

5-2023

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Coping with Stress and Developing Self-Care Skills for First-Generation College Students

Marissa Jost

A Capstone project for the Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family Science

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Coping with Stress and Developing Self-Care Skills for First-Generation College Students

Introduction

First-generation college students often face new challenges and stressors that can be difficult for them to cope with. Lack of coping skills for first-generation college students can have adverse effects on mental health such as increased symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression. When college students develop coping skills and self-care strategies, they may become more successful in navigating college life and responsibilities. To support first-generation students, I will develop a three-part interactive workshop for students enrolled in college support programs attending California State University, Monterey Bay in Seaside, California.

Needs Statement

First-generation college students face stressors that can make it challenging to cope with college life. The status of being a first-generation college student is often linked with low socioeconomic status and less access to social resources, which are part of the stressors faced (Garriott & Nisle, 2018). Some of the common stressors that first-generation students have to navigate include increased academic demands, building a social network, navigating autonomy in daily activities, living away from home, and exposure to systematic social stressors such as lack of resources. According to Kroshus et al. (2021), the transition to college is a period of vulnerability and first-generation students are more susceptible to experiencing stressors throughout the school year. A lack of self-care and coping skills can make managing these transitions and stressors more challenging.

Lacking stress management skills to manage stress, especially as a first-generation college student, can lead to poor mental health outcomes. According to Martin (2021), increased symptoms of anxiety and depression caused by stress can adversely affect important aspects of college life such as academic performance, social functioning, personal growth, and more. The unique social characteristics of first-generation students can also make them more vulnerable to stress and its effects on mental health (Jenkins et al., 2013). Given their unique characteristics, first-generation students may find it difficult to achieve personal and academic goals due to the impact of stress.

Self-care and coping skills are essential in order to support mental well-being and mitigate the symptoms of anxiety and depression, among college students, caused by stressors. According to Amir Khan et al., (2022) when there are social demands that exceed one's coping resources, the body responds to them as a threat leading to extreme emotions that disrupt mental processes. This means that it is important to learn how to cope with stress to manage mental health, which can be a difficult process for first-generation college students with limited experiences and a lack of support while navigating the demands of a college education. One study following the COVID pandemic demonstrated that training for undergraduate students on coping strategies and mindfulness exercises can be beneficial for self-care development (Klonoff-Cohen, 2022). If all college students can benefit from self-care development, then first-generation students can benefit even more because as the previously mentioned research shows they are more vulnerable to stress and its effects on mental health.

There are resources available to students that can aid in the process of coping such as social support, academic programs, mental health programs, and more. Supportive peer relationships are important in adapting to college but can also be more difficult for

first-generation students to establish because they may differ from their peers (Jenkins et al., 2013). This demonstrates that if students are provided the tools to build social circles with peers they will also build a support system in the process. Stephens et al., (2015) show that there is also evidence that participating in some early academic intervention programs can strengthen the way students respond to situations in a positive way when navigating through college. If first generation students are given the opportunity to participate in these types of early intervention programs, they have advanced opportunities to connect with peers and build a support system. This finding exhibits that utilizing various social and academic support resources can make a positive difference in developing coping skills for first-generation college students.

Self-care strategies are beneficial for coping with symptoms of stress. The focus of practicing self-care is an effort to take part in activities and behaviors that enhance one's well-being (Martin 2021). There are resources available to first generation students to practice and build self-care skills. Research supports that first-generation students report higher levels of stress but use support services less compared to their peers (Garriott et al., 2017). This shows that first-generation college students may not be aware of and not utilizing resources. One resource that can be accessible is online virtual mental health resources which have expanded in recent years and can be used as a form of self-care. Research on a digital mental health program mobile app demonstrates evidence of a reduction in symptoms and an increase in the development of self-management tools (Lattie et al., 2020). This suggests that using self-care strategies such as online resources as a way to manage symptoms caused by stressors can assist first-generation college students as they navigate the challenges and responsibilities experienced in college.

First-generation college students are more vulnerable to the effects of stressors which make it more difficult to successfully navigate through college life. This increased vulnerability can negatively impact mental health and well-being. Bringing awareness to students about resources, coping skills, and the benefits of self-care strategies can alleviate the negative outcomes of stressors. In order to increase their awareness and aid in developing coping and self-care strategies, I intend to provide a three-part interactive workshop to first-generation students at CSU Monterey Bay enrolled in a college support program.

