



Integrating wellness into curricula using the ten dimensions of wellness as a framework[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Burnout is a public health crisis that persists at the expense of clinician well-being, the healthcare workforce, and the quality of care provided. Clinician well-being is a professional imperative, yet nursing students still report higher levels of burnout than non-nursing students. Cultivating an academic learning environment that supports the development of resiliency, well-being, and improved student mental health requires a coordinated and sustained effort from nurse educators and academic leaders. This article aims to inspire nurse educators to take the first or next steps toward integrating wellness into nursing curricula. The ten dimensions of wellness provide a framework for wellness programming. Practical strategies aligned with each dimension are offered. As an exemplar, the *Banding Together for Wellness* program is summarized, including innovative incentives for student participation. Over the past five years, 426 (approximately 54 %) undergraduate nursing students voluntarily completed the program. While best practices may vary by institution, the strategies and resources offered herein can support nurse educators in the classroom, lab, and clinical setting as we all work to foster personal and professional well-being in nursing students. Nurse educators can be instrumental in cultivating the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for life-long self-care, well-being, and nursing practice.

A significant body of evidence demonstrates the high rates of depression, anxiety, addiction, and suicide among healthcare providers and the inverse correlation between clinician wellness, adverse patient outcomes, and costly workforce attrition (National Academy of Medicine, 2022). Leaders in health care and nursing education have responded to the burnout crisis among health care providers and student clinicians, including the NAM's (2019) *Taking Action Against Clinician Burnout: A Systems Approach to Professional Well-Being* Action Collaborative on Clinician Well-being and Resilience, the American Nurses Association's (2017) *Healthy Nurse Healthy Nation* initiative, the U.S. Surgeon General's *Addressing Health Worker Burnout* (2022), NAM's (2022) *National Plan for Health Workforce Well-Being*, and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing's (AACN, 2020) *A Call to Action for Academic Nurse Leaders to Promote Practices to Enhance Optimal Well-being, Resilience, and Suicide Prevention in U.S. Schools of Nursing*.

Furthermore, a significant proportion of the future nursing workforce is already experiencing burnout at the outset of their careers.

Recent meta-analyses report a worldwide prevalence of burnout of 23–37 % among nursing and medical students (Almutairi et al., 2022; Kong, Yao, Chen, & Zhu, 2023). Nurse educators increasingly recognize the need to act but are often still determining where to start or how to expand their current efforts. This article aims to provide nursing faculty with easy-to-implement wellness strategies in the classroom and clinical settings using the ten dimensions of wellness as a framework to guide a holistic approach to student wellness programming.

Background

College attendance is increasingly associated with stress, anxiety, and depression. Suicide has become the second leading cause of death for college students related to academic stressors, social pressure, substance use, and emotional volatility, and student visits to college counseling centers have increased dramatically, with over 40 % of those seeking treatment experiencing serious mental health crises (Hirsch,

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Rabon, Reynolds, Barton, & Chang, 2019). In addition to academic stressors, nursing students experience the stress associated with clinical practice. Health professional students are more likely to experience burnout caused by excessive workloads, long work hours, isolation, increased clinical demands & moral distress that can lead to higher rates of depression, anxiety, substance use disorders, medical call to action errors and suicidality (Davidson, Proudfoot, Lee, Terterian, & Zisook, 2020; Melnyk et al., 2020).

Unsurprisingly, nursing students report significantly higher incidences of stress, anxiety, poor sleep, and stress-related illnesses than non-nursing students (Bartlett, Taylor, & Nelson, 2016; Frögeli, Rudman, & Gustavsson, 2019; Hand, Evans, Swenty, White, & Chen, 2022; Li & Hasson, 2020; Melnyk et al., 2021; Spurr, Walker, Squires, & Redl, 2021). Moreover, the prevalence of depression (52 %), anxiety (32 %), stress (30 %), and sleep disturbances (27 %) among nursing students worldwide has worsened since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Mulyadi, Tonapa, Luneto, Lin, & Lee, 2021). In addition, burnout is common among nursing students. According to Hillert, Albrecht, and Voderholzer (2020), burnout reflects “the experience of symptoms of any kind, which are experienced as a result of overload” (p.8). Feelings of burnout are typically related to a specific area of one’s life such as occupational or academic burnout. Longitudinal studies on the effects of burnout in nursing students demonstrate the adverse impact not only on students’ physical and mental well-being but also on learner engagement, skill acquisition, readiness for nursing practice, routine use of evidence-based practice (EBP) and early career attrition (Ríos-Risquez, García-Izquierdo, Sabuco-Tebar, Carrillo-García, & Martínez-Roche, 2016; Ríos-Risquez, García-Izquierdo, Sabuco-Tebar, Carrillo-García, & Solano-Ruiz, 2018; Rudman & Gustavsson, 2012; Wei et al., 2021).

