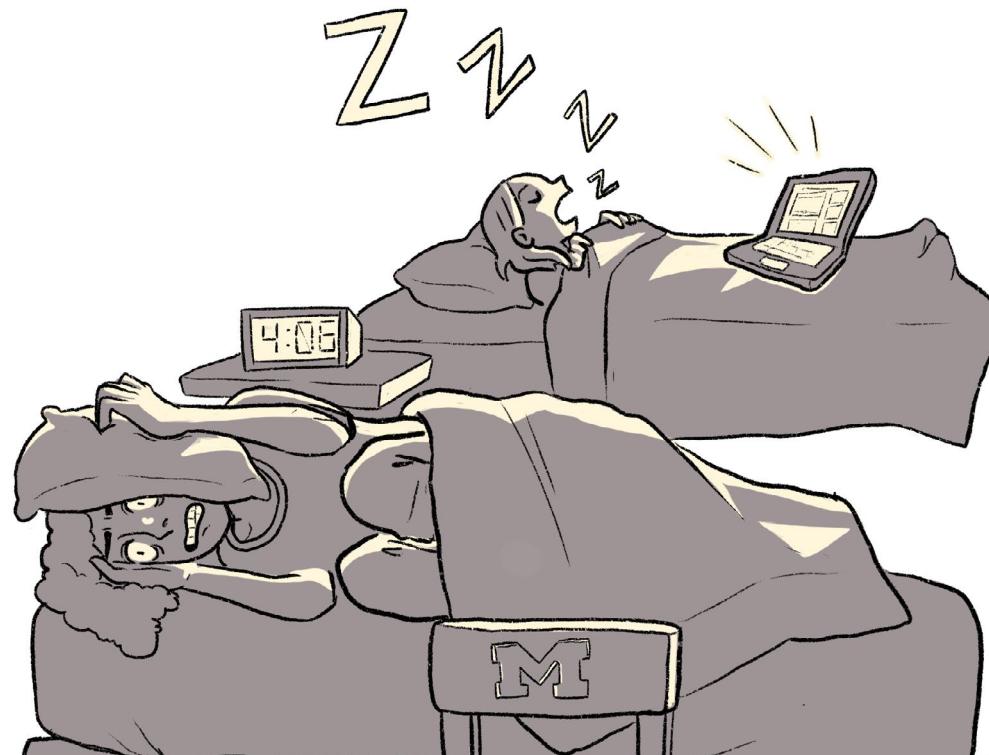




9. **Remember, you are not alone.** Connect with others. Share your perfectionism challenges with a trusted friend. By doing so, you may gain new perspectives and support.

DIFFICULTY SLEEPING

Figuring out your priorities can be difficult and often sleeping is not at the top of the list. Your sleep might be affected by a host of reasons: sharing a room with a new person and adjusting to their habits, getting used to the sights, sounds, and feel of your residence hall, co-op or apartment (as well as a new bed), your daily schedule being dramatically different one day to the next, balancing academics and your social life, and a mind that might be racing with new responsibilities, tasks or worries.



WHAT TO DO:

1. Go to bed and wake up around the same time everyday, regardless of your class schedule. When you sleep in, try to limit it to only a few extra hours. Oversleeping on the weekend can affect your circadian rhythms and make it harder to fall asleep on Sunday night.

2. Pay attention to the light, temperature, and sounds in your room.

Cooler temperatures are better for sleep. A sleep mask can help you sleep in darkness even if your roommate has a light on. A white noise machine, fan or ear plugs can help take your focus away from distracting sounds.

3. Establish a good bedtime routine. Wind down with a daily routine at the end of the day—take a shower, wash your face, listen to calming music read, apply a calming scent or lotion and/or drink herbal tea.

4. If you're sleep deprived, you may be tempted to take naps during the day. If you can, limit it to a 20-minute power nap.

5. Be mindful of your caffeine intake and do not use alcohol or marijuana to help you sleep (drugs impede quality sleep).



6. Turn off your electronic devices an hour before you go to bed. The bright light from the screens inhibits melatonin production (melatonin makes us sleepy). If you must read on an electronic device, switch to night time settings. It also helps if you do not keep your phone near your bed



and turn off all notifications.

