

Student Well-Being Toolkit



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Student well-being is at the heart of academic success.

At RIT Croatia, we want to support your well-being through education and additional student-centered resources.

This toolkit is aimed at both freshmen and upper year-level students and encompasses all well-being resources offered by RIT Croatia as well as some community based resources in Zagreb and Dubrovnik. The transition to college can bring with itself unforeseen challenges. Coming close to graduation also opens up questions about the future and bring up a sense of uncertainty.

We encourage you to get informed and motivated to use resources that can improve your well-being. Proactively taking care of your health and well-being builds resilience while healthy habits serve as protective factors in challenging times. Also - being aware of help that is available in crisis situations can be crucial.

With this toolkit, we want to let you know that you're not the only one experiencing those challenges and that there are solutions to all of them as well as resources you can tap into to cope with the uncomfortable feelings they bring.

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Physical Well-Being:

Exercise Facilities

Working out regularly is one of the best things you can do for your overall wellbeing. Aside from a general fitness level, it improves your mood, sleep, ability to concentrate, and self-confidence.

Plus it's a great activity to do together with fellow students and way to initiate new friendships around healthy habits.

Gym facilities available to students

XXL 1 Gym in Zagreb

All RIT Croatia students have access to the XXL 1 Gym just an 18-minute walk away from campus.

Aside from working out on free standing exercise equipment, you can also join group workout sessions led by XXL fitness trainers.

Find out more what type of workout sessions are offered and check out the current time schedule of workout sessions.



Saiyan Gym FITT in Dubrovnik

RIT Students in Dubrovnik can exercise at the Saiyan Gym FITT, on Ćira Carića street 1 (Solitudo), a 21-min walk from the Student Dormitory. The gym is open Mon-Sat from 8 am to 8 pm

When going to the gym for the first time:

- bring clean gym clothes and shoes
- bring a bottle of water and a towel
- come at least 15 min earlier to have enough time to register and change
- Bring a proof you're an RIT student (ask at our reception)

Physical Well-Being:

Outdoor Opportunities

Being active outdoors reduces your stress-levels and boosts your overall physical well-being. And you don't have to push yourself for a rigorous workout or hike - taking a relaxing **walk** surrounded by calming green will already do you good when you feel overwhelmed.

Both our campuses are located close to beautiful city parks and breathtaking wild nature - all approachable by walking or with public transportation. We encourage you to explore and find your favorite spots to enjoy either alone or **hang out with friends!**



Zagreb

Bundek park: located just across the street on the northern side of our campus, it's the perfect location to spend your breaks between lectures, go for a picnic during lunch break and have a quick walk to relax and gather your thoughts before and after stressful exams

Jarun park: favorite park for those living in the western part of the city, located next to the **Sava river** and its walkable embankment, it offers training opportunities and beaches for sunbathing

Maksimir park: heavily forested park on the east side of the city, lets you get lost and explore different trails and lakes each time. You'll often find free outdoor activities and workshops hosted there (usually announced through social media)

Medvednica mountain: offers a ski-slope in winter and beautiful hiking paths that are walkable all year long. Mountain huts that serve hearty meals, drinks and cosy atmosphere can be found all over the mountain. The **Sljeme peak** can also be reached by cablecar or bus and makes it ideal for a social weekend activity

Physical Well-Being:

Outdoor Opportunities

Dubrovnik

Gradac park: just behind RIT's campus, you'll find Gradac park overlooking the Lovrijenac fortress and open sea. Pick a park bench and relax in the shade, or continue down the stairs to **Danče beach** to wind down after lectures.

Velika i Mala Petka forest park: a 15-minute walk from the Student Dormitory, you'll enter the pine forest park bounded by cliffs and open sea. It offers about 3 km of gravel paths suitable for walking and running, including several viewpoints.

Srđ mountain: reaching Srđ peak from Dubrovnik old town should take one to two hours of hiking, depending on the route, in which you will cover a little more than 400 height meters. When you feel like enjoying the views is all you can motivate yourself to do, there's also a cablecar.

When going outdoors:

- bring appropriate clothing and shoe ware
- always have enough water with you
- if you're going to spend more than 2 hours outdoors - bring snacks
- always check the weather forecast if you're going to the mountains and don't go alone!



Physical Well-Being:

Nutrition



For students who left home for the first time, one of the novelties in their daily tasks is organizing all their meals by themselves. Managing the time and budget to do so can take some time to figure out.

But since nutrition plays a big role in your physical and mental wellbeing, you don't want to live off sandwiches for four years!

Luckily, in both our campus locations, that doesn't mean you have to cook for yourself daily. Available **student restaurants** offer a variety of cooked meals at affordable prices and are located so you can reach them during longer gaps between lectures. We encourage you to explore available options to find the ones you like best!

And since meals have always been a social matter - don't hesitate to suggest to a colleague from class to join you!

