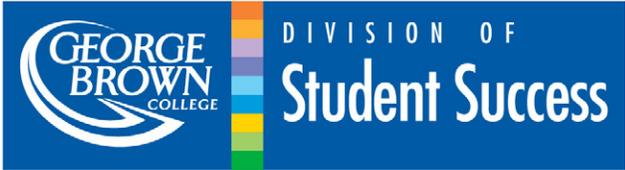




FOUNDATIONS

FOR FLOURISHING

Healthy Campus Initiative



Training Curriculum: Foundations for Flourishing

SERIES INTRODUCTION

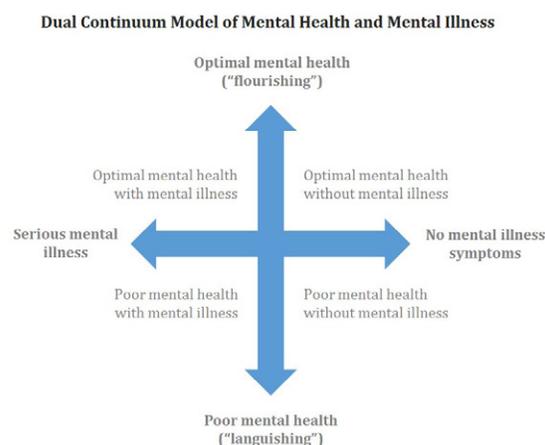
Welcome to the *Foundations for Flourishing Training Curriculum*! This workshop series is a three-part interactive and customizable training program designed to equip faculty and staff at a post-secondary institution with the basic knowledge and skills that they need to make the most of their influence on student well-being and to create supportive learning environments and college spaces.

This workshop series was created as part of the *Healthy Campus Initiative* at George Brown College (GBC), a 'whole-campus', 'whole-student' approach to building a culture of care on campus. Inspired by the work of many other colleges and universities across Canada, 'Healthy Campus' at GBC is a health promotion framework which explores the impact of well-being on learning. This framework has spread quickly across the college! Beginning in our Student Affairs department in 2013, the Healthy Campus Initiative has transformed into a college-wide movement of people organizing and transforming their environments based on a shared commitment to systems-based approaches to mental health promotion and a desire to create conditions at the college that enable all students to thrive.

The definition of mental health that guides the work of GBC's Healthy Campus Initiative was developed by the World Health Organization (Kessler et al., 2006). According to this definition, mental health is:

The capacities of each and all of us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections, and personal dignity.

This definition notably does not equate mental health with the absence of mental illness symptoms; within the Healthy Campus framework, it is possible for those with serious mental illnesses to experience optimal mental health (that is, to 'flourish'), and for those with no mental illness symptoms to experience poor mental health (that is, to 'languish') (Keyes, 2002).





The GBC Healthy Campus Initiative's 'Whole Campus' and 'Whole Student' approach is further explained as follows:

'Whole Campus' means that creating a healthy campus community is about *everything*, including college policies, the physical environment, social inclusion, curriculum, classroom interaction, training of faculty and staff, skill-building for students, counselling and crisis intervention, and more. It requires a proactive, systemic approach.

This approach requires faculty, support staff, administrators, student leaders, and students—that is, everyone on campus—to be engaged in understanding and enacting the role they play in creating a healthy campus community.

'Whole Students' means recognizing the powerful link between physical health, emotions, thinking, behaviour, social interaction, life experiences, social power and oppression, and student success. It means taking a holistic approach and not artificially separating 'academic' support needs from 'personal' support.

This approach is about all students, all of the time. It is about honouring the fact that mental health and well-being can fluctuate, and recognizing that mental health and well-being is much more than an absence of illness. Thus, the focus of the Healthy Campus framework is truly on what it means to *flourish* at college.

ENGAGING STAFF AND FACULTY IN PROMOTING STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

When the Healthy Campus Initiative began in 2013 it concentrated largely on engaging students in efforts to change norms around mental health at GBC. Through projects like a video campaign, the expansion of a peer support team on campus, the founding of a Healthy Campus Student Alliance, and various wellness-related events throughout the year, we focused on providing students with the tools that they need to support themselves and each other.

We know, however, that in any post-secondary institution, staff and faculty play a crucial role in promoting student well-being (Burgess, Anderson & Westerby, 2009; Dhaliwal & Stanton, 2013; Hanlon, 2012; MacKean, 2011). A large part of students' social and emotional support system is comprised of teachers and other staff who help them navigate their college journey. When staff and faculty feel confident in their ability to support students both proactively and responsively, students have access to a network of mentors, cheerleaders, and practical guides that can make the difference between flourishing and languishing. Thus, in 2014, we decided to place an increased emphasis on creating learning opportunities for staff and faculty at the college to expand their knowledge and share skills related to promoting mental health and supporting students throughout all stages of their college experience.

It was around this time that the *Foundations for Flourishing* series was formed. The series was created by Kate Klein, the Healthy Campus Initiative's Research and Education Coordinator, whose role was to:

- Educate staff and faculty at GBC about how daily school environments and interactions can impact students' mental health;
- Connect staff, faculty, and admin with the resources they need to help them do their jobs with students' mental health and well-being in mind; and
- Facilitate the cross-pollination of people's skills, ideas, and initiative when it comes to making GBC a place where students can flourish.

Given their often increasingly large workloads and frequently precarious teaching contracts (Ross, 2017), a particular challenge for college and university-wide mental health promotion initiatives has been effectively engaging faculty in these efforts (Condra & Roston, 2014). Broadly, the aim of engaging faculty at GBC has been to support them in prioritizing emotions in their teaching practice (which involves shifts in both attitude and behaviour), and involvement beyond the classroom in college-wide efforts to promote student well-being. This goal involves cultivating faculty's understanding that:

- Students' emotions and their well-being are *central* to their education, not peripheral;
- Students' emotions play a role in their learning no matter what you're teaching—even if it's math, plumbing fundamentals, or engineering.

Furthermore, they must understand that:

- As educators, they play an enormous role in fostering students' well-being;
- That college-wide change in service of student well-being is possible;
- And that they can actually be agents of that social change beyond the classroom.

Thus, this workshop series was born. The following section contains information about how to use these workshop guides to effectively implement Foundations for Flourishing in your own post-secondary context.

References Cited Above:

- Burgess, H., Anderson, J., & Westerby, N. (2009). Promoting mental well-being in the curriculum. *The Higher Education Academy Inclusive Practice E-Bulletin Series*, V1, 1-2.
- Condra, M. & Roston, J. (2014, June 25). Engaging faculty in campus mental health promotion. In *Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health webinar series*. Retrieved from <http://campusmentalhealth.ca/webinar/engaging-faculty-in-campus-mental-health/>.
- Dhaliwal, R. & Stanton, A. (2013). *SFU health promotion: Well-being in learning environments rationale*. Vancouver: Simon Fraser University.
- Hanlon, C. (2012). Addressing mental health issues on university campuses. *University Manager*, Summer 2012, 1-6.
- Kessler, R.C., Andrews, G., Mroczek, D., Ustun, B., Wittchen, H-U. (2006). The World Health Organization Composite International Diagnostic interview short-form (CIDI-SF). *International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research*, 7, 171-185.
- Keyes, C. (2002). The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of Health and Social Science Research*, 43, 206-222.



MacKean, G. (2011). *Mental health and well-being in post-secondary education settings: A literature and environmental scan to support planning and action in Canada*. For the CACUSS Pre-Conference Workshop on Mental Health, Toronto (June 19-22, 2011).

Ross, S. (2017, February 23). The rise of precarity: Understanding and navigating the emerging economic and social (dis)order. Retrieved from: <http://education-forum.ca/2017/02/23/the-rise-of-precarity/>

HOW TO USE THESE WORKSHOP GUIDES

The workshops in the *Foundations for Flourishing* series are titled as follows:

- Unit 1: Giving Responsive Support
- Unit 2: Creating Caring Environments
- Unit 3: Working Together for Student Mental Health

Each workshop is 4 hours in length. The workshops can be taken in any order. However, the series as a whole has been designed to steadily increase in scope if taken in order from Unit 1 to Unit 3, beginning with Unit 1's focus on personal one-on-one interactions between staff and students and ending with Unit 3's focus on system-wide change. Most participants will come to the workshops with the goal of developing better one-on-one support skills, and hopefully leave the series with a much broader and systemic understanding of how they can make a difference in students' lives.

At George Brown College, people who complete all three workshops become a 'Healthy Campus Champion', which involves public recognition as well as entry into an ongoing community of practice. You may consider instituting a similar reward system at your school in order to motivate people to complete the series.

This guidebook has been designed to help people facilitate the Foundations for Flourishing series in different post-secondary contexts. Because so much of the content is about having an impact on your institutional context, it is important to tailor the content as much as possible to the particularities of your school as a learning, working, and community environment. There are some sections of the workshops that cannot be run until you, for example, compile resources or case studies relevant to your school. All materials referenced in this guidebook are available to download and adapt at www.georgebrown.ca/healthycampus/foundation-flourishing.

If you have any questions about how to run these workshops or how to tailor them to your local context, please don't hesitate to contact Kate Klein at kate.klein@georgebrown.ca.

Training Curriculum: Foundations for Flourishing

Unit 1 Giving Responsive Support 1

Unit 2 Creating Caring Environments 39

Unit 3 Working Together for Student Mental Health 73



Unit 1: Giving Responsive Support



Contents

Section 1	Introducing the Session	 35 mins.....	5
Section 2	Basic Principles	 10 mins.....	7
Section 3	Comfort Zones Activity	 25 mins.....	10
Section 4	Judgments Activity	 30 mins.....	13
Section 5	Noticing Signs of Distress	 15 mins.....	20
BREAK		 10 mins.....	22
Section 6	Reaching Out	 30 mins.....	23
Section 7	Listening	 25 mins.....	26
BREAK		 10 mins.....	29
Section 8	Four-Way Listening Activity	 20 mins.....	30
Section 9	Boundaries	 5 mins.....	33
Section 10	Giving Referrals	 20 mins.....	34
Section 11	Conclusion	 5 mins.....	37

Unit 1: Giving Responsive Support

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SHOULD GET OUT OF THE SESSION

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify the difference between responsive and proactive support, and define both.
- Determine which types of student support are 'inside' and 'outside' of their comfort zone.
- Explain the importance of asking open-ended questions when supporting students.
- Identify what information is missing and needs to be acquired when given examples of students expressing signs of distress.
- Identify the following categories as "signs of distress", and define:
 - Marked change over time
 - "Extreme" or unusual behaviour
 - Things students say or write
- Articulate an alternate explanation for an example of each of the above signs of distress.
- Identify how they would reach out to struggling students in three scenarios similar but different than those presented in the workshop.
- Recall and name the three things one must listen for when exercising active listening: facts, feelings, and needs.
- Summarize and restate a complex expression of distress in their own words.
- Refer students to additional support services at George Brown College (GBC).
- Identify their personal boundaries and needs concerning offering responsive support to students.

INTENDED BEHAVIOURAL OUTCOMES

If you intend on evaluating the impacts of this training, what follows is a breakdown of the changes to future behaviour that this workshop has been designed to prompt.

Since the session ended, have participants:

- Reached out to more students, asking them if they need support?
- Changed anything about how they react when a student tells them about their feelings?
- Felt like they were a better listener?
- Given more referrals to students?

KEY CONCEPTS

- Responsive support ([see page 5](#))
- Proactive support ([see page 5](#))
- Judgment ([see page 13](#))
- Open-ended questions ([see page 17](#))
- Signs of distress ([see page 20](#))
- Listening ([see page 26](#))
- Facts, feelings, and needs ([see page 26](#))
- Boundaries ([see page 33](#))
- Referrals ([see page 34](#))

MATERIALS NEEDED

See www.georgebrown.ca/healthycampus/foundation-flourishing to download editable versions of all materials below:

- Paper and pens
- Laminated pages for the judgments activity
- ‘Simple Strategies for Supporting Students’ handout
- Feelings wheel handout
- Feelings and needs cards
- Boundaries handout
- Referrals guide
- Unit 1 evaluation forms

HOW TO RUN THE SESSION

The ideal number of participants for this workshop is 6 to 12 people. The workshop cannot be effectively run with any fewer than 3 people. Two 10-minute breaks should be scheduled during the workshop to ensure participants remain focused in the sessions. Refreshments (coffee, tea, fresh fruit, etc.) should be provided to help participants feel taken care of and to keep them nourished with optimal energy levels for participation.

WORKSHOP FACILITATION GUIDE

Use the following notes to guide you through the facilitation of this workshop.



The “Time” column indicates the amount of time each section should take. The timing next to the section headers reflect the total time to give to overall section, and then the timing for each step is broken down underneath.



“What I say”: The text in quotation marks gives an example of what the workshop developer typically says during this section of the workshop. It supplements the other instructions, which you can deliver in your own words. Feel free to translate the quoted text into language that is more natural for you as well, while still communicating the core message.

Section 1 Introducing the Session

 35 mins

Please note that this section will require some advance preparation in order to tailor the content to your institutional context.

STEP 1

Introduce context and yourself

At George Brown College, this workshop opens with an introduction of the Healthy Campus Initiative, the broader context in which this workshop is taking place. Give context that is relevant to your particular institutional environment.

10 mins

Introduce yourself and share briefly any relevant information that will help participants understand who you are and why you are well-positioned to facilitate this workshop.

STEP 2

Participant introductions

Do a go-around and give participants the opportunity to introduce themselves. Ask them to share their names and a short overview of what they do at the school.

15 mins

“Your job title is interesting but what’s more useful is a general description of how you spend your time here at George Brown College? What are some of the common and daily duties of your job?”

STEP 3

Introduce proactive vs. responsive support

Tell participants that throughout the Foundations for Flourishing workshop series, there are two key concepts that all other skills are built upon: **responsive support** and **proactive support**.

8 mins

“Responsive support is what we usually think about when we think about supporting students: a student is going through a tough time and we do what we can to help them, whether that’s by referring them to a support service, giving them useful information, or even just acting as a listening ear. You can break this down into levels of severity, ranging from matters of concern where there is no risk of harm to self or others, all the way up to more crisis-level situations where there might be some risk of harm to self or others. Breaking it down this way can help us respond appropriately – for example, you probably wouldn’t respond in the same way to a student who says “Ugh, why did I take 7 classes, I’m so stressed!” as you would to a student who says they are contemplating suicide, right? Different level of responsibility that you might feel, different supports you might bring in, different time-sensitivity, etc.”

“ Proactive support, on the other hand, is all the things we collectively put in place to actually prevent students from going through a tough time in the first place. This can include anything from the policy we write, to the curriculum we develop, to the physical spaces we build, to the service models we design, and more. You don’t need to interact directly with students in order to proactively support them – you just need to be doing your job with student well-being in mind.

Talk about where this workshop fits within the bigger picture of professional development opportunities available to participants, especially as it relates to proactive vs. responsive support.

“ If you’re interested in learning more about proactive support, this is what Units 2 and 3 of this workshop series is all about, so be sure to register in those units to learn more.

In particular, clarify that this workshop is not about crisis response, and point participant in the direction of other training opportunities that focus on this topic.

STEP 4

What are we doing here?

Explain that this workshop is all about developing responsive support skills to enable us to respond to day-to-day matters of concern facing students. Emphasize that many people in the room already have expertise and experience in helping students face these kinds of concerns, and express hope that they will feel welcome to share their wisdom.

2 mins

“ Today we’ll be talking about:

- Noticing signs of distress in students
- Finding ways to reach out when we notice distress
- Basic active listening skills, and
- Giving referrals when the support that students need is beyond what you are able to offer.

Section 2

Basic Principles

 10 mins

STEP 1

Go over the principles

Explain that this workshop is informed by four basic principles that weave through the entire Foundations for Flourishing training series. Go over each of the four principles.

1. **Reach out:** acknowledge that sometimes connecting with students in the terrain of emotional support can feel scary! Reassure participants that this is totally normal and it's important for them to reach out even if they end up being wrong about a student needing help. It's worth the risk of being wrong because even if they are wrong 90% of the time, they need to reach the 10% of students that may be in need of support.

“ It's true that sometimes you might risk a bit of awkwardness if you're wrong. But in my opinion, the worst-case scenario of what happens if you're wrong is that the student, who isn't currently going through a tough time, now knows that if they ever are struggling with something that they go to a school where people care enough about them to ask. And if you're right, you've probably made a really big difference in that student's life. So ask! The risk of asking is worth it.

2. **Cultivate curiosity:** explain that while student support involves a lot of really practical skills, some of the most important skills happen internally, inside your own head. One of these mental skills is the cultivation of curiosity by constantly and internally asking yourself “why” about the things that you experience.

“ Working at a school can sometimes feel a bit overwhelming because we are dealing with so many students on a daily basis. Sometimes we cope with this sheer quantity of people by lumping students into convenient categories. We say ‘students are like this’, or ‘students do that’, but the reality is that the student

experience is incredibly variant and all we really know for sure are the behaviours the student shows us. We do not always know what's occurring in their lives or the reasons for their behaviours. Even when students are acting in ways that we often dismiss as 'disruptive', 'aggressive', 'indifferent', 'difficult', and so on, there is almost always something else going on that deserves our compassion. But we will never uncover that if we immediately write a student off based on challenging behaviour. Cultivate curiosity and compassion by asking questions to yourself about student behaviour: "why might this person be acting this way?", "what may be motivating these behaviours?", "what can I know for sure about this person based on this behaviour?".

- 3. Context matters:** tell participants that in addition to curiosity, understanding that everything has context is an important support skill. There is no 10-step or cookie cutter approach to student support, because every student is different and their unique context will necessitate a different approach.
- 4. Connect and empower, don't fix and control:** acknowledge that the last principle is often the hardest for people, especially those who work as teachers or front-line support staff with students. It's often in our nature and our job description to be 'expert problem solvers' with students, but really students don't need us to fix things for them; ideally the support we provide creates space for students to find solutions and describe their experiences on their own terms.

“ I know that this is hard for some of you because I myself am a recovering 'fixer'. I love to fix people's problems for them, it makes me feel very good about myself and like a very helpful person. But I know that sometimes trying to fix people's problems for them can actually cause more harm than help. At the end of the day, students are the experts on their own lives; they know best what they feel capable

UNIT 1: Giving Responsive Support

Section 2: Basic Principles

of, what solutions make sense for them, what resources they have access to, and what language fits them best, etc. Our role is to help them carve space for themselves to explore solutions for themselves. Our role is to ask questions and listen carefully, so we can share back what we hear to help them determine what is best for them.

Section 3

Comfort Zones Activity

 25 mins

STEP 1

Introduce
Comfort Zones
activity

Tell participants that before we start learning hands-on skills we need to explore some basics about support and gauge what we're comfortable with.

3 mins

Tell participants that everyone already has some support skills they're good at, and some that could use some work.