7. If your mind is racing with task lists, creative ideas or worry, have a pen and paper by your bed so that you can write them down and save them for your waking hours.



8. Try some gentle stretching or yoga in the evening to help you relax.

9. Try to get outside and spend time in sunlight (or bright light) during the day. This helps ensure your circadian rhythm and sleep/wake patterns are properly set.

10. If you find yourself worrying about not going to sleep, tell yourself “a sleepy brain will sleep” and that you are doing the best you can. Use a distraction technique like listening to a guided meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, or deep breathing.

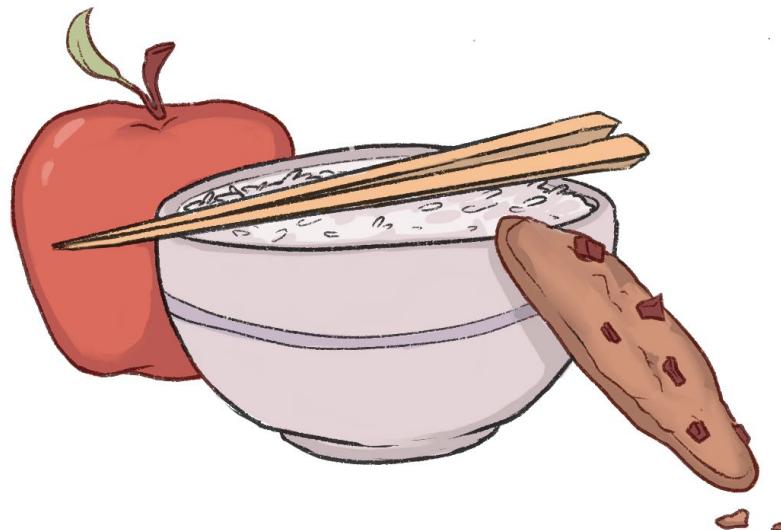
11. Condition your brain to remember that your bed is for rest or sleep (not for doing homework or watching TV). So if you’re able, it’s best to do non-sleep related activities out of bed.

12. If you’re still having trouble falling asleep, simply tell yourself that you will be tired the next day and that you will try to get a better night’s sleep tomorrow. If you are able, get out of bed and go to a quiet lounge and do some light reading or journaling. Once you start to feel drowsy, go back to your room and try again. This can help condition your brain that “bed=sleep.”

EATING

Being on campus and navigating new food choices can be an adjustment and feel overwhelming. How many dining halls are there on campus? What are the different food options? Which dining hall has the best cookies? It can feel like there are too many choices and other times not enough. This is a time when you can be adventurous as you navigate a new food environment, new types of foods, and ways food is prepared and presented. Dining halls are staffed by people who care about providing and promoting many different food options. The food is fresh, well-balanced, locally sourced as much as possible, and has a lot of variety.

Some of these tips may help you feel more grounded, less stressed, and better able to enjoy these new experiences. Not every tip will work for everyone, but try them out and see which ones work best for you.



WHAT TO DO:

1. Establish a routine and schedule for meals and snacks. Look at your class and work schedules and find times to eat. Plan ahead and pack snacks and meals. Consider shopping for food and preparing meals and snacks for the week on the weekend.
2. Remember to eat regularly and throughout the day. Eating three meals a day plus snacks is a great way to ensure that our bodies and minds are being nourished consistently. Know that we need to eat to think and perform. Fueling our bodies and minds helps with concentration and focus. Respect your body's need for breakfast, it helps get our minds and bodies ready for the day.

3. Listen to and honor your hunger and satiety cues.

Eat when you feel physical hunger cues, stop when you are satisfied, and prioritize nourishing yourself. You might find yourself feeling like you don't have time to eat. Be flexible with your food options. Sometimes it is going to be a quick take-out meal between class and other times you will have time to sit down and share a meal with friends. Look into To-Go and Feel Better Meals through Michigan Dining for additional options.