Zagreb

sorted by closeness to campus

- 'Restoran Gaudemus'
- 'Restoran Filozofski fakultet'
- Cassandra (at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing)
- Student Dormitory Cvjetno naselje
- Student Dormitory Stjepan Radić ('Sava')
- 'Restoran Savska' (Student Center)
- Superfaks (at the Faculty of Food Technology and Biotechnology)
- 'Restoran Veterina'
- 'Restoran Ekonomija'
- 'Restoran TTF'
- 'Restoran TVZ'
- VeMaG (at the Faculty of Science)
- 'Restoran Medicina'
- Student Dormitory Laščina
- 'Restoran Borongaj'
- 'Restoran Agronomija i Šumarstvo'
- Fast food restaurant of the National and University Library

Dubrovnik

- OBIED (in Student Dormitory)

Physical Well-Being:

Nutrition

Cooking delicious and diverse meals on a student budget can take some time to master but don't let that stop you from trying.

Check out our downloadable Tiger Cookbook where our faculty and staff share some of their favorite recipes!



Author Bas Kast conducted a meta-analysis of research in the field of nutrition to come to simple conclusions about healthy eating you can implement easily and without additional costs.

To gain more orientation about how to eat to support your mental and physical health, explore his comprehensive book ‘The Diet Compass**’ available in public libraries in print.**

*If you want a short overview of Kast's main findings, you can read through his **article** in the Welt am Sonntag in the RIT library. The original text is in German but a translation to English is selectable.*



Physical Well-Being:

Healthy Sleep Habits

Establishing healthy sleep habits - **with at least 8 hours of nightly rest!** - can go a long way in improving your physical, cognitive, and emotional wellbeing, and making your study sessions more efficient.

If you want to learn more about the functions of different sleep phases, how sleep affects your **studying** and **performance** as well as your **mood** and **emotional regulation**, we recommend a peak into Sleep Insights : A Conversation with Matthew Walker, a leading sleep-scientist, available in the RIT online library.

What can you do you improve your sleep?

- set an alarm to remind you when to go to sleep
- keep your smartphone away from your nightstand, ideally out of your bedroom!
- buy an **old-school alarm clock** to wake you up in the morning
- take some time to wind down before going to bed
 - have a cup of (caffeine-free) tea, shower, read a book - don't let the last thing you see before closing your eyes be a screen
- keep your room dark, cool, and quiet

Sleep **before** learning is critical for brain functioning. Sleep **after** learning benefits the consolidation of new memories. (Walker, 2008)

Consider again what will give you more advantage before pulling an all-nighter before an important test next time!

If you want to dig deeper into the topic, check out Dr. Walker's comprehensive book 'Why We Sleep' available in public libraries in print.

Healthy Study Habits:

Plan Ahead to Minimize Stress

The only effective way for avoiding excessive stress during exam time is to **prepare well and plan ahead** from the start of the semester. Other than **going to class regularly**, make it a habit to:

Visit your instructors during office hours:

If you missed the opportunity to ask a question or didn't catch the answer in class, you can always ask them during the weekly office hours for which all instructors are available. Not only will you get an individualized explanation but also the opportunity to build a connection with your instructor.

Reach out to a tutor for additional explanation:

For courses students struggle with most, tutors are available during weekly tutoring hours. Older-year level students who successfully passed the course are there to explain your question about lecture material, homework, projects, and exams. Don't hesitate to reach out as soon as you notice that you're not fully following the classes.

When you weren't able to avoid stressful situations and obligations piling up, choose the most effective coping method: **problem-solving**.



The first step to tackling the problem is facing it head-on:

1) **Create a Semester Plan.** Download a copy of our template, go through your syllabi, and mark all assignment deadlines and exam dates to get an overview.

2) **Create a Weekly Plan.** Based on your semester plan, break up each task - whether it's an assignment, project or exam preparation - **into specific steps that take up to 30 min.**

Add those tasks into your weekly plan, keeping in mind the deadlines from your semester plan.

Tackle your task list one day at a time, cross out each task you've done and review your progress at the end of each day. **Adapt your plan to your realization.**

In times of high pressure when your daily task-list seems to be never-ending, don't forget to **plan in breaks** and rewarding activities.

Stay motivated by setting daily short-term goals and rewards for them.

Social Wellbeing:

Overcoming Loneliness in College

Feeling lonely in college, especially during your freshman year, is not an uncommon experience. The excitement of being in a new town and school can easily mix with a sudden feeling like you're all on your own.

And since the topic is not a very popular one to talk about among students, it can feel even more **isolating to go through this experience**.

To show you you're not alone in this, Princeton student Emery Bergman's created a video on her college transition and how things went a lot different than expected

What can you do?

Unfortunately, one can feel lonely even in a classroom full of peers. The antidote to isolation are close, trusting relationships. Investing time and energy to build them and being patient in the process will pay off.

Here are a few starting points:

Student Clubs: These student led organizations gather 10 or more students of all year-levels with similar interests - whether in sports, art, program-related topics - that meet regularly to **engage in activities** related to the club's topic.