“ For example, you could have a Masters in Social Work and still find it challenging to take criticism. All that training and there's still something important to work on! Or maybe you feel socially awkward in certain situations. Maybe you feel like you always say the wrong thing when somebody's upset. Maybe talking about feelings make you clam up. It's good to have self-awareness about our own levels of comfort in social situations. However, you also need to recognize your strengths. For example, maybe you have the memory of an elephant and you can remember the name of every person you've ever met. That's a support skill! We've all had the experience of having somebody unexpectedly remember our name, and know how special and valued we felt. When it comes to supporting others there is a diversity of tools and approaches that can be used. We all have strengths to work with and we all also have skills we can improve on.

Tell participants we are now going to do an activity to discover our experience and comfort levels with different support skills. The goal of this activity is not to “prove that you're comfortable with everything!”. The goal is to reflect on your strengths and identify areas for growth, practice and potentially, further training.

STEP 2

Give
instructions

Instruct participants to find a good-sized piece of paper and a pen. Offer materials to participants in need.

2 mins

Tell participants that the first step of the exercise is to draw a circle on their piece of paper that takes up the whole page. Wait for them to finish drawing before moving on to the next step.

“ The circle that you've just drawn represents your comfort zone. Now I'm going to read out a list of skills that are

pretty important skills for supporting students. For each skill that I read, make a mark on your paper, either inside or outside the circle that represents where that skill currently sits within your comfort zone. Feel free to get as creative as you like – if something is kind of in your comfort zone you can put it just inside the circle, if it's something you do every day you can put it right in the centre, and if it makes you want to pee your pants you can find a different piece of paper if you want. Whatever feels reflective of how you feel about that skill."Talk about where this workshop fits within the bigger picture of professional development opportunities available to participants, especially as it relates to proactive vs. responsive support.

Tell participants that they can just leave a cluster of marks or label the marks with words if they want.

STEP 3

Read
the skills

Read the following list of skills to the group, giving short amounts of time for contemplation between each one.

8 mins

- “ • Reaching out and offering support to a student who you know well.
- Reaching out and offering support to a student who you don't know well. For example, maybe you've just met them, or you're passing them in the hall.
- Intervening in a conflict between two students.
- Having something helpful to say when a student tells you they're struggling with something.
- Holding back from *immediately* giving advice in the face of a student's problem.
- Remembering about available services when a referral might be needed.
- Picking up on subtle signs of distress in others. For example, maybe through body language, or tone of voice, etc.

- Suspending judgment when a student is saying or doing something that you don't like or approve of.
- Supporting a student who you don't like very much.
- Remembering what a student has told you and finding ways to check in with them about it at a later date.
- Taking responsibility for saying or doing something that was hurtful to a student

STEP 4**Discussion
and reflection**

Explain that all participants should now have what looks like a scatter plot of marks in and around their circle. Tell participants that some of them might have lots of marks inside their comfort zone or others might have lots outside of their comfort zone.

12 mins

“ Whatever your piece of paper looks like right now is totally okay.

Tell participants that they probably noticed that there were some trends or patterns in the kinds of things they tended to be comfortable with, or the kinds of things they tended to be uncomfortable with.

Ask participants:

“ Does anybody want to share anything that they noticed about their own patterns or themselves while doing this activity?

Encourage participants to raise their hand to speak or ensure there's a diversity of voices speaking by asking after some responses, if anyone wants to speak who has not spoken yet. You can also pose the question again between students answering, for participants that need more time and encouragement to speak in a group.

If there's time, ask:

“ How did doing this activity make you feel?

Section 4

Judgments Activity

 30 mins

STEP 1

Introduce
Judgments
Activity

Tell participants that we're now going to focus on the impact of judgments in our support work. Explain that they're not going to be taught how to be 'non-judgmental', because making judgments is an important part of life.

2 mins

“ We all make judgments all the time. We need to make judgments to stay alive. For example, do I cross the street now, or wait? Should I touch that pot or could it be too hot? We also use judgements to develop systems of ethics that we live our lives by, which drive us to act in different ways. In these ways, judgments are useful and necessary. However, judgments can become problematic when we start internalizing them from the world around us without using careful reflection or critical thinking. We can easily start accepting certain judgments automatically because it's easy and habitual. For example, the idea that it's better to be skinny, or that certain religions are superior to others, or that poor people are lazy, are all judgments that many of us have learned from the world around us just because we didn't do the work of second-guessing them.

Tell participants that the goal, therefore, isn't to be non-judgmental, it's to learn to be self-reflective about the judgments we're making, to ensure they are fair and not harmful. We want to always ask ourselves: "is this judgment useful, or is it causing harm?" Tell participants that the skill we want to develop is to be more mindful of the impact of our judgment, and to set aside judgements that are unfair or harmful.

“ The truth is, we live in an extremely judgmental world, where we all are judged every day about how we look and act, the choices we make, the things we own, the directions we've chosen for our lives, and more. Students feel judged all the time and it can be a very powerful act of support to offer them a space and relationship where they feel free of judgment.

Tell participants that this is easier said than done. It's not only difficult to set our judgments aside, but we also have different opinions and understandings of what is in fact "judgmental".

“ We're going to do an activity that will help us explore how certain behaviours or statements could be interpreted as judgment by students. I think we will find very quickly that we don't all have the same ideas about what is judgmental, but hopefully we can take that as an opportunity for discussion.

STEP 2

Introduce Judgment Spectrum Activity

5 mins

Tell participants that we are going to do an activity that requires five volunteers and that those volunteers will have to stand up in front of the group to read and hold up a short statement. Wait for five people to volunteer and tell them to stand in a line at the front of the room.

If the workshop has fewer than five total participants in attendance, this activity can be amended by forgoing the use of volunteers, spreading the five statements out in a line on a table, and getting participants to gather around them to look.

Tell the entire group of participants that you are going to describe to them a scenario that a faculty member might reasonably experience with a student. You will then hand the group of volunteers five laminated cards representing five different ways that that one could respond to this situation. The volunteers will each read their laminated card aloud to the entire group and then stand in a line holding up their card at the front of the room.

Tell the entire group (including the non-volunteers) that our task is to collectively arrange these five responses along a spectrum from 'most judgmental' to 'least judgmental' by asking the volunteers to shift their order in the lineup based on the sign they're holding. Remind the group that everybody can participate in this conversation about the lineup order, including the volunteers. Tell them that there is no one right answer, and ask them to try and explain their opinions about where the volunteers should be placed as much as possible.

Tell them this scenario:

“ You are a teacher in a class of about 40, and you notice that one of your students is having trouble staying awake in your class. This student is usually alert, punctual, and participates a lot in class, but today he is literally falling asleep in the back of the room. This is very unusual for this student but you don't want to single him out, so you wait

UNIT 1: Giving Responsive Support

Section 4: Judgements Activity

until class is over and grab him on his way out. You say to the student 'Hey, I noticed that you were having some trouble staying alert in class today. That's not like you. Is everything okay?'

The student responds by saying: 'I'm so sorry I was falling asleep. To be honest, I just got off a three-day-long bender; I've been drinking all weekend and haven't really slept much for three days straight.'"

Remind participants of the instructions: everybody will now work together to order the responses from 'least judgmental' to 'most judgmental'.

Hand out the five statements printed on laminated cards to the volunteers. Ask them to read the statements out loud, and then to hold their statements up for others to see.

The five responses are:

Why would you do that?? You know you have a test this week!!

Oh yeah? How are you feeling about that today?

I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that, but I'll admit it worries me.

Amazing! I wish I still had time to do things like that. Good for you!

Oh, were you okay? Were you safe?

STEP 3

Activity and Discussion

Tell the group that they all (including both the five volunteers and the others) need to work together to arrange the statements (and the people holding them) from 'least judgmental' to 'most judgmental'.

Orient participants by picking a side of the room that represents the 'most judgmental' end of the spectrum and a side of the room that represents that 'least judgmental' end of the spectrum so that participants know where to place the volunteers and the responses they're holding.

Remind them that there is no one right answer and they might not agree. Ask all workshop participants to propose suggestions and request that the volunteers shift their place on the line based on these suggestions. For example, a participant might say "I think the person in the green shirt is most judgmental, you should move to the other end of the line", or "Rachel and Juanita, can you switch spots?" When somebody makes a suggestion, ask them to explain their reasoning.

In the amended version of this activity designed for a smaller group, participants can shuffle the responses around on a table or the floor instead of making requests of a line-up of people.

20 mins

Participants may need reminders about which side of the room represents which end of the “judgment spectrum”. Tell the group that this is an exercise to facilitate dialogue and thus it’s okay to keep changing the order of the line-up as inspired by the discussion taking place.

Ask probing questions to elicit participants’ beliefs about judgment. For example:

- “
- What makes you say that Ashraf’s statement is the most judgmental? or
 - What is it about the open-ended question that makes you feel like the person is suspending judgment? or
 - How would it make you feel if somebody asked you that question? or
 - The difference between these two statements is minor, but there is a difference; what do you think it is?

Ask soliciting questions about statements that nobody has talked about yet; for example,

- “ What do we think about this one? Where should it go on our spectrum?

To stimulate a stagnating conversation or if participants seem to need more support to accomplish the task, ask them to identify the differences between two statements.

For example,

- “ What’s the difference between this one and this one? Why is this one more judgmental?

If you think that participants haven’t fully thought through the implications of a statement they’ve positioned as “non-judgmental”, ask follow-up questions.

For example,

- “ Are there any ways in which a student might read this one as judgmental?”

UNIT 1: Giving Responsive Support

Section 4: Judgements Activity

What to cover in the discussion

- **Tone:** tone matters a lot in deciding whether something is judgmental. For example, the response “Oh yeah? How are you feeling about that today?” delivered neutrally has a very different implication than the same sentence delivered sarcastically.
- **The difference between “non-judgmental” and caring statements:** Many participants will immediately choose responses like “I’m not saying there’s anything wrong with that, but I’ll admit it worries me” as the least judgmental because it ‘shows the teacher cares’. Talk about the fact that there’s a difference between being ‘caring’ and ‘nonjudgmental’, and that ‘caring’ responses can actually be quite judgmental if they are paternalistic (that is, if they assume that the student doesn’t know what’s good for themselves).
- **Positive judgments are still judgments:** Many participants will start off by saying that the response “Amazing! I wish I still had time to do things like that. Good for you!” is the least judgmental statement because it’s positive and affirming. Help them to understand that while this statement might be less judgmental than “Why would you do that??”, it still contains a judgment about the student’s actions (that the actions were “amazing”). Ask participants how they think a student might feel if they were feeling terrible about their weekend and they received a response like this one.

“ Do you think they would feel comfortable opening up to their teacher about their feelings?

- **Use open-ended questions:** By comparing the different responses, guide participants to an understanding of the value of open-ended questions like “Oh yeah? How are you feeling about that today?” vs. more leading questions like “Were you safe?”. Explore how leading questions limit the range of feelings and experiences that are open for discussion, and explain that the goal should be opening up as much space as possible for whatever a student might be feeling.

- **Depends on what?:** Many participants will resist putting the responses in order and say “it depends”. This is a good sign of critical thinking! There could be a time and place where each of these responses might be appropriate and they’re not necessarily mutually exclusive. Remind them that we’re talking about the very *first* thing you would say in response to the student’s disclosure, which should really be as open-ended as possible. However, agree that many of these responses could be appropriate follow-up questions. Ask them to unpack “it depends” by asking “it depends on what? What are some of the factors that you would consider in deciding an appropriate response? For example, previous knowledge of the student, how much time you have to offer the student in that moment, your rapport with the student, etc.

STEP 4

Conclusion

If it hasn’t come up in discussion yet, conclude the activity by telling participants that there is one crucial missing piece of information that your response should be making space for. Ask them if they can think of what it might be.

3 mins

Note that participants often offer “why they did it” as the missing piece of information. If this comes up, tell them that while context is always useful in knowing how to support somebody, you don’t need to know the ‘why’ in order to be helpful here. In fact, as a teacher it might not be appropriate for you to ask for this kind of personal information.

After they give some responses and if nobody has said it, tell the participants that the most important piece of information they should be making space for is *how the student is feeling about what happened*. Everything else will flow from there.

“ Maybe, after asking some open-ended questions, you’ll discover that the student feels humiliated and is beating themselves up about what happened. In that case you’ll be happy that you didn’t choose to take a punishing approach to the student’s disclosure, because they already feel bad enough. Maybe you’ll find out that through their weekend bender, the student has broken a year’s worth of sobriety, in which case you might refer them to a counsellor. Maybe you’ll find out that they had an amazing time and are, in fact, quite prepared for their test, in which case you

might have a brief conversation about being alert in class and move on. But without that preliminary knowledge of how the student is feeling you really don't have enough information to offer an effective response.

Remind participants that there are no right or wrong answers here. Nonetheless, here is the order that you think these responses should go in, starting with the most judgmental:

Why would you do that?? You know you have a test this week!!

Amazing! I wish I still had time to do things like that. Good for you!

I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that, but I'll admit it worries me.

Oh, were you okay? Were you safe?

Oh yeah? How are you feeling about that today?

Remind participants of the basic principles to keep in mind:

- Open-ended questions
- Start by finding out how the student is feeling; leading with your own opinion closes off possibilities for where the conversation could go
- Treat the student like an adult; don't lecture

Conclude this activity with the following quote:

“ The art and science of asking questions is the source of all knowledge.” – Thomas Berger

Section 5

Noticing Signs of Distress

 15 mins

STEP 1

Introduce the skill of 'noticing'

Tell participants that now you're going to start thinking about applying what we've been discussing to our interactions with students.

3 mins

“ One of the first skills that you'll need is the ability and willingness to pay attention to the subtle and explicit signs that students express when they're in distress. While there is no way to ever know for sure that a student is struggling with something until you ask them – this is mostly guesswork – there are some things you can look out for that will help alert you to the need to check in with them.

Remind participants that one's ability to 'notice' will depend strongly on whether they have an ongoing or one-off relationship with a student. There is no such thing as 'normal behaviour', but there is 'normal for that person' and you will learn what's normal by seeing patterns over time.

STEP 2

Signs of distress

Walk the participants through the following "signs" of distress:

5 mins

- Marked change over time. For example, in academic performance/attendance/punctuality, in behaviour, in appearance, etc.
- "Extreme" or unusual behaviour. For example, outbursts, listlessness, falling asleep, difficulty concentrating, crying, laughing/talking to self, etc.
- Things students say and/or write. For example, references to suicide or intentions to harm themselves or others, expressions of hopelessness or being overwhelmed, etc.

STEP 3

Introduce why we consider context

Tell participants that while these things can all be signs of distress, context matters enormously in interpreting students' behaviour. Try to think of some examples or stories that illustrate this point. Some examples are shared below, but choose something that you think will be relevant to your context.

7 mins

“ For example, perhaps a student is having frequent angry outbursts in class, but they are from a marginalized group and you discover that they have been hearing frequent oppressive remarks from fellow students. In this case, the 'symptom' is 'angry outbursts', but the problem is the

oppressive remarks and the solution is to fix the classroom context (not 'fix' the student, although they may require support given the harmful impacts of oppressive remarks).

“ Or maybe what you're reading as a sign of distress may be something that the student has been dealing with for a long time and they know how to deal with it. For example, maybe your student was diagnosed with ADHD when they were young and they do have trouble concentrating. They also already may have supports and tools to manage it. This is also true with mental health challenges – maybe your student hears voices, or has manic episodes, or has anxiety attacks, but they already have a really strong support system and know what to do when this happens.

We also need to consider that what you might interpret as a problem or sign of distress may be a student's coping strategy.

“ For example, say you're a professor whose student walks into class every day wearing headphones, and the student doesn't take the headphones out for the first 15 minutes of every class. Maybe you fix the 'problem' by telling the student that no headphones are allowed in class, and then maybe the student stops coming to class. Or maybe you check in with the student and discover that the student lives with a lot of anxiety, and walking into an auditorium full of students causes them a lot of stress. You learn that the student has learned to cope with this anxiety by listening to music as they walk in, sit down, and calm themselves down enough to learn. Now, there is still a problem with the student missing the first 15 minutes of every class. But now that you have all the information, you can work with the student to come up with a solution that will work for everybody, rather than tearing them away from a coping strategy that's actually helping them to show up to class.

Tell participants that “not knowing for sure” shouldn’t stop them from checking in with students; it just means that we have to avoid making assumptions and armchair diagnoses and instead practice looking for signs that a student may need support. This involves noticing signs of distress, doing our best to understand the context of this distress, and engaging with the student to discover how they are feeling. Tell participants that it can help to expect to be wrong, and ask anyway.

Remind participants that part of being a post-secondary institution that cares about mental health means creating classroom and college spaces that are inclusive and welcoming of a wide range of mental, psychological and emotional experiences. This isn’t about creating a standard for how all students should feel emotionally, but is rather about making sure that every student has the support they require, according to their self-determined needs.

Reassure participants that you know that taking the leap of checking in with students when you suspect they may be struggling with something can feel scary, especially when you never know for sure that your guess is right! Tell them that practicing responsive support and engaging students can help to dissipate fear and get more comfortable in the role of supporter. Let them know we’ll be doing practice exercises after the break.

BREAK  10 mins

Section 6

Reaching Out

 30 mins

STEP 1

Frame the activity

Tell the participants that now that they've noticed a student may be in distress, they need to figure out how to reach out to them. Let them know that they will have the chance to think that through in this section of the workshop.

3 mins

Distribute the **'Simple Strategies for Supporting Students'** handout and ask participants to read it. Give participants a minute or two to read it over, front and back; let them know that it will inform our discussions for the rest of the workshop.

After everyone looks like they are finished reading, let the participants know that when they reach out to students it's important for them to thinking about reaching out to students, they should remember that it's okay to "talk how they talk". Tell them that sometimes when people are learning to be more supportive they think that they all of a sudden need to start talking like experienced social workers, but that's not necessarily true. There are two good reasons why you should speak how you normally speak:

1. Students will notice that you are all of a sudden talking differently and will think you're being weird, and
2. You want to make sure that these skills are working their way into your daily life, and that's not going to happen if you feel like you have to become an entirely different person to do it.

Remind participants that they don't have to be anybody except themselves to do this well.

STEP 2

Introduce "Reaching Out" activity

Tell participants that you are going to put up slides with a few case studies of situations that they might commonly find themselves in with students where they feel like reaching out might be needed. Let them know that they will be breaking into small groups to discuss these case studies, and discussing the following two questions:

2 mins

1. How would you reach out to this student? For example, through what mode of communication, how and when?
2. What would you say?

Break up the participants into groups of 3-4 people to discuss. Once they are settled with their group, read the first case study out loud and then allow time to discuss the discussion questions.

STEP 3**Case study #1**

Read aloud: “You’re teaching a class of 60 and it’s Week 6. Raoul was punctual, present, and participative in Weeks 1-3 but was absent in Week 4 and hasn’t been back. He hasn’t dropped the class, but hasn’t been in touch about his absence. There’s a test coming up and you’re nervous about the amount of content that he’s missed.”

15 mins

Remind participants that they will now discuss how they would reach out to Raoul, and what they would say.

What to cover in the discussion

The following considerations may come up in discussions for Case Study #1. If participants do not mention them, you can discuss them after all groups have reported back.

