



## [WellU @HT Weekly Wellness Newsletter \(Volume 7, Issue 1\)](#)

### **Welcome to This Week's Wellness Newsletter!**

As we approach the end of the semester and the holiday season, it's the perfect time to reflect on the importance of mental health. This time of year can be both exciting and overwhelming, with exams, deadlines, and holiday preparations competing for our attention. To support you during this period, we've dedicated this issue to helping you prioritize your mental well-being.

In this edition, you'll find guidance on managing stress during finals, practical ways to incorporate physical activity to support mental wellness, and strategies for navigating the holiday season with balance and care. These tools are designed to help you approach this busy period with focus, resilience, and a sense of calm.

Caring for your mental health is not just about addressing challenges; it's a proactive step toward achieving your goals and enjoying the meaningful moments this season has to offer. As part of our HT community, let's work together to finish the semester strong while prioritizing our well-being.

Together, we can embrace this time with purpose and positivity. Let's make this season one of growth, care, and success.

Maria P. Lopez  
Program Coordinator  
WellU RAM Wellness Program

## The Importance of Mental Health

Mental health plays a crucial role in our overall well-being. It influences how we manage stress, maintain meaningful relationships, and handle daily responsibilities. By caring for our mental health, we create a strong foundation for academic success, deeper connections, and a more enjoyable holiday season.

### Mental Health and Well-Being



### Common Mental Health Challenges During This Time

- **Exam Stress:** The pressure to perform well can lead to feelings of anxiety and overwhelm.
- **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD):** Shorter days and less sunlight can contribute to feelings of sadness or fatigue.
- **Burnout:** After months of studying and work, it's easy to feel drained and mentally exhausted.
- **Holiday Expectations:** Family obligations and planning can cause additional stress.

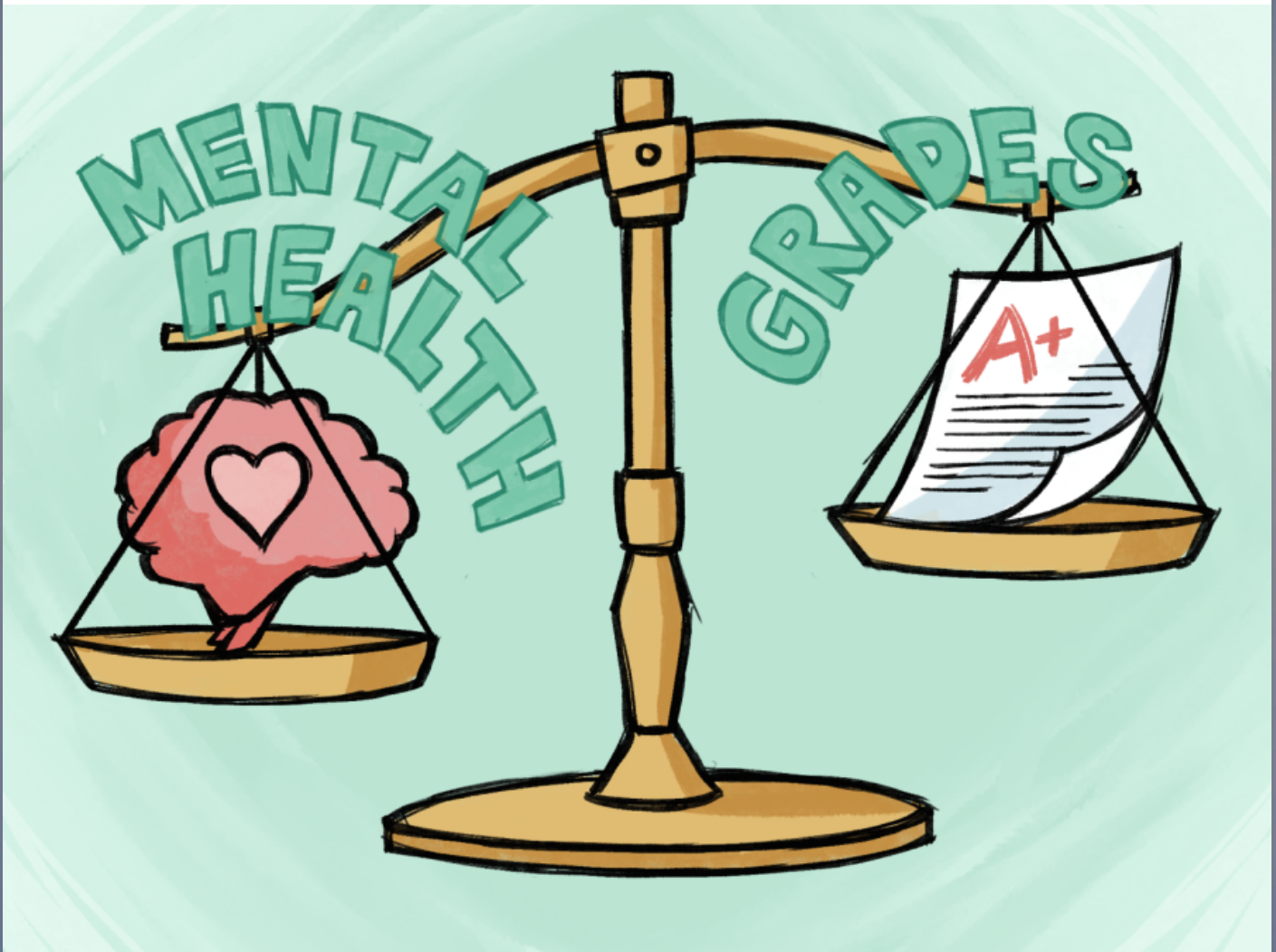
### Mental Health and Academic Performance

