

Communication Campaign for Student Self-Care

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the busy college student, it is crucial they have an outlet to reduce the amount of stress they feel on a daily basis. The pressure put on students and the lack of time they have to get everything done is a major issue. Juggling work, school, and a social life while also trying to navigate being an independent adult for the first time in life is an extremely difficult responsibility. Many students have not learned the proper coping mechanisms for dealing with stress or mental illness, and so this organization offers free resources aimed at helping students develop skills that allow them to manage their issues and anxieties in a productive way. The Office of Health Promotion and Wellness, formed approximately five years ago, strives to not just educate the student body on living a healthier lifestyle, but also to provide opportunities for students to engage in those practices. Seeking to support the work of the Office of Health Promotion and Wellness, the goal of this communication for social change campaign is to promote self-care and wellness as a means of reducing the stress, anxiety, and depression many new students are facing, and therefore, improve the overall health of DePaul students.

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

DePaul University's Office of Health Promotion and Wellness educates and advocates for healthy behavior amongst DePaul University students. Their mission statement says:

The Office of Health Promotion & Wellness is here to empower the DePaul community to embrace a healthy lifestyle, creating a culture of health and well-being that fosters personal and academic success. In collaboration with university and community partners, the office provides holistic education, support, and resources for individuals to create and sustain long-term, healthy behaviors. Our office provides information and covers topics that range from nutrition, physical fitness to mental health and sexual health and relationship violence. While all health topics are important, special emphasis is placed on alcohol and substance abuse prevention and sexual health and violence prevention (Office of Health Promotion and Wellness, n.d.).

Working with their office is the Health Education Action Team (HEAT), a student peer education group that assists the Office of Health Promotion and Wellness in putting on annual outreach events to engage students in healthy behavior. The Office of Health Promotion & Wellness and HEAT work toward three goals: 1. Improve help-seeking behavior 2. Improve access to accurate health and wellness information and resources 3. Create and enhance long-term, sustainable, healthy behaviors (Office of Health Promotion and Wellness, n.d.). With a focus on counseling, peer education, public events, and health behavior promotion, the Office of Health Promotion and Wellness and HEAT are the perfect partners for our communication campaign to promote self-care amongst DePaul students.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The United States has the highest rate of antidepressant and anti-anxiety medication use of any other country in the world (Friedman & Gould, 2016). These mental health issues in young adults, specifically college students, are at an all-time high. Reports from universities and colleges across the nation find that more college students report not just feelings of stress, anxiety, hopelessness, and depression, but also serious thoughts of suicide and actually committing suicide more than ever before (Brown, 2016). Reports have also noted that along with the rise of mental illness comes a rise in alcohol abuse and dependency, eating disorders, sleep-deprivation, and self-inflicted injuries (Henriques, 2014).

The amount of pressure put on students and the lack of time they have to address their obligations is another major issue (Novotney, 2014). Juggling work, school, and a social life while also trying to navigate being on your own as an adult for the first time in life, is an extremely difficult responsibility, and without the proper coping mechanisms, students are almost set up for failure (Illinois Board of Education, 2007; Sevinc & Gizir, 2014). Before college, many children have every moment of their lives scheduled, and controlled. They have a solid support system with friends and family around at all times. Studies show that having this familial support and involvement reduces the chances a student will experience feelings of anxiety and depression (Marianos et al, 2013; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). When entering

college - a new environment where they have to rebuild that support system - students can become overwhelmed, leaving them vulnerable to anxiety and depression.

The major point evident throughout the research on poor mental health in college students is the focus on education about these problems as well as the emphasis on self-care as a means of managing them (Brown, 2016; Gabriel, 2010; Guntman, 2015; Khusid & Vythilingam, 2016). Meditation, mindfulness, journaling, exercise, and yoga are just some of the examples doctors and mental health professionals suggest as methods for self-reflection to reduce anxiety levels and feelings of depression (Khusid & Vythilingam, 2016). Many of these tactics are proven to be therapeutic and can be done in small amounts of time every day, fitting into any type of schedule. For the busy college student, it is crucial they have an outlet to reduce the amount of stress they feel on a daily basis. This is why it is so important to make sure students are aware of the resources they have on campus for seeking mental health help as well as educating them on what self-care actually is and opportunities to implement these methods in their lives.

SWOC Analysis:

This analysis will examine The Office of Health Promotion and Wellness at DePaul University. We examined how effectively the organization reaches DePaul students and if the tactics produce their intended outcomes. This is important to point out where improvements can be made and how to capitalize on the existing strengths.