- The “email” vs. “phone” question – what are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
- Given that the reasons for Raoul’s absence could be anything from “he didn’t realize he needed to formally drop the class and never plans to return” to “he doesn’t like your class and would rather not go” to “he feels anxious about returning after missing a bunch of classes” to “something devastating has happened to Raoul”, what might you include in your email that would open up space for Raoul to talk about any emotional concerns he might have without making it seem like you’re jumping to conclusions?

After a short discussion, move onto the next case study. Participants remain in the same group.

STEP 4**Case study #2**

Read aloud: “You work at the front desk of an academic centre, and Jessica has been coming in relatively frequently to complain about the service she’s receiving at the college. She does seem to be having some bad luck with the bureaucracy of the college, and has had some unfortunate service experiences, but you also feel like she makes things harder than they need to be. She’s made a couple of comments that lead you to believe that there may be some difficult things going on in her home life. You want to ask her if she needs support, but every time she comes in she’s really angry and accusatory and you’re afraid of escalating the situation.”

10 mins

Tell participants that they may naturally start discussing this case study by talking about de-escalation strategies. Request that they focus instead on strategies for asking Jessica about her home life. Remind them that it is often easier to be compassionate and reach out to someone when they seem sad. It often requires a more conscious effort to reach out compassionately to someone who is expressing their hurt with anger.

What to cover in the discussion

The following considerations may come up in discussions for Case Study #2. If participants do not mention them, you can discuss them after all groups have reported back.

- Though it may seem counterintuitive, why might responding to Jessica’s anger with validation help in this situation? *Possible answers might include:*
 - People usually just need a listening presence, not necessarily to have their problems fixed
 - It builds trust between you so that you can better support her
 - Sometimes people have learned that the only way they will be heard is by raising their voice; just because she’s angry doesn’t mean she’s not hurting

The difference between “validating feelings” and “validating facts”. It’s possible to treat Jessica’s feelings as valid without necessarily agreeing with her account of things.

Section 7

Listening

 25 mins

STEP 1

Introduce
the skill of
'listening'

Tell the participants that once students make the choice to trust them enough and open up, the work doesn't stop there! It's important to have good listening skills so that the student feels heard and validated, and feels that it was worth it to open up.

1 min

“ Listening sounds easy, but it takes work! There are so many different processes going on in the simple experience of one person listening to another. The listener has to pay careful attention and not only comprehend the words they hear, but also the 'stuff' behind what's being said. They have to interpret the underlying meaning, feelings, wants, needs, etc. While this is happening, the speaker is working hard to translate their complex feelings and thoughts into words, tones and other forms of communication. This can obviously be much more difficult if the language they need to use is not their first language, or if they're not used to talking about their feelings. Or maybe they were raised to believe that their feelings don't matter or they shouldn't impose them on others.

STEP 2

Introduce
'facts, feelings,
and needs'

Tell participants that it can be helpful to think about improving their listening skills by breaking down the task of listening into three different levels. If they feel unskilled at listening, they can first start by listening for the 'facts' of what the person is saying: the who, what, when, how of the story.

2 mins

Once they get good at that, they can try listening for the 'feelings' being communicated: the emotions that are underlying the story. This makes it obvious that listening is not just about the words you hear, but the body language you pick up on, the tone you sense, the meaning you infer.

Once listening for feelings becomes comfortable, they can try listening for the 'needs' that the speaker may be identifying in their communications: the things driving their behaviours and feelings. Human needs can be things like 'the need for connection', or 'the need for validation', but also things like 'the need for shelter'. A person's needs depend on their unique circumstances, but there is also something universal about them. Listening and sharing back the 'needs' you hear, can help the student understand that what they're feeling is not only 'normal', but a part of the fabric of human experience.

The ‘master level’ listening skill is the ability to support the speaker in putting words to their experiences. If you’re listening really well and they’re struggling to articulate their feelings, you can offer language, framings, or interpretations that seem like they might help make sense of things. Tell participants that they should be careful in doing this, though, as it runs the risk of disempowering or invalidating the speaker if done poorly.

STEP 3

Introduce ‘emotional vocabulary’

Tell participants that there are some basic tools that they should have in their listening toolkit. Hand out the **‘feelings wheel’**. Explain that one useful tool that will help them listen well is having a broad ‘emotional vocabulary’, which basically just means knowing a lot of words to describe feelings.

2 mins

“ Most people know the basic emotions: sad, mad, and glad. But we get so much better at empathizing with ourselves and others when we realize that there are more words to describe our emotional experiences than we could ever imagine. It makes a huge difference if you can move from saying ‘it sounds like you’re feeling mad’ to ‘it sounds like you’re feeling disturbed’ or ‘violated’ or ‘frustrated’, or ‘hurt’!

Tell participants that they can keep this feelings wheel at their desk, and every once in a while look it over to remind themselves of the vastness of students’ emotional experiences.

STEP 4

Introduce ‘paraphrasing’ activity

Tell participants that another tool they want in their toolkit is ‘paraphrasing’. Explain that paraphrasing is about summarizing what the person has said in their own words to make sure you’re not misunderstanding. Remind them that the point of paraphrasing is to clarify your understanding, so they should expect to be wrong and use that as an opportunity to revise their understanding of what’s going on.

10 mins

Tell participants that you’re going to put some words up on the screen, and that you want them to imagine that a student is saying these things to them. Ask them to reflect on how they might paraphrase what the student is saying.

Read aloud: “So, I don’t know – I think there’s a lot of different things I could do but I’ve been thinking a lot about it and I think I’m going to start looking for a job, applying for student housing, and finding a counsellor to talk to. Maybe over the next couple of weeks.”

Ask the group if anybody wants to try paraphrasing what the student has said. Many people can try if there’s time.

Some people’s attempt at paraphrasing will look like almost repeating back what the student said (e.g. “So what I’m hearing you say is that you want to start looking for a job, applying for housing, and finding a counsellor. Is that right?”).

Validate this as a correct try, and explain that there are two “schools” of paraphrasing. One encourages you to repeat what’s been said, and the other encourages you to find a way to summarize and synthesize what’s been said. Ask participants to consider what they might say if they were trying to “summarize” what the student said –

“ is there anything that “job”, “housing”, and “counsellor” have in common?”

Good answers might include: “It sounds like you’re making a lot of concrete plans these days!”, “it seems like you’re trying to get all your ducks in a row!”, or “it seems like you’ve got a lot on your plate!”.

Because of the nature of participants’ work, many people will leap to problem-solving in their attempt at paraphrasing, for example, “it sounds like you’re making a lot of concrete plans! Is there anything that feels like a priority for you right now?”. Tell participants that while some of their work responsibilities might include helping students accomplish their goals, they want to be cautious about *immediately* leaping to “fix”. Remind them that right now we’re practicing our listening skills, which is really about making sure the student feels heard, understood, and validated.

STEP 5

Introduce ‘reflecting feeling’ activity

Tell the participants that the last listening tool we’re going to discuss is ‘reflecting feeling’, which is similar to paraphrasing but about feelings instead of facts. Reflecting feeling is about naming what you think the student might be feeling or experiencing, in order to both validate and make sure you’re not misunderstanding. Remind them that just like with paraphrasing, they should prepare to be corrected.

10 mins

Tell participants that you’re going to do the same activity as with paraphrasing, but this time you want them to just throw out emotions that they think the student could be feeling.

Read aloud: “I know you’re not my teacher anymore, but I just can’t bring myself to talk to Mr. Middleton. He’s so mean, I don’t even want to be in class with him anymore. After he said that to me, I went home and I cried all night. I couldn’t believe a teacher would treat me that way.”

Ask participants to throw out what feelings this student might be feeling. Validate every suggestion, unless you think it’s way off the mark.

Ask participants to now find a way to say the feelings they imagine the student might be feeling in a sentence, in a similar way as they phrased their paraphrase.

“ How might you show the student that you’re picking up on the emotions they may be feeling?

Many people can try if there's time. Have them share their sentences aloud with the larger group. *Possible examples could include:*

- "It sounds like that really upset you a lot."
- "It sounds like you're really having a hard time feeling safe in Mr. Middleton's class since that happened. Is that right?"
- "It seems like that really shook you. Is it anger that you're feeling, or fear?"

Some participants (especially teachers) may express concern about "validating" a story that may not be true, or about "throwing a colleague under the bus". Explain that there is a difference between validating "facts" and validating "feelings".

“ Validating this student's feelings doesn't mean you say something like, "ugh, yeah, Mr. Middleton is such a jerk!". It's possible to validate their feelings without debating the facts. For example, you can say "wow, it sounds like that really upset you." As a listener, your job is not to play detective and sniff out whether the speaker is telling the truth. Your job is empathize with their emotions and show that you care.”

BREAK

 10 mins

Section 8

Four-Way Listening Activity

 20 mins

STEP 1

Introduce four-way listening activity

3 mins

Tell participants that now they're going to have the chance to bring all these skills together in practice. Remind them that in real life situations they will have to listen for facts, feelings, and needs all at the same time. Tell them that, for practice, we're going to split the labour up a bit and do some collaborative listening.

Say that for this activity you'll need four volunteers, but that you will explain the activity before anybody needs to put themselves forward. If there are only four workshop participants, they will all need to participate. If there are only three participants the facilitator can play the storytelling role, though this is not ideal. If there are more than four workshop participants, the rest of the group will observe.

Explain that the first volunteer will choose a story from their life outside of work about a time that they were once involved in a conflict. The story can be as simple as 'that one time my roommate would never do the dishes' or 'that time I was cut off in traffic'. There's no need for intensive self-disclosure.

Tell participants that the other three volunteers will each have a listening task. While they all listen to the first person telling their story:

- **Person A:** will listen for and take note (either in their head or on a piece of paper) of the "facts" of the story. When the story is finished being told, they will do their best to summarize just the "facts": who, what, where, when, and how. They should leave the feelings and needs they hear out of their summary.
- **Person B:** will listen for and take note of the "feelings" of the story. They can do this by just listening for the feelings and listing them, or by using the "feelings cards" and picking out which explicit or implicit feelings they hear in the story.
- **Person C:** will listen for and take note of the explicit or implicit "needs" articulated in the story. This one is a bit more challenging! Think – what need the storyteller seemed to have that wasn't being met in this conflict? There is also a deck of "needs cards" that they can use for support in the activity.

STEP 2

Four-Way Listening Activity

List the roles again and ask for a volunteer for each of the following roles:

12 mins

- Storyteller
- Listener A – Facts
- Listener B – Feelings
- Listener C – Needs

Hand out the feelings and needs cards to the volunteers tasked with listening for feelings and needs. Remind the listeners that they can take notes with pen and paper if that helps them remember. Prompt the storyteller to begin their story.

When the story is over, ask Person A:

“ What were the facts of the story?

Once Person A has explained the facts, ask the storyteller:

“ Did they get that right?

Allow for any clarification/correction if necessary.

Ask Person B:

“ What feelings did you hear in the story?

Once Person B has listed the feelings they heard, ask the storyteller:

“ Did they get that right?

Allow for any clarification/correction if necessary.

Ask Person C:

“ What needs did you hear in the story?

Once Person C has listed the needs they heard, ask the storyteller:

“ Did they get that right?

Allow for any clarification/correction if necessary.

STEP 3

Discussion

Ask the storyteller:

“ How did that feel for you?

Ask Person A:

“ How did listening for facts feel for you?

Ask Person B:

“ How did listening for feelings feel for you?

Ask Person C:

“ How did listening for needs feel for you?

If there are observers, ask:

“ Are there any observations from the outside? How did that seem to go? If you were to volunteer, are there any roles that you think would be easy for you? Difficult for you?

**What to
cover in the
discussion**

- The transformative power of just being listened to.
- The impact of having “needs” reflected back to you when you’re going through a tough time. When we help identify the underlying and universal needs we hear being expressed by students, we help humanize the emotional reactions they are experiencing. Framing students concerns as fundamental human needs helps them feel more normal, less isolated and therefore, more likely to seek support when it’s needed.

5 mins

Section 9

Boundaries

 5 mins

STEP 1

Introduce
concept of
boundaries

Acknowledge that throughout this training many participants may begin questioning whether they have the adequate qualifications to do this type of support work. Many may be concerned that this subject matter is for counsellors or other professionals. Many may not want these kinds of responsibilities.

Tell participants that knowing the scope of our responsibilities as staff in an educational institution is a central part of supporting students effectively, and also supporting ourselves in the process.

“ We call this ‘setting boundaries’. When I talk about boundaries, what sorts of things come to mind?

Allow participants to freely share ideas as they come up. Affirm all responses.

Once answers slow down or stop, reassure participants that a large portion of Unit 2 of this training will be dedicated to discussing how to set boundaries effectively. If they are interested in this topic, encourage them to register for this workshop. In the meantime, hand out the **‘boundaries handout’**.

Transition to the next and final section by saying that part of having good boundaries is knowing that you are not the only person who is able to support any given student. Remind participants that they are just one part of an entire ecosystem of support at the college. Tell them that having a good understanding of supports available to students is important, and knowing how to give effective and caring referrals to college services is an important tool to have in their boundary-setting toolkit.

Section 10

Giving Referrals

 20 mins

Please note that this section will require some advance preparation in order to tailor the content to your institutional context.

STEP 1

Introduce giving referrals

Tell participants that part of the skill in giving an effective referral lies in striking a balance between being firm about your limitations and making the student feel cared for.

10 mins

Ask: what are some ways that you would give a referral to a student that both:

- a. Ensures the student doesn't feel brushed off or bounced around, and also
- b. That respects your personal/professional boundaries, needs, and limitations?

Encourage them to practice saying the actual words that they would choose rather than a general example like "I'd say something validating or encouraging." How would they introduce and characterize the referral?

STEP 2

Introduce the referrals guide

Hand out the [referrals guide](#). Explain that this is a resource that was developed for staff to help them know:

7 mins

- What services are available to students
- Under what circumstances they should refer a student to each service
- The contact information for each service
- The best way to access the service

Explain that in addition to the table of contents divided by department and alphabetically, the referrals guide is broken down into the following sections:

- Getting the basics in place
- Academic support
- Emotional support
- Equity and access
- Emergency, health & safety resources

Note that giving a good referral is not just about knowing about the services, but about careful, active listening, just like we've been talking about for the entire workshop.

“ Students aren’t always going to come to you saying ‘Excuse me, I’m looking for a referral!’. So part of the skill of giving referrals is listening carefully to what needs are being expressed and knowing when a referral may be needed. A student leader I once worked with told me about the worst referral they ever gave. A student came up to them, very upset, saying ‘I just told my parents I’m gay and they kicked me out of the house!!’ The student leader, who also identified as gay, honed in on the first part of the sentence and started telling that person about all the amazing clubs and services available to LGBTQ students at GBC. When they first started at GBC as a queer student the thing that they were missing was community connection. As a result, the student leader immediately focused on finding the student opportunities to connect to community. But they weren’t listening to the whole story and all of the human needs expressed. What the student really needed was housing support! That’s why it’s so important to listen to all the information, facts, feelings and underlying needs. And when in doubt, ask more questions!

Tell participants that the other thing to keep in mind is consent. The last thing that a student needs when they’re distressed is to be barraged with unwanted advice or too much information. You also don’t want to assume that a student has never heard of the places you want to refer them to, or that what you’re offering is the only solution. It’s best to ask their consent before going into too much detail.

“ You might say: ‘Would you be interested in hearing about some resources at GBC that might be able to help you out with this?’ or ‘have you ever heard of Peerconnect? No? Would you be interested in hearing a bit about it?’

Remind participants that sometimes the service you want to recommend may feel sensitive, stigmatized, and/or personal to the student. There are a lot of things you can do to break the taboo that often surrounds asking for help.

Ask participants how they might frame a referral to Counselling Services in a way that addresses the possible stigma around mental health challenges. Possible examples could include:

- “It sounds like you could really use somebody to talk to. There are some really awesome folks up at Counselling Services who help people with all sorts of life stuff. Have you ever been?”

- “When I’ve been to Counselling Services I’ve really found it useful in sorting through all my different feelings and coming up with solutions. Is that something that you might find useful too?”

Suggest that participants do their best to confidently de-stigmatize the need for supportive services, while respecting the fact that students may want them to be discreet while talking about referrals. Recommend that participants treat every student need like it is normal and anticipated, and avoid making assumptions about the student.

STEP 3

Review the
guide

Give participants a few minutes to look through the referrals guide. Once they’ve done that, ask them if they have any questions about it. Are there any services in there that they’ve never heard about, or have confusion around? Answer any questions they might have.

3 mins

Section 11

Conclusion



STEP 1

Thank you!

Thank participants for attending the workshop.

Review the content.

- “ We’ve covered a lot of content here in a short time. And hopefully now you’re more confident to:
- Provide reactive support to students
 - Use judgment without harm
 - Identify signs of distress
 - Use active listening skills and open-ended questions to uncover the facts, feelings, and needs that students express
 - Obtain consent and refer students to additional support services
 - Identify your own boundaries and needs for doing responsive support work.

Remind participants that giving better responsive support to students is not about trying to be a counsellor. Responsive support is about enhancing the impact we already have on students, to ensure their health and safety. Emphasize that coming to trainings like this demonstrates a huge commitment to student well-being, and that this deserves congratulations!

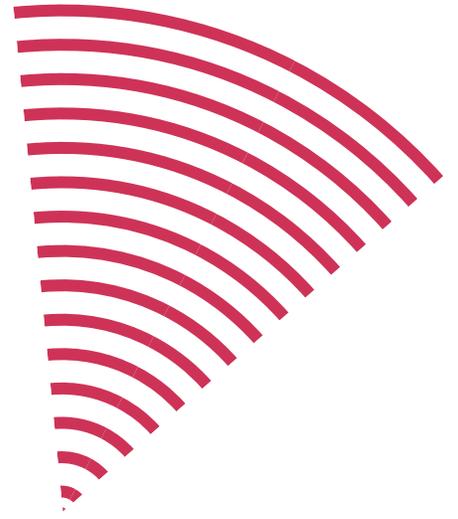
It’s useful to get an immediate sense of how the participants have felt about the training and new skills they’ve learned, as well as give them an opportunity to connect with the group they’ve been working with in the workshop.

Closing Exercise: Ask students to share one word (only one word) that describes how they are feeling now about using responsive support with the students they work with. You can either direct who speaks next, or ask participants to “popcorn” their responses, saying their word when they feel ready to share it. After everyone has shared, thank them for sharing.

Hand out **workshop evaluations**. Ask participants to take 5 minutes to fill in the paper evaluation form and hand it back to you before they depart.