The fourth objective of the *Quintuple Aim for Healthcare Improvement* emphasizes the need to address clinician burnout not only because the care of the patient requires care of the provider but also because positive population health and systems outcomes are unsustainable without a well workforce (Bodenheimer & Sinsky, 2014; Nundy, Cooper, & Mate, 2022). Shifting the healthcare paradigm from one focused on caring for the sick to one holistically focused on health and well-being is essential. Nurse educators are increasingly aware of the urgent need to prepare students to care for the self with the same quality and compassion they care for patients. Self-care is now a professional imperative.

The AACN *Call to Action* emphasizes the need for student learning environments that support the development of resiliency, well-being, and improved mental health (AACN, 2020). During the 1970s, a model outlining six dimensions of wellness was developed to enhance well-being on a university campus (Hettler, 1980). The original model has been adapted by universities to include additional dimensions of wellness; the framework guides academic programming intended to meet student wellness needs (Eastern Tennessee University Wellness Committee, 2023; Northwestern University Student Affairs, 2023; The Ohio State University Student Wellness Center, 2023).

Academic leaders and nurse educators must work collaboratively to influence the well-being of students and our future nursing workforce by integrating wellness into our nursing curricula and role modeling the importance of the various dimensions of wellness. Wellness programming can enrich the academic experience and afford students a lasting regard for personal health and well-being as a professional and personal priority. Current evidence demonstrates a range of effective wellness interventions that target symptoms of academic burnout, resilience-building, and reduction of stress, anxiety, and depression, including strategies like reflective journaling, mindfulness practice, progressive muscle relaxation, microlearning wellness interventions, and cognitive behavioral interventions, such as positive reframing (Aloufi, Jarden, Gerditz, & Kapp, 2021; Amsrud, Lyberg, & Severinsson, 2019; Cornine, 2020; Gawlik et al., 2020; Melnyk, 2020; & Tating et al., 2023). However, the evidence for best practices related to student wellness is still developing (Kunzler et al., 2020; Mitchell, 2021). Academic leaders can and should foster the necessary collaboration to generate high-level

evidence of the long-term effectiveness of student-wellness strategies.

The clinician burnout crisis is critical, and the need to act is urgent. However, taking action can be intimidating for faculty without self-perceived expertise in wellness or a seeming lack of time due to workload constraints. However, with a modest investment of time and effort, faculty can make incremental changes in teaching and learning strategies that can have a meaningful, life-long impact on students. The clinical, lab, and classroom settings provide unique challenges and opportunities for wellness programming. The ten dimensions of wellness can provide an organizing structure for taking the first steps toward integrating wellness into our nursing curricula.

Purpose

Wellness programming strategies are provided herein to inspire and support nurse educators in enhancing their nursing curricula. These strategies are appropriate for undergraduate and graduate nursing students and can be easily adapted to various cohort sizes and across different course delivery modes and clinical settings. The suggestions offered here are not an exhaustive list, nor are they intended for all-inclusive implementation. In fact, educators may adapt these strategies and, ideally, be inspired to innovate new strategies that focus on multidimensional wellness. Lastly, an exemplar student wellness program is summarized to demonstrate an innovative, holistic approach to wellness programming using the ten dimensions of wellness as a design framework. The *Banding Together for Wellness* program is a feasible, cost-effective, and sustainable approach to integrating wellness within an undergraduate nursing program.

Framework: ten dimensions of wellness

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2018) defines the concepts of wellness and well-being. In the context of student wellness programming strategies, *wellness* is defined as the self-directed, evolving process of taking steps to reach well-being. Wellness is comprised of ten interdependent dimensions: emotional, career, social, spiritual, physical, financial, intellectual, creative, environmental, and digital (see Fig. 1). This differs from *well-being*, a personal sense of health and vitality that arises from our thoughts, emotions, wellness behaviors, and life experiences.

It is important to note that the pillars of justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging are foundational to wellness and well-being (Swann, Feimster, Young, & Chamut, 2022). It is essential for faculty to remember that not all students have equal opportunity and access due to systemic and structural barriers. Inclusive academic environments that value authentic diversity and foster a sense of belonging are fundamental to individual and collective student wellness. Educators must maintain this awareness and realize that genuine success will require routine self-reflection on their knowledge gaps and implicit bias.

Strategies: ten dimensions of wellness

Career wellness

Career wellness focuses on making positive career-path decisions and finding meaningful ways to use personal strengths to better the professional community in which they are engaged. The professionally well individual gains personal fulfillment from their professional work that is enriching and consistent with their values, goals, and lifestyle. The ultimate career goal is professional satisfaction and the joy of practice (Sinsky et al., 2013). All aspects of wellness programming implemented within a nursing program ultimately support career wellness. In addition to role-modeling professional wellness, educators can provide students the opportunity to master competencies for self-care, resilience, personal well-being, and professional decision-making prior to the professional transition to practice.



Fig. 1. Ten dimensions of wellness.

Caption: This figure depicts the ten dimensions of wellness that are the framework for this article.

