

Happy Students, Happy Teachers:

Strategies for Reducing Stress for Students and Faculty

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Wednesday, May 14 | 1:30-2:20PM | Wallace Library, Room 3490

Welcome! Please take a seat.

Stress in Our Classrooms

1. Please draw a vertical line down the center of your whiteboard
2. On the left side of the board, write down the things that stress you out as a *teacher*
 - You have 5 minutes to discuss
3. Now on the right side of the board, write down the things that you think stress out the *students* about classes
 - You have 5 minutes to discuss
4. For each side of your board, identify the top 2 issues you think are the most stressful or impactful
 - You have 3 minutes to discuss



Let's Share!

What are the top issues
on each side?



Common Stressors in the Classroom

Faculty

- Low student engagement and motivation (Junker et al., 2021)
- Negative teacher-student interactions (Junker et al., 2021)
- Classroom disruptions (Wettstein et al., 2021)
- Administrative burdens and grading (Will, 2023)
- Courseload and course prep (Will, 2023)
- Lack of support (Will, 2023)

Students

- Academic rigor and workload (Bouchrika, 2025)
- Academic pressure from others (Bouchrika, 2025)
- Large class sizes (Bouchrika, 2025)
- Time management stress (too many things going on at once) (Zauderer, 2025)
- Lack of support (El-Ghoroury et al., 2012)

Student and Faculty Mental Health

Student Mental Health

- ~60% of college students meet criteria for at least one mental disorder (Lipson et al., 2022)
- ~75% of students report moderate or severe psychological distress during the academic year (NCHA, 2021)
- 83% of faculty agreed that student mental health problems are worse than when they started their careers (Eisenberg et al., 2024)

Faculty Mental Health

- ~33% report that emotional and mental difficulties affect them 1-2 days per month (Eisenberg et al., 2024)
- 42% of faculty with mental health issues refrained from seeking help due to fears of professional repercussions or appearing “weak” (AAUP, 2023)

Why Should We Care About Stress and Mental Health in Our Classrooms?

- **Pap et al. (2023):** Faculty stress and subjective well-being is linked with student mental and physical health
 - Examined 410 college students and 66 faculty
- **Key Findings:**
 - Greater teaching self-efficacy linked with better student mental health
 - Greater perceived teacher support linked with better student physical and mental health