Unit 2: Creating Caring Environments



Contents

Section 1	Introducing the Session	🕒 35 mins	43
Section 2	Why Does This Matter?	🕒 20 mins	46
Section 3	Zone of Influence	🕒 45 mins	50
BREAK		🕒 10 mins.....	52
Section 4	Understanding One's Own Boundaries	🕒 30 mins.....	55
Section 5	The Boundary System	🕒 10 mins.....	60
Section 6	Intrapersonal Boundaries Activity	🕒 20 mins	62
BREAK		🕒 10 mins.....	64
Section 7	Strategies for Setting Boundaries	🕒 35 mins	65
Section 8	Boundary-Supportive Workplaces	🕒 15 mins.....	69
Section 9	Conclusion	🕒 10 mins.....	71

Unit 2: Creating Caring Environments

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SHOULD GET OUT OF THE SESSION

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Define and identify the difference between *responsive* and *proactive* support
- Distinguish between the useful stressors and un-useful stressors in the skydiving story.
- Articulate the central way that their work supports students (the “heart” of their work).
- List 5 stressors that students experience in school and 5 stressors that students experience outside of school.
- Sort the stressors in the point above according to whether they are ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ their zone of influence.
- Identify which of three images/drawings represents ‘rigid’, ‘weak’, and ‘healthy’ boundaries and explain some of the characteristics of each boundary state.
- Identify where, on a spectrum between ‘rigid’ and ‘weak’, they feel their professional boundaries currently are.
- Give examples of how somebody might set boundaries using the following methods: direct verbal communication; non-verbal communication; policy, rules, and laws; appeal to authority; avoidance; referral.
- Name two things that workplaces could do to help employees ‘loosen’ rigid boundaries, and two things that workplaces could do to help employees ‘tighten’ their weak boundaries.

INTENDED BEHAVIOURAL OUTCOMES

If you intend on evaluating the impacts of this training, what follows is a breakdown of the changes to future behaviour that this workshop has been designed to prompt.

Since the session ended, have participants:

- Changed anything about how they interact with their colleagues/staff?
- Changed anything about how they approach their job based on the zone of influence activity?
- Shifted their boundary-setting practices with students?
- Shifted their boundary-setting practices with colleagues?
- Done anything else differently?

KEY CONCEPTS

- Stress ([see page 47](#))
- Zone of influence ([see page 50](#))
- Boundaries ([see page 55](#))
 - As a spectrum: Permeable, rigid, and healthy ([see page 56](#))
 - As a system: Behavioural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal ([see page 60](#))
- Boundary-supportive workplaces ([see page 69](#))

MATERIALS NEEDED

See www.georgebrown.ca/healthycampus/foundation-flourishing to download editable versions of all materials below:

- Zone of influence worksheet
- What have boundaries done for me lately? handout
- Signs of ignored boundaries handout
- Printed practice scenarios
- Unit 2 evaluation handout

HOW TO RUN THE SESSION

The ideal number of participants for this workshop is 6 to 12 people. The workshop cannot be effectively run with any fewer than three people. Two 10-minute breaks should be scheduled during the workshop to ensure participants remain focused in the sessions. Refreshments (coffee, tea, fresh fruit, etc.) should be provided to help participants feel taken care of and to keep them nourished with optimal energy levels for participation.

WORKSHOP FACILITATION GUIDE

Use the following notes to guide you through the facilitation of this workshop.



The “Time” column indicates the amount of time each section should take. The timing next to the section headers reflect the total time to give to overall section, and then the timing for each step is broken down underneath.



“What I say”: The text in quotation marks gives an example of what the workshop developer typically says during this section of the workshop. It supplements the other instructions, which you can deliver in your own words. Feel free to translate the quoted text into language that is more natural for you as well, while still communicating the core message.

Section 1

Introducing the Session

 35 mins

STEP 1

Introduce context and yourself

At George Brown College, this workshop opens with an introduction of the Healthy Campus Initiative, the broader context in which this workshop is taking place. Give context that is relevant to your particular institutional environment.

10 mins

Introduce yourself and share briefly any relevant information that will help participants understand who you are and why you are well-positioned to facilitate this workshop.

STEP 2

Participant introductions

Do a go-around and give participants the opportunity to introduce themselves. Ask them to share their names and a short overview of what they do at the school.

15 mins

“ Your job title is interesting but what’s more useful is a general description of how you spend your time here at George Brown College? What are some of the common and daily duties of your job?

STEP 3

Introduce proactive vs. responsive support

Tell participants that throughout the Foundations for Flourishing workshop series, there are two key concepts that all other skills are built upon: **responsive support** and **proactive support**.

8 mins

“ Responsive support is what we usually think about when we think about supporting students: a student is going through a tough time and we do what we can to help them, whether that’s by referring them to a support service, giving them useful information, or even just acting as a listening ear. You can break this down into levels of severity, ranging from matters of concern where there is no risk of harm to self or others, all the way up to more crisis-level situations where there might be some risk of harm to self or others.

“ Breaking it down this way can help us respond appropriately – for example, you probably wouldn’t respond in the same way to a student who says “Ugh, why did I take 7 classes, I’m so stressed!” as you would to a student who says they are contemplating suicide, right? Different level of responsibility that you might feel, different supports you might bring in, different time-sensitivity, etc.

“ Proactive support, on the other hand, is all the things we collectively put in place to actually prevent students from going through a tough time in the first place. This can include anything from the policies we write, to the curriculum we develop, to the physical spaces we build, to the service models we design, and more. You don’t need to interact directly with students in order to proactively support them—you just need to be consistently keeping student well-being in mind when doing your job.

Talk about where this workshop fits within the bigger picture of professional development opportunities available to participants, especially as it relates to proactive vs. responsive support.

“ If you’re interested in learning more about responsive support in response to day-to-day concerns, Unit 1 of this workshop series is a good session to complete.

In particular, clarify that this workshop is *not* about crisis response, and point participant in the direction of other training opportunities that focus on this topic.

STEP 4

What are we doing here?

Explain that in this workshop we will begin to explore the topic of proactive support. In particular, in the first half of the workshop we will discuss:

2 mins

- Proactively building a culture of care & support in your daily environments - no matter your role
- Understanding what you have influence over and making the most of that influence

Explain that of the three workshops in the Foundations for Flourishing series, this session is the most focused on self-reflection: rather than sharing general principles, tell participants that they will have the opportunity to think about the specific role that they play at the college and all the ways they’re able to support students within that role.

UNIT 2: Creating Caring Environments

Section 1: Introducing the Session

Tell participants that the second half of the workshop will focus entirely on setting boundaries with students and co-workers, because part of knowing what you have influence over means also knowing what is *outside* of your influence.

Section 2

Why Does This Matter?

 20 mins

STEP 1

The influence
of just one
person

Remind participants that navigating college is a challenging opportunity for growth that, for some, can be scary and overwhelming. Some students might need some extra support in navigating these challenges, but it's worth remembering that college is a time of transition for all students.

2 mins

Explain that recent research on retention has shown that sometimes the difference between a student deciding to stay in school versus deciding to leave is knowing that just one person cares about their success or well-being, whether that person is a teacher, a counsellor, a support staff, or anybody else.

“ On the one hand, this is a scary fact. You would hope that every student feels like just one person cares about them, and yet this is obviously not the case. But you can also look at it like an exciting fact, because *we can do that*. If each one of us turns our attention towards consistently being that one person in a student's life that makes a difference just by showing them we care, we can have a huge impact.

STEP 2

Video and
debrief

Tell participants that they will now watch a video illustrating the impact that just one person can have on the life of a student who is going through a tough time.

10 mins

Give context to the video by telling participants about the Accessible Campus website and the mental health-specific student profiles contained therein.

Show participants the video featuring Melanie, found at the following location:

Council of Ontario Universities. Accessible campus: Student Profiles.
Retrieved from: <http://www.accessiblecampus.ca/understanding-accessibility/mental-health-accessibility/student-profiles/>

Once the video finishes, ask participants what came to mind while they were watching it. What stood out to them?

After discussing participants' observations, note that while Melanie has a formal psychiatric diagnosis, the lessons in this video can apply to any student who is feeling lonely, stressed, confused, or unseen. Emphasize that her experience of support didn't start by seeing a counsellor; it started by being warmly acknowledged by a teacher, and through compassionate mentorship in a culturally-specific, home-like environment.

“ As Melanie said in the video, Laura wasn't an important person in her life because she was a trained counsellor. She mattered because she listened to Melanie in a caring, non-judgmental way, and it was through that relationship that Melanie was able to start feeling okay at school, and then maybe begin to access even further support.

STEP 3

Mini-lecture on stress

Tell participants that much of this workshop will focus on the topic of student stress. Given that this seems to be such a hot-button issue in the media these days, explain that you will now take a moment to clarify exactly what you mean when you discuss 'stress'. Tell participants that you will specifically address the following questions: is all stress inherently bad? And: is it really our job to 'protect' students from it?

8 mins

“ Any time we do something new, we take a risk, and that risk comes with stress. So we could say that learning is inherently risky, and thus inherently comes with some productive stress. While we're learning we're stepping outside of our comfort zone, trying new things, experimenting with new ways of thinking about things, doing things we're bad at, and doing things we're bad at *in front* of other people! This newness can be stressful at first, and that's an important part of the learning process.

We know that, in some ways, stress can play a facilitative role in learning when it's experienced in moderation. But mostly, stress inhibits learning by triggering a fight-or-flight response in our bodies that makes it harder to remember, process, and communicate information. This is especially true if that stress is chronic, all-encompassing, or rooted in an experience of trauma.

“ So we’re not talking about stress-free college spaces, because that would mean creating a college where nobody learns anything. Rather, we’re talking about figuring out: what’s the difference between useful stress (the stuff that’s an important part of the learning experience) and un-useful stress (the stuff that gets in the way)? And once we figure that out, how can we collectively work to reduce, prevent, and eliminate un-useful stress so that students are able to cope with the forms of stress that they’re here to tackle?

Tell participants that you’d like to explore an analogy to help them understand. Tell the following story as dramatically as possible to try and draw participants in the emotional, embodied experience you’re describing.

“ Imagine this: you decide that you’re going to go sky-diving. This is something that you’ve had on your bucket list for a long time, but you’re terrified. You’re not one of those people who does these kinds of adrenaline-seeking things all the time – this is a genuine challenge. But you feel like it’s a challenge you could grow from, so you sign up for an appointment to go.

On the day of the jump you get to the tarmac and they put you in a plane. But as the plane takes off, you turn around and see the pilot taking a swig from a flask with one hand, and texting with the other hand. You were nervous before, but *now* your body kicks into full panic mode. Your face flushes, your heart starts beating fast, your ears start ringing, your palms sweat, and you start having an out-of-body experience. You turn to the sky-diving instructor, who says: “Okay, so here’s what you have to do.” Then, just as they begin to give their instructions, the engine kicks into a different gear and you can’t hear a word they’re saying. You can see their lips moving and you assume that they’re saying very important things, but the only thing you can *really* hear them say is ‘Okay, go! Jump!’

“ In this scenario, the role of the sky-diving instructor is to do what they can to minimize all forms of unnecessary stress so that you can focus on the very stressful experience of jumping out of a plane. They do this by...

- Showing you they're ensuring your safety
- Giving clear, audible instructions, and
- Answering your questions with confidence.

This doesn't mean that the experience isn't stressful! The stress is the *point* of it. But it does mean that you get to do this very scary thing with the support and mentorship of somebody who's got your back.

There are so many parallels to the school environment, here. We are *not* talking about protecting students from risk, not at all. We're actually talking about creating learning spaces that enable supported, transformative risk-taking. We're creating environments where students can learn what they need to learn first, here, with a bit of a safety net so that they're equipped to apply what they learn later, outside of college, when they may not have the same kind of safety net.

Check to make sure that this distinction makes sense to participants. Tell participants to keep this distinction in mind as you discuss stress together in this workshop: not all stress is bad, but some is unnecessary and creates an impediment to learning. It is *these* kinds of stresses that we'll be talking about addressing in our work.

Section 3

Zone of Influence

 45 mins

STEP 1

Introducing
the Zone of
Influence

Tell participants that a significant portion of today's workshop will focus on something called their 'zone of influence'. This is about understanding what, exactly, they as individuals can do when it comes to influencing student well-being at the college. Explain that this is really about being in touch with their power.

6 mins

Note that even though it doesn't feel like it sometimes, we each have a zone of influence. We all have some power to promote student well-being, even if we never engage with students as part of our jobs.

“ For example, maybe you write policy, or set strategic direction for your area. In that case, you can support students through the priorities you set and the systems you develop. Maybe you supervise staff, in which case you can make sure that your team has all the supports that they need to support students properly. Maybe you're responsible for communications, in which case you're in charge of basically telling the story of what it means to be a student at the college! Or maybe your zone of influence is limited to your one-on-one interactions with students. If that's what your zone of influence looks like, we saw in Melanie's case just how important that can be.

Mention that we also all have limits to our power, and that this is equally important to understand. Explain that knowing what kinds of things we do or don't have the power to influence is important for a number of reasons:

1. It's important so that we can be effective: we can focus our energy on things that are within our control and thus have a bigger, more efficient impact.
2. It's important so that we don't burn out: we can avoid tiring ourselves out trying to influence things that we don't actually have the power to influence.
3. It's important so that we don't accidentally hurt people.

Explain that sometimes when people don't realize they have a certain kind of power they can cause harm by accident, because they don't even realize that they're having an influence. Conversely, when people don't know the limits of their power they can set up false expectations for others and let them down when they're not able to fulfil their promises. Knowing our power is a way of ensuring that we're being responsible for the impact that we have on others.

STEP 2

The heart of your work activity

11 mins

Begin this activity by saying that understanding one's zone of influence starts by knowing the central way that our work supports students. Tell participants that this is called the "heart" of their zone of influence.

Recalling that students experience many emotional challenges (including things that cause stress, things that provoke strong feelings, things that confuse, etc.) during their time at college, ask participants to take a pen and paper and independently begin making a bullet-point list. *Which of the emotional challenges that students face does their work address or prevent?*

Once it seems like participants are slowing down in their list-making, give them the next step. Ask them to take a look at the list they've made, and summarize the entire list into one sentence. Acknowledge that this task is harder than the last! Examples of sentence beginnings include:

"As a career advisor, my work is to..."

"As a faculty member, the central part of my job is to..."

"As support staff in the Centre for Business, my role is to..."

Encourage them to try and write a sentence using plain language; that is, no college jargon allowed!

Once it seems like most participants have finished writing their sentence, welcome them to share what they've written with the group.

Summarize by saying that the heart of their work sits right at the centre of their zone of influence: it's a foundational part of the work they do, and what they're best-positioned to influence in their role.

“ Every single person's job at the college can be thought of like a coin with two sides: a logistical side and an emotional side. Even for those of us whose work feels very numbers-based or administrative have an emotional side to our work. For example, if you work in tech support, or in the OSAP office, or in the finance department tracking college budgets, you understand that while you're crunching numbers, troubleshooting computer problems, filling out forms, and following procedures, you're also doing work in an area that is often stressful, frustrating, and high-stakes for people. The work that you do has an emotional impact, even if talking about emotions doesn't feel like a central aspect of your job description. We all really do have things we can impact when it comes to student well-being.

STEP 3**Zooming out:
Sources of
stress activity**

12 mins

Tell participants that you will now zoom out from the heart of their zone of influence to take a broader look at the elements of student well-being that they can influence in their role. Reassure them that this isn't about adding tasks to their job description, but rather developing a stronger understanding of what they're already influencing in their existing role.

Pull up the "Sources of Stress" document on the screen. Tell participants that you're going to make another list, but this time as a group. Point out that while we know that students have many things going on in their lives that stress them out, we often divide these things up into "academic issues" and "personal issues" as though students' lives can be split up into chunks in that way. Taking a more holistic approach means having a much broader understanding of the factors that cause students stress in all realms of their life.

Start by exploring "outside of school" factors. Ask participants: what sorts of things cause students stress outside of school? Make a bullet point list in the document on the screen as participants name stressors. You may choose to add commentary or ask follow-up questions about certain stressors if it seems appropriate. Different groups will form different lists of stressors depending on the mix of experience in the college context that they have. If these factors haven't yet been added, it can be illustrative sometimes to add "the weather" and "systemic oppression" to the list yourself, just to show the range of stressors that can come into play in students' lives.

Go through the same process for "within school" factors. Note how the division between "outside of school" and "inside school" is a bit arbitrary – there are many stressors that defy or flow between the categories.

Stop the activity either when participants run out of things to say or when there is no more space left on the screen, whichever comes first. If participants express a sense of overwhelm at the sheer number of stressors on the screen, validate that feeling. Reassure them that after the break you will work together to figure out who might play a role in addressing, reducing, and preventing some of these stressors.

BREAK 10 mins

STEP 4

Sorting the sources of stress

16 mins

Hand out the **Zone of Influence** worksheet. Explain that visualizing our zone of influence can help us to understand it better. Instruct participants to write the “heart sentence” they wrote earlier into the circle at the centre of the diamond on the worksheet.

Tell participants that their task now is to look at the giant list of student stressors and start sorting them. Tell them to take a look at each of the stressors and ask themselves: is this something I can influence? If the answer is yes, then they should write it inside their zone of influence (as represented by the diamond). If the answer is no, then they should write it in the space outside the diamond. They may not get through the whole list, but encourage them to consider as many stressors as they can.

Once it seems like most participants have made it through a significant amount of the list, or if it seems like people are slowing down, point out the rectangle below the diamond at the bottom of the worksheet. Tell them that once they’re done sorting the stressors in relation to their zone of influence, they can move on to this section. Explain that the rectangle represents factors that either enable them to make the most of their influence on student well-being, or that inhibit them (that is, that get in the way).

“ For example, under inhibiting factors, you might write down anything from ‘I know when I forget to eat lunch, I’m grumpy with students,’ to ‘My strained relationship with my manager inhibits me,’ to ‘This particular policy gets in the way of my ability to support students.’ Enabling factors might include good professional development, having friends at work, or taking time to have a second coffee on Tuesdays. Whatever is relevant to you!

Once everybody is done, ask participants to go around and each name *one* thing that they put inside their zone of influence, and one thing that they put outside of their zone of influence. Ask them how it felt to do this activity. Some participants might have found it empowering or relieving, while others might have found it overwhelming or exhausting. Ask follow-up questions to explore the ‘why’ behind these feelings, and validate participants’ range of reactions.

Remind participants that just because something is outside of their zone of influence doesn't mean that it's irrelevant to them.

“ Maybe you don't have any control over the fact that a student is going through something, but you can at least offer a listening ear, or incorporate an understanding of these stressors into the way you do your work. Knowing that students are going through all these things might inform how you make decisions or how you interpret students' behaviour.

“ It's also important to remember that just because something is outside *your* zone of influence doesn't mean it's impossible to influence – we are all just one node in a massive network of support that's available to students. So if you find yourself confronting a student issue that is beyond your zone of influence, the first thing you want to ask yourself is: whose zone of influence *does* this fall inside of?

Prompt participants one last time for any thoughts or questions they might have; let them know that you are about to switch gears to a different topic, so if there's anything else they want to say about making the most of their zone of influence, now's the time!

Section 4

Understanding One's Own Boundaries

 30 mins

STEP 1

Introduction

Explain that this workshop can be imagined as a tree – the part about expanding our understanding of our zone of influence is kind of like giving us permission to expand and reach our branches out and up towards the sky. The second half is a reminder that we cannot make the most of our expanse unless we have roots planted firmly in the ground, rooted in a true understanding of our capacities and realities.