Theory

The theory that relates to my project is Arnett's theory of emerging adulthood as it applies to the age of the participants. The theory proposes that the time of life roughly between the ages of 18 to 25 is considered a distinct period called emerging adulthood. Emerging adulthood is characterized by five distinct features: the age of identity explorations, the age of instability, the self-focused age, the age of feeling in between, and the age of possibilities (Arnett, 2004). Since first-generation college students are emerging adults, they should be at this stage of development and adjusting to the college environment. According to Munsey (2006), some emerging adults are more successful in their transitions than others, if they had a good foundation set in childhood and adolescence. The two main aspects of this theory that my project will address are the age of instability and the self-focused age. Emerging adults begin to explore more aspects of their lives such as relationships and work, but their lives are also unstable due to frequent moves and changes in their lives. As previously addressed, first-generation college students face adversities and are more vulnerable to stress, which can increase the instability of this stage in emerging adulthood. The self-focused stage demonstrates that during the emerging adulthood years, they focus increasingly on themselves as they develop the knowledge, skills, and

self-understanding they will need for adult life. This applies to first-generation students because, as previously discussed, they often lack the knowledge and skills to help them be successful such as coping with stress and developing self-care skills. This theory applies to my participants and project application because it will expand on developing emerging adults' skills to aid in decreasing the effects of the instability that they face in this stage. With available support, emerging adults can strengthen their skills to improve the ability to cope with stress. Therefore I am creating an interactive workshop to help first-generation college students increase their awareness of the impact of stress and develop coping and self-care skills.

Consideration of Diversity

My project will be conducted in a hybrid format in person and via Zoom, with first-generation college students enrolled in college support programs at CSU Monterey Bay. The participants for this project are first-generation college students and are not reflective of the entire CSUMB community because CSUMB has a community of only about 50% first-generation students. The college support programs serve students from various underrepresented backgrounds such as first-generation students, low-income students, students with disabilities, students from migrant backgrounds, current and former foster youth, and undocumented students. These communities do not represent all of CSUMB nor all first-generation college students due to the limitations of their group affiliations and the qualifications and criteria for support program enrollment. The demographic information available of all CSUMB students shows that the ethnic makeup consists of 3% African American, 9% Asian American, 46% Latino, 1% Native American, 1% Pacific Islander, 29% White, 8% Two or more races, and 4% other/decline. The content of this curriculum may not apply to all first-generation college students because it is only being presented to students

enrolled in the college support programs at CSUMB, which is also not reflective of all CSUMB students. The information presented from the curriculum may not be generalizable or useful to all college students since it is geared toward first-generation students and the population of participants is drawn from CSUMB only. The content being delivered has limitations because it does not go in-depth on specific mental health conditions that can coincide with stress or impact first-generation students as well as the content does not include cultural background influences that may be applicable. An additional limitation is that the content can only be applicable to emerging adults enrolled in college and would need to be modified to apply to any other age demographic. Due to the discussed limitations, this project overall is not inclusive of all emerging adults and age demographics therefore changes would need to be made for the content to apply to a wider audience and participants.

Learning Outcomes

I intend to provide a three-part interactive workshop to first-generation college students enrolled in college support programs attending CSU Monterey Bay.

By the end of the project, participants will be able to:

1. Name three common stressors faced by first-generation college students.
2. Indicate three effects of stress that impact mental health in first-generation students.
3. Indicate three coping skills or self-care strategies to aid in coping with the effects of stress on mental health.

Method

First, all students enrolled in a college support program at CSUMB were contacted via email about two weeks before the workshop, so they could fill out an RSVP form and pre-survey.

Then, on the day of the workshop, as attendees arrived, they were told to sign a sign-in sheet to track attendance. I started the workshop with a 5-minute icebreaker activity where I asked participants to introduce themselves with their name, year in school, and what it means to them to be a first-generation college student. Then, I started my interactive presentation by introducing myself and the purpose of the workshop. On the second slide of the presentation, I asked the group to participate by raising their hands for a series of brief questions: please raise your hand if you have often experienced stress due to college life as a first gen student, you have often had difficulty coping with the stress you have experienced as a first gen student, and you have felt it difficult to find self-care strategies to help you cope with stress. These questions for the participants covered the three main points of the presentation: stress, coping skills, and self-care. See Appendix A. Then, I presented slides with information about the impacts of stress, developing coping skills, and practicing self-care. The first half of the presentation took about 15 minutes.

Then, I led a guided journaling activity to practice self-care skills. The guided journaling activity consisted of a packet that included two pages with information on different types of self-care, a daily journaling questions worksheet about daily self-care practices, and a self-care routine planning worksheet. Each part of the activity took about 15 minutes overall with 10 minutes to fill out each page of the worksheet, and 5 minutes to share in pairs about what they wrote on each page. See Appendix B. I wrapped up the activity with a group discussion on what was shared in the small groups. This segment was about 5 minutes. Then, I closed the presentation with a wrap-up of the key takeaways from the workshop presentation, which took about 5 minutes. Finally, one day after the workshop concluded, participants were sent a 10-question post-survey via email. See Appendix D.

Results

Learning outcome 1 was that the participants would name three common stressors faced by first-generation college students. To see if participants could name three common stressors faced by first-generation college students, I distributed a post-survey to all workshop participants. The questions asked in the survey for learning outcome 1 can be seen in appendix D in questions 8, 9, and 10. I reviewed all the participants' answers from the survey. Based on the seven responses from the post-survey of those who participated in the workshop, all seven participants named three common stressors faced by first-generation college students. Table 1 depicts the results of the post-survey. As shown in the table participants were able to name a variety of stressors that were covered in the workshop content. I believe this learning outcome was partially met.