- Ask students to reflect on their accomplishments to date and regularly update their resume or curriculum vitae (CV) on online platforms like LinkedIn (<https://linkedin.com>) or Handshake (<https://joinhandshake.com>).
- Have students submit a resume as a course assignment and provide feedback.
- Provide information sources for career fairs, nurse residency programs and fellowship opportunities along with professional networking events and consider requiring or encouraging optional attendance.
- Invite a professional photographer to the school of nursing to provide student opportunities to obtain a professional headshot during an already scheduled event or celebration.
- Maximize the use of existing university career services and resources to support students.
- Host a professional speaker series, or panel of recent program graduates, to share their professional journeys and answer student questions.
- Encourage students to regularly reflect on short- and long-term goals to foster learning and career development.
- Implement a *transition to practice* seminar series at the school of nursing to support students in their professional development. Topics might include cover letter and resume writing, job search strategies, mock interviews, negotiating employment contracts, mitigating litigation, nurse residency or fellowship opportunities, legal issues for entry-level and advanced practice, or professional branding and social media (Shihabuddin, Momeyer, Bobek, & Sharpe, 2023).

Creative wellness

Nursing is both an art and a science and nurse educators have an opportunity to support creativity through teaching strategies. Creative wellness allows a person to appreciate and/or participate in a diverse range of arts or cultural experiences, and to value and cherish the surrounding world. Creative learning environments can stimulate deeper learning and critical thinking (Alsayed, Alshammari, Pasay-An, & Dator, 2020; Taşdelen Baş, Özpuat, Molu, & Dönmez, 2022).

- Use non-traditional teaching methods that foster creativity such as narrative photography or storytelling. Narrative photography is an art-based technique that tells a story using a photograph. This methodology has been shown to promote empathy, creativity, reflection, and assist in understanding such concepts as nursing theory (Leyva-Moral, Aguayo-González, Folch, San Rafael, & Gómez-Ibáñez, 2022). Likewise, storytelling can help foster empathy, stimulate creative thinking, and help students process difficult clinical experiences (Darby, Petersen, Stoltman, & Gilmore, 2022; Fitzpatrick, 2018). Storytelling can be done by asking the students to write a 50-word story about a clinical experience and then share it with a small group. Following the discussion with the small group, faculty should ask the student to re-write the experience from another viewpoint. When the student completes this exercise, they gain a new understanding, often from the viewpoint of the patient, which can foster greater empathy for the patient and improve their processing of the experience.
- Incorporate an arts class as part of nursing curricula. A study by Taşdelen Baş et al. (2022) found that when nursing students were required to take a “decorative arts” course over two semesters as part of their curricula, they scored higher on the Critical Thinking Disposition Scale than those students who were only required to take it for one semester.
- Provide opportunities for interprofessional teamwork. Interprofessional teaching in nursing programs has been shown to improve creative thinking (Liu, 2022a; Liu, 2022b).

- Embrace mistakes and failures: Failure and mistakes are a natural part of the creative process. Embracing these challenges can help individuals learn and grow, and can lead to new and unexpected ideas.
- Challenge assumptions. Challenging assumptions and thinking critically can help individuals see problems or situations in new ways and can lead to creative solutions.
- Encourage and empower nursing students to advance ideas that lead to innovation. Students must feel confident that creative thinking and problem solving are valued. Nurse educators can promote out-of-the-box thinking by encouraging a spirit of inquiry and innovation (Snow, 2019).

Digital wellness

Digital wellness is a newer dimension of wellness. A digitally well person considers the impact of virtual presence and the use of technology and takes steps to create sustainable habits that support their values, goals, community, and safety. It is important to consider the impact of technology on students’ well-being to prevent workload burden, fatigue, and burnout since technology is pervasive in the delivery of health care and nursing education (Hilty et al., 2022). In addition to personal use of technology, students are required to use technology to function in the classroom and clinical learning environments, as well as for coursework and study time outside of the learning environment.

Faculty can adopt a digital wellness approach programmatically or within individual courses to support students in reducing digital fatigue and mental exhaustion, improving well-being and increasing their overall academic success (Dacillo, Dizon, Ong, Pingol, & Cleofas, 2022; Pedersen et al., 2022). Educators can consider the following strategies to incorporate intentional, mindful use of technology practices in the classroom.

- Implement “audio only” breaks during virtual class sessions (Bailenson, 2021). In addition, permit students to turn their cameras off periodically to reduce cognitive load and digital fatigue.
- Build in technology breaks in the face-to-face classroom by incorporating effective, technology-free, active learning strategies like role-play, class debates, think-pair-share activities, or collaborative case analyses in small groups (Bristol et al., 2019; Pivac, Skela-Savic, Jovic, Avdic, & Kalender-Smajlovic, 2021).
- Adjust assignment deadlines to 6 pm or 7 pm (rather than Sunday at midnight) to encourage decreased screen time and breaks from technology. This strategy also supports physical and intellectual wellness by promoting healthy sleep patterns.
- Role model healthy boundaries for the use of communication technology. Include explicit policies in course syllabi that outline primary methods of faculty-student communication, anticipated response times, and etiquette expectations for professional communication. For example, “Instructors will respond to student emails within 24-hours Monday through Friday. Emails received on weekends will be returned by end-of-day Monday. Students may call or text the instructor only for urgent, time-sensitive issues.”
- Incorporate creative technology into assignments and interactive lessons to engage students and encourage meaningful participation, such as Jamboard (<https://jamboard.google.com>), Nearpod (<https://nearpod.com>) or Kahoot (<https://kahoot.com>).
- Incorporate digital literacy objectives into assignment objectives and role model best practices by demonstrating the skills for searching and verifying credible sources, performing rapid critical appraisals, and synthesizing information in verbal and written communication. Digital literacy is the ability to locate,