4. Eat mindfully, savor and enjoy your food. Use your five senses, notice and observe the smell, taste, texture, sound, and features of your food. Eat a balanced diet and don't buy into food rules or engage in diet talk. Utilize many coping strategies to manage stress and strive towards balance.

5. Branch out and try new foods. We often have different ideas of what is comforting and nourishing; seek out what you enjoy and also try new things that could be a surprise new favorite. If you have special needs regarding food options, such as food allergies, reach out to Michigan Dining to meet with one of their registered dieticians for a tour of the dining hall.



6. Eating can be a nice chance to have alone-time and can also be a time to build connections with others. Enjoy the quiet time that eating on your own can provide. Bring a book, try out new dining facilities or local restaurants, and be adventurous. If you are finding yourself wanting company, consider asking a roommate, someone down the hall, or someone in class if they want to grab a meal before or after class. You can also be brave and ask someone to sit next to them in the dining hall. You never know where you will meet a new friend, it could be over a meal or attending a campus event that has food.

7. Hold onto your culture and supplement with foods from home. There may be times when you simply cannot find your favorite food items. If that is the case, asking for ingredients or food in a care package can be a great way to seek support. You can also try to find your favorite foods in the community. Ann Arbor and the surrounding communities have numerous specialty grocery stores that might have just what you are missing.

8. Take care of yourself around holidays and special events. You might not be able to be home for all of the special events that often involve food. Be creative about finding other ways to connect with your family, friends, culture, and food.

9. If you feel like you are having difficulty navigating food options and are focusing on food more than usual, talk with supportive people in your life and consider meeting with a counselor or other professional on campus. Did you know that UM has a multidisciplinary eating disorder treatment team that provides support for students who are navigating eating and body image concerns? Feel free to reach out to CAPS and/or UHS if you have any questions and want to learn more about campus resources.

MOVEMENT

Who has time to move? Where is the gym? What is the Arb? You may know that movement is important but may be unfamiliar with campus, not have access to facilities from home, or access to the kinds of movement that you prefer.



You may be from the midwest region or may be from across the globe. Either way, there are a lot of things to adjust to, including getting used to differences in weather and geography (anyone missing mountains and oceans?), a new environment, new schedule, and new priorities and responsibilities. Ann Arbor has a lot to offer and has unique opportunities to move all year long. Be adventurous and open minded about trying new ways to be active and move. Movement can help with adjustment and getting to know campus. Moving can help with focus, feeling energized, managing stress, and improving mood. Also, listen to and respect your body and what it is able to do.

WHAT TO DO:

1. **Make a point to move regularly throughout the day.** It's easy to get caught up in front of your computer and realize that you have not been outside or moved during the day. Schedule movement and exercise breaks. Identify times in your schedule and do something. Some days you might not have as much time to move as you would like, so plan for something shorter, even a 2-minute stretch break can be beneficial.



- 2. Use movement as a chance to make friends and connect with people.** There are numerous club and intramural team opportunities to try out. Join a pick-up basketball game or try tennis. Be social; ask a friend or potential new friend to go for a walk in the Arb, go to one of the many campus rec buildings, or try out an exercise class. See someone cool skateboarding on campus? Say hi and ask where they like to skate.
- 3. Be brave and try new things.** Heard of chair yoga? Did you know having a dance party counts as movement? There are always new class offerings at the rec centers. There are many club and intramural teams to try out. There are countless places to walk and hike on campus and parks around campus. There are many student groups that have dance performances that are important and honor cultural backgrounds.
- 4. Embrace activities that are seasonal.** Go for a walk and enjoy the Fall colors, rent ice skates and snow shoes in the Winter, go on a wildflower walk in the Spring, do some yoga outside in the Summer. And, be flexible. In the Winter, it might be running inside instead of outside.
- 5. Movement can happen anywhere; it does not need to be at a certain gym with a certain routine.**



Practice flexibility and try a yoga video at home, stretch and take a break outside in between classes and as a study break, and rent a canoe on the Huron River.

6. Do what is fun! Whether it is running, stretching, dancing, weightlifting, strength training, rock climbing, boxing, martial arts, tai chi... the type of movement doesn't matter. What matters is being kind to yourself, doing what you like, listening to your body, and having fun!