Learning outcome 2 was to indicate three effects of stress that impact mental health in first-generation students. This learning outcome was also measured by the aforementioned post-survey that was distributed to workshop participants. See appendix D questions 8,9, and 10. Based on the 7 participant responses from the post-survey, 6 were able to indicate three effects of stress that impact mental health in first-generation students. See Table 2. The post-survey shows that almost all the workshop participants were able to indicate three effects of stress based on the content that was presented to them. Therefore I believe this learning outcome was partially met.

Learning outcome 3 was to indicate three coping skills or self-care strategies to aid in coping with the effects of stress on mental health. In the workshop, this outcome was assessed through the interactive activity, using the self-care worksheets as seen in Appendix B. The results were gathered by the post-survey as well. Of the 7 responses from participants in the post-survey,

all 7 indicated three examples of coping skills and self-care strategies based on the workshop content. See Table 3. Therefore I believe that this learning outcome was met.

Discussion

I believe this project was successful overall. The participants that attended the workshop actively participated and were engaged in the material and information that was presented. Since the participants were all in the emerging adulthood stage, according to Arnett's theory, the project was relevant to their experiences as first-generation college students at this stage in their lives. Each of the learning outcomes was met partially or successfully; therefore, I believe it worked. I think that the participants responded best to the self-care development workshop activity because during the activity I observed a lot of positive responses, interactions, and discussions. The self-care activity helped students practice developing skills on their own with the guidance of the information that was presented to them. To assess the participant's knowledge before attending the workshop I sent out a pre-survey form to fill out. Based on their responses each of the participants had some previous knowledge of the topics discussed in the workshop content but those who also completed the post survey showed an increase after the workshop. Based on the responses from participants in the post-survey, there is clear evidence that the workshop left an overall positive impact.

For being inclusive of diversity, I think that my project could have included a bigger audience of first-generation students. If I had not limited it to only first-generation students enrolled in a college support program, it would have been more reflective of the first generation community of students as they are not all in support programs that require additional demographics or affiliations. In addition to this, the content is limited in the fact that it is focused

on emerging adulthood which limits the first-generation audience of those outside of this age range.

If I had to do this project again I would edit the content to be more comprehensive. This would have been done by having a more in-depth two-part workshop with more information presented and additional measurable activities. For the pre and post-surveys that were given to participants, I would edit the questions to get clearer answers based on the content for more clarity in the results of addressing the learning outcomes. Even without the possibility of making these changes I still feel this project was successful and each of the participants learned more about the topic. In the future, I hope that the participants learned what the impacts of stress are on them, how to cope in a healthy way, and continue to develop their self-care skills.

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Table 1 - Post Survey

Question 1: Based on what you learned in the workshop please give 3 examples of common stressors faced by first-generation students.

Participant Number	Response	Correct based on content?
1	Navigating college by yourself, feeling like many people look up or follow you (feeling like many eyes are on you in terms of family and friends), and having to juggle with school and outside events (job, family, etc).	Yes
2	Some common stressors faced by first gen students are academic demands, learning to say “no”, and set boundaries.	Yes
3	financial, coursework, family, mental health	Yes
4	Finances, grades, imposter syndrome	Yes
5	First-generation students experience stress through feeling out of place, not getting the resources they need, and lack of time-management.	Yes
6	One example of a stressor faced by first generation students is not knowing knowing what to do after graduation. Another example is feeling scared and alone throughout the educational journey. A final example is feeling pressured to follow through with higher education for the sake of making parents proud.	Yes
7	academic, financial, and social	Yes

Table 2 - Post Survey

Question 2: Based on what you learned in the workshop please give 3 examples of the effects of stress that impact mental health in first-generation students.

Participant Number	Response	Correct based on content?
1	Lack of sleep, mentally exhausted, and overworking one self (not being able to say no to certain things)	Yes
2	Stress can effect the impact of mental health of first gen students because you tend to feel alone or like a failure and it is hard to communicate these emotions with your family. I personally begin to feel like I'm letting people down.	Yes
3	It can increase mental health issues which can lead to problems with personal relationships, academic performance, or work	Yes
4	Lack of sleep, depression, burn out	Yes
5	Stress can make us feel depressed leading to things like not engaging in physical activity, not socializing, and not eating well or drinking water.	Yes
6	An example of the effects of stress that impact mental health in first-generation students is feeling overwhelmed and lost. Another example is that when you're mentally distressed, it can affect you're physically and emotionally, too. A third example of the effects of stress is neglecting self-care habits.	Yes
7	If I'm honest, I don't remember.	No

