

MASON

CHOOSES

KINDNESS



TOOLKIT

resources to help you be more kind

20
22

[KINDNESS.GMU.EDU](https://kindness.gmu.edu)

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How To Use This Toolkit

This toolkit provides a number of resources for you to learn more about the impact of kindness on you and those around you, and offers strategies for you to utilize kindness at Mason. **Click on the titles of any resource to access them.**



kindness.gmu.edu
mck@gmu.edu

[toolkit updated 1/28/21](#)

Why Kindness?



Dear Mason Patriots,

Many of you probably hear about the importance of random acts of kindness. There's even a National Random Acts of Kindness Day celebrated annually in the United States. Although random can be good, at Mason, we're committed to *intentional* acts of kindness.

We chose the theme of "*Mason Chooses Kindness*" as a way to integrate and coordinate the many well-being activities on our campuses for students, faculty, staff, and alumni. We also believe kindness is essential in uplifting compassion and connectedness, developing courage in advocating for others, and actively embracing our common humanity. Now more than ever, our world can benefit from intentional acts of kindness, both small and large. MCK is an initiative that connects people across differences to promote kindness, including advocating for others and standing up to injustices, which are powerful and intentional acts of courageous kindness.

The science indicates that our well-being is enhanced in various ways when we engage in kindness, whether you're giving or receiving it. And after all, *humans are wired for caring, connection, and compassion*. This MCK toolkit includes resources that you can use in your organizations, classrooms, workplaces, and in your life. For additional information, visit our website at kindness.gmu.edu.

We hope you will join us and *find at least one thing to participate in*, even if it means taking a step out of your comfort zone. If you want to get more involved, feel free to email MCK@gmu.edu.

With gratitude,



Lewis Forrest, MCK Co-Chair
Associate Dean of University Life

Nance Lucas, MCK Co-Chair
Executive Director & Chief Well-Being Officer,
Center for the Advancement of Well-Being

Background

Vision

As Mason Patriots, we change the world one small act of kindness at a time.

Mission

Our mission is to create and sustain an infectious kindness revolution at Mason.

What is Kindness?

At Mason, we define kindness as intentionally engaging in positive actions that are friendly, caring, and compassionate towards self and others.

Mason Well-Being Initiative

At Mason, we believe that we *thrive together* with shared success as one of our core values. Our goal is to evolve as a model well-being university, providing a place for all members of our Mason community in an environment where everyone thrives while contributing to others' well-being.



MCK Pillars

Education & Awareness

Creating a culture of kindness at Mason through acts of genuine kindness, sharing our stories, and supporting one another, while educating the campus community around the importance of kindness.

Positive Connections

Creating and discovering opportunities to support meaningful, interactive, and engaging connections.

Courageous Advocacy

Being a champion for others through uncompromising acts that empower self and others.

Creativity

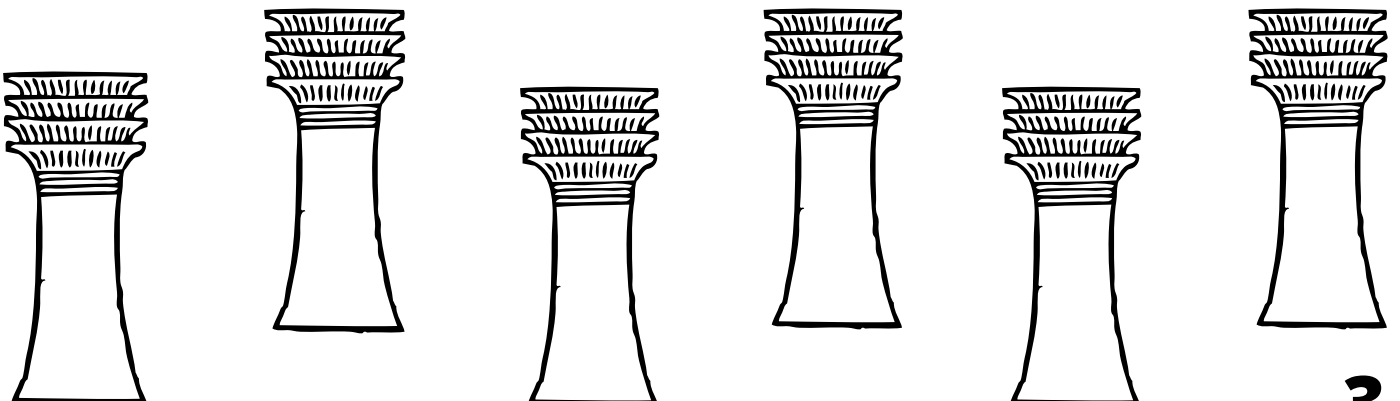
Utilizing our strengths and talents to support a campus culture of kindness, incorporating our unbridled energy, enthusiasm, and creativity.