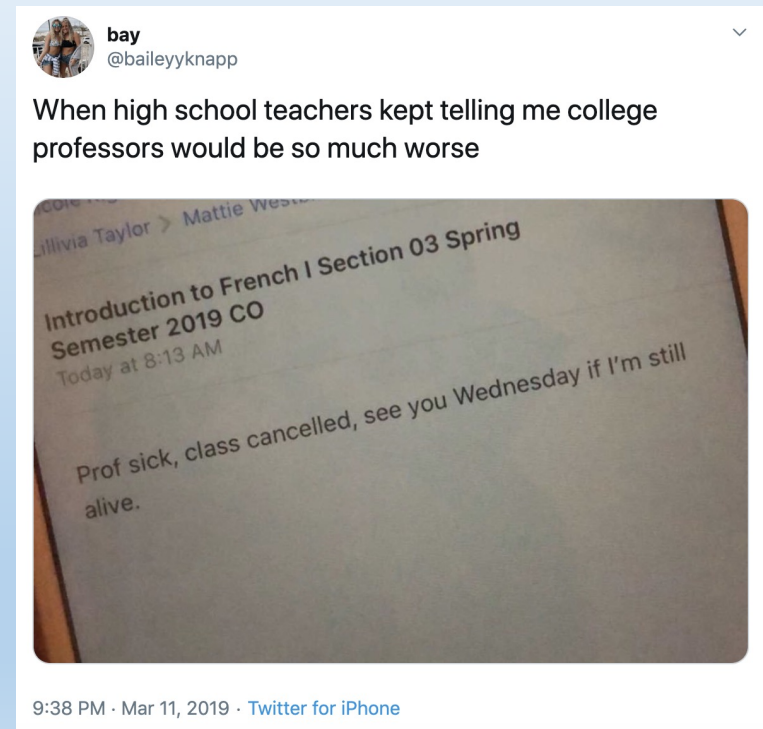


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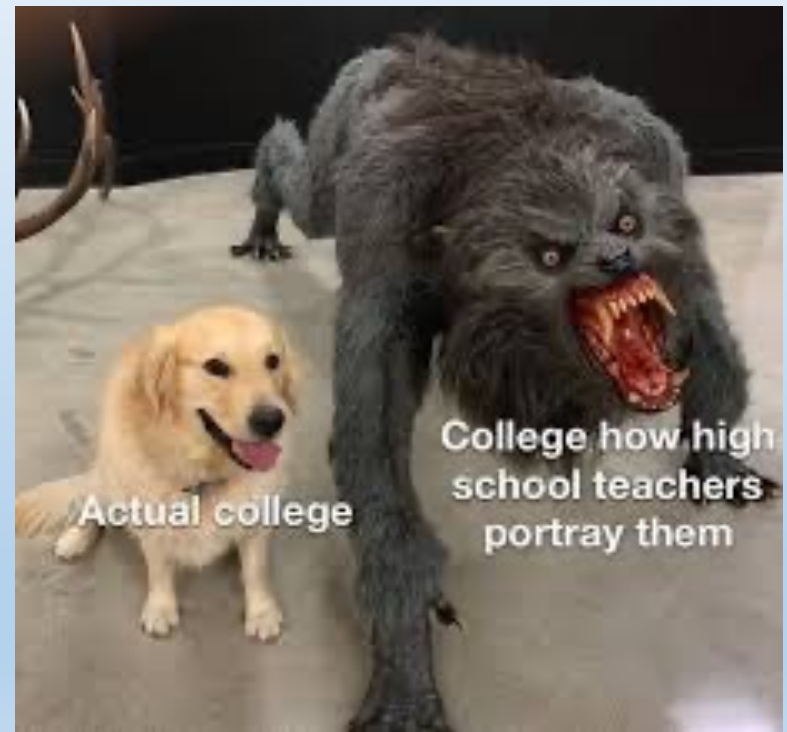
"What's your major in college?"
"stress"