7. Need a study break? Make it a stretch break. Feeling cooped up in your room? Go outside! Fresh air and being in nature can feel good and boost your mood and sense of connection.

8. Try mindful movement and go on a walking meditation. Pay attention to how your body is moving, notice where you are, what you are doing, and have gratitude for what your body is able to do for you. Enjoy the experience and the increased presence and awareness that it brings.

9. Know what your body is able to do, listen to what your body needs, and check in with yourself frequently. Vary the level of intensity of your movement; gentle movement counts. Pay attention and honor when your body tells you have done enough. Be thoughtful of your ability status, energy, physical health, and food intake. Pay attention if you find yourself feeling like you need to exercise more frequently than usual, if you are exercising while injured or sick, if exercise is getting in the way of being social or your relationships, or it is feeling excessive in any way. Consult a physician at UHS if you have any concerns about how your body is functioning and reach out to CAPS if you want to discuss exercise and how it may relate to body image or eating.

MONEY MANAGEMENT

Paying for college and anticipating future student loan payments can be sources of worry and frustration, ones that may affect your college academic and social experiences. Between getting student loans, paying for tuition and board, buying school supplies, and planning your flight home for fall break, you probably have been spending money before you even arrived on campus. Expenses continue in college. You may spend on necessities such as textbooks and medication and also on things or experiences you want such as going out to eat, buying athletic event tickets, and updating your wardrobe or tech gadgets to keep up with your friends.



In college, you likely will have the freedom and independence to manage your own finances. But with the independence may come anxiety of the unknown or unfamiliar. Managing money may be a new skill for some of you, one that your parents or guardian always took care of for you. For others, managing money will not be a new responsibility. Perhaps some of the ideas below will give you some additional money management strategies to consider.

WHAT TO DO:

1. Remind yourself that money management does not have to be an unattainable skill and if you have not developed skills for it, being in college is the time to try some new strategies and learn this skill.

2. Be compassionate toward yourself if you struggle with financial concerns and money management. Attending this university is an expensive endeavor. For international and out-of-state students, the expense may be compounded due to currency exchange and added costs. For many students, your families and communities may be bearing the cost of college, and this may contribute to increased pressure that you succeed academically.

3. Be mindful when you are putting off or avoiding money management. Managing money may produce anxiety, stress , and/or embarrassment which could lead to avoidance of crucial money management strategies including checking your bank balances and potentially having open conversations with your family and/or friends about money. Without money management strategies in place, however, you may spend beyond your means. If money management is a stressful activity

for you, carve out at least two specific times in your schedule each month. During this time, you can plan to check your bank account and update your budget. Be intentional in scheduling time that will not be stressful. It will also be beneficial to schedule self-care or relaxation time (e.g., having a favorite meal/snack, going for a walk, watching a funny tv show, listening to music) for afterward. This will give you the opportunity to unwind after a potentially stressful activity. Over time, as you grow your money management skills, you may likely feel less anxious about the process.

4. You may notice affluence on campus, which is a reality for some. However, students on campus come from a variety of social class backgrounds. If you find yourself comparing yourself to affluent peers and possibly feeling not good enough or as if you must spend more money than you would like in order to feel accepted, please remember to be kind to yourself and consider taking a moment to see the campus more broadly.

5. Stay grounded in your values about money, which may come from how you were raised and your family background. This approach will help



you be realistic about your financial means. There may be times you are tempted to impress friends or fit in with others. You may spend more money than you can afford or engage in expensive activities/events that are not aligned with your values. It is common to want to try new things, but refrain from doing so if it will cause you financial stress, is not aligned with your financial values, and does not bring enjoyment and meaning to your college experience. Balance is important.

6. If feasible, create a budget either by using an available online resource or simply an Excel sheet and be sure to track your spending at least twice each month to ensure you are still within your budget. In your budget, be sure to include all necessary (e.g., groceries, gas) and desired expenses (e.g., eating out, entertainment, hobbies).