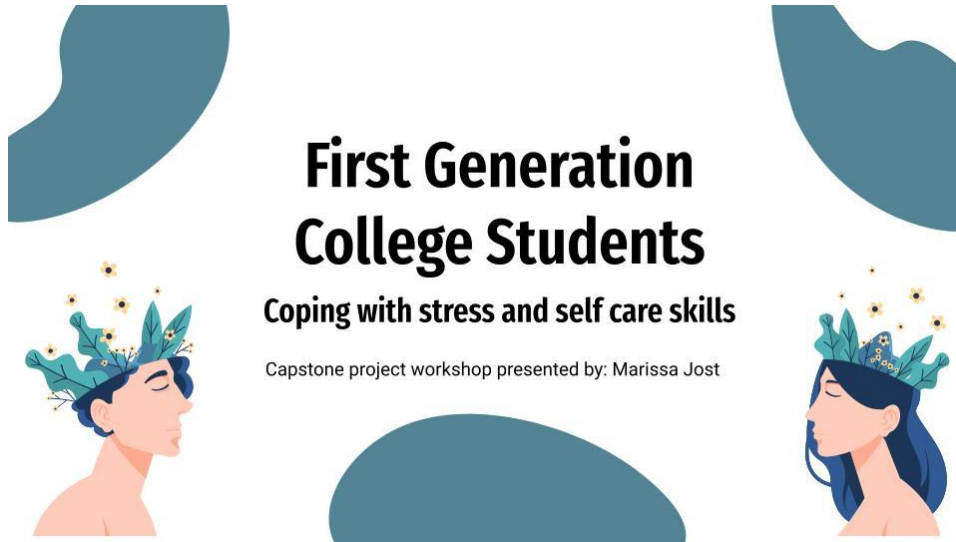
Table 3 - Post Survey

Question 3: Based on what you learned in the workshop please give 3 examples of coping skills and self-care strategies.

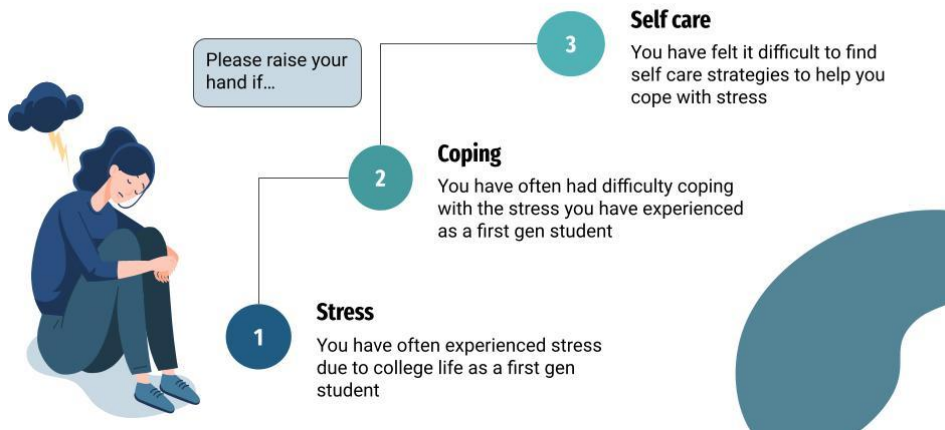
Participant Number	Response	Correct based on content?
1	Add breaks in your schedule, sleep in or exercise, and journal	Yes
2	Some examples of self care strategies are yoga, mediation, and keeping your body healthy by drinking water and eating meals.	Yes
3	personal self-care, emotional self-care, and financial self-care. Three examples would be a hot shower, taking medicine, or going to the gym	Yes
4	Journaling, taking walks, controlled breathing	Yes
5	Some self-care strategies include meditation, physical exercise, and talking through emotions with a therapist or someone you trust.	Yes
6	Three examples of self-care strategies include yoga, eating healthy, and socializing.	Yes
7	yoga, going on walks, and deep breaths	Yes

Appendix A

Workshop presentation



What do you know about stress and coping skills?



Stress

First-generation college students face stressors that can make it challenging to cope with college life.

The status of being a first-generation college student is often linked with factors such as low socioeconomic status, less access to social resources, and more which are part of the stressors faced.

Common Stressors

- Increased academic demands
- Building a social network
- Independence and autonomy
- Systematic challenges



Coping Skills

Example?

Can anyone give an example of what they think a healthy coping skill is...



- Coping skills are essential in order to support mental well-being and mitigate the symptoms of anxiety and depression that are caused by stressors.
- It is important to learn how to cope with stress to manage mental health, which can be a difficult process with limited experiences and a lack of support.

- There are resources available to students that can aid in the process of coping such as social support, academic programs, mental health programs, and more.
- Utilizing a variety of social and academic support resources can make a positive difference in developing coping skills for first-generation college students

Self Care

Do you practice self care?



Resources

There are a variety of online and community resources available to support self care development.

Physical

Taking care of oneself physically can help improve holistically.

Mental/Emotional

Mental self care involves activities that help declutter your mind and reduce your stress levels.

Let's Practice Together!