- Strengths
 - Engage in social media (Twitter, Instagram, & Facebook)
 - Partnerships and cooperation with other various campus organizations
 - Promotion of department events through several networks and their partnerships
 - Presence on campus by setting up information tables in high-traffic areas
- Weaknesses:
 - Office is in a poor location - hard to find, no foot traffic
 - Budget prohibits the ability to do more elaborate events
 - Event attendance is often low
 - Zero presence on the DePaul Loop campus

- Students' lack of knowledge about the existence of the Office of Health Promotion and Wellness
- No presence on the Loop campus
- Lack of employees or volunteers available to organize and plan events
- Opportunities
 - Willingness of various self-care experts (e.g. yoga teachers) to lead events or informational sessions
 - Strong campus community. Opportunity to partner with local businesses (such as gyms or restaurants) to incentivize students to be more active and eat healthier - offer a discount with student ID or get a free item for going to the establishment - would be dependent on the type of business
 - Ability to partner with other campus and student organizations to promote and execute larger events on campus
- Challenges
 - Capturing students attention
 - Response and engagement from students
 - Low participation from students on their social media
 - Too many communication messages
 - Busy students do not often have time to personally seek out additional resources on campus
 - When event attendance is low, not enough students are able to talk to their friends and post on social media about the benefits of attending the event
 - Students are bombarded with information from multiple campus organizations and when an abundance of messages exist, some get lost or forgotten or lose their impact
 - Students commuting primarily or solely to the Loop campus are not reached

Environmental Scan:

The Office of Health and Wellness promotion is under the Student Affairs office, which is charged with communicating, educating and advocating for health resources, health education, and promoting healthy decisions.

Technology

- Website
 - Website for the Office of Health Promotion & Wellness is currently under the DePaul office of student affairs, it doesn't technically have it's own website, but is a subpage of the student affairs webpage.
 - Some confusion for the reader, as well as limited space for program information and promotion
 - Information decentralized under the Division of Student Affairs
- Social Media
 - Utilizes social media on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
 - Not always active, use for promotion of events and health campaigns such as for college alcohol awareness week.
 - Instagram, #TakeCareDePaul, under 200 followers

The “Competition”

- DePaul Division of Student Affairs
 - Office of Health Promotion & Wellness falls under a centralized student affairs office, where the office is situated amongst all the other student services offices on campus, it doesn't allow the office to stand alone amongst all the other services offered to students by DePaul.
 - Division of Student Affairs also promotes events and opportunities for participation throughout their 15 offices.
 - Being under the umbrella of other student services, the unique services that the Office of Health Promotion and Wellness provides can get lost among the several other student services offices, making the branding and name recognition difficult to maintain
 - Partnerships contribute to successful events and strong turnout due to being exposed to multiple networks, however, the singular work of the Office of Health Promotion and Wellness can be lost in the messaging of many collaborating offices and services vying for the student's attention.
- Counseling Services

- Also under the Division of Student Affairs, the counseling services offers individual counseling to students focusing mainly on mental health help.

Economic

- Free time for students
 - Free time is becoming increasingly limited due to the cost of higher education and the need to pay for it. This allows for limited free time for students to engage with their university and to non-academic learning to help improve their quality of life.
 - Heavy workload from their job and classes is a contributor of additional stress to the student which is why an Office of Health Promotion and Wellness is important for students
- Budget and manpower
 - The Office of Health Promotion and Wellness benefits is made up of three full time staff and approximately six part time student workers. With 11 official services, outside of promotional campaigns, education events, outreach and collaborations the team attempts to do a lot with limited budget and staff.

Political, Regulatory, Legal

- Communication
 - They attempt to use best practices in their promotion of healthy decisions, balancing sustainable healthy decisions with current trends
- Messaging
 - The information the Office of Health Promotion and Wellness works to use up-to-date and best practices in the area of campus and student health. They are careful with the practices and choices they promote and use critical judgment in their practices

Social

- Media (general)
 - One of the goals for the Office of Health Promotion and Wellness is to “Improve access to accurate health and wellness information and resources” (Office of Health Promotion and Wellness, n.d.). They work to clarify potential misleading information about health and wellness that is circulated in the general media through multiple program offerings, campaigns, and educational materials. This

also includes working to combat the glorification of alcohol and drugs in entertainment and media. For example, in 2015, the Office of Health Promotion and Wellness launched the “Take care of yourself. Take care of each other. Take care DePaul.” poster campaign which addressed health and wellness issues, including sexual violence, alcohol use, and stress. The posters provided educational statistics and tips to inform students on how to recognize a threatening situation and how to create a safer campus community (Office of Health Promotion and Wellness, n.d.).

- DePaul student population
 - As DePaul is set in an urban setting, the student population is diverse and includes commuter students.
 - 42 percent of the population is under the age of 24;
 - 53 percent of students are female and 47 percent are male;
 - 35 percent of the population are students of color; and
 - 7 percent are international students (DePaul University, 2015).