7. Keep your budgets flexible. You may need to move money from one category to another during certain months to account for unexpected or unplanned college experiences. For instance, your laptop may need to be repaired (unexpected expense) or your roommate might invite you to a holiday show where you might need to buy a ticket (unplanned expense). Flexibility in budgeting will help you stay within your means while not feeling as if you are missing out on college experiences.

8. Spend less whenever and wherever you can. For instance, use your student ID for discounts at local restaurants and even online retailers. Buy used textbooks online or from other students or rent, whenever possible. Take advantage of free or low-cost entertainment

and fitness options on campus. Be sure to avoid fees and fines such as from the library, parking, credit cards, bank accounts, and others. Also, remember to cancel subscriptions you are not using. Every dollar saved intentionally can go toward something else you need or want.

9. Incorporate fun, self-care, and even your hypothetical, future spring break trip into your budget. If you plan ahead for these expenses and start realistically considering how you are going to pay for fun and self-care activities, you may feel less strapped for cash or overwhelmed when the time comes for it. You can also be planful about how you save (e.g., prepping meals and snacks, buying fewer coffees, saving holiday gifts) and make money (e.g., on-campus job, work study, internship, paid research opportunities) to pay for these experiences.

10. Start an emergency fund, if possible. To ensure more flexibility in your financial situation, try to allocate some money every month to an emergency fund for illness, car repairs, parking tickets, dead phone batteries, changes in income or others. If possible, open a new bank account (there are options for online banks) only for this emergency fund. Avoid connecting this account with other accounts, so you are only able to access this money when you need it. Be realistic in how much you put in this fund and only allocate money for emergencies after you have considered all your necessary monthly expenses. As an example, setting aside \$10 to 20 each month to an emergency fund adds up quickly and will come in handy at some point.

11. Be aware of campus financial resources, if you are faced with an emergency. The Dean of Students office, Center for Education of Women, and Office of Financial Aid all offer

emergency financial help to students who are struggling with personal or family challenges.

12. Be vigilant for financial scams. It is heartbreaking to lose your hard-earned money to fraud. It is best practice to investigate emails or phone calls you receive with requests for money before you decide to share any sensitive, personal information (e.g., bank account number, Social Security number, full legal name and date of birth).

13. Get support from others. Issues related to money can sometimes feel alienating. It may feel difficult to talk to friends or family when you are struggling with financial concerns. Pay attention to those around you and you may hear that others have similar concerns. Take a chance by sharing a little bit (to start with) about your financial struggles and see if their responses are helpful. You may even ask them for advice or resources. You can also use resources such as workshops on money management by some local Ann Arbor banks.



ASKING FOR HELP

College is marked by a time of numerous adjustments for every first-year student. Perhaps you have never lived away from home, have never had a roommate, have never failed a test or a class, or have never had a lecture with over 100 students! It is quite common to feel like a “small fish in a big pond” here at UM. While this transition into college may be one of the biggest periods of change, students are continually adjusting to the new circumstances and challenges that come with every year. These new experiences that college brings, whatever they may be, can be overwhelming and can leave students feeling stressed, anxious, or lost.



Ways of coping with emotions such as these are unique to each student, and are often influenced by cultural norms and expectations. For example, some students may prefer to talk with a family member or friend, while others may be used to coping on their own. That is why when it comes to asking for help, it is common for this to mean many different things based on your own background. It can help to reflect on what this means for you, and to consider the suggestions below for what could align with your views of asking for help.

WHAT TO DO: FOR ACADEMICS

1. Identify and build your staff/faculty “Board of Directors.” In other words, identify a handful of staff/faculty, whether that be an academic advisor, particular professor, or GSI to whom you can go for direction, advice, or help.

Having this list of individuals can be helpful throughout your time in college, especially during times when you are feeling particularly stuck.

2. Attend office hours. Most, if not all, of your classes will provide office hours, which is a time during each week that the professor and/or GSI is available to meet with you and answer questions. This information is often found on the syllabus for each class.