Student-Professor Rapport and Student Success

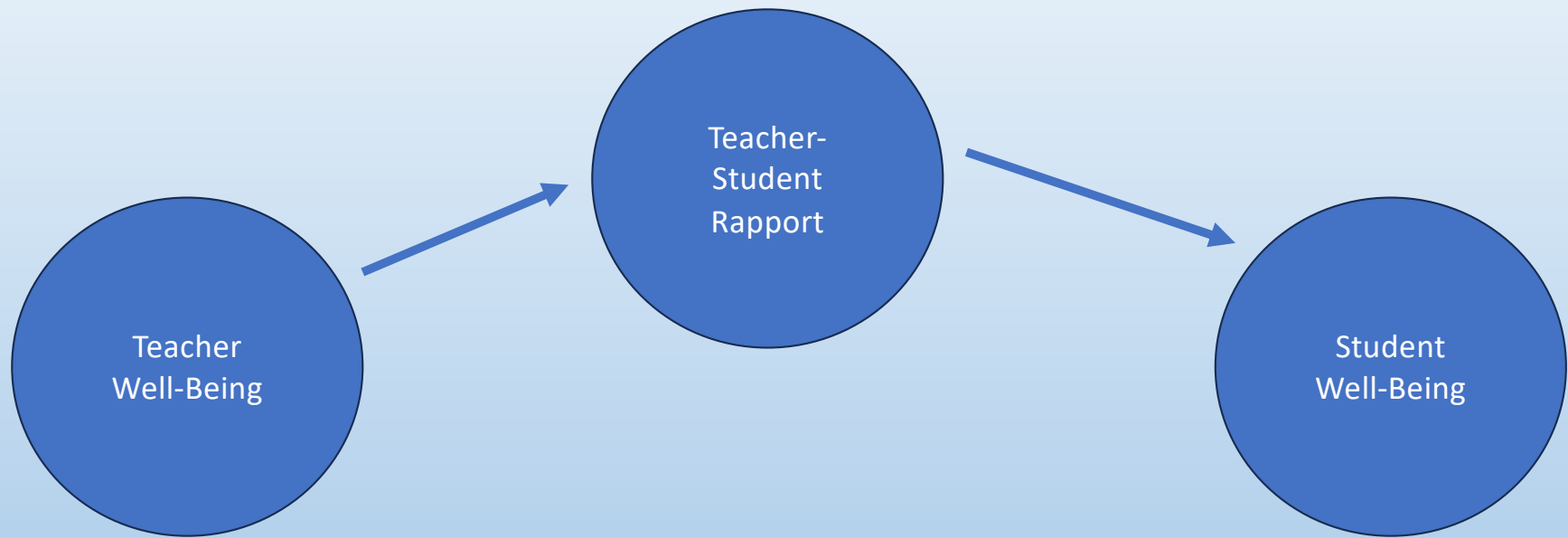
- **Student-Professor Rapport:**
 - Perception that professor is accessible, approachable, fair, interesting, and creates a sense of mutual trust, respect, and care (Benson et al., 2005; Faranda & Clarke, 2004; Broom et al., 2024)
- **Links with positive student outcomes:**
 - Greater enjoyment of the course, motivation, learning, and pro-academic behaviors like attendance, attentiveness, and studying (Benson et al., 2005; Buskist & Saville, 2004; Frisby & Martin, 2010; Frisby & Myers, 2008; Lammers et al., 2017; Broom et al., 2024)



Why might greater teacher well-being and rapport lead to better student outcomes (both mental health and academic)?