- evaluate, and communicate information effectively using digital platforms.
- Integrate assignments or activities that build competence for creating an online professional presence, particularly as students prepare to transition into practice. This strategy pairs well with the dimension of career wellness. Create opportunities for students to master best practices for professional self-branding and the use of social media for professionals in a safe, mentored environment.

Emotional wellness

The dimension of emotional wellness includes the knowledge and skills to identify personal feelings and the ability to regulate those emotions. The National Institute of Health (NIH, 2022) describes emotional wellness as “the ability to successfully handle life’s stresses and adapt to change and difficult times.” The following are strategies that can be implemented in the classroom or clinical setting:

- Teach students paced **breathing exercises**. Paced breathing exercises activate the parasympathetic nervous system and enhance the interaction between the autonomic nervous system and central nervous system activities. Studies demonstrate the positive effects of paced breathing exercises on emotional control and psychological well-being, especially in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression (Balban et al., 2023; Hopper, Murray, Ferrara, & Singleton, 2019; Zaccaro et al., 2018). Implement the use of breathing exercises with students, especially during times of increased student anxiety, like before an exam or skills competency assessment or at the end of a clinical shift. Animated graphics designed to guide breathing exercises can be played synchronously or posted on the course platform for asynchronous courses. Popular resources include Calm (<https://www.calm.com/breathe>) and YOGABODY® (<https://www.yogabody.com/breathing-gifs/>)
- Check-in with students regularly with an **emotional pulse check**. This communicates to students the importance of their emotional well-being to faculty and provides routine opportunities for students to hone their emotional self-awareness and seek further support if needed. Educators must be prepared to respond to students in distress with appropriate resource referrals or potentially adapt the pace of the course (or assignment deadlines) if students are experiencing overwhelming feelings. Use polling technology like Zoom (<https://zoom.us>) or Poll Everywhere (<https://www.poll.everywhere.com>) or collaborative word cloud tools like LiveCloud (<https://livecloud.online>) or AhaSlides (<https://ahaslides.com/>) is a creative way to check in with students. See Table 1.
- Model and emphasize gratitude. People who regularly **practice gratitude** by taking time to reflect on the things they are thankful for tend to experience higher levels of positive emotions. Studies demonstrate the positive effects of gratitude

Table 1
Examples of emotional pulse checks.

Poll: Which weather report best represents how you are feeling today?
<input type="checkbox"/> Clear skies and sunshine all day
<input type="checkbox"/> Partly cloudy with sunshine
<input type="checkbox"/> Cloudy with a chance of rain
<input type="checkbox"/> Thunderstorm warnings
Word Cloud Polls (results to be shared as a word cloud!)
Share 3 words that describe how you are feeling.
Share 2 words that reflect what you most like to do to stay well.
Share 1 word that reflects your purpose, i.e., what gives you meaning and motivation.

practice on reducing stress and depressive symptoms and the positive correlation between gratitude, resilience, and feelings of happiness (Cheng, Tsui, & Lam, 2015; McCanlies, Gu, Andrew, & Violanti, 2018; Melnyk et al., 2020). As with Emotional Pulse Checks, consider the use of polling technology or word clouds to foster a routine gratitude practice in the classroom or clinical setting. Furthermore, students are often asked to self-reflect at regular intervals as part of the experiential learning process. Consider adding a gratitude prompt to existing self-reflective exercises. Prompts can be incorporated into post-conference clinical discussions, added to a written self-reflection assignment following a practicum exam, or included as an open-ended question at the end of a quiz. See Table 2.

- Use and teach positive reframing. Positive reframing is an emotion-focused coping technique that involves changing the way one thinks and talks about a situation or experience, which can be effective for reducing stress and self-criticism (Munroe, Al-Refae, Chan, & Ferrari, 2022). Reframing is a cognitive-behavioral technique that aids in challenging negative thoughts or attitudes with new possibilities for a positive perspective. Educators can role model this strategy by reframing situations that typically trigger negative emotions or induce added stress to help students maintain a more optimistic outlook, stay motivated, and develop resilience in the face of challenges. See Table 3.
- Provide students opportunities to interact with therapy dogs. The use of *therapy dogs* to provide comfort and stress relief to people in healthcare and educational settings is gaining popularity. Research demonstrates the benefits of dogs on human health and wellness, such as decreased heart rate, blood pressure, cortisol levels, and symptoms of anxiety and depression (Gee, Rodriguez, Fine, & Trammell, 2021; Machová, Procházková, Vadroňová, Součková, & Prouzová, 2020). Even short-term exposures of 10 to 15 min have been shown to decrease anxiety significantly (Kline, Fisher, Pettit, Linville, & Beck, 2019; Machová et al., 2020). Schools of nursing should consider working with local therapy dog programs to schedule a therapy dog-handler team to visit the college during times of increased student anxiety, like during midterm or final exam week. Of note, working with a program of highly trained, therapy dog-handler teams reputedly certified through an organization like Canine Good Citizen (CGC) or Alliance of Therapy Dogs (ATD) is important.