3. Work with a tutor. Many of the departments at UM offer tutoring options to students, many of which are free and peer-led. Check out the Newnan Academic Advising Center, Sweetland Center for Writing, Math Lab, and Science Learning Center, along with many more to see what options might work for you. There are also non-university, fee-based tutors in the community to consider as well.

4. Work in a group. If you enjoy working with others, creating or joining a study group can be a great way to explore questions with peers. Students have done this by creating their own groups, as well as participating in university-established study groups such as the ones offered at the Science Learning Center (for particular classes).

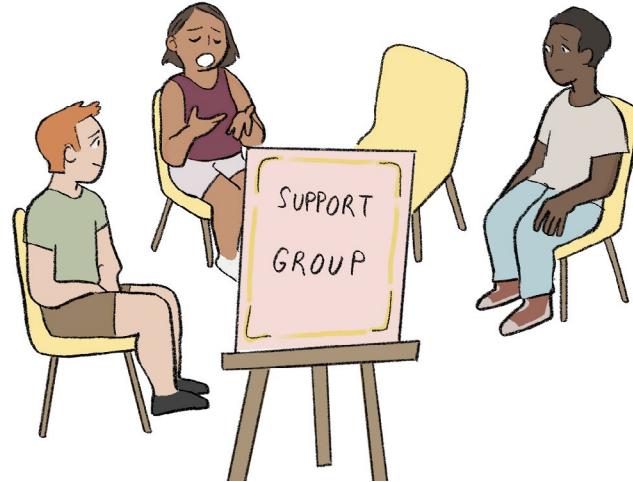
5. Support within Student Life. There are a number of different departments within Student Life to go to for help with various concerns, with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) being one specific to academic accommodations. If you have a registered disability or feel that you have a disability that interferes with your academic potential, SSD can be a helpful resource for understanding the possible academic accommodations available to you.

WHAT TO DO: FOR YOUR MENTAL WELLNESS

1. Recognize and acknowledge. The first step in asking for help for your mental wellness is recognizing and acknowledging when you are distressed. Sometimes it is easy to know when you are distressed, and other times it may not be as clear. Some common signs include: marked

changes in mood, changes in sleep, changes in appetite, changes in motivation, difficulty concentrating, and losing interest in things that are typically enjoyable for you.

2. Explore your options. A big part of asking for help is meeting yourself where you are at. In other words, what kind of support would be most helpful for you at this time? Maybe that is reaching out to family or friends, or joining a student-based support group such as the Wolverine Support Network, or considering professional sources of support.



3. Student-based supports. If you feel more comfortable discussing your concerns with peers, consider talking to a friend, or becoming a member of the Wolverine Support Network (WSN), which is the primary peer-led, group-based support network on campus. You can also check out other mental health focused student-led groups on the University of Michigan Maize Pages.

4. Professional supports. There are times when mental health concerns are difficult to manage on

our own or with friends and family. Consider looking into the numerous professional resources on campus that can provide additional support, including but not limited to Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC), Spectrum Center, and Wellness Coaching at University Health Service (UHS).

5. Religious/Faith-based supports. If you identify with a particular religion or faith, there are a number of religious and spiritual student groups on campus that are available to you, as well as places of worship in the Ann Arbor community. An option to consider is the Interfaith Program at Trotter Multicultural Center, which aims to help students explore their religious, spiritual, and secular identities. Another option is exploring the diverse religious and spiritual resources offered by the Association of Religious Counselors (ARC).

WHAT TO DO: FOR SOMEONE ELSE'S MENTAL WELLNESS

1. Recognizing someone in distress.

There may be a point during your time in college where you sense that a friend or peer is struggling with their mental health. While other people's mental wellbeing is not your responsibility, you may find yourself wanting to do something to help.



The first step is recognizing some of the signs of someone in distress, which includes, but is not limited to, marked change in behaviors, increased isolation, and/or hearing language around suicide (i.e., “I do not want to be here anymore”, “[I wish things were over”, etc.).

2. Consider consulting with an advisor or professor. If you are concerned about someone and are unsure of how to broach your concerns with that person, you may consider talking with an advisor or professor who knows the student. The advisor or professor may have suggestions on how to proceed with the situation, or may be willing to speak with the student as well.