The needs of these populations are different because many do not live on campus to be on campus for off-hours activities, and they may have family responsibilities. Since DePaul has a diverse student body, cultural sensitivities and differences need to be taken into consideration when trying to engage the student population.

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS & TARGET AUDIENCE

The Office of Health Promotion and Wellness strives to communicate with DePaul students regardless of age or status within the university. The National Alliance on Mental Illness states three-fourths of serious mental illnesses develop by the time a person is 24 years old (National Alliance on Mental Illness, n.d.), and a 2013 study showed that approximately one third of college students have suffered from debilitating depression and overwhelming anxiety (Novotney, 2014). Due to these statistics, the campaign will focus on college students ranging in age from 17 to 24 years old and who are going through the transitional period of starting college or going back to college. With mental illness on university campuses at an all-time high, it has become imperative this group of individuals draw focus and attention in order to identify the

causes of and solutions to this issue. By targeting this demographic, we hope to help college students identify the signs of mental illness in themselves and in others, and motivate them to practice self-care in order to reduce the negative impact that mental illness can have on their lives.

STRATEGY STATEMENT AND THEORY

Overwhelming stress and lack of self-care are issues that many college students are facing throughout their academic careers. With this campaign, students will be given tools, references, and guidelines to identify, cope, and treat their stress and anxiety through practices of self-care. Theories such as social marketing, health promotion, and participatory methods will support this campaign by:

- First, helping students identify their stress and anxiety;
- Second, encouraging students to practice methods of self-care; and
- Third, providing tools, references, and specific guidelines to talk about their issues

The campaign will host stress-relieving events the week before finals, arguably the most stressful time of the school year, and will communicate relevant, timely information to the target audience through social media and mass emails.

COMMUNICATION GOALS

1. Promote self-care among college students to reduce stress, anxiety and depression.
2. Implement an on-going, campus wide discussion surrounding self-care and healthy mental health practices.

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

Addressing Goal #1

1. To inform 50 percent of DePaul freshmen and first year graduate students about self-care by the end of the 2016-2017 academic school year.
2. To gain the support of 30 percent of upperclassmen DePaul college students to promote self-care on campus by the end of the 2017-2018 academic school year.

Addressing Goal #2

3. To get 25 percent of DePaul freshman and first year graduate students to practice some form of self-care by the end of the 2016-2017 academic school year.
4. To achieve 25 percent participation of DePaul freshman and first year graduate students at on-campus self-care promoted events by the end of the 2017-2018 academic school year.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Don't forget to ACT
 - a. Be **AWARE**: Reflecting on emotions periodically throughout the day will help a person recognize when they're feeling too stressed out or upset. Once the feeling is identified, the proper coping mechanisms can be executed.
 - b. Practice self-**CARE**: Taking time out of the day, even just 5 - 20 minutes, can greatly reduce feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression.
 - c. **TALK** it out: Having a support system is a crucial part of coping with and preventing mental illness. Find those people you trust whether it be a friend, family member, support group, or therapist. Talk out your issues and emotions with them.
2. #MySelfCareLooksLike
 - a. The "My Self-Care Looks Like" hashtag will be used by the campaign to show ways of practicing self-care in day-to-day life through social media outlets.
 - b. The hashtag shows that there are multiple ways to practice self-care and that each person can choose a method that effectively works for their lifestyle and their stress.

These simple messages give students permission to make their mental and physical health a priority. In today's multitasking world, health is often sacrificed for school work and related responsibilities. ACT reminds students to be conscious of how they're feeling, particularly in periods of stress, sadness, or self-doubt and to practice self-care, which pushes against the narrative that students should feel guilty for making physical, spiritual, and emotional health a

priority. Finally, students should not feel ashamed by any mental issues they are facing. The final step in ACT - *Talk it out* - encourages students to reach out to loved ones or professionals to talk through their situation. Stress can be debilitating, but talking it out and finding support can help. In fact, a 2015 study found that certain talking therapies can be as effective as antidepressant medications (National Center for Biotechnology Information, 2015). Students can then use the hashtag to share how ACTing has affected their lives and their stress levels and share how self-care plays a part in their own personal lives. The #MySelfCareLookLikes message will emphasize that there is no right or wrong way to practice self-care. All students have individual needs and should find and identify self-care practices that best help them deal with the stresses of daily life.

TACTICS

Implemented Tactics

1. Host an on-campus stress relieving arts & crafts event where students can participate in adult coloring, making their own stress balls, and decorating pumpkins. Surveys will be handed out to students after they craft to measure the effectiveness of the event. Pamphlets will also be available to provide further information on the benefits of self-care.
2. “Takeover” the DePaul Health & Wellness Center Instagram and Twitter accounts during Brain Fuel Week, a week in which the organization promotes mental health before quarter-end finals, to promote self-care practices using #TakeCareDePaul.