8 mins

“ In my time facilitating these workshops, an underlying thematic current that often courses through what people say to me, either explicitly or implicitly, is fear about setting boundaries.

Ask participants whether they've heard the word "boundaries" before, what the word brings to mind, and how they might define it. Affirm all responses, which could include:

- Setting limits
- Knowing what you're capable of
- Saying no
- Knowing the difference between you and others

“ Often when it comes to supporting others, there's a fear that we won't know how to enforce our boundaries, or – sometimes worse – fear that if we do enforce our boundaries, that they won't be respected. Or maybe we're already really overextending ourselves and the thought of taking on one more thing feels impossible.

This is totally understandable! When we don't feel confident about our ability to set boundaries, either because we don't have the skills or because there are external factors making it difficult, it can often feel like we either have to be a brick wall or a doormat. We either harden up, or let ourselves get walked all over. Ideally, though, we're somewhere in the middle, and we get there by having really thought through what our boundaries are on key questions, and feeling confident and practiced at enforcing them.

Remind participants that how we understand our boundaries is very informed by our culture and context – there is no ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ way of having boundaries. Welcome them to share their own understanding of what healthy boundaries look like in their life and culture if it differs from what’s shared in the workshop. Let participants know that this section of the workshop will begin with an exploration of their general tendencies when it comes to setting boundaries with students. Then, we’ll practice a bit. Then, we’ll finish the workshop by talking about how we can create working conditions where our boundaries and others’ boundaries are respected.

STEP 2

Boundaries as a spectrum

Explain that while we often think that setting boundaries is all about getting good at saying “no,” boundaries can actually be best understood as a spectrum between ‘rigid’ and ‘permeable’.

2 mins

“ An example of a rigid boundary is a brick wall – it’s almost impossible to move, even when good things are trying to get through.

An example of a permeable boundary is a line in the sand – you can see there’s a boundary there but there’s really nothing to stop you from crossing it. It’s easily washed away.

An example of a healthy boundary is a sieve – it lets smaller, safer items through while keeping larger, unwanted items out.

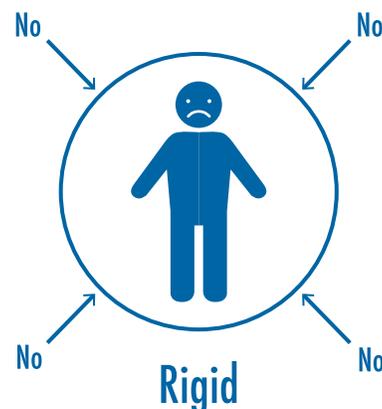
STEP 3

Rigid boundaries

Tell participants that we can think about these analogies as they relate to people, and show them the stick figure images.

7 mins

Describe the image of the person with rigid boundaries, who has a solid-line forcefield around them. This stick figure has bad things coming at it, and luckily their forcefield is so thick that these bad things are bouncing right off. But the stick figure looks sad, which is because the downside to having such a strong forcefield around you is that good things bounce off too. Explain that people with rigid boundaries often feel shut off from the world around them, because they’re saying no to both the bad and the good. People with rigid boundaries often feel in control but also less open to new ideas. Perhaps most importantly, they are often quite isolated.



UNIT 2: Creating Caring Environments

Section 4: Understanding One's Own Boundaries

Point out that talking about boundaries in this way isn't meant to pathologize people who have developed defenses like this – every single person's boundaries are very smart strategies that we've learned to employ in times that we've needed them. Ask participants if they can think of circumstances that might lead somebody to develop rigid boundaries. Good suggestions might include:

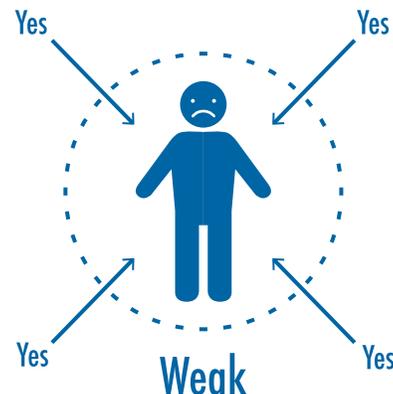
- A family history where a person needed strong protections in place to keep themselves safe;
- A history where somebody's boundaries weren't respected unless they were stated forcefully;
- Experiences of being in chaotic environments;
- Working in environments where a lot of emotional demands are made and where there is a lot of exposure to vicarious trauma (e.g. front-line social service work, crisis work, etc.);
- Being in a present environment that is genuinely emotionally or psychologically threatening.

Reiterate that in these kinds of circumstances, developing rigid boundaries is a pretty brilliant self-protection strategy. However, sometimes self-protection strategies that we've developed in one context can be less useful in another, safer context. Tell participants that if having rigid boundaries is something that they relate to, there are strategies we can use to loosen them up if they are currently in life circumstances where it is safe to do so.

STEP 4

Permeable boundaries

Describe the image of the person with weak, or permeable boundaries, who has a dotted-line forcefield around them. This person also looks unhappy, because while their permeable forcefield lets all sorts of good things into their life, they're also unable to block out the bad stuff. People with permeable boundaries often have trouble with letting too much in, which leaves them open to unwanted demands from others. Sometimes they struggle with letting too much of themselves *out*, which limits their level of privacy and sense of self.



7 mins

Ask participants to reflect on the context of the person with permeable boundaries in the same way that they did with the person with rigid BOUNDARIES. Ask participants if they can think of circumstances that might lead somebody to develop overly permeable boundaries. Good suggestions might include:

- A desire to be liked or accepted by others;
- Having a self-concept that's based on the idea of being 'helpful' or 'easy-going' or 'giving';

- A family history where a person relied on flying under the radar or appeasing in order to stay safe;
- A history of not having one's boundaries respected (sometimes it's less painful to never set boundaries than to set boundaries and have them violated);
- Being (or being read as) a woman in a world where 'successful' womanhood involves being nice, soft, sweet, generous, and pleasing.
- Being (or being read as) a woman in a world where women are punished for setting boundaries (for example, being called a "b*tch," aggressive, demanding, naggy, cold, withholding, etc.).
- Being in a present environment that makes it genuinely difficult to say "no" (for example, being given a workload that is too large, or being understaffed at work, or working in an environment where only people with poor work/life balance get promoted).

Reiterate that just as with rigid boundaries, we can see that there are very understandable reasons why people develop permeable boundaries, and there are also strategies for making them a bit less permeable.

STEP 5

Healthy boundaries

Argue that boundaries at their most healthy are semi-permeable: open enough to let in the good when needed, but also sufficiently closed to block out the bad. Describe the third stick figure image, which has a forcefield around the stick figure made up of dashed lines. The person is smiling because the dashed lines surrounding them block out the things they want to say no to, but there is still enough space in between the lines that the "yes" still gets in. Ideally the parts of our boundaries that are impermeable feel less like a cage that isolates us and more like a blanket fort that helps us feel safe and contained and protected.



5 mins

Pass out the [What Have Boundaries Done for Me Lately?](#) handout.

With all of this in mind, ask participants to grab a piece of paper and pen, and draw how they think their boundaries are right now on the spectrum from rigid to permeable. Reassure them that they won't be asked to share, but welcome them to share any reflections they have about the boundaries spectrum once they're done.

UNIT 2: Creating Caring Environments

Section 4: Understanding One's Own Boundaries

Conclude by reminding everybody that good boundaries are ultimately about balance. Show them the image of somebody holding up a note to themselves that reads:

“ I can build boundaries without shutting people out. I can protect my heart without being afraid to love. I can be vulnerable without feeling weakness or shame. I can be resilient without self-guilt. I can show up for others without forgetting about myself.

Source: Alexandra Elle

Tell participants that the only way to get good at striking this balance in one's life is through persistent, self-compassionate practice, and that this is a big part of what we are doing together today.

Section 5

The Boundary System

 10 mins

STEP 1

Introduce the idea of boundaries as a system

State that another way to think about boundaries is as a system. Ask participants to imagine an apple with three layers.

10 mins

Source for this section:

Forbes, B. (2016). A sequence & meditation for setting healthy boundaries. *Yoga Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.yogajournal.com/practice/sequence-meditation-setting-healthy-boundaries>.

Explain that the outermost layer of our boundary system is kind of like the apple's skin. It's the easiest to see because it relates to **behaviour**. This is the aspect of setting boundaries that's about the actions that you take: the time you give to others, or how much you pile onto your own plate. Setting boundaries on this level often comes with guilt, because when we say no we can feel like we're letting other people down.

Continue by discussing the middle layer of our boundary system, or the **interpersonal level**. This is the flesh of the apple, and it's all about how impacted we are, emotionally and physiologically, by other people's moods and emotions.

“ This is relevant to everybody, but it's especially relevant to those of us who are often referred to as empaths because we're so hyper-sensitive to the feelings of people around us. The interpersonal level of the boundary system is all about the extent to which others' moods influence your own. When you actually *feel* someone's emotions as though they were your own, it can fill you with the urge to relieve their suffering *now*. Setting boundaries on this level often looks like reminding ourselves of what's *ours* to be responsible for, and what's *theirs*. Sometimes it looks like needing to take breaks from interaction because feeling other people's feelings all the time can be exhausting.

Tell participants that the innermost layer of our boundary system, or the apple core, is **intrapersonal**. This is all about your connection to your deepest self, and how linked you are with your body in each moment.

“ We often describe this as our gut feeling – for example, when you meet someone and you feel a sensation in your body, like a clenching in your abdomen or a tightness in your throat, that tells you this person isn't trustworthy or

safe. This intrapersonal level is also what helps us make decisions about what to say yes and no to. If we lack boundaries at this level we don't necessarily know how to listen to that gut reaction that's telling us "no, don't say yes to that!," or "yes, move towards that good thing!" This can sometimes result in a nervous system imbalance like anxiety or depression.

Give participants the handout **Signs of Ignored Boundaries**. Tell them that when we don't know how to listen to ourselves at an intrapersonal level, we can sometimes ignore our own boundaries without even realizing it! Reassure them that it's possible to get better at listening to ourselves, however, and that paying attention to the signs in this handout is a good way to start recognizing when we're doing that to ourselves.

Section 6

Intrapersonal Boundaries Activity

 20 mins

STEP 1

Give instructions

Tell participants that you're about to do an activity that gets us connected with that most innermost layer of our boundaries: the ability to listen to ourselves.

5 mins

Ask them to stand up or otherwise move away from the table and find a partner. If there is an odd number of people in the group, one group of three could work. This activity will require a bit of physical space, so it may be necessary for some of the group to move out into the hall or another open space.

Once participants have found partners, give them the full set of instructions and ask them to wait until you've told them everything before enacting what you've described. The instructions are as follows:

- “• Stand as far away from each other as possible.
- Decide who is Person 1 and who is Person 2.
- Once Person 1 says “okay,” Person 2 will start walking or otherwise moving towards Person 1, very slowly.
- **To Person 1:** while Person 2 is moving towards you, I want you to pay attention to what your body is telling you about how comfortable you feel having that person get close to you physically. It's not personal, or about that person specifically – we all have different comfort zones around physical proximity. Picture there being a forcefield around you, just like the stick figures from earlier, and try not to judge how big or small your forcefield is. It is just how big it is, in this exact moment in time. While the person is moving towards you, as soon as you notice your gut telling you that the person has reached the limit of your comfort zone, tell them “stop” or just raise a hand.
- **To Person 2:** As soon as Person 1 says “stop” or raises their hand, I want you to immediately stop moving forward. I want you to then look at that person with kindness, and say “thank you.”
- **To Person 1:** Next, I want you to check in with yourself about your comfort with where the person is now standing. You may realize that you waited too long to speak up and the other person is now standing a bit

- too close for comfort. Feel free to ask the person to step back until you're comfortable! You may realize that you panicked and spoke too soon, and would actually feel comfortable with the person moving closer. You can tell them that.
- To Person 2: For each adjustment you are asked to make, please say "thank you." And remember – you get to have boundaries, too! If the person asks you to move closer to them than you feel comfortable with, simply stop where you feel comfortable and say 'thank you, but I'm most comfortable here.'

Let the participants know that once they do this, they will have an opportunity to swap roles. Acknowledge that this activity may be outside of some people's comfort zones, and give permission to sit it out if that's desired.

STEP 2

Boundary affirmations + activity

Begin by affirming participants' right to set boundaries.

10 mins

“ Before we do this activity, I want us to take a moment to affirm that we are allowed to set boundaries, that the innermost layer of the boundary system is worth listening to, and give ourselves permission to act on what we hear. If you're willing, I'd love it if you could close your eyes while I say some affirmations.

I am allowed to say no.

Having limits makes me a better support person.

I release what is not mine to feel.

Let my "yes" mean "yes" and my "no" mean "no."

We are all grown-ups here. We are all responsible for our own feelings.

I am allowed to say no.

Give the group permission to get started and enough time for each person to take a turn being both Person 1 and Person 2. Walk around the room while the activity is happening and be available to answer questions, give moral support, and help people share the physical space of the room as best as possible.

STEP 3**Debrief**

Once everybody is done, bring them back together to debrief. Ask them:

5 mins

“ How did that feel?

Affirm that later in the workshop, participants will get the chance to practice setting boundaries around common things that come up in the workplace. Specifically, they will get the chance to practice what words one might use to set boundaries in those moments.

BREAK 10 mins

Section 7

Strategies for Setting Boundaries

 35 mins

STEP 1

Discuss
boundaries
in non-choice
relationships

Note to participants that sometimes the way we set boundaries with others depends on the nature of our relationship. Explain that in relationships of choice (such as with your friends, romantic partners, etc.) the best way to set boundaries is almost always verbally, by stating what we need.

15 mins

“ However, today we’re talking about setting boundaries in a professional setting, where the people you’re interacting with are your bosses, co-workers, and service users or students. We might call these non-choice relationships. In these situations, sometimes verbal boundary-setting isn’t always an option for us, whether because there’s a power dynamic there, or because you’re expected to be more solicitous with service users than you would be with people in everyday life, or something else. In these cases, it can be useful to have some other boundary-setting tools available to us.

Talk through the following examples of strategies for setting boundaries. For each one, pause to make sure the participants know what it means, and see if they can think of an example of how the strategy might be used. You can use the following breakdown as a guide:

- Direct verbal communication
 - *Means:* Clearly articulating what is/is not acceptable, or what you are/are not able to do, using your words.
 - *For example:* “I’m sorry, but that’s not a part of my job description,” “Please don’t use racist language like that in this classroom,” “I’m eating my lunch right now, but I can help you with that in about 20 minutes!” etc.
- Non-verbal/visual communication
 - *Means:* Using things like body language, tone of voice, etc. to communicate our boundaries instead of our words.
 - *For example:* Not making eye contact with a customer until you’re ready to serve them, wearing headphones on the subway as a sign that you’re not interested in having a conversation with a stranger, crossing your arms and keeping a distance as indicators that you’re not interested in physical contact, etc.
- Policy, rules, and laws
 - *Means:* Establishing community norms by writing them down and forbidding deviation by setting consequences for people who don’t follow the norm.

- *For example:* Posting a “No Smoking” sign outside the office, the school’s code of conduct, workplace violence laws, etc.
- *Note:* The existence of policies or rules can be useful if you don’t feel comfortable setting a boundary yourself. For example, you could say “I’m sorry, you can’t do that; policy XYZ says so,” instead of saying “I don’t want you to do that,” which can feel more vulnerable. The downside to this strategy is that the policy or rule you rely on needs to be established proactively in order to be helpful in the moment.
- Appeal to authority
 - *Means:* Pointing somebody to a person with more authority than you in order to validate the boundary.
 - *For example:* Referring a customer to your manager when they’re not respecting your perspective, bringing in a chair or program coordinator to enforce a rule, saying “I’m sorry but my boss told me that I can’t do that.”
 - *Note:* This is similar to relying on “policy, rules, and laws.” Some managers are very comfortable with having their authority used like this in moments when a student or co-worker is not respecting a boundary; it’s worth checking in with them to establish whether this is okay, though. Furthermore, it’s important to be mindful of who the student is and whether appealing to authority is safe/the best route in this situation for everyone involved.
- Avoidance
 - *Means:* Not responding at all, or staying away from situations where one is put in the position where they have to respond to requests or boundary invasions.
 - *For example:* Ignoring someone’s texts, avoiding situations where you are alone with someone who makes you uncomfortable, responding to requests vaguely with the hope that they’ll go away, etc.
 - *Note:* This is a strategy that can be useful in situations where it is genuinely risky to set a boundary with somebody; in general, however, it’s advised to communicate one’s boundaries more directly.
- Referral
 - *Means:* Being clear with somebody (e.g. a student, a service user, etc.) that you cannot meet their needs, but offering to connect them with somebody else who is able to.
 - *For example:* “This is a bit beyond my expertise, but I know somebody else who can help you. Would you like their phone number?”

Conclude by asking whether participants can think of any other means of setting boundaries.

STEP 2

Practice scenarios

Break the participants into four small groups. If it is a particularly small group, groups of two will work but each group will have more scenarios to get through. As a facilitator you may choose to eliminate some of the scenarios if time is limited.

20 mins

Tell the participants that you will be distributing printed scenarios to each group. Instruct them to read the scenario aloud in their small groups and then brainstorm strategies for directly and verbally communicating a boundary in each situation. Remind them that they will get the most out of the exercise if they discuss what they would actually say, and then try saying it.

The scenarios are as follows:

1. A student is asking for help to an extent that you believe is beyond your job description – it seems like they want you to do their work for them.
2. You work in an open-concept office and a co-worker is always leaning on your desk and talking to you while you're trying to get work done.
3. Your students generally seem to really like you and want to be your friend/mentee. When class ends, you usually get a handful of emails from students asking to hang out and go for coffee.
4. You are the only East Asian person in the office and a co-worker keeps asking you questions about Chinese food and city life in Beijing. Your family is Vietnamese and you were born and raised in Scarborough.
5. A student shows up to your office in tears and starts disclosing information about difficulties in their personal life that feels beyond what you have the capacity to support.
6. A manager from another department consistently pays a lot of attention to you, makes remarks on your appearance, and stands just a little too close for comfort.
7. You come back from the bathroom to find that a student has stepped behind your desk and looked through your files to find a document you were planning on giving back to them. They don't seem to register that this was inappropriate.
8. Your manager asks you to take on a task that you don't feel like you have time to take on. You are already overloaded with work and putting in overtime to get it all done.

Once it seems like participants have discussed each of their scenarios, bring them back into the large group and ask them to report back by sharing the scenarios they discussed and some of their suggestions. Ask the groups whether there were any scenarios that they discussed where the idea of setting boundaries felt uncomfortable. Invite them to guess why setting boundaries in these particular scenarios felt different for them than others.

