

First-Year Wellness Experience (FYWE)

INSTRUCTOR RESOURCE GUIDE





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What is the FYWE?



The First-Year Wellness Experience (FYWE) is Georgia Tech's comprehensive program designed to support **first-year undergraduate** students' personal, academic, and professional growth during their transition to campus.

FYWE addresses eight dimensions of wellness: financial, spiritual, environmental, intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and occupational.

By the end of the academic year:

- All first-year students will have opportunities to learn about and apply skills in each of the eight wellness areas.
- First-year students will build a supportive community that reinforces their individual and collective wellness.

Why do Instruction Practices Matter to Wellness?

- Students are human too. Students engaged in improving their personal and community wellness are more ready to learn and more likely to participate in class.
- Faculty who demonstrate authentic interest in their students' wellness contribute to a healthy campus culture for everyone at Georgia Tech.
- Reinforcing the FYWE content in your courses counts as a student success strategy that can be reported in your annual faculty evaluation. FYWE topics align well with small teaching pedagogy and high-impact practices.

The materials in this guide and the accompanying slides are organized around the 8 Dimensions of Wellness.



Ways to Align Your Courses with FYWE

01

Share

Share FYWE information with any co-instructors or TAs as well as with your department.

02

Use

Use the FYWE-aligned prompts provided as icebreakers or exit tickets in your courses.

03

Check out

Check out the GT Center for Teaching and Learning for more information on course design and instructional methods to increase well-being.

04

Sign up

Sign up for the SEWB all-student newsletter <https://comm.students.gatech.edu/node/494> so you can share relevant campus updates with your students.

August - September

Social Wellness

Definition: *Connecting and engaging with others and our communities in meaningful ways, having a well-developed support system, demonstrating intercultural competencies, and having a sense of belonging and inclusion.*

Instructor Tips

- Post a question for students to ask each other as they wait for class to begin. (Suggested prompts are included below.)
- Use pair & share techniques so students meet their classmates.
- Develop a discussion board in Canvas to allow students to introduce themselves and share goals/interests.
- Normalize that it may take a few weeks to settle in and make friends.
- Connect students through study groups, group activities, and team projects.
- On the first day of class, use a survey to get to know students (e.g. general interests, goals for the course, optimal learning environments, content interests)
- Create seating charts for class each week based on categories (e.g. birthday month, favorite color, hobbies, favorite sports, etc.)

Peer to Peer Discussion Prompts

- What was your favorite out-of-class activity in high school? Do you plan to continue that activity at Tech?
- Do you consider yourself an introvert or an extrovert? Why?
- How often do you hang out with people from a different background than your own?
- How do you want to develop a social life at Tech that is different from how you approached it in high school?
- What are a few questions to start a conversation with somebody you just met?
- What qualities do you most look for in a friend or teammate? Why?
- What is something uplifting that someone said or did for you? How did it make you feel?

October

Emotional Wellness

Definition: *Coping effectively with life stressors, having self-esteem, and expressing optimism, as well as being aware of our feelings, accepting the full range of emotions in self and others and expressing them appropriately.*

Instructor Tips

- Include a wellness statement in your syllabus (examples provided later in this document).
- Indicate that progress, not perfection, is your goal for students.
- Learn students' names.
- Consistently invite students to ask questions and come to drop-in/office hours.
- Provide positive and constructive, not just critical, feedback on assignments.
- Talk about the topic of mental health openly to help destigmatize it.
- Introduce students to the [Headspace app](#) (free for Tech students).
- Discuss failure, talk about recent times you've failed and how you've worked through those failures. Allow students to share their own failures and wisdom from failures.

Peer to Peer Discussion Prompts

- What is something you say to yourself that you would never say to a friend? (How could you improve your self-talk?)
- What does your body feel like when you are experiencing stress?
- Who or what makes you laugh?
- What are some ways you try to manage stress in a healthy way?
- What's the funniest movie or show you have watched?
- What brings you joy?
- What does contentment look and feel like to you?
- How can you connect with others when you and/or they are upset?
- Think about a time you failed. What wisdom did you gain from the experience?
- When do you feel the most confident?

