

Wellness in Writing Center Work

Some Needs/Issues of the moment:

- Staffing
- Self-care for directors/WPAs
- Lack of contact
- Lack of motivation
- Withdrawal
- Strategies for touching base but don't seem like "work"
- Community building
- Training needs
- More support for mental healthcare
- Lobbying for tutors
- Support students for this time
- How good learning depends on emotional well being

Burnout—notice the signs:

“Burnout is defined as a “progressive loss of idealism, energy, and purpose experienced by people in the helping professions as a result of the conditions of their work.”¹ It is further defined by 3 key characteristics” (Sanchez-Reilly et al., 2013):

1. physical and emotional exhaustion
2. cynicism
3. inefficacy

Activity—brainstorming:

- Articulate/develop a self-care plan:
 - Saying “no” to things and recognizing own limitations in terms what can be packed into a day or a week.
 - In terms of boundaries, try to look at email during work hours (9 – 5PM).
 - Give break from reading the news—only morning and news reading/watching.
 - Exercise—if and when you can get it.
 - creative play; getting outside/moving/exercise; setting boundaries/saying no (YES to that!); **making a structure** that works for me; experimenting to see what works and then going all out with what works
 - Middlebury executive functioning and time management resources (including schedule planner):
<http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/resources/ctlr/students/olr/time>
 - Sleeping; eating okay; staying connected to other human beings in meaningful ways

- Wellness check-in: sleeping, internet/wifi access, space working/living in
- I've suggested that my tutors/advisers take an actual lunch break, and consider having one day each week when they do not log into college email at all.
- I have been spending the hour before dusk at a tiny, empty local park—no wifi, so I write, either drafts of emails or my own creative work. The sunsets are lovely and just being somewhere else is so good.

Advocacy

Activity—discussion:

- How are we advocating for ourselves, for our tutors, for our clientele?
 - Giving guidance on how to do your job/not banging the drum of productivity.
 - Material constraints of our work?
 - Emotional constraints of our work?
 - Recognizing differential experiences that are occurring among different populations at this time (e.g. racism, differential experiences of COVID etc.)
 - Finding resources about free internet for students that the university makes available, emphasizing flexibility with peer tutors
 - Mainly, advocating by making sure tutors can continue working this semester — and ensuring that the WC can continue next semester (as our college has already announced budget cuts, potential staffing reductions, etc.).
 - WC is creating a Community Coronavirus Journal—I'm collecting entries in a google doc which we'll share periodically with the community and also give to the archives. It's boosted WC visibility for a minute.
 - Having a conversation with student employment—with those who handle federal work study, labor advocacy.
 - Addressing that student employment/registrar is projecting unfair income reimbursement for FWS students—payment for tutors/fair payment.
 - In the past, I have had my tutors role-play saying no to me. It has come in handy now—one consultant had to step away from tutoring (they all get paid anyway) and I was so glad she could identify her needs and ask for them and I thanked her
- Concerns around reportage during financially stressful moment:
 - Data and reports are not the only way to approach “justifying” a writing center:
 - Qualitative information—gathered from tutors, from students, from faculty, from staff, from administrators, from outside colleagues in the field
 - Letter writing campaign from faculty, staff, alumni, tutor etc. about writing center and its meaning role in their lives/work.
 - At UCI we've been talking a bit about how Writing Center professional staff can offer professors/lecturers pedagogical writing support at this

time. So a case can be made (to Deans, whoever) for how we offer campus as a whole writing support.

- Faculty development opportunities
- Recognizing that deadlines have changed, business in the writing center might be impacted—cause is hard to determine, at the moment.
- Engage in Meaningful work—ask tutors to hone their research, teaching, and professional development skills. Ask them to develop trainings, resources for writers, and other meaningful and helpful projects.

Self-Awareness

Developing self-awareness:

“The importance of developing self-awareness deserves particular attention as a realm of self-care. Self-awareness, **defined as a clinician's ability to combine self-knowledge and a dual-awareness of both his or her own subjective experience and the needs of the patient**, has been identified in the field of psychology as the most important factor in the psychologists' ability to function well in the face of personal and professional stressors.⁵¹ Greater self-awareness among clinicians may lead to **greater job engagement and compassion satisfaction, enhanced self-care,**⁵² and **improved patient care and satisfaction.**^{20,53} Conversely, clinicians who possess lower levels of self-awareness have a greater likelihood of compassion fatigue and burnout. **Data support mindfulness meditation and reflective writing as 2 methods of enhancing self-awareness.**”

Activity: Discussion

How we might help our tutors (and ourselves) to develop self-awareness:

- Mindfulness meditation with tutors.
- Reflective writing with tutors.
- This isn't for self-awareness, but I led our staff in some improv games last year. That could be a good thing for the person who wanted to get tutors together without making them feel like they were working.
- Other Collaborative activities
 - Music get together
 - Sensitivity training... activities to take on the subjectivities of others \
 - Improv

Internet and Space Access Challenges

What to do when your students/tutors lack access to tech/space etc.?