Compassion

Operating from a place of mindfulness, kindness, common humanity, and grace through understanding, acceptance, and forgiveness.

Well-Being

Supporting holistic development of individuals and groups in their social, spiritual, emotional, physical, and community well-being through evidence-based research and practices.





General Resources

The Importance of Kindness

Amanda Cuoco, 2020

"We may not be able to help everyone that we come in contact with. We may not be able to understand what they are going through. We may never have the answers and may never know the full story and that is OK. The way we respond to others can make a difference."

"Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for a kindness." — Lucius Annaeus Seneca

Kindness may help socially anxious people relax

Katie Coopersmith, 2015

"A new study published in the journal Motivation and Emotion by UBC Clinical Psychology professor Dr. Lynn Alden and SFU SSHRC post-doctoral fellow Jennifer Trew suggests that performing acts of kindness might help lessen social anxiety."

"People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centered; forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; be kind anyway."- Mother Teresa

How Sharing Kindness can Make you Healthier & Happier

Mayo Clinic Staff, 2018

"You can rewire your brain to be more present and kinder to others, giving your mood a daily boost. These three simple practices will help get you started."

How the Power of Kindness Impacts Your Life and Others

Tony Fahkry, 2017

"Kindness is not something that demands hard work. It originates from the simple act of doing no harm to others."

The Science of Kindness

Shakira Hoosain, 2019

"A series of studies in neuroscience at Stanford University, headed by Prof Jamil Zaki, have found that kindness is actually 'contagious' and that if you see an act of kindness or generosity, you are likely to spread it. One good deed will in turn inspire another."

The Science Behind Kindness

The Catchafire Team, 2018

Be it random or intentional, free or extravagant, the way we choose to express acts of kindness is as unique as our fingerprints, but ultimately it all converges into one, collective impact — that of making the world a more compassionate and just place.

Boost Your Health With Acts of Kindness

Earlexia Norwood, 2016

"When we smile, we produce the hormone oxytocin in the brain and throughout the body. Oxytocin releases nitric oxide in the blood vessels, expanding the vessels and helping lower blood pressure."



"Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world." — Desmond Tutu

"Your beliefs become your thoughts, your thoughts become your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your habits, your habits become your values, your values become your destiny." -Gandhi

Student Testimonials

Hear from fellow Mason students on the importance of kindness & how they plan to spread it!



"My plans to spread kindness in this academic year at Mason are to befriend more people, give out genuine compliments, and help people who may need it. I hope people will be encouraged to join in when they see what I am doing."

**Nasrin Ali - Kindness Ambassador,
Computer Science Major**

"...Warmth and love will always defeat division and darkness, and one simple act of kindness can be the catalyst of change that links together a whole web of light, bringing us as a community together to unify at a level of prosperity and peace beyond heights ever before imaginable."

**Ransom Fox - Kindness Ambassador,
Public Administration Major**



"To me, kindness is going out of your way to do things for others, whether that's saying something kind to them, or helping them with a daily task that they may not ask for help with. You just go out of your way to do so."

Taylor Lucas - Communication Major



Resources for Students

Tidewater

4349B Chesapeake River Way

Click to read
the full article!

What Does it Mean to be "Kind" in College?

