



Wellness Room

Teaching students how to self-regulate and manage stress

The purpose of the Wellness Room is based on *physiology* and *brain science* (neuroscience).

We are teaching students two main concepts:

- 1) to recognize how their stress response system works (nervous system) and
- 2) what coping skills they can use to self-regulate (self-regulate means to manage our emotions and behavior). We are all doing the work of self-regulation every day

Rates of anxiety and depression are increasing in children and adolescents. Twelve percent of youth between the ages of 12 and 17 report they have experienced one major depressive episode in the past year and an estimated $\frac{1}{3}$ of adolescents have a diagnosed anxiety disorder (Prothero, 2018).

We know the root of anxiety is fear and manifests in ruminating over the past or worrying about the future. The key is bringing our attention to the present moment. When we are intentional about being aware of our thoughts and emotions in the moment, we are more empowered to cope in healthy ways. Learning how to recognize our emotions and self-regulate is a lifelong skill that can help decrease anxiety and depression.

The Wellness Room provides a safe and comfortable space to do the work of self-regulation.

Some classic signs of anxiety may include:

- Easily frustrated
- Somatic Complaints, e.g. stomach aches, headaches, trouble breathing
- Exhibits fear
- Seems on the lookout for danger (hypervigilant)
- Easily upset by mistakes (perfectionism)
- Cries
- Startles easy
- Blushes, trembles
- Frequently expresses worry
- Has difficulty completing work

Less obvious signs of anxiety may include:

- Acts irritable
- Acts angry
- Does not follow school rules
- Has inconsistent patterns in antecedents
- Exhibits ritualistic or repetitive behavior
- Is inflexible
- Acts out of the blue; seems over-reactive

When our amygdala detects a threat, the emotion brain shuts down the thinking brain and we become dysregulated. Our nervous system activates to prepare us for fight or flight.

In that moment, we need to regulate our nervous system to bring our thinking brain back online so we can choose how to respond, rather than react. Using the Wellness Room allows students to take a deep breath, take a walk, and engage in a sensory soothing activity in a safe and calm environment.

These healthy coping skills empower students to self-regulate, a skill they need their entire life.

	<p>Welcome</p> <p>All Students & Teachers</p> <p>Tier 1 Universal Intervention</p> <p>Calm sensory soothing environment Dim lights Pleasant sights & smells Soft places to sit</p>	<p>We all experience stress and vulnerability, especially during transitions in life and changes in our daily routine. Research shows pleasant smells, soothing music, and laughter decrease levels of the stress hormone, cortisol. We all need breaks throughout the day to self-soothe using all of our 5 senses.</p>
	<p>Check-in</p> <p>#1 question “Do you want to be in the Wellness Room?”</p> <p>Data Collection: Student name Teacher name Time-in/out Rate emotions in/out (can track what tools student used)</p>	<p>Anyone can use the Wellness Room at anytime. Research shows we are more productive when we take short breaks throughout the day. Data is collected on student usage to identify patterns, e.g. coming in at the same time everyday or at the same time as another person to problem solve potential issues the student is experiencing.</p>
<p>1. CHECK IN ✓</p> <p>2. CHOOSE A TOOLBOX 📦</p> <p>3. GET A TIMER ⌚</p> <p>4. FIND A SPOT 📍</p> <p>5. Clean up 🧹</p>	<p>Expectations</p> <p>On opening day: all classes receive an orientation to the Wellness Room to teach the students the purpose of the room and how to access it appropriately.</p>	<p>The expectations for using the Wellness Room are explicitly taught. Students will choose an activity (or not--they may choose to breathe or meditate) and pick up a timer (10 minutes), then choose a place to sit.</p>
	<p>Tools (coping)</p> <p>To self-regulate</p> <p>Intentional Breathing Sensory Music/Art Trivia/Joke books Educational: Mindfulness Apps Videos about the brain</p>	<p>Research shows Self-regulation allows us to recognize & manage our emotions and recognize others feelings and empathize. It also boosts academic performance: <i>Managing emotions is a better predictor of academic achievement than IQ</i> (Lehrer, 2009).</p>



Tables to work

Actively using coping tools
Engaging the senses and creating
Our brain changes according to how we use it

This is a quiet environment where participants actively engage in sensory soothing activities to self-regulate.
Self-regulation is the ability to calm yourself down when you're upset and cheer yourself up when you're down.



Comfortable Places to work

What we experience creates neural pathways in our brain to support new learning and develop new habits.

Neuroplasticity is the brain's tendency to continue to restructure itself based on experience. When students experience the calming physiological effects of engaging in sensory soothing activities they learn these activities calm them down and they will choose to do these activities instead of engage in maladaptive behavior when they become upset (dysregulated).



Places to sit

Chairs only.
Soft
Comfortable
Only room for one.

Students may access a weighted blanket to rest in a comfortable chair. They may listen to soothing music, engage in meditation with an app, or watch educational videos on how the brain works.