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Fast Five with the TFSC, November 2021

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Fast Five with the TFSC

A Newsletter for First Year Faculty at the University of Arkansas

NOVEMBER 2021 THEME: STRESS MANAGEMENT

3 Quick Tips from the TFSC Co-Directors:

1. Try reframing: Instead of saying, “I have to grade papers” say, “I’m excited to see what the student learned about this topic.” When feeling overwhelmed, say what there is to be grateful for. “I am grateful to have an opportunity to mentor so many bright students.” The emotions are still there, but reframing gives us the power to interpret them more positively.
2. Give yourself something to look forward to – meeting a colleague for coffee, walking on Old Main lawn and seeing the trees change for fall (they are usually spectacular), or taking a weekend trip. Having something positive to look forward to reduces stress and boosts your mood.
3. Take time each day to disconnect from everything – either sitting quietly, doing a hobby you enjoy, going for a walk – even five minutes can help with stress. As the semester goes on things get busier, and it becomes even more important to plan small breaks in your day.

4. An Experienced Professor’s Best Tip:

Professor **John Pijanowski** of the Curriculum and Instruction Department in the College of Education and Health Professions is a former co-director of the TFSC, a Baum Teaching Award recipient, and a Fulbright Scholar. He’s also a Faculty Fellow for the Office of Faculty Affairs to support faculty wellbeing and will be offering sessions related to stress in the Spring 2022 semester.

Think of a time during a relatively normal day when you felt present and at ease...



What was happening in that moment? What were you doing? If others were there, what were they doing? Could you re-create it for yourself, or help create that experience for others?

Faculty stress is a huge, multifaceted, and pervasive topic. It is also personal to each of us because we all feel it a bit differently. However, I do think that faculty generally tend to experience some common stressors and similar obstacles to addressing them. Two issues that primarily seem to come up repeatedly are:

1. Faculty life can lend itself to working in isolation.
2. The work is never ‘done’ and is always available.

Both of those issues contributed to faculty stress before the pandemic, and both became even more prominent during the pandemic. These are two, of many, issues we are exploring with Vice Provost Kathy Sloan to identify the spaces and opportunities for building communities on campus and explore the sense of ‘belonging’ people feel here. We are also looking forward to working with faculty to identify the sorts of systemic supports, activities, and new tools we think might help faculty improve their overall wellbeing.

My personal experience has been that when I do identify those moments throughout the week that can make a big difference in reducing my stress that I schedule them with the same commitment that I would a class I was teaching. I would not skip a class or check my email during a class and so for me those

moments that are a mix of meditation, mindful movement, and social exercise – they have become sacred. If I don't then the work, which is always available to me, will consume every moment.

5. The Take from a New Professor:

Marjan Miri is a Visiting Assistant Professor in Interior Design in the Fay Jones School of Architecture. Her courses require much faculty commitment due to high levels of student interaction with projects. Marjan was recently awarded the New Faculty Commendation from the TFSC.



“As you start to walk on the way, the way appears” this quote by Rumi; a Persian poet, helps me to manage my stress. Whenever I am stressed out, I write my reasons to be overwhelmed down and categorize them. It gives me a better understanding of what I need to do. Design school is not easy, neither for students nor for faculty. Design studios, as a class, are 12 hours long every week and need additional time after class to work on a design project. As a faculty member, I try to keep up with my student’s general semester schedule to avoid conflicts for important deadlines with other classes because I know how much work they need to do for the studio. Understanding that everyone is under pressure is the key to help each

other to get the work done and finish the semester. During my grad school, we had a weekly meeting as a class; we called it “Teatime.” Each week one or two students were responsible for bringing snacks to the class, and we spent the last 20 minutes of class eating together, talk and share our feelings. It was like a pressure release for us. As a faculty, I found it helpful as well. Weekly group talk with my students helps us as a group to feel we are not alone, and everyone is dealing with stress, and it is normal.