In concluding this activity, touch on the following points:

- There is great value in actively giving yourself permission to set boundaries in situations that feel particularly tricky for you. Participants are encouraged to think of words, or phrases, or images that affirm their right to set boundaries in moments where they need a little extra encouragement (just like the ones that were read before the activity where we walked towards each other).
- In setting boundaries, it is important to follow through. Recall the image of the line drawn in the sand: if you verbally set a boundary but it's easily washed away, or if you do nothing to enforce it, people will learn not to respect your boundaries even when you do set them.
- Perhaps the most difficult part about setting boundaries is when people are unhappy with you for doing so:

“ In those moments, it can be useful to remember that it actually takes quite a bit of self-awareness and maturity to react with grace and humility when somebody sets a boundary with us. Even with the best of intentions, other peoples' boundaries can sometimes make us feel powerless, or hurt, or rejected, or angry, or abandoned, or any number of other things that stem from the things we've experienced in life. Even when our mind thinks, “that person is justified in saying no,” sometimes it takes our hearts and bodies some time to catch up. Whatever the person's reason is for reacting poorly to your boundary, remember that their reaction is about *them* and is not your responsibility to prevent or take care of. It may be useful to develop a strategy for how you will cope in those moments when you may be pulled to capitulate, argue, seek approval, care-take, or otherwise rush to fix or react. Then practice that strategy as much as you can!

Section 8

Boundary-Supportive Workplaces

 15 mins

STEP 1

Introduce the idea of “boundary-supportive workplaces”

Tell participants that our last activity requires us to zoom out again and look at some of the big-picture factors in the workplace that either enable or discourage good boundaries.

2 mins

“ Having good boundaries also relies on other people respecting your boundaries. So there’s a structural question here, too – it’s not just about your skills. For example, if I’m a manager, and my employee is trying to create better work-life balance for themselves but I keep adding more and more things to their portfolio without relieving them of other duties, I’m actively making it difficult for them to enforce their boundaries. Being a supportive supervisor or co-worker means actively helping your staff and colleagues in creating the kinds of conditions that they need to thrive in their work.

STEP 2

Brainstorm

Bring back the stick figure images from earlier in the workshop. Instruct participants to imagine that they are the manager in a workplace where many of their employees tend to have quite rigid, inflexible boundaries.

13 mins

“ What kinds of things would you do or put in place in the working environment that would enable your staff to loosen up their boundaries a little bit?

Some good suggestions might include:

- Opportunities to build trust and community
- Professional development opportunities (the more competent we feel, the more we see that there are many ways of doing things)
- Instituting an open-door policy where staff are always welcome to speak honestly and openly with you
- Creating a safe working environment where there is minimal need to protect oneself strongly – if you encourage your staff to loosen their boundaries but don’t address things that are causing them harm in the workplace, they may end up getting hurt

Ask participants to now imagine that they are the manager in a workplace where many of their employees tend to have weak, overly porous boundaries.

“ What kinds of things would you do or put in place in the working environment that would enable your staff to firm up their boundaries?

Some good suggestions might include:

- Modelling good boundaries yourself
- Having periodic check-ins with your staff to make sure their workload is feeling manageable
- Creating a culture where staff in your department step in to help each other during difficult interactions with students
- Introducing professional development opportunities about boundary-setting in the workplace

Reiterate that even somebody who is very skilled at setting boundaries will have a much harder time applying these skills if the *context* of their work makes it difficult to do so. Affirm that a truly healthy campus community doesn't place the onus of setting boundaries solely on the shoulders of staff, but actively works to enable and encourage good boundary-setting for all.

Section 9

Conclusion

 10 mins

Tell participants that how they decide to apply what they learned, either about making the most of their zone of influence or about setting boundaries, depends a lot on their role and their workplace context.

5 mins

Ask the group if anybody has thoughts they'd like to share about how they will apply what they've learned today at work.

Tell participants that creating caring environments at school is not *just* about being a caring person – it's also about noticing, recognizing, and valuing the undervalued care work that others do on a daily basis. It's about making our daily environments a place where care is the norm rather than the exception, which begins by making sure the people who are already going over and above for students and colleagues get the praise and reward they deserve. Encourage participants to go back to their offices and pay a little extra attention to the people proliferating care in their workplace. Ask them to make sure that those people are honoured for the important work they do.

Thank participants for attending the workshop.

5 mins

Review the content.

- “ We've covered a lot of content here in a short time. And hopefully now you have a stronger understanding of:
- What you have influence over in your role
 - How, specifically, your role can have an impact on all of the student stressors we discussed today
 - The particular ways you set boundaries today based on the life experiences you've had
 - More strategies and options for setting boundaries with students and co-workers in the future
 - Some ways that we can build entire workplaces in a way that enables and encourages good boundary-setting.

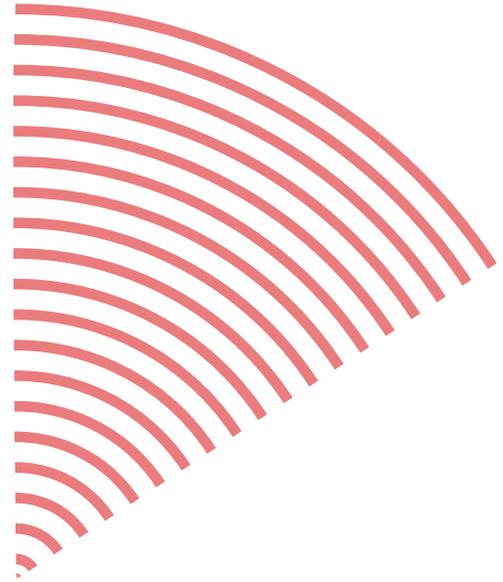
Remind participants that giving better responsive support to students and embedding proactive support into everything we do is not about trying to be a counsellor. Proactive support is actually about reducing the challenges that students are facing so fewer students need counselling in the first place! Emphasize that coming to trainings like this demonstrates a huge commitment to student well-being, and that this deserves congratulations!

It's useful to get an immediate sense of how the participants have felt about the training and new skills they've learned, as well as to give them an opportunity to connect with the group they've been working with in the workshop.

Closing Exercise: Ask students to share one word (only one word) that describes how they are feeling now about either a) making the most of their zone of influence, or b) setting boundaries. You can either direct who speaks next, or ask participants to "popcorn" their responses, saying their word when they feel ready to share it. After everyone has shared, thank them for sharing.

Hand out **workshop evaluations**. Ask participants to take 5 minutes to fill in the paper evaluation form and hand it back to you before they depart.

Unit 3: Working Together for Student Mental Health



Contents

Section 1	Introducing the Session	🕒 30 mins 77
Section 2	Social Determinants of Health	🕒 40 mins 80
Section 3	Strategies for Making Change Introduction	🕒 5 mins 85
Section 4	Strategies for Making Change Following Students' Lead	🕒 15 mins 87
Section 5	Strategies for Making Change Change Practice by Changing Policy	🕒 35 mins 89
BREAK		🕒 10 mins 90
Section 6	Strategies for Making Change Building Tools for Change	🕒 15 mins 92
Section 7	Strategies for Making Change Act in Small Ways Together	🕒 15 mins 95
Section 8	Strategies for Making Change Carve Out Space	🕒 15 mins 97
BREAK		🕒 10 mins 97
Section 9	Strategies for Making Change Support Students by Supporting Staff	🕒 15 mins 98
Section 10	Strategies for Working Together	🕒 35 mins 99

Unit 3: Working Together for Student Mental Health

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SHOULD GET OUT OF THE SESSION

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Define and identify the difference between *responsive* and *proactive* support
- Define the 'social determinants of health'
- Name 3 systemic aspects of college life (outside of accessible mental health services and crisis management) that could impact student well-being
- Make connections between different social issues and mental health and well-being
- Identify which of the following institutional change mechanisms are involved in varying examples of social change in post-secondary environments
 - Following students' lead
 - Changing practice by changing policy
 - Building tools for change
 - Acting in small ways together
 - Carving out space
 - Supporting students by supporting staff
- Name at least 2 advantages and 2 disadvantages to working as part of an alliance with other campus stakeholders to effect positive change
- When given a problem scenario, identify:
 - What social determinants of health are at play?
 - What kinds of initiatives would positively impact this problem?
 - What stakeholders should be a part of a working group to effectively implement these initiatives?

INTENDED BEHAVIOURAL OUTCOMES

If you intend on evaluating the impacts of this training, what follows is a breakdown of the changes to future behaviour that this workshop has been designed to prompt.

Since the session ended, have participants:

- Thought more about how common emotional problems amongst students could be impacted by systemic change?
- Felt like systemic change was more possible than before?
- Accepted more offers to collaborate with others than before?
- Initiated more offers to collaborate than before?
- Done anything else differently?

KEY CONCEPTS

- Social determinants of health ([see page 80](#))
- Alliance ([see page 99](#))
- Health promotion ([see page 80](#))
- Proactive support ([see page 77](#))
- Task vs. maintenance functions ([see page 104](#))

MATERIALS NEEDED

See www.georgebrown.ca/healthycampus/foundation-flourishing to download editable versions of all materials below:

- First activity materials:
 - Ball of string or yarn
 - Laminated signs
- CACUSS/CMHA framework handout
- ‘Change Avenues’ handout
- Case study videos
- Cue cards/small pieces of paper
- Pens
- ‘Carve out space’ activity handouts
- ‘Simple Strategies for Working Together’ handout
- Unit 3 evaluation handout

HOW TO RUN THE SESSION

The ideal number of participants for this workshop is 6 to 12 people. The workshop cannot be effectively run with any fewer than three people. Two 10-minute breaks should be scheduled during the workshop to ensure participants remain focused in the sessions. Refreshments (coffee, tea, fresh fruit, etc.) should be provided to help participants feel taken care of and to keep them nourished with optimal energy levels for participation.

WORKSHOP FACILITATION GUIDE

Use the following notes to guide you through the facilitation of this workshop.



The “Time” column indicates the amount of time each section should take. The timing next to the section headers reflect the total time to give to overall section, and then the timing for each step is broken down underneath.



“What I say”: The text in quotation marks gives an example of what the workshop developer typically says during this section of the workshop. It supplements the other instructions, which you can deliver in your own words. Feel free to translate the quoted text into language that is more natural for you as well, while still communicating the core message.

Section 1 Introducing the Session

 30 mins

Please note: a significant portion of this workshop is based on case studies derived from years of experiences at George Brown College. In order to effectively translate it to your school context, you will need to come up with case studies that are relevant to your school. More information on how to do this can be found below.

STEP 1

Introduce context and yourself

At George Brown College, this workshop opens with an introduction of the Healthy Campus Initiative, the broader context in which this workshop is taking place. Give context that is relevant to your particular institutional environment.

10 mins

Introduce yourself and share briefly any relevant information that will help participants understand who you are and why you are well-positioned to facilitate this workshop.

STEP 2

Participant introductions

Do a go-around and give participants the opportunity to introduce themselves. Ask them to share their names and a short overview of what they do at the school.

10 mins

“ Your job title is interesting but what’s more useful is a general description of how you spend your time here at George Brown College? What are some of the common and daily duties of your job?

STEP 3

Introduce proactive vs. responsive support

Tell participants that throughout the Foundations for Flourishing workshop series, there are two key concepts that all other skills are built upon: **responsive support** and **proactive support**.

8 mins

“ Responsive support is what we usually think about when we think about supporting students: a student is going through a tough time and we do what we can to help them, whether that’s by referring them to a support service, giving them useful information, or even just acting as a listening ear. You can break this down into levels of severity, ranging from matters of concern where there is no risk of harm to self or others, all the way up to more crisis-level situations where there might be some risk of harm to self or others.

“ Breaking it down this way can help us respond appropriately – for example, you probably wouldn’t respond in the same way to a student who says “Ugh, why did I take 7 classes, I’m so stressed!” as you would to a student who says they are contemplating suicide, right? Different level of responsibility that you might feel, different supports you might bring in, different time-sensitivity, etc.

“ Proactive support, on the other hand, is all the things we collectively put in place to actually prevent students from going through a tough time in the first place. This can include anything from the policies we write, to the curriculum we develop, to the physical spaces we build, to the service models we design, and more. You don’t need to interact directly with students in order to proactively support them—you just need to be consistently keeping student well-being in mind when doing your job.

Talk about where this workshop fits within the bigger picture of professional development opportunities available to participants, especially as it relates to proactive vs. responsive support.

“ If you’re interested in learning more about responsive support in response to day-to-day concerns, Unit 1 of this workshop series is a good session to complete.

In particular, clarify that this workshop is *not* about crisis response, and point participant in the direction of other training opportunities that focus on this topic.

STEP 4

What are we doing here?

Explain that this workshop is the culmination of a process in this series where we move from thinking about individual approaches to student well-being towards imagining more collective approaches.

2 mins

Articulate that Unit 1 is all about the basic skills required to provide responsive support to students when they need it—how to create healthy, supportive one-on-one relationships. Unit 2 is about moving beyond responsive support, and making the most of your power as an individual.

Note that something is missing! Argue that while knowing your power and using it effectively to get students’ needs met within the existing system is an important strategy, we also know that sometimes, when we work together, we can actually change the system altogether. Point to the history of social movements in this country and elsewhere as evidence that there

are many ways of collectively working together to achieve the changes that we want and need, and that sometimes this means thinking outside the box and doing things differently.

“ This workshop is about collective action. It’s about moving beyond the things we do alone to support students and towards the things we do together to transform the college in service of student well-being. It’s about changing the game we’re playing, starting by pooling our resources and collaborating effectively.

Acknowledge that even this school as a system is impacted by institutions and forces larger than it, whether it be the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, or the city of Toronto, or larger systems like racism and colonialism. Often, social issues caused by systems ‘out there’ are reproduced ‘in here’, in the spaces we work in, like this school. It’s our collective responsibility to acknowledge how and when this happens, and to work together to effect positive change.

“ While I do believe that those things can be changed as well, in the interest of time we’re going to focus our thinking on this school as a system. But next stop, the world!

Section 2

Social Determinants of Health

STEP 1

Introduce the concept

Explain that changing the game of student mental health includes changing the way we think about mental health in general. This requires moving away from a narrow medical model and towards a model that accounts for social, environmental, political, economic, and other contextual factors that structure how mental health is understood and influenced.

5 mins

Ask the group if anybody has heard of the term “social determinants of health” and if they can explain it.

After taking some suggestions (if the participants have them), affirm that after many years of blaming health challenges on individuals’ “breeding” or their personal lifestyle decisions, we now know that the primary factors that shape our health are not our medical treatments or lifestyle choices, but rather our living *conditions*. Explain that these big-picture factors influencing our health are called “social determinants of health.”

Clarify that our “living conditions” can include many things, including the distribution of income and wealth in our society, whether we’re employed, if we are employed what our working conditions are like, the health and social services we receive, our experiences of trauma and oppression, our ability to obtain quality education, food, housing, and so on. These are some of the building blocks of a healthy life that we know to be essential for fostering mental health and well-being.

Point out that many of the living conditions just listed are things that are beyond our individual control, which offers even more reason to do away with old, individualistic, moralistic ways of thinking about health that blame people for their own suffering.

Note that, as we expand our understanding of what impacts health beyond shifts in individual behaviour, what we consider to be health promotion also shifts and expands to include anything that aims to change the social and economic factors that make some people more likely to get sick than others.

“ This means that ending poverty is health promotion! Changing laws that discriminate against entire groups of people is health promotion. Healing intergenerational trauma is health promotion, as we’re seeing with the work Indigenous communities are doing to get Canadians to understand the impacts of the colonization and the residential school system. It means that building parks is health promotion. Ending violence against women is health promotion. Thinking about health in this way means thinking *huge*, which can definitely be hard! There are reasons why we often resort to thinking about health

UNIT 3 : Working Together for Student Mental Health

Section 2: Social Determinants of Health

in individualistic ways, and one is that it's just easier to wrap your mind around, for example, getting people to change their sexual health practices, than it is to address the root of why some communities are more likely to contract HIV than others. But this big-picture thinking is vitally important—and fortunately it is something we can practice at!

STEP 2

String activity

Tell participants that they are about to do an activity that will help get their minds thinking about the big picture and making connections between big-picture issues.

15 mins

Get them to stand up in a circle, and pass around laminated signs with words printed on them. If the group is small, you can give people the option of holding two signs each. Split the signs up into “school factors” (which have blue dots printed on them) and “social determinants of health” (which have red dots printed on them) in advance of the workshop to ensure that you hand out a relatively even number of each. The words on the signs include:

Facilitator note: these are the “school factor” signs:

- Student success
- Leadership
- Retention
- Well-being
- Universal design for learning
- Punctuality and attendance
- Graduation
- Safety
- Self-directed learning
- Career clarity

Facilitator note: these are the “social determinants of health” signs:

- Poverty
- Racism
- Ableism
- Colonialism
- Gender-based violence
- Trauma
- (Im)migration
- Political turmoil
- Grief and loss
- Unsafe living conditions

Show participants the ball of string/rope/twine that you have and explain that they are each going to take turns making connections between big-picture issues.

Tell them that whoever goes first will look around the circle and look for a sign that they think is somehow connected to the sign that they're holding. If they're holding a blue dot word, ask them to try and make a connection to a red dot word. If they're holding a red dot word, ask them to try and make a connection to a blue dot word. They will do their best to explain what that connection is, and then hold onto the end of the string and toss the ball to the person holding that sign. The person who has just caught the ball will then find a sign (with a different coloured dot than their own) that they think connects to their sign, and do the same thing—explain the connection, hold the string, and toss the ball to that person. By the end of the activity the inside of the circle should look like a cat's cradle, criss-crossed with overlapping string.

Note that not everybody has the same catching and throwing ability, and welcome participants to help each other out with the physical aspect of the activity if relevant. Reassure participants that they just need to try—some of the connections are trickier than others and nobody will judge them if they can't make the most articulate explanation in the world.

Once the activity is over, ask the group if anybody has any reflections they want to share with the group. Were some issues connected more than others? Why? Emphasize the importance of understanding that *all* issues that impact our students are interconnected.

STEP 3

Social
determinants
of health at
school

Once participants have sat back down, affirm that they have just enacted how the social determinants of health apply in school contexts.

15 mins

“It's actually a really exciting time to be a college-based mental health promoter, because we're right in the middle of a mass movement, where post-secondary institutions across the country—and across the world, really—are all looking for approaches to student well-being that look beyond addressing individual symptoms of mental illness and towards an understanding of contextual impacts on well-being. In Canada this is most often called the 'Healthy Campus' framework of mental health.