Environmental wellness

Environmental wellness involves the ability to recognize one’s responsibility to improve, protect, or preserve the quality of life in a community by being respectful of the surroundings. A significant wellness consideration often overlooked is the effect of the physical environment on the occupants of the space. For example, the configuration

Table 2
Examples of gratitude prompts for a “Dose of Vitamin G”.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ What is something new that you are grateful for leaning today?■ What was the best moment of your day and why was it special?■ Who are the people you are thankful for and why?■ Write about a time when you felt truly grateful and explain why.■ What are some simple pleasures that bring joy to your day?■ Write about a person who has positively influenced your life and how they did it.■ What is something you take for granted but are grateful for?■ Write about an experience or opportunity that you are grateful for having.
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Table 3
examples of positive reframing.

Instead of...	Reframe it as...
A set-back or failure	A character-builder
A performance improvement plan	A student success plan
An impossible task or clinical placement	A challenging opportunity for growth
Criticism or a “bad evaluation”	Individualized feedback for growth and development
Hopeless or impossible situation or task	An opportunity to problem-solve and find creative solutions
A tedious assignment	A chance to focus and practice attention to detail

of a classroom has a direct influence on student engagement in active learning (Holec & Marynowski, 2020). Well-being can be promoted through design and features within the space; optimal building systems decrease poor attention, absenteeism and stress, and increase cognitive abilities and performance (Araya León, Guasch, Estévez, & Peña, 2022; Liu et al., 2020).

- Encourage students to consider the environments in which they work, play, learn, study, and connect with others. Best practices specific to the built environment include nature as part of the design, a process called biophilia. Biophilia affects well-being, whether it is through views of nature or design features that imitate nature within the space. Since students learn in classrooms and in online settings, the biophilic properties of both the home (Realyvásquez-Vargas et al., 2020) and the work environment (Colenberg, Jylhä, & Arkesteijn, 2021) affect student success and wellness. In clinical settings, encourage environmental wellness and sustainability by being mindful of managing resources and supplies.
- Provide designated spaces for respite and quiet time. For optimal environmental wellness, the interior of the academic building should include these types of areas to support diversity and equity. Meditation, lactation, and religious spaces create a sense of belonging and inclusivity.
- Ensure student safety and security within all environments, online, on campus, and in clinical settings. Encourage students to prioritize assessing safety issues, including exposure to harmful substances or infectious diseases in their environments.

Financial wellness

Financial stress is a significant problem for college students that can have far-reaching negative consequences. Seventy-four percent of college students report feeling financial stress and are uncertain how to manage the variety of financial pressures they face (McDaniel, Montalto, Regan, & Rehr, 2020). Financial stress has been linked to a range of negative academic outcomes, including lower grade point averages (GPAs), higher likelihood of dropping out of school, extended time to degree completion, food insecurity, and poor mental health outcomes like depression, anxiety, psychotic episodes, and low self-esteem (Moore et al., 2021; Oh et al., 2022). Financial stress has also been associated with an increased risk of substance abuse among college students and feelings of isolation and embarrassment (Moore et al., 2021). Wellness in this dimension requires awareness of one’s financial status and managing money to achieve realistic goals.

- Consider the cost of textbooks and clinical resources when planning courses. University libraries offer free digital content, e-books, and learning materials. There are also ‘open-source’ resources like OER commons (<https://www.oercommons.org>) and OpenStax (www.openstax.org).

- Post the required materials and schedules for courses and clinical as far in advance as possible to allow students to plan finances and work schedules accordingly. Students' employment hours are a significant predictor of students' wellbeing (Peltz, Bodenlos, Kingery, & Rogge, 2021).
- Within reason, exercise flexibility in due dates and be mindful of homework volume and timing of deadlines to support working students.
- Developing and providing a list of student resources including such things as scholarship opportunities, food pantries, free transportation, and financial planning through the college/university and community settings can decrease financial strain and improve student outcomes (Barr & McNamara, 2022).
- Screen for food insecurity and advocate for program initiatives that improve access to food, like universal free meal programs, as these strategies have been associated with multiple student benefits, including better diet quality, food security, and improved academic performance (Cohen, Hecht, McLoughlin, Turner, & Schwartz, 2021). Food insecurity has been linked to an increased likelihood of feeling stressed and having depression, anxiety and sleep disorders (Arenas, Thomas, Wang, & Delisser, 2019; Pourmotabbed et al., 2020; Martinez et al., 2021).