Guided Journaling Activity

- Guided journaling can be a great way to practice self care.
- Getting thoughts, feelings, and emotions on a page can help alleviate some stress.
- Space for reflection.



Wrap Up!

- Academic Demands
- Navigating Independence
- Manage mental health
- Find support resources
- Physical
- Mental/Emotional resources

01

Stress

Being a first gen student is linked with increased amount of stress experienced.

02

Coping

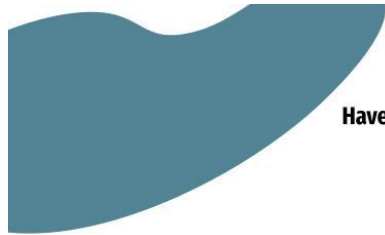
Coping skills are essential to support mental well being.

03

Self Care

There are many forms of self care skills that can be developed as a form of coping with stress.



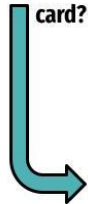


Thank You!

Have any questions or comments?
Feel free to contact me!

Email: mjost@csumb.edu

Do you want a chance to win a \$10 Target gift card? Fill out the post survey below!



Slide template credit to Slidesgo

Appendix B

Self-care practice worksheets

DAILY SELF-CARE JOURNALING

If you have your own journal (you should!) use these prompts to inspire you to write on a **daily basis!**

Today I practiced self-care by...

Today I had fun when...

I accomplished...

I felt proud of myself when...

I felt good about...

Today was interesting because...

I am grateful for...

I took care of myself by...

Something I did well today was...

I showed love to myself by...

I struggled with...

Self-Care Routine

Self-Care Ideas			
Physical	Mental	Emotional	Spiritual
Stretch	Socializing	Therapy	Meditation
Exercise	Creativity	Honesty	Yoga
Eat Healthy	Hobbies	Say "no"	Deep Breaths
Spa Day	Books	Boundaries	Prayer
Pampering	Affirmations	Self-Talk	Journaling
Water Drinking	Learning	Laughter	Mantra

My Self-Care Ideas...			
Physical	Mental	Emotional	Spiritual

My Self-Care Routine		
Daily	Weekly	Monthly

TYPES OF SELF-CARE

We've talked about self-care as acts of kindness that meet your needs. These needs can be put into different categories. This allows you to see what areas of your life you might be neglecting and need to pay attention to.

Self-care is all about communicating with yourself and saying "Hey Self, what do you need right now?"

Then do that thing and if you aren't able to do that thing right then, intentionally putting aside time later for that need.

Self-care changes with moods and situations because what you need changes. It helps you figure out a step-by-step plan on what to do when you're sick, tired, sad, stressed out, anxious, and all emotions in between.

Self-care helps stop the spiral of destructive emotions. It gives you something to focus on when you feel yourself starting to break down. It's your greatest ally when it comes to coping with life in a healthy and productive way.

Physical Self-Care

Physical self-care is the most frequently talked about type of self-care. It means getting enough water, food, sleep, and physical activity. Physical self-care means not neglecting your physical needs.

Emotional Self-Care

The ability to deal with your emotions in a healthy way. Learning how to cope with strong emotions instead of acting out and being self-destructive or shutting down.

Personal Self-Care

Learning who you are, what you like, and what you enjoy doing in your spare time. It's important to have goals and interests that are just for you and just to make you happy.

Social Self-Care

It's important to know if you're an introvert, extrovert, or something in-between. You need to be able to understand what your social needs are and how to create boundaries that respect them.

Spiritual Self-Care

You don't have to be religious to take care of your spirit. Spiritual self-care is about finding peace and acceptance within yourself. It's also about having a higher understanding of who you are and why you are here.

Professional Self-Care

Continuing to learn and advance in your field. Having a job that just makes you happy. Making sure that you have healthy boundaries when it comes to work and home.

Environmental Self-Care

Taking care of your space. Making sure that you're in a healthy living environment free from danger and abuse. Doing all of those chores and not letting them pile up.

Financial Self-Care

Budgeting and paying bills on time and saving money if you're able to. Also working through money-related fear and anxiety. Planning for the future/retirement.

Appendix C

Pre-Survey Questions

Capstone Workshop - RSVP and Pre Survey

Hello College Support Programs students!

Thank you for your interest in attending this workshop for first gen students!

Join us to learn about coping with stress and developing self care skills as a first generation college student. The workshop will consist of an interactive presentation and activity. All students that attend and complete the pre and post survey will be entered in an opportunity drawing for a chance to win \$10 gift cards.

Date: Monday, 3/20

Time: 1pm-2pm

Location: University Center Living Room or Zoom

*light refreshments will be available

Please take a moment to fill out this brief survey. It should take no longer than 5 minutes.

** Indicates required question*

1. First and Last Name *

2. Email *

3. Class Level *

Mark only one oval.

First Year/Freshman

Second Year/Sophomore

Third Year/Junior

Fourth Year/Senior

Other: _____

4. What support program are you in? *

Mark only one oval.