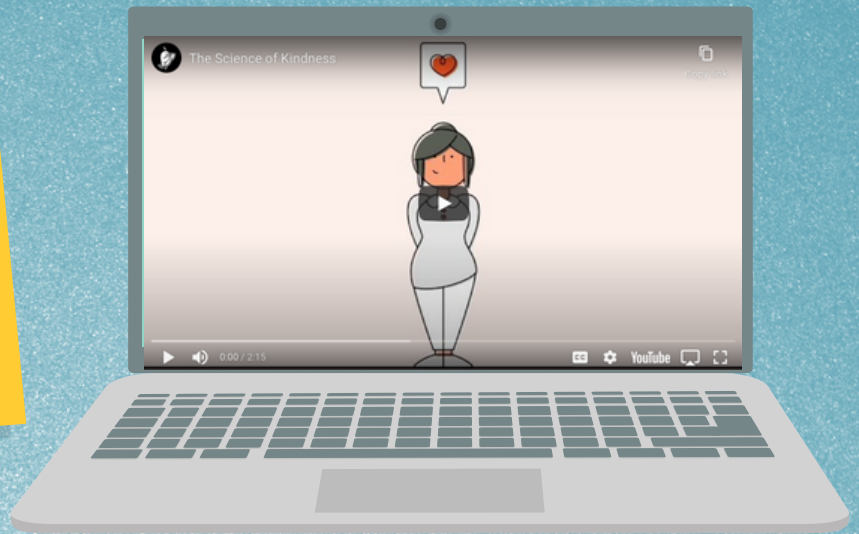
Alex Silberzweig, 2017

Real talk from a student at Penn State. What does it mean to be kind in college when college can often make you feel less kind? You're swamped with classes, homework, exams, work, family, systemic injustices, and all sorts of stressors that give you every reason to keep kindness low on the priority list. How do you deal with this? How do you redefine kindness?

note to self:
**DO NOT
QUIT**

Kindness doesn't mean saying yes to every opportunity so you don't hurt someone's feelings. Remember to be kind to YOURSELF!

What exactly is kindness? Find out here!



Watch this TED Talk on the magic of kindness!

Get inspired with this commencement speech on kindness!



I'VE BEEN
SEARCHING FOR
WAYS TO HEAL
MYSELF, AND I'VE
FOUND THAT
*kindness is
the best way.*

LADY GAGA



Check out Lady
Gaga's book
Channeling Kindness

Here's Lady Gaga
talking to the Dalai
Lama about kindness.
Click to be inspired!



inspire Simple Kindness

Adapted from goodnet.org

On the Street

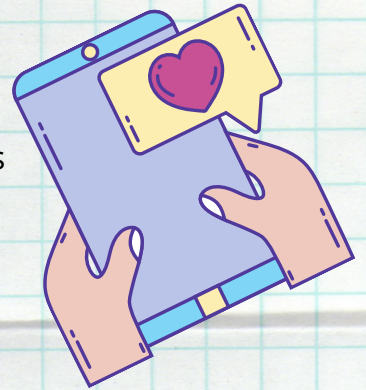
- Smile or say "hi" to passersby on campus.
- If you drive a car, let someone in your lane who is trying to get in, or give someone else a coveted parking spot.
- Stay 6 ft away from others! Even if you know you don't have Covid, put someone else's mind at ease by staying apart.



GOOD
MORNING

Online

- Give someone a compliment online. Bonus points if it's a stranger!
- Spread your social media likes generously.
- Post positive things to brighten someone's day



In Class or At Work

- Bring someone a cup of coffee or another beverage without being asked.
- Write an encouraging note and leave it on someone's desk
- Reach out to someone who may be struggling in your class and offer to help



You're
Amazing

At Home or In Your Residence Hall

- Make dinner for your household (or order takeout).
- Do a chore for someone else (clean the bathroom, vacuum, tidy the kitchen, etc.)
- Write a letter to your roommate thanking them for putting up with you.
- Call a family member to reconnect.