Intellectual wellness

Intellectual wellness includes the ability to learn and use knowledge and skills. An individual with intellectual wellness will value lifelong learning, engage in critical thinking, develop moral reasoning, appreciate worldviews, and participate in continuing education in pursuit of knowledge. Active engagement in each of the dimensions of wellness improves cognitive ability and overall wellness in this domain. Incorporating active learning strategies as a core component of teaching fosters deeper student learning and improved critical decision-making skills (Alberti, Motta, Ferri, & Bonetti, 2021; de Gagne et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2021; Williams, 2021).

- Incorporate team-based learning as a teaching strategy to encourage students to collaborate and problem-solve. Teamwork and collaboration encourage connection, accommodate different learning styles, and provide opportunities for new perspectives, ethical skills building, and divergent thinking (Alberti et al., 2021). For example, student teams can review clinical cases that require collaboration to respond to follow-up questions, whether online or on campus.
- Encourage curiosity and diversity of thought. Incorporate interprofessional perspectives within team-based learning to help expand knowledge, perspective, appreciation, and collaboration.
- Incorporate microlearning. Microlearning supports intellectual wellness by presenting content in smaller units that allow for self-directed learning, which is associated with positive knowledge attainment and retention (de Gagne et al., 2019). Microlearning can be incorporated into a flipped classroom approach, in which students are given learning resources to review before class. Then, class time is used for discussion, problem-solving, and group activities.
- Use active learning strategies that promote individual learning as well as group learning. Address the importance of having a growth mindset, and provide opportunities for self-assessment, reflection, and inquiry related to learning and intellectual wellness, as most students are unlikely to have been taught about how to learn effectively (Williams, 2021).
- Encourage student participation in new and diverse learning experiences outside of the nursing profession or perspective.

Physical wellness

The physically well person can engage in activities of daily living without experiencing undue fatigue or exhaustion. Perhaps the most

meaningful strategy educators can engage in the learning environment is the opportunity for physical movement. Average adults spend 50–70 % of their time sitting and evidence demonstrates that people who sit the most (compared to people who sit the least) increase their risk of diabetes and cardiovascular events by 112 % and 147 % respectively (Ussery, Fulton, Galuska, Katzmarzyk, & Carlson, 2018; Wilmot et al., 2012). The physical dimension of wellness encompasses many self-care behaviors including sleep, nutrition, exercise, personal habits, and health care.

- Cultivate a culture of wellness in the classroom (in-person or online) by taking a brief *wellness break* at least every 45–50 min. A wellness break prioritizes time for physiologic self-care such as hydration, nutrition, elimination, cognitive rest, and physical movement.
- Be a role model. Find opportunities to walk *with* students to emphasize the importance of physical movement and demonstrate creative ways to incorporate movement throughout the day. For example, host an *after-class wellness walk* on campus or hold *walking meetings* during office hours.
- Encourage students to stand *during* class (in-person or asynchronous) when needed and role model this behavior. If resources allow, request standing tables for the back of the classroom.
- Incorporate planned, 1–3-minute movement breaks into the class agenda. Brief videos can be embedded (or hyperlinked) in slide presentations to encourage periodic “lecturcise” (lecture + exercise = lecturcise) during class (Gawlik, 2017). Brief physical activity sessions integrated during classroom instruction have been shown to benefit academic performance and student engagement (Watson, Timperio, Brown, Best, & Hesketh, 2017). Consider using videos that guide students through active stretching exercises, restorative yoga poses, or popular dances. Furthermore, students can be encouraged to incorporate a lecturcise activity in their class presentations.
- Host a class discussion board forum and ask students to share their favorite healthy recipe or advanced meal-preparation ideas with their peers. This strategy can also foster a sense of community and social connections in the classroom.
- Designate a day for students to bring in a healthy snack to share during class. This can introduce students to new healthy food options and can be incorporated as a fun assignment when learning nutrition content.
- Approach food vendors about offering a variety of healthy snacks in vending machines in lieu of traditional sugary, ultra-processed foods.
- Consider implementing official *fatigue mitigation policies* in program handbooks or course syllabi to emphasize the importance of getting a minimum of 7 h of sleep per night regularly for optimum sleep health, learning potential, and patient safety (American Colleges of Nurse Midwifery, 2017; ANA, 2014; Caruso et al., 2019; Samra & Smith, 2015; Watson et al., 2015). When deprived of adequate sleep, nursing students are less equipped for classroom and clinical learning. Fatigue, defined as impaired function resulting from physical or mental exertion, can adversely impact student health and well-being and potentially affect patient safety (American Nurses Association [ANA], 2014). The LIFE Curriculum (https://med.stanford.edu/gme/duke_life.html) is a no-cost collection of educational and training resources to support faculty in mitigating the potential sequelae of student fatigue.
- Incorporate wellness-focused microlearning modules into asynchronous course content to allow students to engage in different types of physical wellness throughout the term. (Gawlik, 2017; Gawlik, Guo, Tan, & Overcash, 2020). Create a module comprised of a variety of brief (10–15 min) physical

wellness activities for each week of the term. Offer extra credit for students' participation in and self-reflection following the weekly microlearning activities. Educators may also consider incorporating multiple dimensions of wellness into weekly activities.