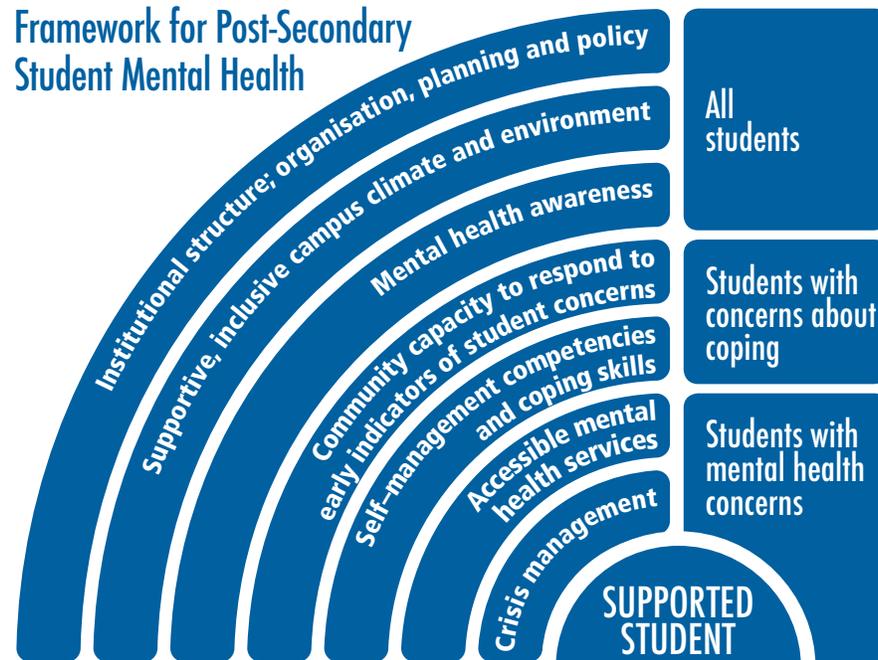
Explain that this collective shift is fundamentally oriented around the question of how we create whole campuses that support whole students, in all of the complexity of their lives. This is the core of the concept “proactive support.”

Tell participants that back in 2013 the Canadian Mental Health Association partnered with the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services to write a document that acted as a roadmap for post-secondary institutions that were interested in developing a systemic mental health promotion strategy.

UNIT 3 : Working Together for Student Mental Health

Section 2: Social Determinants of Health

Show participants the slide with the CACUSS/CMHA framework on it.



(Image adapted from Canadian Association of College & University Student Services & Canadian Mental Health Association. (2013). *Post-Secondary Student Mental Health: Guide to a Systemic Approach*. Vancouver, BC: C. Washburn, S.T. Teo, R. Knodel, J. Morris.)

Explain that the report argues that while historically most post-secondary institutions have solely focused on the bottom two tiers (“**Crisis management**” and “**Accessible mental health services**”), and while these tiers continue to be incredibly important aspects of any effective mental health strategy, they are not enough. The report argues that in addition to these bottom two tiers, we need to be doing all the other tiers as well.

State that these tiers include:

- **Self-management competencies and coping skills** (that is, creating opportunities for students to learn these things)
- **Community capacity to respond to early indicators of student concern** (that is, catching problems while they’re still small, and increasing the number of people in the college community who are able to do this)
- **Mental health awareness** (that is, a college community where we are not only familiar with mental health challenges, but where we really understand what mental health looks like and how it can be supported)
- **Supportive, inclusive campus climate and environment** (that is, both a mental health-promoting built environment, and a mental health-promoting culture)
- **Institutional structure: organization, planning, policy**

“ And... that’s a lot! I get out of breath even just going through this framework sometimes. It’s important to understand that, ideally, we would be working on *all* of these areas of intervention, all at once. This is what it takes to have a truly systemic mental health promotion strategy. But if you take away one thing from this workshop, it’s this: it is both incredibly vital to do all of these activities, and also *literally* impossible for any one person or department to take this all on themselves. Even the president of this college couldn’t do all of this on her own. It needs all of us, and we need to work together. But this is easier said than done! This is why the focus of this workshop is on the question of how we can work together effectively to support our students.

Section 3

Strategies for Making Change

 5 mins

Introduction

STEP 1

 Introduce
Comfort Zones
activity

5 mins

Explain to participants that this majority of this workshop will be about exploring six different case studies from the history of this school where a group of people got together and decided to try and make change in service of student mental health and well-being.

Hand out the “**Avenues of Change**” handout.

State that while there are countless ways of making change, that today we are going to focus on six avenues of change that are particularly relevant in a post-secondary context:

1. Following students’ lead
2. Changing practice by changing policy
3. Building tools for change
4. Acting in small ways together
5. Carving out space
6. Supporting students by supporting staff

Point out that each of the case studies you will be exploring fall into one of these six avenues of change, and that they also fall into one of two categories: **starting something new** and **making something better**.

“ Starting something new is when a group of people see a gap in what already exists. Something is missing that really should be there, and that gap is potentially hurting students. So this group of people gets together to create something that will fill that gap. Making something better is when a group of people see that something that exists already isn’t working as well as it should be. Maybe it’s not as efficient as it could be, maybe it’s leaving out certain groups of students, or maybe it’s outright causing harm. So that group of people get together and work to improve that pre-existing thing. Some people call this reform work.

Explain that most change strategies fall into one of these two categories, although some are so complex that they encompass both.

Tell participants that they will have the opportunity to hear directly from people who participated in these projects about how their work came to be. Instruct them that as they are hearing each case study, they should be thinking about two questions: (1) what does this initiative have to do with mental health? (2) What needed to happen in order for this initiative to be successful? What were the ingredients of its success?

Note to facilitator: the section timings under “Strategies for Making Change” include the length of the GBC-specific videos. The sections may take more or less time for you, depending on the length of your videos.

Section 4

Strategies for Making Change

Following Students' Lead

 15 mins

STEP 1

Case
Study #1
Following
Students' Lead

2 mins

Explain that as college staff and faculty, one of the most important roles you can play in making change is *not* by leading that change yourself; it's by supporting students in being agents of social change in their own right. Helping students to turn their ideas for change into action can be about connecting them with resources, connecting them with people who might be able to help them, or sometimes just connecting them with the confidence that they are capable of leadership.

Tell participants that the first case study they will be exploring is a collaborative campaign that started at George Brown College back in 2012. The Free to Pee campaign started when Robin, a gender non-conforming Social Service Worker student and part-time LGBTQ support staff at the Student Association's Community Action Centre approached her supervisor about some challenges she'd been facing accessing washrooms at school.

Show Case Study #1 video.

Note to facilitator about choosing your own Case Study #1:

The Free to Pee campaign was chosen for this case study as an example of a collaborative student-initiated campaign that involved staff and students working together for some sort of systemic change. If you can find a case with similar characteristics at your school, it would be a good fit. The campaign or project doesn't have to be directly about mental health; in fact, it's better if it isn't, because this will help participants begin to understand the kinds of change that impact student well-being in a more expansive way, to include issues of access, social justice, engagement, connection, etc.

Below is a transcript of the video we made at GBC to give participants an understanding of the Free to Pee campaign. Read through it so you can get an idea of the kinds of material that has been sparking conversation in GBC's rendition of this workshop. But you are encouraged to make this your own in a way that speaks to the unique challenges, strengths, and culture of your institution.

Transcript of Case Study #1 video:

Interviewer: Tell me about how the Free to Pee campaign got started.

Robin: It started when I was a student at George Brown, in the Social Service Worker program. I was also working at the LGBTQ Centre at George Brown. And I was experiencing some challenges using the washrooms... the multi-stall women's washrooms, because people were unsure of my gender, and they liked to give me strange looks, or question me, or explain at my being in that place, where I needed to be to go pee. So, it actually was really challenging, because it caused me a lot of anxiety every time I needed to go to the washroom. I was talking about it with my peers and

supervisor at the LGBTQ Centre, and they suggested that that might be something to start taking action on, because if it's happening to me, it's happening to other gender non-conforming and trans students. And that's who I was representing. So, that was where the idea came from. And then... I was speaking about it to people, and somebody suggested I contact [name], who's a staff at George Brown, and he was really enthusiastic. It's something he'd been wanting to do, or had started working on. And he got together a committee of people he knew would be interested, and we started working from there to imagine some sort of course in changing this experience of using the bathroom. And we started with doing some surveys, and some focus groups, to try and find out what some of the experiences were, that people were having. And from there we designed an awareness campaign, which included posters and postcards, and took time to distribute that throughout the three campuses. And then after that the next step was to do an audit of the bathrooms, so to go into every bathroom, look at how it could be changed to be more accessible to people with different manifestations of their gender who are being perceived by other students as not belonging.

From there we turned this audit, which was originally just collecting info about the structure and number of washrooms, and turned it into an event. And we ended up getting volunteers and having bright t-shirts and signs and making a lot of noise. And also getting a petition to be signed, so we were interacting with the student body as well as getting the job done. So that was a really fun day, and we collected a lot of useful information. And we were collecting this information in order to lobby the administration to make some changes, so... the dream was to have multi-stall washrooms that are gender-neutral and to help raise awareness around that being something that can exist, and should exist. But smaller goals were to make single washrooms signed differently, so that they were accepting and welcoming and trans and gender-nonconforming people. Yeah, so there were different strategies, and we came from a few different angles in the campaign.

STEP 2

Following up on Case Study #1

Ask participants how they think safe washroom access for trans and gender-nonconforming students relates to mental health. Facilitate a brief discussion about this.

7 mins

Ask participants what supports they think (based on what Robin said as well as their own thoughts about what it takes to make change) needed to be in place in order for this campaign to be successful? What were the important ingredients of success and effective tactics?

Section 5

Strategies for Making Change

Change Practice by Changing Policy

 35 mins

STEP 1

Case
Study #2:
Change
Practice by
Changing
Policy

Explain that while on the surface it may seem less exciting than a big campaign, changing policy can have extremely wide-reaching implications for how a college operates.

7 mins

Tell participants that they will next hear from Karen Walker, who is an Accessibility Consultant that played a key role in instituting GBC's Captioned Media & eText policy over a decade ago. Explain that this is a great example of change made through policy, because while it has had an enormous impact on the culture and accessibility of our school, it has also been incredibly complex to implement and the challenges continue to this day.

Show Case Study #2 video.

Note to facilitator about choosing your own Case Study #2:

The Captioned Media & e-Text policy was chosen for this case study because while it has had clear benefits to student well-being, it also had a lot of complexities in its implementation: a lot of pre-conditions, required resources, and education were needed. If you can find a policy with similar complexities at your school, it would be a good fit.

Transcript of Case Study #2 video:

Interviewer: So, tell me about how the captioned media policy came into existence.

Karen: Okay. Well, that's a really interesting story. I would say probably 10 or 12 years ago... well, to back up a bit, the college has always been really well-known for having a very high number of Deaf and hard-of-hearing students, and we have some really specialty programs that are geared to not only Deaf and hard of hearing students, but working within the Deaf community. So, I would say maybe about 10 or 12 years ago, Deaf and hard of hearing students started to become very vocal, as they should be, about the fact that professors would show films and any kind of media... videos... in class. And they didn't have really good access to that information because the films wouldn't have captions. And keep in mind that when a student who's Deaf has an interpreter in the class, or a hard-of-hearing student has a computerized note-taker, those service providers can't keep up with how fast the content is presented in a film. So that was a really inaccessible situation.

At the same time, the college has always had a very active strategic accessibility committee that really... the job was to respond in a strategic way to current and future disability legislation standards. So we brought this issue from the students to the committee, and there were students on the committee as well. And the committee really thought this was something that could be addressed. And John Hardy, who was and is the Director of Educational Resources, really took it upon himself to have this policy really come out of and be a part of Educational Resources. So, John and different people from Disability Services, and Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Services, and Students Affairs, we worked on policy, and this *Captioned Media and e-Text*

policy was approved by the Board of Governors in 2006. The policy was really unique, because at the time we also embedded some responsibilities for different departments around e-text, or electronic text, format of materials, which has also been very helpful.

The next part of the whole birth of the policy was really John hiring Anne Villahermosa around 2006, or maybe 2005, to really start looking at what sorts of procedures would actually make sure that this policy had very good compliance. When I look at Anne's website, which is the *Captioned Media and e-Text Policy Research Guide*, she now says that at this point 65% of the library's media is captioned. Everything that's purchased either is captioned or there's permission to caption it. So, that's a really good trend. The other thing was, in 2009, we worked to develop a promotional video to really advertise the policy internally to faculty and staff, and to talk about why captioned media was so important and how faculty could get support around captioned media, and also the Universal Design for Learning benefits of captioned media. And that video is actually still used today, it's called "*Why Captioned Media?*"

The other thing that's kind of interesting is that Anne and I presented at an international conference of disability service providers in post-secondary education in 2010. And we talked about the policy and the video, and we had a lot of interest. Even today Anne gets a lot of calls across North America about our policy. So it's something that we still work at. The compliance issues are ongoing, the education pieces are ongoing. But it truly is not only very good for Deaf and hard-of-hearing students, but the Universal Design benefits, like classrooms that don't have great acoustics... there's a lot of research that captioning helps students who may not have English as a first language in terms of recall of information... noisy classrooms... all kinds of things. So, I think that's a policy that George Brown should be really proud of, because it was very proactive even in terms of the AODA [*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*]. And it's just great to work at a place where you can do some things that are so forward-thinking.

STEP 2

Following up on Case Study #2

Ask participants what they think captioned media has to do with mental health and well-being.

8 mins

Ask participants what they think (based on what Karen said as well as their own thoughts about what it takes to make change) needed to be in place in order to effectively implement this policy. What did it take for it to be successful? What might be needed in order to make it even more successful today?

BREAK

 10 mins

STEP 3

Campaign and Policy Thinking Activity

20 mins

Tell participants that you will now do an activity together that gets the idea-generating part of their brain working. Distribute one **cue card or small piece of paper** to each person and instruct everybody to use this paper to write down one thing about the way their school works today that they think negatively impacts student mental health.

Give them a bit of time to think and write. Once it seems like everybody has written down an idea, collect the papers and split everybody into groups of 3 or 4.

Shuffle the papers and give each small group one of them. Based on the issue written on the paper they've been given, their task is now to collectively come up with:

- One policy-based solution to this issue, and
- One campaign idea addressing this issue, which must involve students.

Tell participants that there is only one rule for this activity: "remove all roadblocks!" This means that nobody is allowed to say things like "that's not realistic," or "that would be too expensive," or "admin would never get on board with this." Remind them that change-making is "imagination work," and that it's important not to get too bogged down in practicalities before you've really had the chance to explore your ideas.

After the groups have had time to think about ideas and discuss them, bring everybody back together and ask willing groups to share their ideas. Debrief in whatever way seems appropriate. For example, you might ask participants:

- How easy or hard was it to come up with policy or campaign ideas?
- What do you think might stop people from thinking about ideas for change at this scope and scale? How do you think we might overcome these barriers?



Section 6

Strategies for Making Change

Building Tools for Change

 15 mins

STEP 1

Case Study #3: Building Tools for Change

12 mins

Introduce the third case study by explaining that sometimes you see a change that needs to happen, but you also know that some serious work is going to be needed before you can get there.

Ask participants to imagine a car that's driving along a road from point A to point B, but the road has caved in between the two points. Explain that "Building tools for change" is about doing the work to fix the road, or creating the building blocks that are going to be needed in order to get where we need to be.

“ This case study features an alliance between GBC's Centre for Preparatory and Liberal Studies, a research group led by Jenny Horsman called Spiral Community Resource Group, and a community literacy organization called Parkdale Project Read. We'll talk more about alliances later. In this case, the CPLS faculty involved in the project saw their "Point B" as being a college community that is trauma-informed, which means that everybody has an understanding of how experiences of trauma and violence impact learning. The road cave-in, so to speak, is that very few people outside of CPLS and a few other programs had this knowledge. So this alliance set to work on filling that gap by developing an online resource designed to help faculty, students, and administrators better understand how students who have experience trauma and/or violence in their lives can learn effectively.

Introduce video for Case Study #3 by saying that the group will hear directly from three GBC faculty who were involved in this project, named Min Kaur, Nadine Sookermany, and Heather Lash.

Show Case Study #3's video.

Note to facilitator about choosing your own Case Study #3:

The Learning and Violence Project's online toolkit was chosen for this case study because it represented an attempt to fill a significant gap in institutional knowledge at GBC. "Building Tools for Change" doesn't have to be an educational project, though—it could be about creating a physical space to help a school reach mental health-related goals, it could be about a project designed to give under-resourced students resources so they can be enabled as agents of social change, or something similar. The basic principle is that people are working to build something without which the desired change couldn't happen.

Transcript of Case Study #3 video:

Interviewer: Tell me about the Learning and Violence project.

Nadine: Well, the project itself came from community. It was funded by a federal funding agency, and a group of folks came together, community, faculty, and the leadership here as well, and decided this was an important issue that needed to be explored. We knew students had named violence, had named trauma, had named issues of systemic oppressions like poverty, racism, and ability, gender expression, sexuality, all of those pieces were being named. And what we thought was: "Let's figure out how to pull that into all areas of the college," so faculty teaching, support, admin, sort of every way that a student enters into the institution. And that's really what the beginning thoughts were. And from there we ended up with three tools. One is a community tool, which isn't exactly about the institution itself. But really what we worked on together was the college tool, and then Heather.... You can talk about the student tool?

Heather: Sure, amazing. My focus was a little bit more with faculty and instructors and students, and sort of the classroom experience. It seems that when people have been through really tough times around violence of all kinds... catastrophic stuff, and the daily grind of systemic stuff... when people have been through tough times, they equip themselves with strategies. These are excellent strategies that keep people sane, and keep people even alive. And the problem is that these strategies get in the way of learning, because if you are in a state of being where you feel like you need to protect yourself, or there's some kind of emergency, then you're in the exact state of being where you can't learn, where you can't keep your thoughts straight, where you can't even physically stay in the room sometimes, when you can't remember things and draw connections between ideas.

So, the idea is to set up a learning space that is really, really safe, and really names these things clearly. That says, "Okay, you have these strategies that have served you well. But they are the exact habits that get in the way of learning." So, we did a pilot course where we asked folks who self-identified as having been through violence and/or trauma, and self-identifying that they think that this stuff is the stuff that gets in the way of their learning. And so we got people together for a pilot course to try out some approaches and some curriculum that might help people strategize to find ways into learning anyway. So if you're being triggered by somebody and you want to leave the room and you can't learn when you're in this state, how do we name and sort of work with and through those triggers to say, "Okay, here they are!", and let's call it what it is, and how do we stay in the room anyway?

So it's a little bit about how instructors respond to those strategies, you know? Because often those strategies look like the person just isn't paying attention, or it looks like they're just really aggressive, or... you know what I mean? It looks like they don't care, maybe. But maybe they care desperately, and are fighting really hard to stay present. Anyway, so we worked to sort of gather together some curriculum and some approaches... took that curriculum into a sort of modular online toolkit that is five modules, and each of the five modules address a different impact that violence can have on learning. And you work through them... there's

reading and writing stuff, and video stuff, and artistic stuff, and all sorts of modalities for folks to work with alone and in groups. And so that was my bit, to write that out as curriculum, and to run that pilot course with my colleague Jo Petite. And I was really grateful, actually, to have the chance to develop that. The hope is that that curriculum continues to live in classrooms at George Brown. I hope people can find it.

Min: So, when you go to the website, learningandviolence.net, what you'll find are all these tools. And the most important thing, I think, about it is for people who work in the college, who are support workers, who are frontline folks, even faculty... when you come into contact with a student, part of the student experience in the college is that they need to experience a space that's whole, in terms of their wellness. That they can go to this website and look at all these tools, as everyone here has said... but also for support workers and faculty to understand what and how violence impacts us in multiple ways, and to support our students to navigate through the space, which can be really big, which can be really overwhelming, and it can really make your day or it can ruin your day. So, you don't have to have a degree or some specialization as a counsellor to support or to recognize the signs of what someone might be experiencing. And like we said, it might be as simple as seeing someone who looks really lost in a hallway, and recognizing and going: "How can I support you to get to where you need to go?" And it could be as simple as that.