- Offer asynchronous tutoring options so tutors have more flexibility and do not need to share their space.
- See if college has emergency support fund to help students with access to internet.
- Review and share resources below on free internet for students/tutors.
- Assess your tutors' (and students', if you have them!) access to internet, space, etc. through a quick survey. This allows for more equity and inclusion in both the tutoring and pedagogical processes and helps administrators/teachers to plan different learning models (synchronous and asynchronous).

Online Tutoring Resources

- DePaul University Tutor Handbook (Chs 5 and 6 on asynchronous and synchronous
- “The Message is the Medium: Electronically Helping Writing Tutors Help Electronically”: <http://www.praxisuwc.com/kavadlo-102>
- Another Word UWisc Blog: <https://dept.writing.wisc.edu/blog/the-online-writing-center-is-about-equity-for-students-and-for-you-too/>
- “Learning Online to Tutor Online: How We Teach Writing Tutors” (Gallagher and Maxfield): <https://wlnjournal.org/digitaleditedcollection1/GallagherMaxfield.html>

Free Internet and Other Resources

This information comes from UCI's Coronavirus information page, which has an excellent section covering [Student FAQs](#):

Comcast Internet Essentials

“Effective Monday, March 16, 2020, Comcast is offering 2 months free to new Internet Essentials customers in response to recent and anticipated emergency measures associated with the Coronavirus (COVID-19).”

Source: <https://www.internetessentials.com/covid19>

Charter Spectrum Broadband

“Charter will offer free Spectrum broadband and Wi-Fi access for 60 days to households with K-12 and/or college students who do not already have a Spectrum broadband subscription and at any service level up to 100 Mbps. To enroll call [1-844-488-8395](tel:1-844-488-8395). Installation fees will be waived for new student households.”

Source: <https://corporate.charter.com/newsroom/charter-to-offer-free-access-to-spectrum-broadband-and-wifi-for-60-days-for-new-K12-and-college-student-households-and-more>

Others:

- [FCC agreement](#) stating that providers will waive late fees, not cutoff service for lack of payment, and open hot-spots.
- [Comcast COVID-19 response](#): offers free WiFi for 2 months to low income families plus all Xfinity hot-spots are free to the public during this time
- [Charter Free Internet offer for 2 months](#)
- [AT&T COVID-19 response](#): offers open hot-spots, unlimited data to existing customers, and \$10/month plans to low income families
- [Verizon COVID-19 response](#): no special offers, but following the FCC agreement.
- [Sprint COVID-19 response](#): follows FCC agreement, provides unlimited data to existing customers, and, starting Tuesday, 3/17/2020, will allow all handsets to enable hot-spots for 60 days at no extra charge (I expect others will follow).
- [T-Mobile COVID-19 response](#): follows FCC agreement, plus unlimited data to existing customers, and, coming soon, will allow all handsets to enable hot-spots for 60 days at no extra charge (I expect others will follow).
- [Altice/Suddenlink response](#): offers 30 MB internet to any new subscriber free for 60 days. No late fees or terminations for existing customers

Wellness Resources

Psychology Today Therapist Directory: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists>

Therapy Matcher: <https://therapymatcher.wordpress.com/contact/>

Dr. Andrew Weil 4-7-8 breath yoga breathing technique:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gz4G31LGyog>

Yoga for Writers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQWwWaWXPS0>

Jared Featherstone (personal website, meditation resources):
<https://www.jaredfeatherstone.com/meditation>

Mindful Tutor Article: <https://wlnjournal.org/digitaleditedcollection1/Featherstoneetal.html>

CDC Guidelines for managing stress: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

Emotional Labor Introduction (from forthcoming manuscript):

- https://docs.google.com/document/d/14VnzNSRMRUvWby3nI16gJ5m3ApwZWswPpxzXQCrK8Btc/edit?fbclid=IwAR2E4uMVZxDguc1_iau4MvG90RhDd0Ge10SX8bJMLDpX_WvWfBQQ7hVpgCE
- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1U-wJtALDWdiExV46gzTC0G3FftGjcg1l/view>

Online Security:

FBI Guidance on Zoom: <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/boston/news/press-releases/fbi-warns-of-teleconferencing-and-online-classroom-hijacking-during-covid-19-pandemic>

[Federal Trade Commission](#) (FTC) regarding scammers:

- **Watch for emails claiming to be from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** or experts saying that have information about the virus. For the most up-to-date information about the Coronavirus, visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) and the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO).
- **Ignore online offers for vaccinations.** There currently are no vaccines, pills, potions, lotions, lozenges or other prescription or over-the-counter products available to treat or cure Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) — online or in stores.
- **Do your homework when it comes to donations**, whether through charities or crowdfunding sites. Don't let anyone rush you into making a donation. If someone wants donations in cash, by gift card, or by wiring money, don't do it.

[Cyber and Infrastructure Security Agency](#) (CISA):

- **Avoid clicking on links in unsolicited emails and be wary of email attachments.** See [Using Caution with Email Attachments](#) and [Avoiding Social Engineering and Phishing Scams](#) for more information.
- **Use trusted sources**—such as legitimate, [government websites](#)—for up-to-date, fact-based information about COVID-19.
- **Do not reveal personal or financial information** in email, and do not respond to email solicitations for this information.
- **Review CISA Insights** on [Risk Management for COVID-19](#) for more information.

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