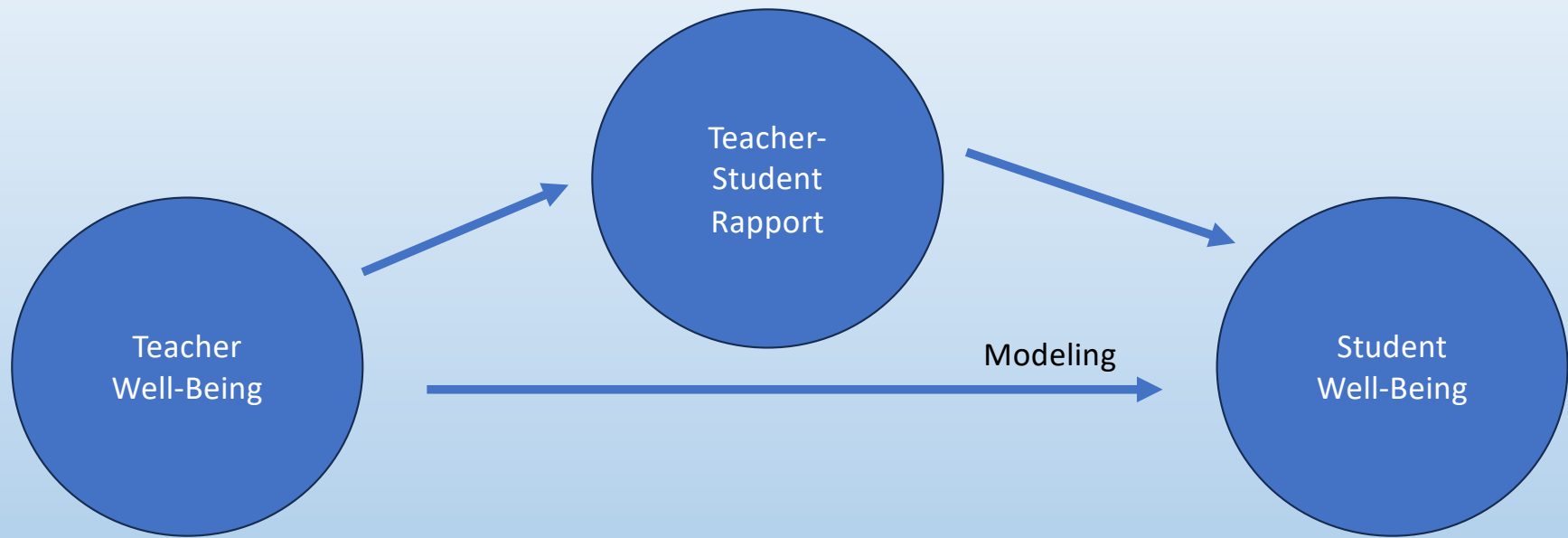


Three Key Mechanisms Linking Teacher and Student Mental Health



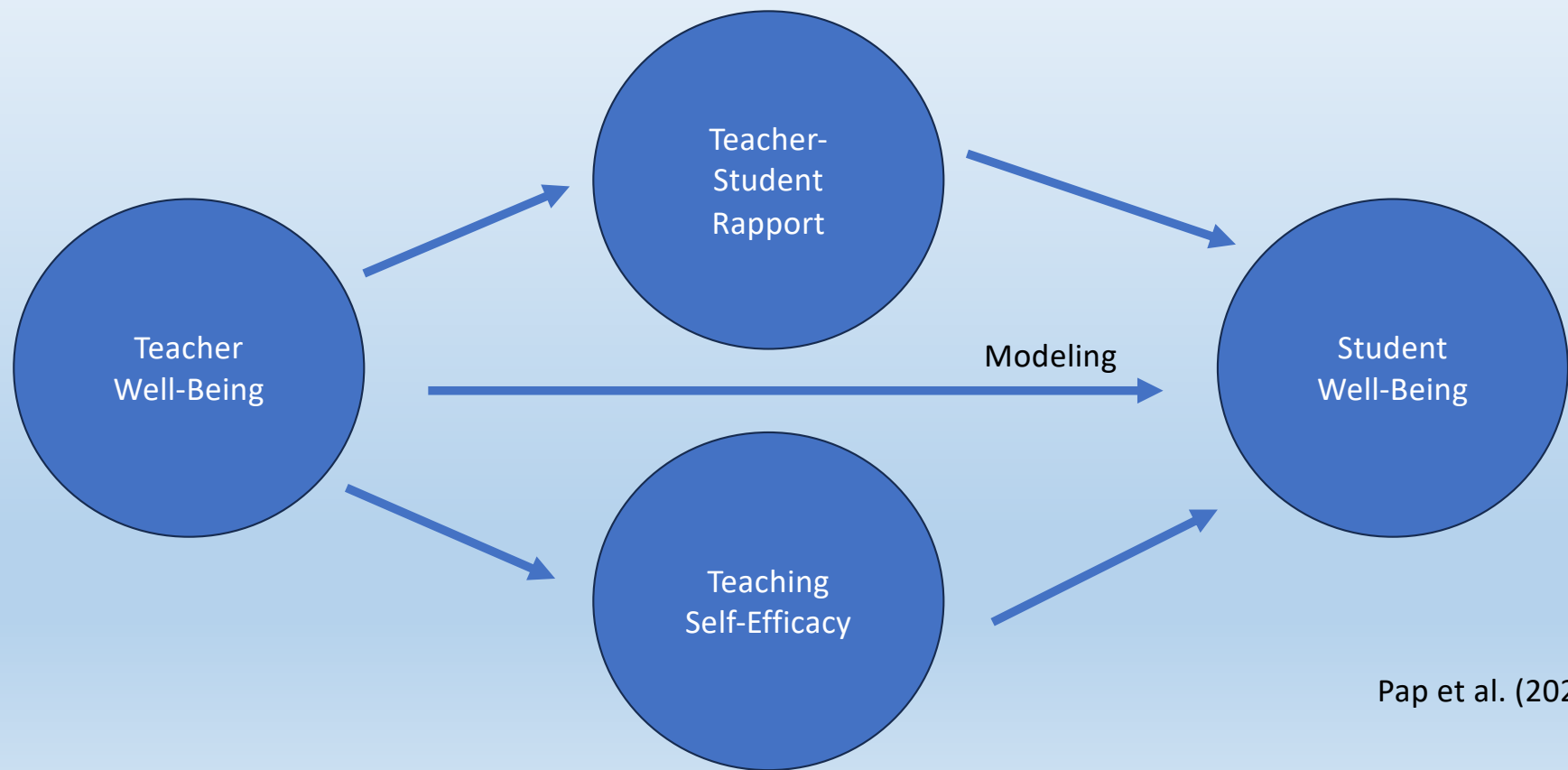
Pap et al. (2023)