College life brings new experiences, challenges, and opportunities, making it a time of great personal and academic growth. While achieving academic success is often the primary goal, maintaining good mental health is equally vital. Mental health significantly affects key aspects of academic performance:

- **Concentration and Focus:** Anxiety and depression can disrupt attention during lectures, study sessions, and exams.
- **Motivation:** Feeling overwhelmed may decrease motivation, making it hard to start or finish assignments and prepare effectively for tests.
- **Memory and Retention:** Chronic stress can impair your ability to retain information, affecting both short-term learning and exam results.
- **Physical Symptoms:** Mental health issues often bring fatigue, headaches, and sleep disturbances, further impacting academic performance.

Understanding these connections helps build a foundation for both mental and academic well-being. By addressing mental health needs, implementing self-care practices, and utilizing campus resources, students can achieve their academic goals while maintaining balance and fulfillment.

"Impact of Mental Health on Academic Achievement in College." *National Society of Collegiate Scholars*, <https://nscs.org>.



## Five Ways to Balance Mental Health and Academics

### ***Managing Stress During Final Exams***

Final exams are often a mix of challenges and opportunities; a time when the pressure to perform can feel overwhelming. With so many responsibilities to manage, feeling stressed is natural; however, prioritizing your mental health is just as important as studying for your exams. Although some stress is inevitable, how you manage it can greatly influence your academic performance and overall well-being. With the right strategies, you can stay focused, reduce anxiety, and set yourself up for success—both academically and personally.

# Tips for exam preparation and tackling worries

by Dr Olivia Remes



## Simple Strategies for Managing Stress and Staying Focused During Finals

### 1. Create a Study Schedule

Break your studying into smaller chunks. Plan when to study each topic, focusing on the harder ones first. A schedule helps you stay organized and reduces stress.

### 2. Take Regular Breaks

Studying non-stop can leave you feeling drained. Try the Pomodoro method: study for 25 minutes, then take a 5-minute break. Use breaks to stretch, snack, or get some fresh air.

### 3. Stay Active

Exercise helps reduce stress. Even a quick 15-minute walk or a few stretches can clear your head and boost your energy.

### 4. Get Enough Sleep

Lack of sleep can make it harder to concentrate. Aim for 7–8 hours of sleep to help your brain absorb and recall what you've studied.

