

Managing End-of-Semester Stress

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As the semester draws to a close, many faculty members face mounting stress, often compounded by the flood of emails, back-to-back online meetings, and other virtual responsibilities. The demands of personal commitments and faculty-related responsibilities such as grading and providing student support while balancing their well-being can be especially overwhelming. Practical tips for improving wellness can reduce stress and positively impact emotional and social well-being, helping ensure a successful semester-end. One area that can be improved is digital health.

Dr. Janet M. Joiner, PhD, LMSW, refers to digital health as digital mental health. She defines digital mental health as the influence of technology and virtual tools on our social and emotional well-being. She highlights the connection between longer work hours and an increased reliance on digital tools with increased mental health challenges. Over-exposure to blue light and the mental strain of navigating digital platforms further exacerbate stress levels. Dr. Joiner's tips toward digital wellness provide faculty with an effective means of managing stress and fostering a healthier work-life balance.

Dr. Joiner's Tips for Digital Wellness



- Acknowledge that life's challenges can impact our ability to maintain quality mental health
- Be transparent when discussing mental health issues to reduce the stigma of seeking help
- Establish weekly rituals for guided meditation or group exercise (Pickleball, Tai Chi, Yoga)

Mark Ostach, author of *Courage to Connect*, uses his art of storytelling to share personal experiences that demonstrate the need for human connection. He offers strategies for improving online and offline connections by managing digital wellness, fostering human connections, and becoming conscious leaders. The following tips from *Courage to Connect* can assist faculty in mitigating end-of-semester stress.

Digital Wellness

- Eliminate digital devices at mealtime
- Prevent the use of digital devices in class or provide temporary holding spaces
- Commit to a digital fast for several hours

Foster Human Connections

- Play board games with family or friends
- Give back, do something for someone else
- Reach out to long-lost friends or family

Be a Conscience Leader

- Express thankfulness
- Consider the perspectives of others
- Take responsibility for your mental and physical well-being

End-of-semester stress from digital demands and professional responsibilities impacts faculty's mental health and productivity. Prioritizing digital health will alleviate stress and restore balance. Examples include acknowledging life's challenges, establishing weekly rituals, fostering connections, and being transparent, which will support a peaceful semester end.