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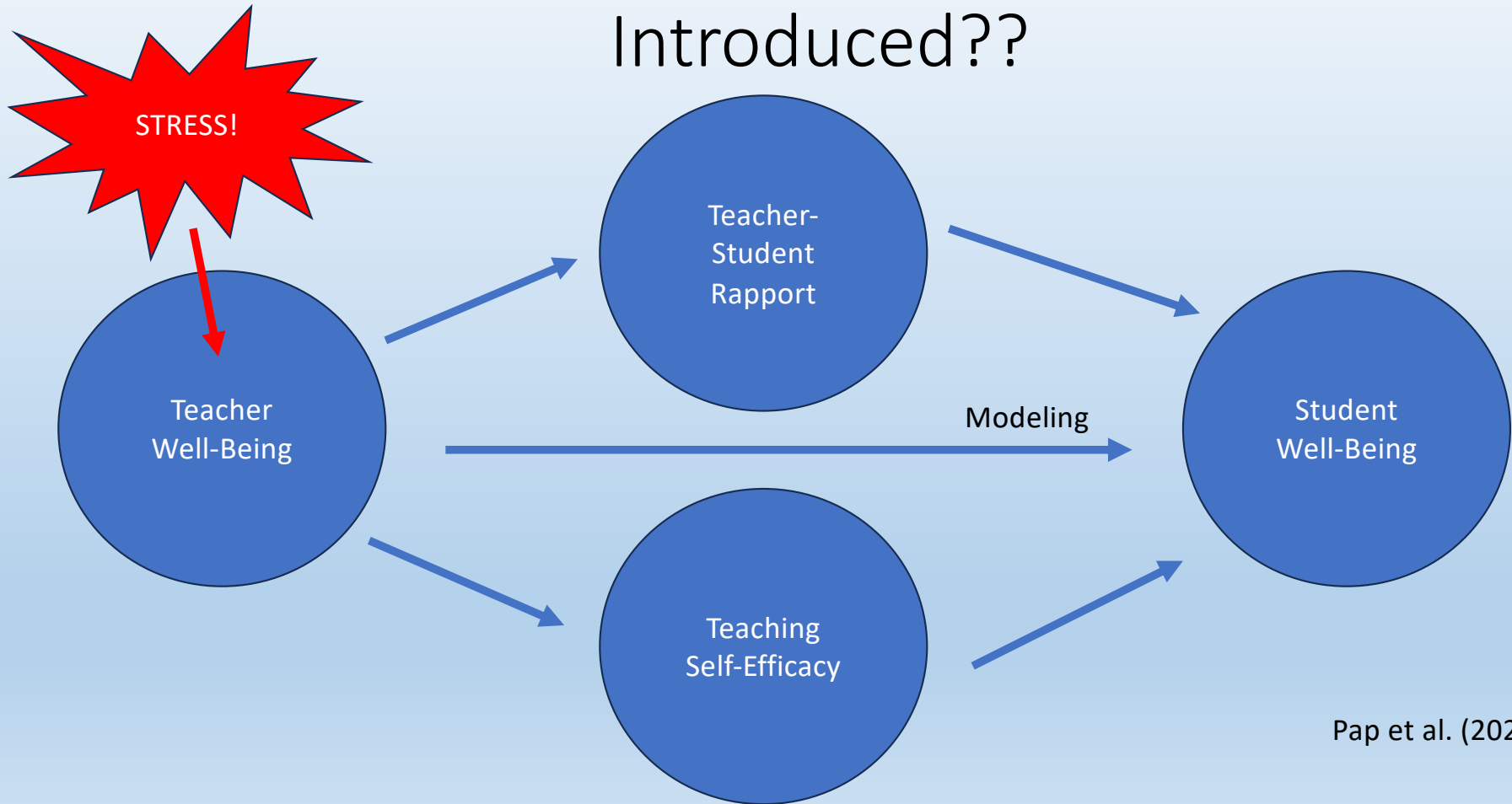
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Pap et al. (2023)