November

Physical Wellness

Definition: *Replenishing the body through physical activity, sleep, and nutrition; conducting routine health care/screenings; and adopting preventive measures.*

Instructor Tips

- Include stretch- and/or deep breathing breaks during class.
- Tell students about a physical exercise or active hobby that has been or is meaningful to you.
- Avoid flippantly reinforcing unhealthy norms such as “all students drink” or “sleep is for the weak.”
- Incorporate class activities that get students up and moving (e.g. standing and working at the board, moving into groups in response to statements or questions).
- Schedule walk and talks with students/encourage students to schedule walking team meetings, as appropriate.
- Be mindful of individuals’ visible and invisible disabilities; make sure to provide equitable options for physical participation

Peer to Peer Discussion Prompts

- What’s your favorite way to move your body (dance, gym, martial arts, etc.)?
- What’s your favorite food?
- In what conditions have you had your most restful sleep?
- What other practices besides sleep help you feel rested?
- Do you prefer to exercise with someone else or on your own?
- What are some indoor and outdoor activities you enjoy?
- What makes you feel strong?
- What steps do you take to ensure you’re staying well?
- What physical activity would you most like to focus on? Think of a plan for how you will engage in this physical activity.
- Which activities help re-energize you?

December

Spiritual Wellness

Definition: Searching for and/or having a sense of purposeful existence and meaning in life, as well as seeking harmony with the universe, extending compassion toward self and others, practicing gratitude, and engaging in self-reflection.

Instructor Tips

- Share with students how your field of study contributes to your perception of purpose.
- Make it clear in your syllabus how you will handle absences for religious observance.
- Provide a “mindfulness minute” before class/exams to allow students to sit quietly and reflect or practice deep breathing techniques.
- Have students set goals for what they wish to accomplish in your course. Ask them to reflect on how the course may relate to their goals.
- Religious organizations at Georgia Tech*

*Spirituality may entail more than a/any faith tradition.

Peer to Peer Discussion Prompts

- What do you feel is your life’s purpose?
- What activity, hobby or interest brings you joy?
- Tell me about a time you had to be compassionate toward yourself.
- What are you most grateful for?
- What practices help you feel balanced and centered?
- When are you most at peace?
- What makes you feel connected to the world around you?
- Who inspires you the most?
- What is the most important lesson you’ve learned recently?
- One reason my life is already great is...
- Write down 3 things that went well this week. Why did they go well?

January

Financial Wellness

Definition: Having basic needs met, applying resource management skills to live within one's means, making informed financial decisions, setting realistic financial goals, and preparing for short- and long term needs or emergencies.

Instructor Tips

- What are some economic impacts of the subjects addressed in your course?
- Let students know about the food pantries on campus as well as the Green Goodbyes thrift shop where they can get free clothing and household goods.
- Publicize resources for students such as services by STAR (Students' Temporary Assistance and Resources) and Financial Aid support.
- Common gadgets are available for loan from the library.

Peer to Peer Discussion Prompts

- Is there something you think you spend too much money on? Why do you think that?
- Are you saving money for something special?
- What are the easiest parts of your budget to manage?
- Who do you go to for financial advice?
- What are some ways you keep track of your finances?
- What is one financial goal you have for the future?
- What do you find most challenging about managing your finances? Why?

February

Intellectual Wellness

Definition: Finding ways to engage in lifelong learning, expand knowledge and skills, and interact with the world through problem-solving, experimentation and curiosity, as well as thinking critically, analyzing rationally, and exploring new ideas.

Instructor Tips

- How does the USG Freedom of Expression policy intersect with course discussions and student learning?
- Suggest blogs or podcasts students can follow to learn more about topics related to your course.
- Encourage students to see help-seeking behaviors as a sign of strength. Invite a student who has gone to tutoring or PLUS sessions to share their impact.
- Study skills video. See also <https://www.success.gatech.edu/tutoring/>

Peer to Peer Discussion Prompts

- How do you define success? Who or what has influenced how you define success?
- Tell me about a time you were really curious about something. How did you learn more?
- Do you follow anyone on social media who has strong opinions different from your own? How does it feel to read their posts?
- What is one subject or skill you'd like to learn more about? Why?
- What connections do you see between the subject matter in your classes?
- How can you apply what you learned in class to other areas of your life?
- Create a bucket list for this semester.
- Something I get to do today/this week that I've always wanted to do is...

March

Occupational Wellness

Definition: Getting personal satisfaction and enrichment from work, hobbies and volunteer efforts that are consistent with one's values, goals and lifestyle, as well as taking a proactive approach to career planning and growth.

Instructor Tips

- What are some career directions for students interested in pursuing the course content as an occupation?
- Spotlight alumni with careers or other passions in your subject matter.
- Encourage students to learn more about careers that may align with their major.
- Invite students who have participated in study/work abroad, research, co-ops, or internships to share their experiences.
- Share tips on how to grow a professional network in your discipline.