TRIO SSS/SSS STEM-HS

EOP

Guardian Scholars

CAMP

UNDOCU Success

5. Will you attend in person or virtually? *

Mark only one oval.

In person

Virtual

6. Do you need any accommodations? Questions, comments, and concerns may be added here as well.

7. Do you feel knowledgeable on the affects of stress on mental health, types of coping skills, and self care strategies for first generation students? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Other: _____

8. To your knowledge what are some common stressors that are faced by first generation college students? Give at least one example if applicable. *

9. To your knowledge what are some of the negative effects that stress has on mental health? Give at least one example if applicable. *

10. To your knowledge what are coping skills and self care strategies? Give at least one example if applicable. *

Appendix D

Post-Survey Questions

Capstone Workshop - Post Survey

Hello-

Thanks for attending the coping with stress and self care skills workshop for first gen students!

We hope you enjoyed learning about the effects of stress and developing coping skills. We appreciate you attending this event.

Please take a couple minutes to answer some questions and give your feedback on the workshop - your responses will be used for capstone project data but any information provided will be kept anonymous!

— * Indicates required question —

1. First and Last Name *

2. Email *

3. Please rate your satisfaction with: *

Check all that apply.

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Length of event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activities (Interactive presentation and Self care worksheets)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information presented	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Time/Day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall satisfaction with the event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. What was the most rewarding part of the event? *

5. How can we improve in the future? (Feel free to add any comments, questions, or concerns here!)

6. Do you feel this workshop was informative. *

Mark only one oval.

Yes
 No
 Other: _____

7. After attending this workshop do you feel more knowledgeable on the affects of stress on mental health, types of coping skills, and self care strategies for first generation students. *

Mark only one oval.

Yes
 No
 Other: _____

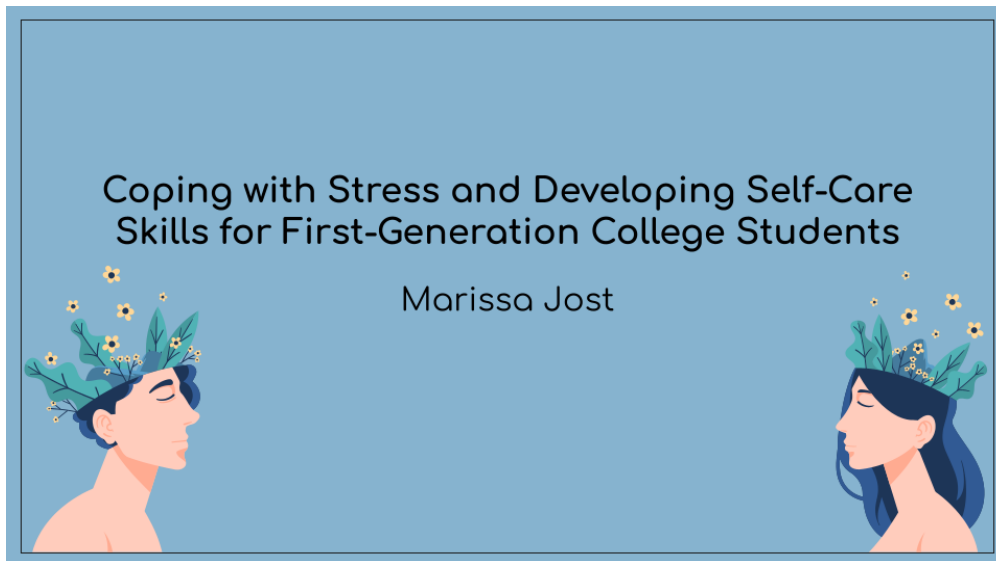
8. Based on what you learned in the workshop please give 3 examples of common stressors faced by first generation students. *

9. Based on what you learned in the workshop please give 3 examples of the effects of stress that impact mental health in first-generation students. *

10. Based on what you learned in the workshop please give 3 examples of coping skills and self care strategies. *

Appendix E

Presentation from Capstone Festival



Need Statement

- ❖ First-generation college students are more vulnerable to the effects of stressors which make it more difficult to successfully navigate through college life.
- ❖ This increased vulnerability can negatively impact mental health and well-being.
- ❖ Bringing awareness about resources, coping skills, and the benefits of self-care strategies can alleviate the negative outcomes of stressors.

This slide has a light blue background with a thin dark blue border. The title 'Need Statement' is centered at the top in a bold, dark blue font. Below the title is a bulleted list of three points, each starting with a dark blue diamond symbol. The text is in a dark blue, sans-serif font. In the bottom right corner, there is an illustration of a woman with dark hair tied up, wearing a dark blue turtleneck sweater, pointing her right index finger upwards. The background of the slide is a solid light blue color.