Get more ideas at kindness.gmu.edu



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30 DAYS OF KINDNESS

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SAUTURDAY

SUNDAY

1 Enjoy a Mindful Practice of Gratitude

2 Create an "Erasure" Poem

3 Give Thanks Before a Meal

4 Complete a Gratitude Exercise

5 Give Someone a Genuine Compliment

6 Spend Quality Time with a Friend

7 Call a Family Member to Say Hello

8 Document Your Acts of Kindness From the Day

9 Send Someone a Kindness Card

10 Donate Anonymously to a Cause

11 Name Someone's Act of Leadership

12 Take an Online Workout Class with BurnAlong

13 Be Patient With Others When You're Angry

14 Give the Gift of Kindness

15 Ask Someone What They Enjoy Doing

16 Practice Active Listening

17 Interact With Your Online Classmates

18 Take a Break to Prevent Burnout

19 Eat an Environmentally Friendly Lunch

20 Enjoy a Quiet Walk in Nature

21 Practice Meditation to Reduce Anxiety

22 Focus on Completing a Task

23 Practice Body Positivity with Self-Affirmations

24 Write about How You Show Compassion

25 Connect with Two People

26 Share Your Feelings with Others

27 Allow Yourself to Sleep in and Relax

28 Study or Work in a New Location

29 Celebrate Your Identity in Community

30 Enjoy Moments of Awe



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Resources for Faculty & Staff



Kindness at first sight?: The role of syllabi in impression format

Nusbaum, Swindell, & Plemons, 2019

Engagement and kindness in digitally mediated learning with teachers

Cramp & Lamond, 2015

The influence of affirming kindness and community on broadening participation in STEM career pathways

Estrada, Eroy-Reveles, & Matsul, 2018

Not-so random acts of kindness: A guide to intentional kindness in the classroom

Binfet, 2015



Kindness in pedagogical and academic life

Clegg & Rowland, 2009

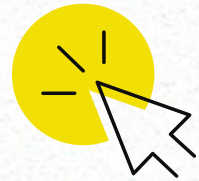
"Relationships with faculty were stronger predictors of learning than student background characteristics for all groups, but strongest for students of color."

Quality and frequency of faculty-student interaction as predictors of learning: An analysis by student race/ethnicity

Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004

The Impact of Faculty and Staff on High-Risk College Student Persistence

Schreiner, Noel, Anderson, & Cantwell, 2011



FINDINGS

In synthesizing the patterns that emerged from the 62 student interviews and 54 interviews of influential faculty and staff, we identified seven themes related to the positive attitudes and behaviors of campus personnel that made a difference in the success and persistence of high-risk students. These themes included (a) a desire to connect with students, (b)

being unaware of their influence on students at critical junctures, (c) wanting to make a difference in students' lives, (d) possessing a wide variety of personality styles and strengths but being perceived by students as genuine and authentic, (e) being intentional about connecting personally with students, (f) different approaches utilized by faculty compared to staff, and (g) differences in the types of behaviors that community college students reported as fostering their success.

In articulating these themes and patterns, the interviews of the students and the faculty/staff members are woven together.

The Student Connection

Throughout the interviews, we heard the theme of connection. Most successful high-risk students had formed a connection with someone on the campus. The most frequent words used in the student and faculty interviews were those that described people in relationship with one another. For students, words and phrases such as "caring," "compassionate," "supportive," "rapport," "takes an interest in me," "helps me," "makes me feel important," "respects me," and "listens to me" permeated their interviews. In the campus personnel interviews, the most frequent theme expressed was student connections: liking students, wanting to spend time with students, enjoying students, supporting students, and, for faculty in particular, interacting with them outside of class. As Levine and Nidiffer (1996) concluded in their study of low-income first-generation students, "it was the human contact that made the difference" (p. 65).

Although the majority (70%) of the campus personnel mentioned by students was faculty, when students described staff members and what made them influential, their statements rarely mentioned the position the person held. The persons with whom these successful high-risk students connected had

**Click the
heading to
read the full
article!**



Kindness During COVID

Kindness During COVID: The Contagion We Want to Keep Spreading

Impact Across Asia Blog, 2020

Now more than ever before, acts of kindness in the midst of this pandemic appear to be having a viral moment. Kindness has a domino effect!



