

“Give it a Go!” – Personal Development Activities

Purpose

Personal Development Activities or “Give it a Go’s!” are evidence-based, positive interventions that are offered to students each week as an opportunity to put into practice the weekly topic. The “Give it a Go!” is not evaluated and students are not required to complete them. They are offered as an opportunity for students to explore for either their personal wellness and/or use as a prospective intervention when working in the field. This is a great strategy for any faculty looking to build in opportunities to support students’ wellbeing. The “Give it a Go!” concept can be used in any course, not just one about positive psychology. Faculty can consider incorporating personal development activities each week or a few times throughout the course as a reminder to help students take care of themselves.

Overview

“Give it a Go” is a weekly personal development activity that offers students the opportunity to engage in a practical application of the theories they are learning in the classroom. These activities range in their implementation, from guided meditations, to writing exercises, to watching videos and reflecting. Within RECL 1213: Applied Positive Strategies in Therapeutic Recreation, students are exposed to a variety of theories and practices that help promote well-being. As a part of this course, students are expected to demonstrate evidence-based strategies in positive psychology and apply them to TR practice. Empirically tested positive interventions have been shown to help promote various pillars of well-being such as positive emotions, engagement, and meaning.

Context

All of the “Give it a Go’s!” are evidence-based interventions that have been created by researchers and scholars in the field of positive psychology. Jackie came up with the idea of introducing one a week as a way to help make the course more relevant and practical. The course includes many theories and I did not want students to underestimate the wider applicability that these theories have. Jackie selects an activity that best compliments the topic discussed in class each week. For instance, the week that they are introduced to the “Best Possible Self” activity is the same week students explore optimism.

Impact

This instructional strategy helps students to understand the practical use of the theories they are learning in the classroom. The goal is to have these activities resonate with students on a personal level and contribute to their overall wellbeing. Students love hearing about the weekly “Give it a Go!” Many times students will say, “Hey, I actually already do that!” and it is a great opportunity to validate a positive strategy that they perhaps did not realize had evidence to support its use. Jackie also receives emails from students months after the course is finished, sometimes even after graduation, to share that they are still using the strategies.