3. Consider consulting with CAPS. It is always ok to ask a mental health professional for help with navigating your concerns for someone else's mental health. You can consult with the Counselor on Duty (COD) at CAPS, which is an urgent/crisis service offered during our open hours. You can also consult with a mental health professional when CAPS is closed by calling CAPS After Hours by dialing 734.764.8312 and pressing 0.

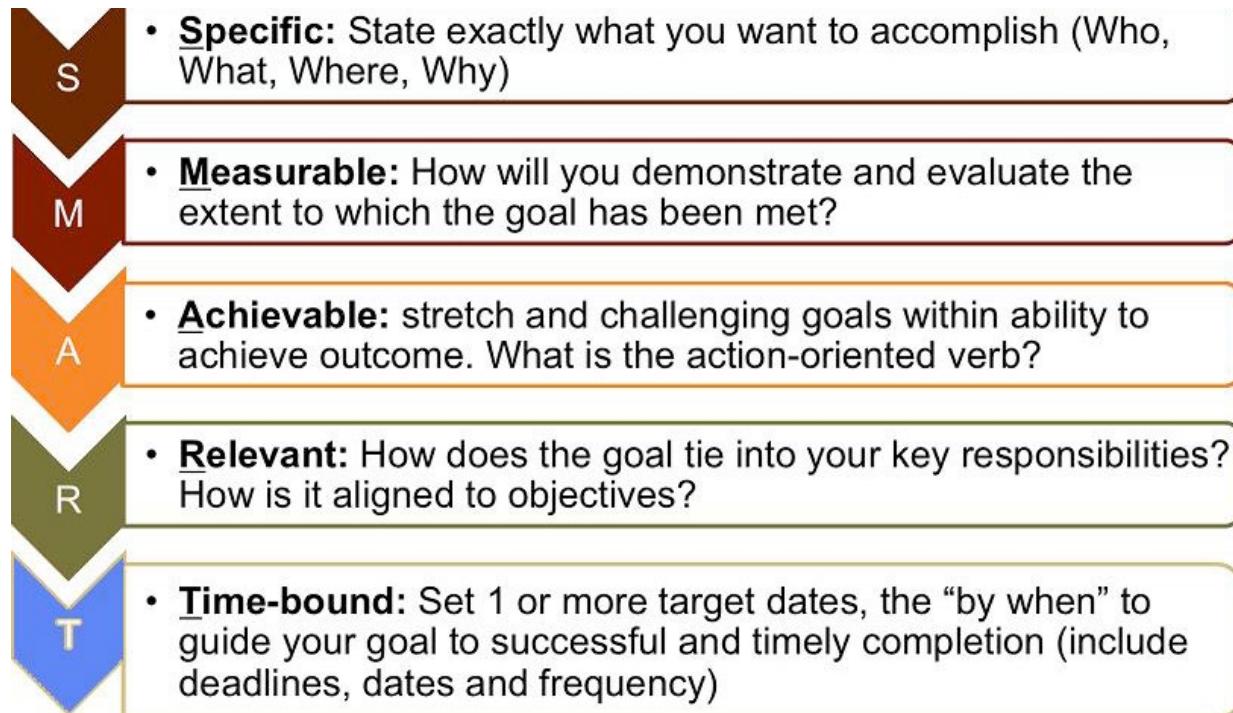
Thanks for reading! We are so glad you are here.
Go Blue!

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Appendices

SMART Goals:



T.H.I.N.K. Model:

- T** - is it True?
- H** - is it Helpful?
- I** - is it Inspiring?
- N** - is it Necessary?
- K** - is it Kind?

For those who desire to be an advocate for anti-racism:

- » How to be an anti-racist: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>

Reading List

- » How to be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi
- » When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir by Patrisse Cullors and Asha Bandele
- » Sister Outsider by Audre Lorde
- » So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo
- » White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism by Robin DiAngelo
- » Roadmap for Revolutionaries: Resistance, Advocacy, and Activism for ALL by Elisa Camahort Page, Carolyn Gerin and Jamia Wilson