The Spreading of the Kindness Contagion

Eric Weiner, 2020

With the coronavirus crisis still brutally affecting our nation, thousands of everyday people are donating their time and money to help strangers. In a way, we're witnessing dueling contagions: one deadly, the other ameliorative. Mirror images of each other. The most basic example of the "kindness contagion" at work is charitable giving. And like other pathogens, the kindness contagion is capable of mutating, jumping from one type of altruistic behavior to another.

The COVID-19 Pandemic Is a Lesson in Social Contagion, Too

Thomas Plante, 2020



In addition to viral contagion, social contagion is an equally important concept to keep in mind during these difficult times to help nurture the best of human nature. As this unprecedented global pandemic develops, likely getting much worse before it gets much better, it becomes especially important to be mindful of and attentive to social contagion theory and to use it to nurture the better angels of our nature rather than the worse and darker angels.



Kindness Contagion

Jamil Zaki, 2016

Some studies found that participants who believed others were generous became more generous themselves. Someone who instead learns that their peers prize empathy will put more work to empathize themselves, even with people who are different from them.

The Contagion We Can Control

Sigal Barsade, 2020

Things are uncertain right now. We've known for a long time that panic spreads. Experts more recently have come to understand emotional contagion, the mechanism by which people's emotions (positive or negative) "go viral" within groups, influencing our thoughts and actions. Reducing negative — and bolstering positive — emotional contagion will help us all weather this very unpredictable storm, together.

The Technology of Kindness

Jamil Zaki, 2019

Connections between people hold our culture together.

While the internet can sometimes takeaway the common ground we need to understand each other, it can also build new communities around kindness.



Acts of Kindness Spread Amid COVID-19 Outbreak as UN Acts to Counter Threat

The Department of Global Communications, 2020



Amid concerns of rising neighborhood tensions in frustrating circumstances, acts of kindness and solidarity are growing. Communities around the world are implementing initiatives to help each other. The United Nations Headquarters in New York called for volunteerism. Community volunteers could be called upon to carry out tasks, such as administering wellness checks for seniors and people with disabilities, food/water delivery, and pet assistance. Acts like these are extremely helpful while the UN helps nations respond to COVID-19.

Kindness as Resistance

We can be unkind without knowing or meaning it. Up your kindness game by learning new ways to avoid causing harm!



Learn more about microaggressions in the classroom.

Microaggressions limit learning, create a toxic campus climate, affect people's sense of belonging, and they lower retention of students, staff and faculty.

Microaggressions in higher education: Embracing educative spaces. Young & Anderson, 2018

What Microaggressions Are and How to Prevent Them

Princing, 2019



READ:

This Book Will Make You Kinder: An Empathy Handbook

Henry James Garrett, 2020



Related Topics



Want to Feel Happier? Science Says Try Being More Generous

Sofie Isenberg, 2020

According to social psychologists, scientists suggest that being generous with others is a more effective way to feel joy. To find joy in giving, one must feel connected with the people or cause they're helping. People must see the impact of their generosity, and they feel like they have a choice to give. In difficult times, don't give up on helping others. Happiness and the joy that comes from giving is an ongoing journey you must think about at each fork in the road.

The Benefits of Talking to Strangers

Jane Brody, 2020

Casual connections with people we encounter in the course of daily life can give us the sense of belonging to a community.

Former U.S. Surgeon General On The Front Line Of Another Health Crisis: Loneliness

Andrea Asuaje, 2020

Around 60% of American adults reported that they struggled with loneliness in a 2020 survey. Former U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Murphy, dedicated many years to study loneliness and its impacts on communities. When we feel disconnected from people, we become hyper-vigilant, more likely to perceive threats around us. Our self-esteem erodes, and our physical health can decline.

Attitude of Gratitude

Philip Wilkerson, 2020

Philip Wilkerson asked himself, "How do I stay aware of the social issues that black men face without getting jaded or cynical about the world we live in?" In his blog post, Philip tells readers that they can still have an attitude of gratitude while simultaneously fighting injustices even during a pandemic.

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Self-Kindness

Kristin Neff, 2011

In this video, Dr. Kristin Neff sits down to talk about self-kindness, the second part of self-compassion. According to Dr. Neff, "the greatest love of all is learning to love yourself."

