# 5 Ways to Support UM Students During Finals Season

As finals week approaches we wanted to offer you a few resources and tools to support our students in the final stretch of the semester. Within this newsletter you will find support to help students battle overwhelm and skills to stress less with relaxation and mindfulness.

## Encourage Stress Management.

Remind students that studying effectively and efficiently requires them to take care of their mental and physical health. This means making a plan in advance, which includes not just what they need to study but also the breaks they will take and the self-care activities they’ll participate in to relieve stress. Also, encourage students to continue doing activities they enjoy and to not isolate themselves in their dorm room or apartment.  Getting outside and among their friends are important stress relievers.

### [Mindful Minutes](https://umt.app.box.com/folder/135239587379)

Making time for stress management in the classroom is a way you can show your support, emphasis the importance of stress management and help students learn new coping skills they can use in the future. Mindful Minutes is a program that provides a collection of stress management resources for instructors to use in the classroom.

## Remind students of campus resources.

UM offers students a wide array of services and resources. Unfortunately, many students are unaware of everything UM offers (or, they know about them but don’t take advantage).

### Top resources for students during finals prep:

* [UM Study Jam Tutoring](https://www.umt.edu/study-jam/)
* [Writing and Public Speaking Center](https://www.umt.edu/writing-center/)
* [Curry Wellness Stress Less Finals Guide](https://www.umt.edu/curry-health-center/services/wellness/wellness-docs/fully-accessible-students-stress-less-newsletter.docx)
* [Curry Counseling](https://www.umt.edu/curry-health-center/Counseling/default.php)

## Emphasize the importance of sleep.

According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, studies of college students have found that lack of sleep, erratic sleep/wake schedules, and poor sleep quality have a negative impact on academic performance and overall mental health. It’s during sleep that our brains organize and prioritize information learned during the day. [Here’s one resource to help students with their sleep.](https://umt.box.com/s/pzp1qzpwdxpcddpuezrk5otfveljwng9)

## Check in.

Take some time to check in with students. Even under typical circumstances, a check-in email from an instructor sends a

powerful message, “I care about you”, which is a key part of students’ sense that they belong and can succeed. In times of particular stress or challenge, such as finals during a global crisis, a check-in email is especially impactful. It can be meaningful even sent to large groups of

students (e.g., the entire class section) if you indicate that you will read and respond to individual student responses. If you cannot respond to each student, perhaps because you are teaching many hundreds of students or are yourself facing overwhelming challenges at this time, you can include a link to course advisers, teaching assistants, and other student supports.

Check ins can also take the form of anonymous Zoom polls, joining breakout rooms during class, or one-word check ins.

### Here are some examples:

* [Class Check-in Activity](https://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/healthycampuscommunity/wle2/brandedtools/Class%20Check%20in%20Activity%20Branded.pdf)
* [Write and Reflect Activity](https://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/healthycampuscommunity/wle2/brandedtools/Two-Minute%20Write%20%26%20Reflect%20Activity.pdf)

## Be mindful of student mental health.

For some students, the pressure of final exams can become overwhelming and contribute to the development or exacerbation of mental health conditions like depression and anxiety. Some mood fluctuation during finals is typical but if you are concerned about the mental health of a student, [please refer to this resource for more information about what to look for and what to do if a student is in crisis.](https://umt.box.com/s/qw1ctzc8vq76zrffksxxnhgiys50ulyv)

For help with resources or questions, contact julee.stearns@umontana.edu

adapted from “5 ways to support your college students during final exams” <https://peacefulprofessor.com/5-ways-to-support-your-college-student-during-final-exams/>