Theory

- ❖ Arnett's theory of emerging adulthood
 - Applies to the age of participants (roughly around 18-25)
- ❖ Characterized by five distinct features
 - the age of instability and the self-focused age

5 Features of Emerging Adults

- 1 Age of identity exploration.
- 2 Age of instability.
- 3 Age of feeling in between.
- 4 Age of self-focus.
- 5 Age of possibilities.

Thinking Tree


Theory

Age of Instability

- ❖ Unstable due to constant new change
 - Stress can increase instability

Self Focused Age

- ❖ Increased focus on themselves as they develop the knowledge, skills, and self-understanding they will need for adult life
 - lack of knowledge and skills to help them be successful such as coping with stress and developing self-care skills



Learning Outcomes

By the end of the project, participants will be able to:

LO 1:

- ❖ Name three common stressors faced by first-generation college students.

LO 2:

- ❖ Indicate three effects of stress that impact mental health in first-generation students.

LO 3:

- ❖ Indicate three coping skills or self-care strategies to aid in coping with the effects of stress on mental health.


Method

What?

- ❖ RSVP/Pre survey
- ❖ 1 hour workshop
 - > Ice breaker
 - > Interactive Presentation
 - > Group discussions
 - > Activity
- ❖ Post survey

Who?


- ❖ All first generation students enrolled in a college support program at CSUMB



**California State University
MONTEREY BAY**

Presentation Opening Questions

What do you know about stress and coping skills?



Please raise your hand if...

1

Stress
You have often experienced stress due to college life as a first gen student

2

Coping
You have often had difficulty coping with the stress you have experienced as a first gen student

3

Self care
You have felt it difficult to find self care strategies to help you cope with stress

Self-care Activity

TYPES OF SELF-CARE

We've talked about self-care as acts of kindness that meet your needs. These needs can be put into different categories. This allows you to see what areas of your life you might be neglecting and need to pay attention to.

Self-care is all about communicating with yourself and saying "Hey Self, what do you need right now?"

Then do that thing and if you aren't able to do that thing right then, **intentionally** putting aside time later for that need.

Self-care changes with moods and situations because what you need changes. It helps you figure out a step-by-step plan on what to do when you're sick, tired, sad, stressed out, anxious, and all emotions in between.

Self-care helps step the spiral of destructive emotions. It gives you something to focus on when you feel yourself starting to break down. It's your greatest ally when it comes to coping with life in a healthy and productive way.

Physical Self-Care
Physical self-care is the most frequently talked about type of self-care. It means getting enough water, food, sleep, and physical activity. Physical self-care means not neglecting your physical needs.

Emotional Self-Care
The ability to deal with your emotions in a healthy way. Learning how to cope with strong emotions instead of acting out and being self-destructive or shutting down.

Personal Self-Care
Learning who you are, what you like, and what you enjoy doing in your spare time. It's important to have goals and interests that are just for you and just to make you happy.

Social Self-Care
It's important to know if you're an introvert, extrovert, or something in-between. You need to be able to understand what your social needs are and how to create boundaries that respect them.

Spiritual Self-Care
You don't have to be religious to take care of your spirit. Spiritual self-care is about finding peace and acceptance within yourself. It's also about having a higher understanding of who you are and why you are here.

Professional Self-Care
Continuing to learn and advance in your field. Having a job that just makes you happy. Making sure that you have healthy boundaries when it comes to work and home.

Environmental Self-Care
Taking care of your space. Making sure that you're in a healthy living environment free from danger and abuse. Doing all of those chores and not letting them pile up.

Financial Self-Care
Budgeting and paying bills on time and saving money if you're able to. Also working through money-related fear and anxiety. Planning for the future/retirement.

Self-care Activity

DAILY SELF-CARE JOURNALING

If you have your own journal (you should!) use these prompts to inspire you to write on a **daily basis**:

Today I practiced self-care by...

Today I had fun when...

I accomplished...

I felt proud of myself when...

I felt good about...

Today was interesting because...

I am grateful for...

I took care of myself by...

Something I did well today was...

I should love to myself by...

I struggled with...

Self-Care Routine


Self-Care Ideas			
Physical	Mental	Emotional	Spiritual
Stretch	Socializing	Therapy	Meditation
Exercise	Creativity	Honesty	Yoga
Eat Healthy	Hobbies	Say "no"	Deep Breaths
Spa Day	Books	Boundaries	Prayer
Pampering	Affirmations	Self-Talk	Journaling
Water Drinking	Learning	Laughter	Mantra

My Self-Care Ideas...			
Physical	Mental	Emotional	Spiritual

My Self-Care Routine		
Daily	Weekly	Monthly

Results

- ❖ Each of the learning outcomes was partially met or fully met.
 - Measured using the post survey responses.
- ❖ Observation of differences between learning outcomes and individual results.



LO 1 and Evidence

Question 1: Based on what you learned in the workshop please give 3 examples of common stressors faced by first-generation students.