Common Humanity

Kristin Neff, 2011

In this video, Dr. Kristin Neff sits down to talk about how accepting conditions and hardships outside our control allows us to see our common humanity in others.

Being Well Podcast: Self Compassion

Rick Hanson, 2020

This episode explores the nature of self-compassion and personal growth. It can be hard to perform and be your best when you're not kind and supportive to yourself. Dr. Kristen Neff tells listeners why self-compassion is important, and how to practice self-compassion naturally in a day.



Mason Resources

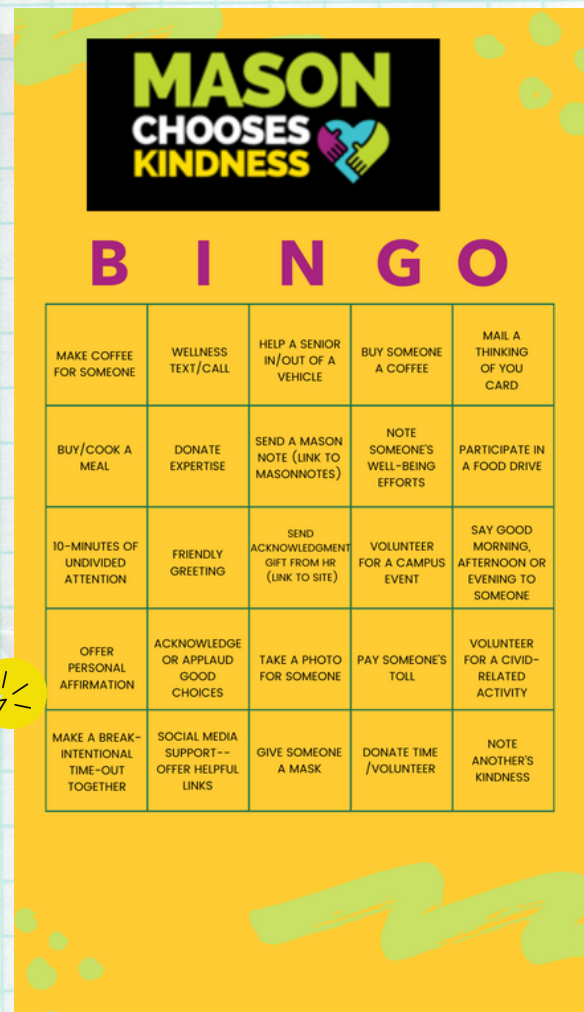
Go to kindness.gmu.edu for additional resources!



Download these templates to write an encouraging note to someone!



Check out the Applied Activities section of the MCK website!



Check the website for info on MCK Bingo!

MASON WELL-BEING RESOURCES

Practicing well-being helps us create a kind community where everyone can thrive together in Mason Nation! Here are some Mason resources you can use to be kind to yourself and others.

CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WELL-BEING

The mission of the Center for the Advancement of Well-Being (CWB) is to be a catalyst for human well-being by promoting the science and practices that lead to a life of vitality, purpose, resilience, and engagement. Check out CWB's website and social media to learn about upcoming well-being events and programs, and to find resources to strengthen your well-being anytime.



Center for the
Advancement of Well-Being

RESILIENCE BADGE

The Resilience Badge contributes to your ability to thrive. This uniquely Mason program offers six asynchronous modules that aim to support your understanding of resilience, your ability to adopt a growth mindset, deepen optimism, explore fear, and identify productive responses to stress. At the conclusion, you'll develop an Individual Resilience Plan and be able to showcase your badge on your resume.



RX RACIAL HEALING CIRCLES

Build community and racial awareness with us through a Racial Healing Circle (RHC). RHCs allow us to discover the common humanity within our diverse population. Created by CWB Senior Scholar Dr. Gail Christopher, RHCs use the powerful approach of storytelling to focus on compassion, health, well-being, agency, and inclusion.



MASON RESOURCES FOR CONNECTING TO COMMUNITY

MASON CHOOSES KINDNESS



Mason Chooses Kindness creates and sustains a kindness revolution at Mason, helping Patriots change the world one small act of kindness at a time.