### 5. Fuel Your Body

Eat foods that keep you energized, like fruits, vegetables, nuts, and whole grains. Drink plenty of water, and don't overdo the caffeine.

### 6. Practice Deep Breathing

When stress hits, take a moment to breathe deeply: inhale for four counts, hold for four, then exhale for four. This helps calm you down quickly.

### 7. Stay Positive

Think positive thoughts like, "I'm doing my best." A positive attitude helps reduce stress and keeps you motivated.

### 8. Use Campus Resources

If you're struggling with a subject, ask for help. HT offers resources like the Center for Academic Excellence (CAE), where you can get free tutoring and study help.



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## *Physical Activity for Mental Health*

When stress and anxiety build up, incorporating physical activity into your routine can make a significant difference. Exercise isn't just about staying in shape—it's also a powerful tool for improving mental well-being.

### **Why Exercise Matters for Your Mind**

Physical activity helps release endorphins, often referred to as “feel-good” hormones, which can naturally lift your mood and reduce stress. Regular movement has been shown to lower symptoms of anxiety and depression, making it easier to navigate stressful times like finals or the busy holiday season (Mayo Clinic, 2023). In addition, exercise promotes better sleep, which is crucial for mental clarity and focus. Studies have found that physical activity helps improve sleep quality and duration, allowing your brain to recharge and process information more effectively (National Sleep Foundation, 2023). Plus, exercise boosts energy levels, making it easier to stay productive during long study sessions or tight schedules. Whether it's a quick walk, yoga, or a full workout, any movement can help you feel more balanced and prepared to face the challenges ahead.

# HOW EXERCISE SAVED MY MENTAL HEALTH



## Simple Ways to Stay Active

You don't need a strict workout plan to enjoy the benefits of staying active. Here are some easy ways to add movement to your daily routine:



### Take a Walk

A brisk 15-20 minute walk can help clear your mind and reduce tension.



### Stretch It Out

Yoga or simple stretches can improve flexibility while calming your body and mind.



### Dance It Out

Turn on your favorite music and dance around, it's fun and energizing!

## Tips for Staying Consistent

### *Paula's Corner*

#### Mental Wellness Tips for the Holiday Season

The holiday season is often referred to as the "most wonderful time of the year," full of joy, celebrations, and togetherness. However, for many, it can also bring a wave of stress, overwhelm, and emotional challenges. You may feel pulled in many directions—balancing exams, family gatherings, and the pressure to stay happy and healthy.

But here's the good news: it's okay to take a moment for yourself. Prioritizing your mental wellness during the holidays can help you feel more balanced and ready to embrace the joy of the season. Let's explore a few simple and effective tips for staying grounded:



### Practice Gratitude

A little appreciation can go a long way in reducing stress and boosting your mood. Try keeping a "gratitude jar" where you write down things you're thankful for each day. Looking back at these moments later can remind you of the good in your life, especially when things feel overwhelming.

### Acknowledge Your Emotions

The holidays can stir up a mix of feelings—excitement, sadness, and even anxiety. It's important to acknowledge whatever emotions come up without judgment. Allow yourself the space to feel them and know that it's okay to not be "happy" all the time. Sharing your feelings with a friend or journal can be a great outlet.

### Focus on What You Can Control

With so many expectations during the season, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. To make things manageable, focus on what you can control and let go of what you can't. Whether it's planning for a few holiday events or sticking to your study schedule, taking small steps toward balance can make a big difference.

### Don't Forget Self-Care

Taking care of your body is just as important as taking care of your mind. Stick to healthy habits like eating nutritious foods, getting enough sleep, and staying active. A short walk, a few stretches, or a good night's sleep can help reduce anxiety and boost your mood.

### Reach Out for Support

If you're feeling isolated or struggling, don't hesitate to reach out. Whether it's talking to a friend, family member, or seeking counseling services on campus, support is available. HT offers a variety of resources to help you navigate the holidays with greater ease.

