

Promoting a Culture of Care

Expressions of care towards others can take many forms. From simply asking, “how are you feeling” to acts of kindness, everyone benefits when we intentionally demonstrate care towards others. Below are a few considerations to help promote a culture of care within and around teaching and learning.

- **Recognize trauma behaviors in students:** Behaviors related to stress, distress, and crisis can be subtle. Take a moment to recognize any of the following [signs of emotional suffering](#) in students’ behaviors. Consider talking with the student to help assess their behavioral state:
 - Personality change
 - Uncharacteristically agitated, anxious, angry
 - Withdrawn or isolating themselves from others
 - Poor self-care or taking part in risky behavior
 - Seem overcome with hopelessness or overwhelmed by circumstances
- **Instructor presence:** Provide multiple ways where students can contact you including office hours. If possible, arrive a little before class and stay late to answer questions. Students in need may seek it in informal ways. Also, consider the emotional safety of your classroom. Make University resources readily available [\[LINK\]](#). If you are concerned for anyone’s safety, call 911 or SLU DPS Police (314-977-4000) on any campus phone). If you are uncertain, call 314-977-2323, and press #9 to consult with the nurse advice line.
- **One-on-One Meeting Strategy with Students:** The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) offers a guide to help instructors plan and conduct one-on-one meetings with students. CASEL’s guide prioritizes giving space for students to share their experiences and perspectives. Their 5-minute chat guide can help instructors get to know students as individuals, be responsive to their needs, and build relational trust. [\[LINK\]](#)
- **Active listening Skills:** When talking with students in need, listen in a non-judgemental way, stay calm and listen to the facts. The art of active listening is a skill that requires practice [\[LINK\]](#). When listening to students, try not to rush to judgment. If a student is in crisis, professional help is the best way to fully address a mental health problem. Take time to help students become familiar with resources available to them that support a safe and equitable learning environment. Resources that support a safe campus learning environment can be found on SLU’s Behavioral Concerns Committee website. [\[LINK\]](#)
- **Instructional strategies that prioritize well-being:** To reduce anxiety and stress, consider instructional transparency (offer clear communication of expectations, due dates, and learning outcomes). Utilize [warm language](#) during in-class discussions and

when drafting course materials. Create a climate of empathy - acknowledge the difficulties that students are undertaking - consider utilizing WISE feedback as a strategy for feedback on assignments [\[LINK\]](#).

- **Practice emotional well-being:** Practice behaviors supporting your own emotional health is another crucial element of creating a culture of care. Consider the following practices for yourself:
 - Self-care: eat, sleep, and be active.
 - Consider check-ups regarding your overall health. Consider talking to a counselor, doctor, a faith-based leader, or family and friends to make sure you are doing well emotionally.
 - Engage and connect with others wisely: Pursue healthy relationships with others that are loving, friendly, and care-based.
 - Relax: Take time to unwind, meditate, go for a walk, do something active