WELL-BEING LEARNING COMMUNITY

The Well-Being Learning Community is an inclusive community where you can explore well-being topics through reflective learning and shared experiences.



ELENA'S SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENT WELL-BEING

Elena's Scholarships for Student Well-Being can benefit your well-being in various domains, through well-being mentoring and a financial award. You can apply each year during Mason's spring semester.



WELL-BEING MINORS AND COURSES

Well-Being Minors and Courses at Mason include two well-being minors for undergraduate students, a graduate certificate, and a variety of courses related to all aspects of well-being.



MASON RESOURCES FOR MANAGING STRESS

THRIVING TOGETHER SERIES ARTICLES



Thriving Together Series well-being articles present research and practices you can use to strengthen all aspects of your well-being.

STUDENT WELL-BEING VIDEOS

Learn well-being tips from your fellow Patriots in our center's student well-being videos.



SCIENCE OF WELL-BEING COLUMNS

Science of Well-Being columns can help you learn more about the science of well-being.



MASON RESOURCES FOR DISCOVERING MEANING AND PURPOSE

LEADERSHIP EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT



Leadership Education and Development provides leadership training, resources, services, and recognition to empower you to create positive change.

LEADING TO WELL-BEING SPEAKER SERIES

The Leading to Well-Being Speaker Series features free presentations from innovative speakers who work at the intersection of leadership and well-being.



Featuring **Brian Levenson**, founder of *Strong Skills*

REGISTER NOW!

Tuesday, Feb. 8, 2022 | Noon to 1:30 p.m. ET



MASON 360 GROUPS

Mason360 features professional, academic, and affinity organizations, including many that relate to well-being, such as campus ministry and social justice groups. Look for well-being or BIPOC well-being tags to find upcoming events and programs to explore.



STRENGTHS ACADEMY



Mason's Strengths Academy gives you an opportunity to discover your talents through the CliftonStrengths Assessment, a well-known tool that measures natural patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving.

MASON RESOURCES FOR TAKING CARE OF MENTAL HEALTH

CENTER FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES



The Center for Psychological Services is the primary training clinic for graduate students in Mason's clinical and school psychology program, and serves the community through a range of treatment services — primarily therapy, psychoeducational testing and mental health evaluations.

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES



Counseling and Psychological Services offers appointments for individual counseling, crisis support at all times, drop-in mental health workshops, and more.

“LET’S HELP OUR STUDENTS”



This is a resource guide produced by University Life to help faculty and staff support student well-being and mental health at Mason.

MINDFUL MASON MOMENTS



Mindful Mason Moments (MMM) are facilitated opportunities for group meditation. The research-backed practice of meditation offers substantial positive benefits, from less stress to increased concentration. MMM facilitators hold space for participants to slow down and reconnect, allowing participants to navigate their day with more awareness, connection, and ease.

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING



Learn more about mental health, the stigma surrounding mental illness, and how you can help people dealing with a mental health crisis. By completing this 8-hour training, you will earn a 3-year certification through the National Council for Behavioral Health.

MASON RESOURCES FOR TAKING CARE OF PHYSICAL HEALTH

MASON BURNALONG



Mason BurnAlong offers online classes and workshops centered on exercise strategies, nutrition, and sleep hygiene. You can also engage in person through any of the Mason Recreation facilities, club sports, intramurals, or outdoor adventures.

MASON RECREATION

Mason Recreation fosters lifelong well-being for the university's diverse students and community through active experiences, education, and engagement.



MASON NATION THRIVING TOGETHER 5K

Be part of our third annual Mason Nation Thriving Together 5K, which will take place on October 29, 2022. Strengthen your well-being by running or walking with us. The 5K supports student funds for your fellow Patriots.



"We believe that young people are uniquely positioned to create this kinder, braver world because they are filled with hope, compassion, and a commitment to community, and they are defined by diversity, inclusivity, and a distinct perseverance that make them powerful beyond even their own wildest imaginations."

-Lady Gaga



If you have questions or want to join the MCK team at Mason, email us at [**mck@gmu.edu**](mailto:mck@gmu.edu)

kindness.gmu.edu



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Changing The World - One Small Act of Kindness At A Time.