Peer Mentoring: During your first semester at RIT Croatia, all freshmen students are assigned a peer mentor - a higher-year level student from their own program - who volunteers their time to introduce freshmen into the college community and support them in finding their way. These connections can turn into college-long friendships.

Use this first contact and engage in activities your mentor suggests.

If you're not a freshmen anymore but would like to extend your college network - sign up to become a peer mentor yourself. Reach out to francis.brassard@croatia.rit.edu in Dubrovnik or tamara.lipnjak@croatia.rit.edu in Zagreb with questions about the program.

Croatian classes: Becoming part of a community becomes a lot easier when you speak or even **understand the language**. Use the opportunity of free Croatian classes at college to learn about the local language and culture and meet fellow international students. Sign up with instructor darija.turkovic@croatia.rit.edu.

Social Wellbeing:

Overcoming Loneliness in College

More tips on building connections in college

- Avoid taking out your phone the moment the class is over. Make an effort to spend your breaks with your classmates.
- Initiate in-person meetings to work on group projects
- Invite one or more class mates to create a study group before midterms and study at the library together
- Go to the gym - either by yourself or invite a class mate to join you
- Ask a classmate to go to lunch at the cafeteria between classes
- ... or do it the Croatian way - ask the person sitting next to you to go for coffee together after class



Mental Health:

RIT Croatia Resources



There is a certain level of discomfort, frustration, and uncertainty that is inherent to college education - which is meant to stretch your comfort zone - and that students need to learn to tolerate and overcome.

However: when you feel that the struggles with your emotions are taking a toll on your physical health, your ability to follow your study obligations, and your relationships, know that you are not the only student who experiences this and **help is available**.

There are solutions to all challenges and you don't need to face the big ones all by yourself. And while the therapist cannot do the work for you, they can support you and alleviate the process you're going through.

RIT Croatia partners with external providers of counseling and psychotherapy and covers up to 8 sessions for students who struggle with their mental health.

The counseling takes place in person, or, if necessary, online.

in Zagreb

students are referred to the counseling center PsihoPlanet that reaches out to the student via email to offer a first appointment with a therapist. Depending on the assigned therapist, the counseling will take place in one of their offices: Savska cesta 38 or Park Kate Šoljić 4.

in Dubrovnik

students are referred to the psychotherapist Nikolina Zore. The counseling takes place in Vukovarska street 28.

How to get help?

1. **Reach out to the Student Life and Well-Being Coordinator.** Drop in or schedule a meeting so you can receive a referral to the counseling center. You can use that opportunity to ask any questions you might have about the referral or counseling process. Maybe you're not sure if counseling is the right way for you, so you can discuss your dilemma and explore alternatives.
2. **Regularly check your RIT email for the appointment confirmation.** Communicate with the therapist and keep your appointment or reschedule on time, if you can't make it.

Mental Health:

Community Resources

Help is available from free service providers in the community, as well:

Zagreb

the Center for Youth Health (Centar za zdravlje mladih) is a one-stop address for questions and free-of-charge counsel and services regarding mental health, **sexual and reproductive health, nutrition and body-image**, study skills, and support for youth with disabilities.

Here you can find the **schedule and detailed contact info for each individual service**.

Website: <https://www.czm.hr/>
Address: Heinzlova 62a
Phone: (+385)1 6468 333

If you're experiencing an acute mental health crisis and you need urgent help, there are community resources you can contact:

Zagreb

Clinical Hospital Center Zagreb:

Center for crisis states and suicide prevention. **Walk-in** every day from 8 am to 8 pm (Address: Kišpatićeva 12) or call **phoneline for crisis states and suicide prevention** 01/ 23 76 335 (available 24/7)

Croatian Institute of Public Health:

Mental Health Counseling Center in Zagreb;
Phone line for psychological support: 01/48 28 888; Mon-Fri 10 am to 10 pm

Croatia-wide

the NGO PROMENTZ maintains an online platform to gather all available, free addresses in Croatia you can reach out to get support through psychological distress.

Here you can look up all available contacts.

Blue Phone Helpline - 00385 (1) 4833 888 Mon-Fri 9 am - 8 pm, E-mail: info@plavi-telefon.hr

Dubrovnik

Department of Mental Health in

Dubrovnik; Dr. A. Šercera 4a, p.p. 58, tel. 020 341 - 082, e-mail: mentalno.zdravlje@zzjzdnz.hr; prevencija.ovisnosti@zzjzdnz.hr
Monday 2-8 pm; Tuesday - Friday 8 am - 2 pm

Emergency: 112



**Remember,
you have the agency to take
action, prioritize your well-
being, and be successful.**

References

Walker, M. P. (2008). Cognitive consequences of sleep and sleep loss. *Sleep Medicine*, 9, S29-S34. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1389-9457\(08\)70014-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1389-9457(08)70014-5)