Participant Number	Response	Correct based on content?
1	Navigating college by yourself, feeling like many people look up or follow you (feeling like many eyes are on you in terms of family and friends), and having to juggle with school and outside events (job, family, etc).	Yes
2	Some common stressors faced by first gen students are academic demands, learning to say "no", and set boundaries.	Yes
3	financial, coursework, family, mental health	Yes

LO 1 and Evidence

Question 1: Based on what you learned in the workshop please give 3 examples of common stressors faced by first-generation students.

Participant Number	Response	Correct based on content?
4	Finances, grades, imposter syndrome	Yes
5	First-generation students experience stress through feeling out of place, not getting the resources they need, and lack of time-management.	Yes
6	One example of a stressor faced by first generation students is not knowing knowing what to do after graduation. Another example is feeling scared and alone throughout the educational journey. A final example is feeling pressured to follow through with higher education for the sake of making parents proud.	Yes
7	academic, financial, and social	Yes

LO 1 and Evidence

LO 1:

- ❖ Name three common stressors faced by first-generation college students.

- ❖ I believe this learning outcome was partially met.
- ❖ As shown in the tables participants were able to name a variety of stressors that were covered in the workshop content in the post survey.
- ❖ Few differences in results and responses from the pre and post surveys.
 - > Some improvement but all familiar with the topic.

LO 2 and Evidence

Question 2: Based on what you learned in the workshop please give 3 examples of the effects of stress that impact mental health in first-generation students.

Participant Number	Response	Correct based on content?
1	Lack of sleep, mentally exhausted, and overworking one self (not being able to say no to certain things)	Yes
2	Stress can effect the impact of mental health of first gen students because you tend to feel alone or like a failure and it is hard to communicate these emotions with your family. I personally begin to feel like I'm letting people down.	Yes
3	It can increase mental health issues which can lead to problems with personal relationships, academic performance, or work	Yes

LO 2 and Evidence

Question 2: Based on what you learned in the workshop please give 3 examples of the effects of stress that impact mental health in first-generation students.

Participant Number	Response	Correct based on content?
4	Lack of sleep, depression, burn out	Yes
5	Stress can make us feel depressed leading to things like not engaging in physical activity, not socializing, and not eating well or drinking water.	Yes
6	An example of the effects of stress that impact mental health in first-generation students is feeling overwhelmed and lost. Another example is that when you're mentally distressed, it can affect you're physically and emotionally, too. A third example of the effects of stress is neglecting self-care habits.	Yes
7	If I'm honest, I don't remember.	No

LO 2 and Evidence

LO 2:

- ❖ Indicate three effects of stress that impact mental health in first-generation students.

- ❖ This learning outcome was partially met
- ❖ Almost all the workshop participants were able to indicate three effects of stress based on the content that was presented to them
 - Outside factors impact the outcome?

LO 3 and Evidence

Question 3: Based on what you learned in the workshop please give 3 examples of coping skills and self-care strategies.

Participant Number	Response	Correct based on content?
1	Add breaks in your schedule, sleep in or exercise, and journal	Yes
2	Some examples of self care strategies are yoga, mediation, and keeping your body healthy by drinking water and eating meals.	Yes
3	personal self-care, emotional self-care, and financial self-care. Three examples would be a hot shower, taking medicine, or going to the gym	Yes

LO 3 and Evidence

Question 3: Based on what you learned in the workshop please give 3 examples of coping skills and self-care strategies.

Participant Number	Response	Correct based on content?
4	Journaling, taking walks, controlled breathing	Yes
5	Some self-care strategies include meditation, physical exercise, and talking through emotions with a therapist or someone you trust.	Yes
6	Three examples of self-care strategies include yoga, eating healthy, and socializing.	Yes
7	yoga, going on walks, and deep breaths	Yes

LO 3 and Evidence

LO 3:

- ❖ Indicate three coping skills or self-care strategies to aid in coping with the effects of stress on mental health.

- ❖ This learning outcome was met.

- ❖ Both pre and post survey had successful outcomes.
 - More familiarity and/or engagement with this position of the subject content.

Discussion

Did it work?

- ❖ This project was successful overall
 - participants actively participated and were engaged in the material and information that was presented
 - each of the learning outcomes was met partially successfully or successfully therefore I believe it worked

- ❖ Based on the responses from participants in the post-survey there is evidence that the workshop left an overall positive impact

Discussion

What would I do different?

- ❖ More comprehensive
 - more in-depth workshop with more information presented and additional measurable activities
- ❖ Pre and post Suveys
 - Edit questions to get clearer responses based on the content
 - More clarity in the results in addressing the learning outcomes
- ❖ More inclusive
 - Bigger audience
 - Limited focus on emerging adults and students in support programs

Moving Forward

- ❖ This project was successful and each of the participants learned more about the topic.
- ❖ In the future, I hope that the participants learned what the impacts of stress are on them, how to cope in a healthy way and continue to develop their self-care skills.



Coping with Stress and Developing Self-Care Skills for First-Generation College Students

Thank you!

Do you have any questions or comments?

Marissa Jost