Social wellness

Social wellness refers to the ability to form and maintain positive relationships with others and engage in meaningful social interactions. Social connections play a critical role in supporting overall physical and mental health, particularly in effecting lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. People who report more social connectedness report higher perceptions of social well-being (Ruppel, Child, Fischer, & Botchway, 2022). Importantly, social support interventions are effective in preventing suicide for those with elevated suicide risk (Hou et al., 2022). Creating community and opportunities for connection and support can benefit students. It is especially important to aid students in maintaining connections during those times when students traditionally report elevated levels of stress so that they have a sense of not being alone, or not being the only person “struggling”.

- Incorporate discussion questions, or open-ended poll questions, into synchronous or asynchronous class activities to generate opportunities for genuine connections between students. For example, “tell me something good that happened this week” or “tell me something you are grateful for today.”
- For larger classes, implement a class seating system that designates seating by fun categories like birthday month, sibling birth order, or clothing color (to depict a rainbow). Seating can change intermittently throughout the term to encourage new peer connections.
- Create opportunities for students and faculty to connect with one another. Host open forums (in-person or online) to discuss mutual challenges and strategies for self-care, coping, or work-life balance. Consider assigning forum themes (e.g. parenting while being a student, men in nursing, etc.) to encourage resilience building and rapport building.
- Bring awareness to community events, student groups, and professional organizations of which students can engage in service work and leadership activities. Equipping students with updated sources of campus and community events of interest can empower them to create stronger personal and professional connections.
- Consider opportunities to include social connectedness when using strategies in the other dimensions of wellness. For example, host therapy dog-handler teams in a common area to bring community to shared spaces in schools of nursing or take a class walk around campus.

Spiritual wellness

Spiritual wellness refers to a person's sense of purpose and meaning in life, and their connection to something greater than themselves. Spirituality can encompass many different beliefs and practices, including religion, spirituality, meditation, and mindfulness. It involves exploring one's values, beliefs, and experiences to understand their place in the world, and to create a sense of inner calm. The ubiquitous concept of *holistic nursing* is based on the interconnected aspects that make up the wholeness of human beings, but the spiritual dimension is often neglected or difficult to approach (Caldeira, Sitefane, & Afonso, 2021).

The path to spiritual wellness is individually unique. Therefore, it is important to consider varied strategies for the classroom and clinical setting that facilitate spiritual practices that can provide a source of comfort and support during challenging times. Educators can consider

incorporating the following strategies:

- Engage students in service learning. Giving back to others through service or volunteer work can give students with a sense of purpose and make them feel connected to a larger community.
- Build on the importance of spiritual care in the context of caring for patients to foster students' self-awareness of spiritual needs through individual or group reflections and case discussions (Ryyke et al., 2021). Challenge students to explore their values, beliefs, and experiences and reflect on the spiritual connections that bring them comfort.
- Create neutral student respite spaces for meditation, prayer practices, or quiet reflection.
- Be mindful of holiday observances for all religions when planning events and due dates for exams and assignments.
- Include syllabi policy statements that provide reasonable accommodations to allow students to observe their religious beliefs and practices, including but not limited to, excused absences for religious holidays and alternative scheduling of events and activities.
- Ensure students have access to (and routine reminders of) the resources available for spiritual support, growth, and development. Many campuses have interfaith or interreligious organizations that offer on-campus or remote services.
- Consider starting each class with a mindfulness activity to foster a calm, focused student presence in the classroom. The mindfulness practice of body scanning can help achieve psychophysical balance and wellness (Nilsson, 2022). Mindfulness Exercises (<https://mindfulnessexercises.com/>) offers a diverse variety of guided mindfulness scripts and audio recordings.

Exemplar: Banding Together for Wellness

The *Banding Together for Wellness* program was designed to normalize the concept of self-care within the nursing profession and prepare students with skills for maintaining personal health and well-being throughout their nursing careers. Integrating wellness-focused teaching and learning strategies into didactic and clinical nursing courses allows students to prioritize and practice self-care, develop healthy coping skills, and build resilience throughout their education and clinical training. The ten dimensions of wellness served as a design framework to emphasize and ensure a holistic approach to well-being.

The *Banding* program is comprised of ten online wellness modules focused on each of the respective dimensions of wellness. Students conveniently access the modules via the university's LMS, where they routinely access their nursing courses. Each module includes relevant reading links, recorded webinars, and a variety of strategies to improve or maintain personal wellness within the corresponding dimensions. For example, the Creative Wellness module includes strategies like suggestions for exploring art activities and recommendations for visiting local museums or nature preserves. All students are provided access to the LMS site for the *Banding* program, but participation is voluntary.

Although each cohort of students shares in the collective *Banding* experience, students can tailor the experience to meet their unique wellness needs by selecting the learning resources and strategies that meet their needs in the timeframe that fits their work-life balance. For each module, students are expected to complete all learning content and practice at least 1 wellness strategy. After completing each module, students submit a reflection on their primary learning points and describe the strategy they selected for practice.