Nadine: Yeah, and I think again, going back to the initial piece is... you know, the college is an institution where community and education meet. And so this tool really is a great way to support not only faculty, not only educators, but also every kind of stakeholder, including the student. And it's more than tools... more than strategies... I think that a lot of people think, well, 'I don't really know this thing called, you know, systemic violence, or trauma, or – like Min said – being a counsellor. Like, I'm not really that... I don't have those skills.' And I think what this tool does is really helps you see that it's more than that. It's a whole... kind of holistic approach, it's a pedagogical tool... but it's really for everyone. So, yeah... I think it's a great thing that we worked on together. I hope you check it out!

STEP 2

Following up on Case Study #3

Show participants the online toolkits described in the video, which can be found at <http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm>.

3 mins

Ask participants for their thoughts on the value of this tool. Knowing that the goal was for this to be widely shared throughout the college community, how might they choose to spread the word about it if they were in charge?

Section 7

Strategies for Making Change

Act in Small Ways Together

 15 mins

STEP 1

Case Study #4: Act in Small Ways Together

Remind participants that while not everybody will have the opportunity to work on a big initiative like the ones that have been described so far, the lessons of collective action apply to everybody, even those who just choose to do things a little differently with their immediate coworkers. Explain that this is because anything we do together is necessarily stronger than what we take on alone.

17 mins

Tell participants that the fourth case study (and the final video) is one where a team of coworkers made a decision to collectively improve their knowledge of student mental health issues through professional development.

“ When I found out that every support staff in the Centre for Construction and Engineering Technologies has been fully trained in Mental Health First Aid, I knew I had to find out the back-story of this collective commitment to learning. We’ll let Erin Agnew, the Manager of Budget and Special Projects in CCET, tell you a bit about how this came to be.

Show Case Study #4 Video.

Note to facilitator about choosing your own Case Study #4:

The training that staff in the Centre for Construction and Engineering Technologies did together is just one example of a small group of staff making a collective decision to work differently in service of student (or staff) well-being. The case study you choose to represent this kind of collective action truly could be anything. Be sure to choose something that has clear impacts not only on the objective of the group, but also on group relationship-building, alignment, and cohesiveness.

Transcript of Case Study #4 video:

Interviewer: So, let me know... what prompted you to start thinking about mental health and well-being in your supervision, and in the training of your staff?

Erin: Well, I think like in most areas of... not even the college, but in society these days, we had been experiencing and seeing more and more students who were showing signs of issues that weren’t so much to do with their actual schooling—although, of course, stress and pressure could trigger it. But we did realize that there seemed to be a lot of students that were possible showing some kind of mental health issue. And my staff, who are the frontline student support staff at the Centre for Construction and Engineering Technologies, have been coming to me and sort of saying, like... you know, “We don’t feel that... you know... we can guess, but we don’t really know for sure, and we also don’t really know how to help them.”

And they thought that maybe if they took something that was a little bit more of a structured type of workshop by professionals, that it might be helpful for them to deal with students who are in crisis. And I thought that was a great idea. I'm going back probably about four years now, that I thought: "Where can I get something that would help our staff?"

So, I had talked to our Employee Assistance Program, and they sent a couple of people... we worked back and forth about how to structure it. It was an afternoon workshop that was opened up to our support staff, both the ones that would be in the offices, and also our technologists that work with students in the shops. And it was very successful... you know, the people that came really got a lot out of it. I think what happened that was what we were hoping is that it gave them confidence to be able to help students. And so it worked both ways. It also, you know, makes you recognize things within yourself that, you know... and your colleagues. It's not just the students that might have these kind of issues. You're working with people that might, and sometimes you can recognize things within yourself.

So, that was the first sort of, I guess, "kick at the can." And then I found out that through our Staff Development, that there was this certificate... two-day workshop that we could get called the Mental Health First Aid. And so, I really... I took it, and along with my staff, we took this. And it was also something that was really helpful. Now, our students that... what we call our 'peer liaisons' are now taking this Mental Health First Aid course also, because when they get students who are coming to either get tutored, or... they realize that a part of it is maybe things that they're dealing with, as far as like a disability, and not knowing how to handle it at the school, and... you know, really for us to be able to recognize it and then send people to our official kind of Counselling area... and I know I've got feedback from our Counselling area that says that it's really great that we can work that way with them. So... that's kind of how we've started initiating things that are helpful within our division, but I also just think that it's a way to start small, and a way to sort of empower the staff and also make them feel like they are really assisting their students to the best of their abilities.

STEP 2

Following up
on Case
Study #4

Ask participants what they think the impact of an entire team going to a training together would be. Discuss possible impacts on team morale, confidence, skill, etc.

8 mins

Section 8

Strategies for Making Change

 15 mins

Carve Out Space

STEP 1

Case Study #5:
Act in Small
Ways Together

Explain that sometimes when a group of people, or even a set of ideas, is marginalized or threatened by the way things are, extra effort needs to go into protecting them and making sure that they're safe. "Carving out space" is about doing exactly that. Note that this isn't about segregation—it's about creating temporary sanctuaries that people can retreat into when their daily spaces don't represent them or aren't the safest places for them to be.

5 mins

Tell participants that there are three important examples of carving out space at GBC today: the spaces run by Indigenous Services, the work of the Black Student Success Network, and the space run by the Community Action Centre.

STEP 2

'Carve out
space' activity

Break participants into three groups, and hand each group a description of one of the three services listed above. Ask them to discuss what the potential impact of initiatives like the one they've been assigned are on the mental health and well-being of the communities they serve.

10 mins

Once a reasonable amount of time has passed, bring the large group back together and ask each group to read aloud the description they were handed and summarize what they discussed. Encourage the rest of the group to add any benefits that they can think of that haven't been mentioned.

Ask participants to spend their break thinking about one thing that they could do (or start doing regularly) to support the mission of any or all of these three important initiatives in their role at GBC.

BREAK

 10 mins



Section 9

Strategies for Making Change

Support Students by Supporting Staff

 15 mins

STEP 1

Case Study #6: Support Students by Supporting Staff

Welcome participants to share the support strategy that they thought of over the break, but only if they want to.

10 mins

Tell participants that the last case study that will be explored in the workshop was a project started by a long-time faculty member at GBC, Jackie Macchione.

“ Jackie was a contract faculty member at GBC for many years, and when she went and did her Masters in Education she decided to focus her thesis work on issues facing contract faculty, and particularly models of professional development that are well-suited to the needs of contract faculty. You may know that contract faculty don't often get the same support in their professional development as full-timers, even though they are often doing the same work. For her thesis Jackie piloted a PD model at GBC called “faculty learning circles,” where she recruited a number of her colleagues in the Pre-Community Services program to participate and ran regular meet-ups with them off-campus.

Note that a faculty learning circle is basically a collaborative learning process where teachers can learn from each other. Faculty in Jackie's FLC did and discussed readings together, discussed thorny issues that came up for them in their teaching, and even visited each other's classes and gave each other constructive feedback on teaching practices. This Faculty Learning Circle was a resounding success, both as a professional development opportunity but also as a chance to build community with one's peers in an environment where support isn't always easy to find.

Ask participants what they think professional development for contract faculty has to do with student mental health and well-being.

STEP 2

Bringing it all together

Tell participants that before you move on to the next section of the workshop, you want to take a moment to look at all the case studies you've just explored as a set. Ask them: are there any themes that weave through each of the case studies? What did they all have in common? Some examples might include:

5 mins

- They all included people working together as a group;
- They all required at least one person to articulate that there was a problem in need of a solution;
- They all really benefited from the diversity of their group.

Section 10

Strategies for Working Together

 35 mins

STEP 1

Introducing
the section

Tell participants that while we all have great ideas for how things could be different in our communities, our workplaces, and the world, successful action usually requires a mix of important factors. These factors might include time, resources, good strategy, or sometimes just luck.

2 mins

Note that the one thing that any action requires in order to make it effective and sustainable is a good group of people that knows how to work together successfully.

“ While our North American media likes to romanticize the idea of the lone hero (think: Martin Luther King Jr., Erin Brockovich, Terry Fox, Harvey Milk, etc.), literally no substantial societal change has ever occurred because of the actions of just one person. It’s always about a group, every time, even when the contributions of the collective get ignored in our historical accounts.

STEP 2

Alliances

Introduce the concept of “alliance,” and tell participants that in this workshop it will be used interchangeably with the word “coalition.” Explain that while in the context of a post-secondary institution the language used to describe a group like this is more likely to be a “committee,” or a “working group,” or a “steering committee,” there is such a rich body of thought to draw from on the topic of coalition and alliance-building in social movement literature that it is worth understanding these concepts as well.

8 mins

Explain that an alliance, at its core, is simply a group of people that comes together to accomplish a specific goal that will benefit them all, and where the goal they are trying to accomplish is beyond what any of them could do individually. Note there are a couple of key aspects in this definition. One is that the work of an alliance benefits all members in some way, meaning that every person involved has some stake in the outcome. The second key aspect is that the work *requires* a group in order to be accomplished.

Give an example relevant to your school of work that *wouldn’t* require a committee (that is, one person could reasonably do it alone), and work that should involve a committee (that is, it requires more than one person to be effective).

Detail some of the reasons why one might form an alliance. Some examples include:

- In the face of a threat:

“ For example, say the Ontario government was about to pass a piece of legislation that you know will hurt students. You might decide to form an alliance to campaign against this law being passed. Or, say the law is already coming down the pipes; you might form an alliance to start to strategize around how we’re going to reduce the harm that this legislation is going to have on our students.

- In the case of shared beliefs: Similar to the “carve out space” avenue of change discussed earlier, explain that sometimes alliances are a way for people with marginalized opinions to band together and keep the spark of their passion for change alive.
- Out of a need for resource interdependence: Articulate that alliances can be useful tool in cases of resource scarcity.

“ For example, [pointing at different people] if you’ve got some money, and you’ve got some human resources, and you’ve got a room we can meet in, and you’ve got some connections to the administration, then we can pool that all together and be a much stronger force than we would be alone.

Ask the participants if anybody has ever been a part of an alliance, coalition, or committee before, whether at work, or in another environment (for example, a parent council, a neighbourhood committee, an advisory board, a garage band, etc.). If anybody says yes, ask them to share what their alliance was all about.

For those who said yes, ask them: what were some of the advantages of working as an alliance? Why not just work alone?

Elaborate on the answers they give by offering any of the following advantages (if they haven’t listed them already):

- Increased resources
- More creative solutions: Explain that a diversity of perspectives around the table results in better strategy because there are more ideas working together.
- Spread out the workload: Remind participants that making change is hard work, and the more people there are to share that labour, the better.

- Increase community awareness: Note that when, for example, there are many people working on a project from a number of different departments, they will leave the coalition meetings and go back to their teams and talk about the work that they're doing, which will make the knowledge of what's happening much more widespread than if the work was siloed in one department.
- Allow for increased risk-taking:

“ I always think about what it took for sexual harassment laws to be created in this province. In the past sexual harassment was so widespread in the workplace that if one woman spoke out against what was happening to her, she risked getting fired. But when ten women, or fifty women, or a thousand women speak out against these hostile working conditions, their numbers protect them in their risk-taking.

Ask participants who have experience working in alliances whether they have experienced disadvantages to working in this way. What makes it difficult?

Elaborate on the answers they give by offering any of the following disadvantages (if they haven't listed them already):

- Requires time and skill: Explain that the more people who are involved, the more time the process will take, and that facilitating the process of a group can sometimes take skill.
- Results are not always readily apparent: Elaborate that with a slower process, the group may not always see the results of the work straight away.
- Motivation and enthusiasm may be difficult to maintain: Conclude that, given the above two challenges, it can sometimes be difficult to maintain motivation and enthusiasm.

“ I've been a part of group projects that have felt like they were taking forever, and what I like to remind myself when I'm frustrated by this is that this is what democracy looks like! The reason why so many things in the capitalist world we live in work so efficiently is because of hierarchy, because a few people are making decisions about things that impact many without everybody's input. So if we want things to work in a way that are truly collaborative and where the people who are impacted by decisions get to have a voice, then we need to have patience and view for the long-term.

Ask participants if anybody has any last thoughts about the disadvantages or advantages of working as part of an alliance.

STEP 3**Case Scenario**

Explain that in order to explore the various steps involved in forming an alliance, the group will think through an imaginary scenario that is actually quite real. Introduce the scenario: **International students experience disproportionate amounts of stress and emotional hardship while at school.**

Tell participants that in this imaginary scenario, they are in a position to do something about this issue. Explain that first, it's important to return to the concept discussed in the beginning of the workshop: the social determinants of health.

Ask participants what the social determinants of health are in the issue of international students' mental health challenges. Affirm all answers, but make sure that the social determinants discussed include systemic factors like issues with the immigration system, racism, and higher tuition fees for international students (not just things like homesickness and culture shock).

Once participants have a good list going, ask them for suggestions of different things that could be done to address this issue. Remind them that they could either "make something better" or "start something new," and that they could follow one of the six avenues of change discussed earlier if that inspires them. Affirm all answers, but see if they can think of ideas that are truly systemic in nature (e.g. policy-based, preventative, big-picture).

Hand out the "Simple Strategies for Working Together" handout.

Tell participants that at the beginning of an alliance, one of the first steps is to form a core working group that is comprised of stakeholders who a) have the most to *offer* this kind of work, and b) have the most to *gain* from this kind of work.

“ This might be controversial given the size of some college committees, but I believe that the ideal size of a core alliance working group ranges between 4 and 10 stakeholders. In the case of a post-secondary institution, 'stakeholders' can either be passionate individuals representing themselves, or people representing departments. Any less than 4 stakeholders, and don't have a lot of power... any more than 10, and the process becomes too unwieldy and ineffectual. This doesn't mean that other people can't be involved in the process, you might bring them on as partners later on, which we'll talk about in a bit. The core working group are the people who are going to drive and lead the action, so you want to make sure you're a good size.

Choose one of the proposed change strategies and run with it. Ask the participants that if they were forming a core working group to take the lead on this project, who would they invite around the table? Remind them that who they invite could be individual people, or representatives of groups/departments. Generate a list of working group members together.

Once the list is complete, ask participants to imagine that they are working group members preparing for their first alliance meeting. Explain that the first alliance meeting is all about laying our individual agendas out on the table, being transparent about what each stakeholder can offer the group, and getting on the same page about what your group is doing together.

“ Often we treat the word ‘agenda’ like it’s a dirty word, but in reality we all have agendas, especially when we’re joining an alliance as part of our jobs. You all have an agenda in coming to this workshop, and I have an agenda in teaching it. The problem with agendas is when we hold them like cards close to our chest, rather than being open and honest about them. Hiding our agendas makes our work competitive, as we all make plays to get our objectives met. Sharing our agendas, however, means that we can actually support each other in getting what we need out of this process. For example, if an international student joined this alliance, maybe they might articulate two reasons why they’re there: one is that they’re passionate about this issue, and the other is that they’re looking for Canadian experience to put on their resume. That’s great! If we know that about them, maybe we can give a role in the group that has a fancy title that will look great on their resume. Agenda doesn’t have to be a dirty word if it just becomes a way for us to communicate our needs, strengths, wants, and limitations.

Mention that a great way of figuring out whether your objectives for working together as an alliance are aligned is by writing a mandate or goal statement.

Point out that the formation of your working group doesn’t have to limit you to only working with those stakeholders. Note that the working group members drive the process, but you may choose to bring on additional partners to lend their expertise at time-limited points in the process. For example, if you were organizing an event, the Marketing and Communications department might not have time to join your working group but they may sit in on a couple of meetings to support you in coming up with a strategy to promote your event to staff and students.

STEP 4**Building
healthy
alliance
cultures**

Tell participants that you will end this workshop by discussing how to sustain a healthy culture in your alliance. Explain that often ideas for change start with a bang, but then fizzle out because there is no real plan made for how you will work together as a group and to make your efforts last. Emphasize that ultimately the most important element in a lasting alliance is not good strategy, good goals, or good marketing... it's good relationships.

Draw participants' attention to the Simple Strategies for Working Together handout that was passed around earlier, and particularly the side that says 'Some things to consider in building a healthy alliance culture'.

Ask participants if anybody has ever heard of the difference between "task" functions and "maintenance" functions in a healthy group dynamic. Welcome anybody who has heard these terms to explain. Explain, if it has not been articulated already, that "task" functions are what get the work done, and "maintenance" functions are what work to preserve your relationships while the work is happening.

“ Both task functions and maintenance functions are important in a group, and neither is more important than the other. I've been in groups that have prioritized task functions over maintenance functions, and while we did good work for a while, everybody hated coming to those meetings and the work eventually fizzled out because of that. I've also been in groups that prioritized maintenance functions over task functions, and while we were all great friends we never got anything done! That's also not worth it. A good alliance culture has a balance of both task and maintenance functions. A very healthy alliance culture not only has a balance between these things, but sees people taking turns playing both roles, so that it's not always the same people doing the same kind of labour.

Explain that there are many other things to consider in contributing to a healthy alliance culture. Ask participants to think back to a time that they were a part of a group (whether it was a work committee, a family grouping, or the camp counsellor team they were a part of when they were sixteen) that felt *dysfunctional*, that really didn't feel like it worked well. *Without telling us what the group was*, ask participants if they are willing to share: what were the features of that group that made it feel dysfunctional?

Affirm all responses, and ask follow-up questions if appropriate.

Now, ask participants to think back to a time that they were a part of a group that felt like it really worked well. Again, without telling us what the group was, ask participants if they are willing to share: what were the features of that group that made it feel really good?

Affirm all responses, and ask follow-up questions if appropriate.

STEP 5

Conclusion

Conclude the workshop by reminding everybody that while these groups they were part of may have just seemed to be that way because of good luck or bad luck, most group dynamics are influenced by the choices that members make.

5 mins

“ Good groups are often fostered by certain group members taking care to institute a good process, or to make sure everybody’s doing okay, or to make sure everybody has a voice, or to make sure we have a good plan – whether or not these efforts are recognized and rewarded. And though it may not always seem true, we can also do something about highly dysfunctional or conflictual groups—it just means we need to do the often scary work of naming and working through conflict within our alliance. You are not powerless in the face of your group’s dynamics—if you choose to take an active role, there are actually a lot of things you can do to contribute to a healthy alliance culture.

Remind participants that, ultimately, investing in healthy alliance cultures is what truly allows our ideas for systemic change to turn into effective, sustainable collective action.

“ The most important thing for you to take away from this workshop is that systemic change is not only possible, but it’s happening! It’s happening right now, right under our noses, and it’s happened throughout the course of this school’s history, where passionate and dedicated college workers got together with a shared vision of things being different. I hope you all have the opportunity to be a part of change like this, whether big or small, in your time here at George Brown.

Thank participants for coming, and ask them to complete a workshop evaluation. Hand out the **Unit 3 evaluation form**.