Peer to Peer Discussion Prompts

- What is one interest or hobby that you want to pursue at Georgia Tech?
- Do you volunteer with any organizations or community groups? If not, what community topics interest you?
- What type of summer employment or activities are you looking for?
- What services in the Career Center might be of use to you as you prepare for your future workplace?
- How can you build your professional network?
- What information do you need to confirm your career choice...or alternatively, open up other possibilities?

April

Environmental Wellness

Definition: *Honoring the interdependent, dynamic relationship we have with our environment – whether social, natural, built or digital and our responsibility for sustaining it; occupying pleasant, nurturing, safe and stimulating spaces and places.*

Instructor Tips

- Discuss the environmental impacts of the subject matter you are teaching.
- Check out Tech's [STAR report](#) from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.
- Introduce the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and discuss how these relate to your coursework or project work.

Peer to Peer Discussion Prompts

- How often do you get to walk outside and explore campus?
- Have you visited the Eco Commons? Do you go there often?
- Do you keep track of how long you spend on your phone each day? If so, what trends have you noticed? If not, what do you find most attractive about a digital environment?
- What green spaces on campus or in your community do you know about? Which most appeal to you and why?
- What environmentally-friendly practices do you take part in? If you don't right now, are there any you think you might take up?
- How do you get to, from, and around campus (drive, bus, bike, scooter, walk, etc.)? What public transportation is available near you?
- How important is sustainability to your decision of where to live post-graduation?



Campus Conversations for any Month

- How does Georgia Tech create conditions in which students, staff and faculty can be healthy?
- How *could* Georgia Tech *better* create conditions in which students, staff and faculty can be healthy?
- What aspects of campus culture, including policies and practices, have the most benefit to well-being?
- What policies or practices should be discontinued to remove barriers to well-being?

Respond anonymously online at:

<https://wellbeingroadmaps.gatech.edu/>

Engagement Tips for Larger Classes

- **Think-Pair-Share:** Ask students to pair up (or sometimes groups of 2-4) and remind them to include students nearby who might be sitting alone and to introduce themselves.
- Assigning students permanent discussion groups/teams. This helps students **build trust and community**.
- Offer a **reminder** for students to share as they are comfortable sharing. They may not want to share their situation but can share some of their feelings or strategies for a situation.
- **Set expectations** in your syllabus for class discussion (e.g. being engaged as opposed to on devices, talk with classmates, etc.).
- Consider using TurningPoint/PointSolutions or other digital polling to **share in-the-moment responses** (less group discussion but leads to a large class discussion) and lead discussion based on this. Ask students to share ideas with the larger group.

Helpful links for teaching large classes:

Incorporating Discussions in Large Classes: https://ctl.gatech.edu/best-practices/engaging-students/discussion/large_classes

Teaching Large Classes: <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-large-classes/>

Wellness Skill Outcomes

SOCIAL WELLNESS

- I maintain a network of supportive friends, family and social contacts.
- I am satisfied with my social life.
- I have someone I can talk to about my feelings (e.g. struggles, etc.).
- I am accepting of others.
- I am able to prioritize my own needs by saying “no” to others’ requests for my time.


EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

- I find ways to cope with stress (e.g. exercise, meditation, social support, self-care activities, etc.)
- I feel good about myself and believe others like me for who I am.
- I am flexible and able to adapt/adjust to life’s changes in a positive way.
- I can express all ranges of feelings (i.e. hurt, sadness, fear, anger, joy, etc.) and manage emotion-related behaviors in a healthy way.
- I do not let my emotions get the best of me. I think before I act.

PHYSICAL WELLNESS

- I participate in physical activity for 30 minutes at least 3 times a week.
- To feel rested in the morning, I get 7-9 hours of sleep each night.
- To stay hydrated, I drink water throughout the day.
- I include fruits and vegetables into my diet.
- If I have a health concern, I seek advice from health care professionals.

SPIRITUAL WELLNESS

- Throughout the week, I make time for relaxation.
 - I have a belief system in place (religious, agnostic, atheist, spiritual, etc.).
 - I am willing to learn the views of others.
 - I am active in communities or causes I care about.
 - I work to create balance and peace within my interpersonal relationships.
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Wellness Skill Outcomes

FINANCIAL WELLNESS

- I am able to set and stick to a budget each month, so I don't run out of money.
- I know about the financial aid resources that I am for which I am eligible.
- I save money regularly.
- I keep my financial information safe by using secure passwords, PINs/dual authentication, etc.
- I check my bank statements/accounts each month.

