Well-Being Initiative

is to support faculty in making small shifts in the design and delivery of their courses to better support student mental health.

In close partnership with academic colleges and departments this initiative strives to help faculty and departments be more proactive in the well-being of all students by embedding supportive conditions into classrooms and departments.

Engaging students in practices that promote mental health is the responsibility of not just one department on campus but of the entire campus community.

Let's hear from UT faculty about the importance of student wellness.
Renee' Acosta: There's all this pressure that be it real or perceived that the students feel that they have to be the best of the best at all times and so they don't cut themselves any slack.

And so they're putting pressure on themselves and we're not doing really anything to relieve that pressure and so I think it's important that we allow the students to be students, that we give them a safe space in which to do other things than study all the time and give them permission to do that.

Let's hear about specific ways faculty support student mental health.

Brian Evans: On Fridays I hold coffee hours from 12pm to 2pm, weather permitting outside in the local cafe, and we talk about whatever's on their minds and it's usually not related to
the classes I'm teaching.

It's about hobbies, career goals, or concerts to see.

But it's also about, you know, what classes might I take next semester.

How do I prepare for a graduate study?

And we also talk about workload and wellness and well-being

and what they can do to kind of de-stress.

So it's just a wide open discussion and sometimes it breaks into smaller conversations.

So you really have students talking to students and I'm really more of a moderator.

>> How you communicate with students matters.

Show your passion for the content.

Try to be authentic.

Openly talk about mental health.
Encourage students to practice self-care.

♪ (music) ♪

Conditions for well-being include social connectedness,

mindfulness, growth mindset,

resilience, gratitude,

inclusivity, self-compassion

and life purpose.

UT faculty use a variety of techniques to embed these

wellness conditions in their classrooms.

Rajka Smiljanic: I come earlier to class just to make sure I have

time to set up and that everything is working and while I'm

working on that I usually ask the students to give me music

suggestions, something that they like listening to and so then

I put that on and I start the class by asking them to tell me
about a couple of fun things that they did over the weekend

or if they have something fun planned out, what's going on in their lives.

I think that kind of first of all sets up the atmosphere as more relaxed because I think they feel comfortable talking and I think that's helpful to both of us to the students and to me to establish the connection that's not necessarily about the class.

Small gestures go a long way.

Learn students' names.

Take "brain breaks."

Teach how to learn from mistakes.

Express gratitude.

Be optimistic.

Be flexible.
Demonstrate empathy and compassion.

Help students set goals.

♪ (music) ♪

Certain instructional practices can support both learning and well-being when implemented effectively.

Let's hear from a professor about one such practice.

Nina Telang: So cooperative learning is something that I actively practice in the class. Most of my lectures have a certain degree of cooperative learning, so in a 75 minute lecture I would have at least maybe two or three instances where students work with a partner or work with two partners on a problem. So what emerges I think from these sessions is not just
that students are solving a problem but what comes from that is also some of the struggles.

That is something that I cannot—there's no substitute for in a traditional lecture.

Try simple things first.

Connect to the real world.

Be explicit about objectives.

Create an atmosphere of cooperation, not competition.

Let students work together.

Incorporate active learning.

Collect and respond to student feedback.

Meet informally outside of class.

Many UT faculty already deliberately embed wellness practices within their instruction and they found that simple techniques
can make a big difference without lowering expectations or decreasing the content learned in their courses.

Check out our resources to support student mental health both in and outside of the classroom.

Supporting student wellness is everyone's responsibility.

♪ (music) ♪