What Happens When Faculty Stress is Introduced??



Pap et al. (2023)

Strategies for Reducing Faculty and Student Stress

Reducing Grading Burden

- **Develop clear grading rubrics and establishing clear and consistent expectations for student work**
 - Provide the rubrics to students in advance of assignment submission
 - If possible, use similar grading schemes across assignments to minimize confusion
 - Can automate much grading via rubric feature on myCourses or AI
- **Other reduction techniques:**
 - Cut back on number of assignments
 - Switch to group papers rather than individual papers
 - Shift to pass/fail for minor assignments
- **Benefits to faculty:**
 - Less time grading overall
 - Less time pondering point values
 - Less quibbling with students over interpretations of assignments
- **Benefits to students:**
 - Less stress wondering if their interpretation of assignment is correct
 - Less time arguing with faculty about grading
 - Reduced academic workload stress

Incorporating Grace Into Your Course

- **Develop policies that grant grace to your students:**
 - Creating a “Life Happens” extension: free 2-day extension on any assignment (no questions asked)
 - Dropping a certain proportion of assignments
 - Providing “cheat sheet” on exams or creating take-home exams
- **Benefits to faculty:**
 - Less time dealing with student excuses and complaints
 - Enhanced rapport with students
- **Benefits to students:**
 - Minimizes academic penalty for illness, life events, mental health challenges, etc.
 - Enhanced appreciation for faculty

Minimizing Anxiety-Provoking Triggers

- Choose class activities and assignments that are less anxiety-provoking:

- Avoid “cold calling” on students and instead ask for volunteers
- Provide alternatives to public responding (written responses, recorded rather than “live” presentations, etc.)
- Assign groups rather than ask students to find groups

- Benefits to faculty:

- Anxious students will be more engaged in class and perform better
- Fewer students requesting exceptions

- Benefits to students:

- Reduced anxiety
- Better engagement with course material
- Better learning of course material

Building Rapport with Students

- **Actively work to build rapport with students:**

- Don't be afraid to let them know you are human!
 - Admit your mistakes
 - Tell personal anecdotes
 - Model appropriate reactions to stress
- Ask them about their lives outside the classroom
 - Genuinely show interest in them as people, not just students
- Incorporate fun into the class!
 - Ex: Presentation Bingo

- **Benefits to faculty:**

- Students feel more comfortable in class- may contribute more
- Greater class attendance and engagement
- Better understanding of student issues
- Better relationships with students

- **Benefits to students:**

- Better relationship with faculty
- Greater investment in class
- Reduced fear of faculty

What other strategies have you used in your classroom to reduce stress on yourself and the students?



Thank you!