National Council on Aging. (n.d.). *Mental health and the holidays: tips for self-care*. National Council on Aging.



## Resources for Mental Health Support

### On-Campus Support

HT offers counseling services to support students' mental well-being. Whether you need someone to talk to or tools to manage stress, the Counseling Center provides free, confidential support to help you navigate this busy time.







## Hotlines and Text Lines

**Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text **988** for immediate support 24/7.

**Crisis Text Line:** Text **HOME** to **741741** to connect with a trained counselor any time, day or night.

**Trevor Project:** Call **1-866-488-7386** or text **START** to **678678** for crisis support.



## Online Resources

**BetterHelp:** An online therapy platform that matches you with licensed counselors.

**Headspace:** A mindfulness and meditation app that offers exercises to reduce stress and anxiety.

**Mental Health America (MHA):** Offers tools like screening tests and tips to maintain your mental well-being at [mhanational.org](https://mhanational.org).



## Local Community Support

**Integral Care:** Crisis hotline: 512-472-HELP (4357) (24/7). Walk-in support and therapy options.

Location: 1165 Airport Blvd., Austin, TX 78702.

**LifeWorks Austin :** Free/affordable counseling for youth and families. Contact: 512-735-2100.

Location: 835 North Pleasant Valley Road, Austin, TX, 78702

<https://www.lifeworksaustin.org/>



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## *Understanding Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)*

As the days get shorter and the weather turns colder, many people start to feel a shift in their mood and energy. For some, this can lead to Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a type of depression that typically occurs during the fall and winter months. It's thought that reduced exposure to sunlight during this time can have an impact on our mental health, making us feel more down, tired, or less motivated than usual.

### What are the symptoms of SAD?

Feeling sad, irritable, or hopeless

Lack of energy or fatigue

Trouble concentrating

Changes in sleep patterns, such as sleeping too much or too little

Difficulty getting excited about activities you usually enjoy

Changes in appetite, especially craving carbs or sugary foods

## How to Manage SAD During the Holiday Season

Managing SAD is especially important during the holidays, as the festive season can sometimes amplify feelings of isolation or stress. Here are some strategies to help reduce the impact of SAD and improve your mental well-being:



### Increase Light Exposure

Natural sunlight plays a key role in regulating your mood. Try to spend time outside during daylight hours, even on cloudy days.



### Stay Active

Regular physical activity, even light exercise such as walking, can improve your mood and help alleviate symptoms of SAD. Exercise helps boost serotonin levels, a neurotransmitter that regulates mood and energy.



### Maintain a Routine

Keep a regular sleep schedule, eat balanced meals, and make time for activities that bring you joy. A stable routine helps provide structure and can minimize feelings of uncertainty or low mood.



### Stay Connected

Loneliness can intensify SAD. Stay connected with friends and family, even if it's just a quick chat or online conversation. Having a support system can provide comfort and help counteract feelings of isolation.

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## ***End of Semester Support: Finals Study Jam***

Attending the Finals Study Jam, hosted by the Center for Academic Excellence, can be a great way to ease the pressure. On Sunday, December 8th, from 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM at the Down-Jones Library, you'll have the opportunity to get tutoring assistance from Peer Learning Coaches and the Math Center Coordinator, as well as Spring 2025 registration help from Academic Advisors.

Taking time to prepare for finals in a supportive environment can help reduce anxiety, so you can feel more confident during exam week. Remember, taking care of your mental health during this busy time is crucial—participating in events like this can make a big difference in your stress levels.



THE CENTER OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE,  
COLLEGE OF ARTS/SCIENCES & SCHOOL OF  
BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY PRESENTS

## FINALS STUDY JAM & REGISTRATION BLITZ

*Meet with an Academic Advisor & receive  
tutoring assistance from our PLCs before  
Final Exams!*

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2024  
5 PM-7 PM  
DOWNS-JONES LIBRARY**

*Come enjoy some Krispy Kreme Donuts,  
coffee & hot chocolate.*

*Don't forget to bring your study materials &  
Smart Devices!*



**Carlos Cervantes**

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