Remaining Tactics

3. Design and distribute posters, pamphlets, and flyers promoting ACT and reasons to practice self-care and tips to implement self-care across DePaul’s campus.
4. Provide students with “Name Your Stress” cards at on campus de-stress events to gain insight into everyday student stress. Encourage students to use #MySelfCareLooksLike to share how they deal with their stresses on social media.
5. Host a social media contest for DePaul students who come up with the most creative display of self-care each quarter. To encourage engagement, the winner would receive a \$30 gift card.

6. Plan and host an on-campus speaking event with experts on self-care & mindfulness to explain the importance of practicing self-care and provide tips on including self-care in students' day-to-day lives.
7. Campus wide email blasts with self-care tips and tricks for midterms and finals - links to below mentioned website to measure engagement.
8. Work with DePaul's Health & Wellness Center to create a section on their current website that promotes self-care and ways to practice self-care daily.
9. Partner with DePaul's Health & Wellness Center to host a yoga event to encourage students to take part in self-care practices.

COMMUNICATION PLANNING MATRIX

Goals:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote self-care among college students to reduce stress, anxiety and depression. 2. Implement an on-going, campus wide discussion surrounding self-care and healthy mental health practices. 				
Objectives:	Tactics:	Audience:	Timing:	Point Person(s)
#1 - Inform DePaul 50 percent of freshmen and first year graduate students about self-care by the end of the 2016-2017 academic school year	<p>On Campus speaking event, with experts on self-care & mindfulness</p> <p>On campus posters, pamphlets and flyers promoting self-care</p>	DePaul freshmen & first year graduate students.	Complete by end of 2016-2017 academic school year (8 months)	Kendall & Robin
#2 - Gain the support of 30 percent of upperclassmen DePaul college students to	Campus wide email blasts with self-care tips & tricks for midterms and finals.	DePaul upperclassmen (sophomores, juniors, seniors)	Complete by end of 2017-2018 academic school year	Kelsey & Chelsea

<p>promote self-care on campus by the end of the 2017-2018 academic school year.</p>	<p>Work with DePaul’s Health & Wellness Center for a section on their website, promoting self-care.</p>	<p>& second year graduate students).</p>	<p>(18 months)</p>	
<p>#3 - Get 25 percent of DePaul freshman and first year graduate students to practice some kind of self-care by the end of the 2016-2017 academic school year.</p>	<p>On Campus stress relieving arts & crafts event. Pre & post “Name Your Stress” cards at on campus de-stress event.</p>	<p>DePaul freshmen & first year graduate students.</p>	<p>Complete by end of the 2016-2017 academic school year (8 months)</p>	<p>Kendall & Robin</p>
<p>#4 - Achieve 25 percent participation of DePaul freshman and first year graduate students at on campus and online self-care promoted events by the end of the 2017-2018 academic school year.</p>	<p>Instagram “takeover” with DePaul Health & Wellness Center, #TakeCareDePaul. Social media contest for DePaul students who come up with the most creative display of self-care each quarter, the winner gets a \$30 gift card.</p>	<p>DePaul freshmen & first year graduate students.</p>	<p>Complete by end of 2017-2018 academic school year (18 months)</p>	<p>Kelsey & Chelsea</p>

TIMELINE

The entire campaign will take over an 18 month period, from October 2016 to June 2018.

The campaign will start during a crucial week for DePaul's Health and Wellness Center, Brain Fuel Week, from November 7 through November 11. As students are preparing for finals, the initial stages of the campaign will begin to raise awareness on campus. Tactics throughout the first eight-month stage will be aimed at informing students of the need for self-care and the benefits of self-care. At the start of the eight-month period, the arts and crafts fair will take place along with the posting of flyers and pamphlets across campus and the takeover of the Health and Wellness center social media accounts. Email blasts will be sent out monthly throughout the entire campaign to keep students informed.

The second and final stage will be aimed at increasing student participation in self-care practices. At the start of the 2017 school year before students become overwhelmed, experts on self-care and mental health will take part in a speaking event to inform students of the need to practice self-care throughout the year. At the event, students will be informed of an upcoming opportunity to practice self-care during midterms - a free yoga event, hosted by our group and the Health and Wellness Center. Throughout the rest of stage two, the DePaul Health and Wellness Center's social media outlets will regularly promote the #MyStressLooksLike hashtag to encourage students to practice self-care and share their methods on social media. Engagement will be encouraged through a quarterly contest for the most creative stress management where the winner will receive a \$30 dollar gift card.

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