Once all modules are completed, students earn a certificate of completion and a digital badge that can be highlighted in their resumes. In addition, students who complete the full program earn an “Honor Cord of Wellness” to wear upon graduation at the nursing convocation and university commencement ceremonies. This recognition is a

reminder to the academic community that a commitment to personal health and well-being is a professional imperative and a valued accomplishment.

The first cohort of undergraduate nursing students to engage in the *Banding* program graduated in 2018. Among the five cohorts to graduate between 2018 and 2022, 426 students (an estimated 54 %) voluntarily completed the entire program to earn a digital badge and Honor Cord of Wellness. Partial student participation was not tracked.

Anecdotal feedback continues to demonstrate themes regarding students' positive regard for the program, the perceived importance of belonging to a community that values student wellness, and enthusiasm for the program's completion incentives. In addition, students report having rewarding conversations during the interview process when potential employers take note of the digital wellness badge on their resumes. From an educator's perspective, the students' post-module reflections help provide insight into students' individual challenges, and "ah ha" moments, as well as the general well-being of the student body. Longitudinal data are currently in process and will help to evaluate the effects, if any, on students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward personal health and well-being and sustainability after the transition to practice.

The *Banding Together for Wellness* program exemplifies a holistic approach to a student wellness programming successfully integrated into an undergraduate nursing program. With a modest investment of time and resources, programs like *Banding* provide a feasible, cost-effective strategy to equip the future nursing workforce with a professional imperative for personal health and well-being.

Discussion

Nurse educators can optimize learning environments to 1) foster personal and professional well-being in nursing students, 2) provide tools, coping strategies, and resources to prevent or reduce burnout, and 3) provide an educational experience that provides students with a positive entry into the nursing profession. While it is important for students to understand that they cannot care well for patients if they are not caring well for themselves, it is also essential for educators to realize the importance of working on their own personal and professional well-being and/or burnout to best teach and mentor students. Faculty should self-assess through the lens of the ten dimensions of wellness to identify any dimensions in need of care or attention and take active steps to address areas where they may need resources and assistance.

Creating a culture of wellness requires a comprehensive, multi-faceted effort from academic leadership. A system-wide culture that promotes help-seeking behaviors supports psychological safety, and values professional well-being is vital to effecting change and sustained success. To transform nursing education and training, positive learning environments need to be a priority for academic leaders. Finding faculty champions and mentors, role modeling healthy behaviors, and engaging faculty, staff, and students in wellness initiatives will provide opportunities for a wellness culture shift.

Collectively, educators are changing the healthcare paradigm and shifting the culture of nursing education to one that embodies a wellness framework. Nevertheless, change takes time. Educators can and should begin taking incremental steps to integrate wellness into nursing curricula. Wellness programming should not be viewed as yet another topic or competency educators are tasked with integrating into already jam-packed program curricula, but rather, as a foundation on which to build.

The task of building wellness into curricula and classroom/clinical settings can be perceived as a daunting task. It is important for nurse educators to remember that it may be helpful to start with one strategy then build on the infrastructure each semester. It will take time to build a comprehensive wellness approach. Many wellness strategies can be optimized for their effectiveness in several wellness dimensions. When selecting strategies, try to maximize the yield by choosing activities that

target more than one dimension (e.g., flexible due dates to promote digital wellness will also support physical and intellectual wellness by promoting healthy sleep; wellness walks promote physical activity and opportunities for social connection and mental clarity).

Both in the start-up phase and periodically thereafter, it is important for faculty to assess and incorporate existing resources in student health and wellness, both internal and external to the school of nursing. Existing university/college resources such as student life, interfaith groups, academic support, counseling, etc., are often free or low cost to students and can serve as a stepping stone to engaging in many of the dimensions of wellness. There are also many resources available through nursing and college organizations like Healthy Nurse, Healthy Nation™ and American College Health Association that also have developed resources to assist with student wellness.

The strategies presented in this article are not an exhaustive list of resources, nor do all need to be implemented at once. Some strategies may be more or less beneficial, or received better, at different institutions. Most of the strategies suggested were designed to cost little to nothing to implement. However, it is important to remember that culture change in schools of nursing takes time and patience. Faculty can be the catalyst for change by starting the wellness discussion within the school of nursing and by taking small steps, such as those listed in this article, within their own courses and clinical and lab settings.

Conclusion

The ten dimensions of wellness offer a holistic framework for promoting undergraduate and graduate student wellness in the classroom and clinical settings. To inspire and support nurse faculty, this article outlines several strategies within each dimension of wellness that can be adapted across educational settings, student cohort sizes, course delivery modes, and cultures of individual nursing programs and clinical institutions. Equipping students with a foundation of skills to cope with the rigor of a professional nursing career also promotes workforce retention and improved care delivery. Nurse educators can be instrumental in cultivating the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for life-long self-care, well-being, and nursing practice.

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