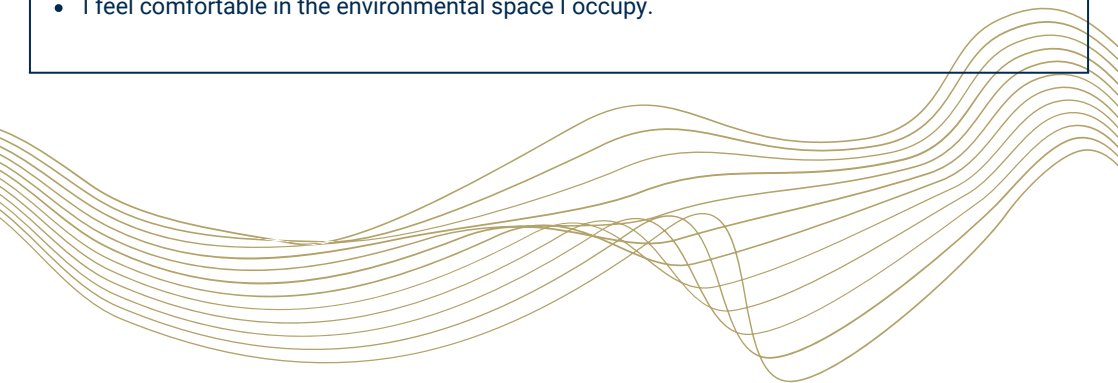
INTELLECTUAL WELLNESS

- I seek personal growth by learning new skills.
- I look for ways to use my creative and critical thinking skills.
- I am open to new ideas.
- When necessary, I know how to access academic resources.
- I stay informed about current issues (e.g., social, political, etc.)

OCCUPATIONAL WELLNESS

- I enjoy multiple aspects of my life.
- I know what skills are necessary for the occupations in which I am interested.
- I strive to develop good work habits (dependability, initiative, etc.).
- I have confidence in my job search skills (resume writing, interviewing, cover letters, networking, etc.).
- I manage my time effectively.

ENVIRONMENTAL WELLNESS

- I spend time outdoors enjoying nature.
 - I reduce, reuse and recycle products.
 - I try to lessen my environmental impact.
 - Whenever possible, I walk, bike, use public transportation or carpool.
 - I feel comfortable in the environmental space I occupy.
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Sample

Student Wellness Syllabus Statement

As of August 2024, there is no requirement for instructors to include a wellness syllabus statement. However, some instructors wish to include such a resource, and for them, this sample serves as a suggestion. If you adopt this syllabus for your course, please let us know by emailing heather.zesiger@gatech.edu. Thank you!

Student Wellness

At Georgia Tech, you are recognized as a human being navigating life's ups and downs. You may experience stressors that can impact both your academic journey and your personal wellness. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing disruptive challenges, seeking help is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you. A [comprehensive list](#) of student services has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-Being, and you can find additional student wellness information at this [link](#).

In an emergency, please call Georgia Tech Police Department at (404) 894-2500 or 911.

For immediate mental health support, you can call the Center for Mental Health Care and Resources at (404) 894-2575.

You can call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org for yourself or if you are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support.

Additional Instructor Resources

Request Wellness Stickers and Postcards	https://forms.office.com/r/USimfkyva0 <i>While supplies last.</i>
<i>How do we well?</i> Online input form	https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/11666ffb6b32406db645b666a39c8930
Sign up to receive the All-student newsletter	https://comm.students.gatech.edu/node/494
Talking with students about...	Talking to Students About Their Mental Health Center for Mental Health Care & Resources (gatech.edu). Facilitating Classroom Discussions About Loss Center for Mental Health Care & Resources (gatech.edu).

Student Resources



Wellness Resources for Students	https://studentlife.gatech.edu/services/mental-health-well-being
Student Resource List for Concerns and Inquiries	https://students.gatech.edu/student-resource-guide
Engage at Georgia Tech	https://studentengagement.gatech.edu/
Georgia Tech Student Resources in Canvas	https://gatech.instructure.com/courses/245818

Gratitude

This instructor guide is the outcome of cooperation between several individuals, units and cabinet areas. Principal contributors include Usha Nair-Reichert, Rebecca Pope-Ruark, John Stein, Christy Stewart, & Cassie Thomas.

Please share your experience using these materials in this [short feedback form](#).

If you have questions about this guide, please contact Heather Zesiger, Director, Cultivate Well-Being Action & Transformation, heather.zesiger@gatech.edu.



**Cultivate Well-Being Action
and Transformation**