Facilitating the Development of Evidence-Based Self-Management Strategies in Australian University Students

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Why should we be concerned with student self-management, success, & well-being?

Self-management = the capacity to work effectively toward achieving meaningful goals, and to be flexible in the face of setbacks

Need for greater self-management capacity in university students is based on:

1. argument that graduates should be more psychologically literate (evidence-based self-management capacity is a component of psychological literacy) (APA, 2011; Cranney & Dunn, 2011a,2011b; Cranney et al., 2012; Sokol & Kuëbl, 2011)

2. argument that self-development, which is a component of self-management, is an essential pre-requisite to professional development (Tano & Vines, 2009)

3. research indicating that university students experience substantial levels of distress, and distress predicts poor academic outcomes (eg Andrews & Chong, 2011; Field et al., 2014; Larcombe et al., 2014; Stallman, 2010)

ie self-management should be a key 21st Century graduate capability
Thriving and the population approach: continuum

Strategies produce a small shift in the population mean on the mental health spectrum (modified from Huppert, 2005).

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How can we support increased student self-management capacity, success, & well-being?

OLT/UNSW SEF funding (2012-2015+): Four components:

1. Support of university-wide initiatives
2. Initiation of network (including mini-projects); staff PD
3. Curricular programs:
   - PSYC1031: Psych. Science of Resilience;
   - Integration of self-management into other courses
4. Extra-curricular and resourcing curricular initiatives, eg:
   - Student Minds
   - Video Resources
**Approach:**

- APPLY EVIDENCE-BASED SELF-MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES
- ACHIEVE MEANINGFUL GOALS = SUCCESS
- INCREASED SELF-MANAGEMENT CAPACITY, WELL-BEING, SELF-EFFICACY

"Upward spiral"

Yes, this is over-simplified, and does not take into account NOT achieving your goals and the importance of learning from that experience (ask Jacky about that later)

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**Core activities (to undertake in the first year):**

1. Providing opportunities within the formal curriculum for students to learn health promoting knowledge and skills – such as resilience, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and time and task management.
2. Developing curricula and co-curricular offerings that build students' self-knowledge (e.g., values and character strengths) so they are better able to make decisions and identify career pathways consistent with their values, interests and strengths.
3. Developing print and online information and resources that build students' knowledge and skills for mental wellbeing (e.g., mental health essentials, stress management, mindfulness, self-compassion, autonomous motivation, managing emotions).

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**Two main areas of overlap with your project:**

- Engaging curricula
- Supportive environments
- Mental health knowledge & skills
- Student wellbeing
- Access to services
- Community awareness
Curricular programs:

- **PSYC1031: Psychological Science of Resilience**
- **Integration of self-management into other courses**

**PSYC1031—Psychological Science of Resilience**

Psychological science regarding:

RESILIENCE STRATEGIES → ACHIEVE MEANINGFUL GOALS → SUCCESS → INCREASED RESILIENCE & WELL-BEING

*Orange* = categories of evidence-based resilience strategies that underpin the structure of course

**Note:** *Self-management* = the capacity to work effectively toward achieving meaningful goals, *and* to be flexible in the face of setbacks
Less decrease in well-being in target course (PSYC1031, compared to comparison course (PSYC1011), during stress-filled final weeks of semester

**Challenges**

- Maintaining academic rigour and emphasis on psychological science
- Ensuring a safe scaffolded environment
- Novelty of flipped format for students—pre-practical requirement
- Balance between knowledge, self-knowledge, and application to others
  - *Scaling up and out...*
2015: Scaling up and embedding strategies in large psychology and non-psychology courses...

**Intended OUTCOMES =**

(a) learn *which of the self-management strategies* are the most promising in different contexts

(b) through partnerships, support *staff capacity-building* in large first- and second-year courses

(c) contribute to improving student success at UNSW

“The self-management resources will include *topics of interest to most students, such as time-management, procrastination and study strategies.*” [these themes identified in 2013 Community of Practice meetings]

**Courses:** Biology, Chemistry, Business & Law, Psychology...

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**Topics (ie SM strategies based on psychological science)**

**STARTED** with (thefridge.org.au):

• Goal and time management
• Motivation management
• Study and work management
• Well-being management

“ENDED” with (Moodle Section):

• Goal setting
• Scheduling time
• Study strategies
• Procrastination and motivation management
• Assessment feedback and reflection
• Stressors vs. distress
• Balancing life
• Mindfulness meditation and learning effectiveness
• Emotional management for a balanced life
• Quiz and exam preparation
Curricular

OUTCOMES SO FAR:

• SM strategies need to relate to their core assessments (or be assessable)

• Students have different needs—allow choice; "just in time" alerts re resources; normalize help-seeking

• Increasing interest amongst educators

• Manual & 2015 report: unistudentsuccess.com/the-fridge/

ONGOING:

• Courses are continuing with adaptable Moodle section on “Self-management for effective learning”

• Continuing development of resources/websites eg thefridge.org.au

• Continuing data analysis and write-up—initial report on Business & Law ( Cranney, Nithy & Cejnar, 2016)

• Continuing to contribute to university-wide mental health strategy; hope to integrate your project findings
Student Minds®

- is the student voice on mental health: an outreach program driven by student volunteers – supported by CAPS.
- Student Minds® aims to raise awareness, cultivate knowledge and develop skills that contribute to student success, wellbeing and resilience.
- Student Minds® volunteering is AHEGS recognized upon completion of necessary hours.

Students can contribute to Student Minds® at one of two levels:
- Student Minds® Executive - Complete 10 hours of training and a minimum of 20 hours volunteering.
- Student Minds® Volunteer - Complete 10 hours of training and a minimum of 10 hours volunteering.

- Growing influence
- 3rd Annual conference 2016
Bibliography/Resources

psychliteracy.com   unistudentsuccess.com   thefridge.org.au   student.unsw.edu.au/mindsmart


