

Health Break: An Innovative Pedagogical Approach Aimed at Preparing Nursing Students to Work with Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities.

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Background/Purpose

The department of nursing at The College of New Jersey collaborated with the Career and Community Studies (CCS) program and developed "Health Break," a program that gives nursing students an opportunity to interact with IDD individuals. Nursing students participate in Health Break to complete 25 hours of community engaged learning credits that are required for students in their sophomore year of the nursing program. Health Break facilitators and nursing students collaborate to provide the CCS students with self-esteem and stress reduction strategies, exercise, team work coaching and coping techniques. Nursing students facilitate the activities for all participants' levels and abilities.

Benefits to Students

The benefits to both the nursing and CCS students are invaluable.

- Nursing students learn how to negotiate and communicate with IDD individuals while persuading them to participate in the various activities.
- The CCS students are inspired by the positive reinforcement and encouragement of their TCNJ peers, and they rise to the higher expectations.
- The networks and friendships formed are also valuable aspects of the program.

Lesson Themes

Themes and Curriculum were developed for virtual and in person activities.

Year 1

- Icebreakers
- Escape Room
- Scavenger
- Tiktok
- Mindfulness -Guided Meditation
- Gingerbread person: write likes inside, then write dislikes outside, then cut away the outside
- Square breathing: Teach the students to do square breathing to help with calming down from stress. That is: Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds. It's supposed to help our parasympathetic nervous system calm down (Aka: the opposite of fight or flight).
- Exercises for groups: Do an exercise for a group to do together.
- Healthy eating

Year 2

- Icebreakers
- Deep Breathing
- Tiktok Challenge
- Coping with Stress
- Active Exercise
- Healthy eating
- Team Building exercises
- How to say goodbye

The Muse Project

- The MUSE project consisted of two TCNJ students collaborating together to develop two years of curriculum for Health Break activities. One nursing major and one CCS student. Both students participated in Health Break during the fall 2019 semester.
- Having the nursing and CCS students collaborate on the curriculum allowed for both perspectives to be implemented into the curriculum.
- By developing two years of curriculum the program will be different each year the CCS students participate in order to keep everyone engaged and interested.
- Developing the curriculum had been especially challenging for the nursing majors because they don't have experience in curriculum development or working with IDD.
- The pre-developed curriculum will allow the nursing majors to focus their attention on the implementation of the activity.

Quotes From Health Break Participants

- "My group really connected with her through her bronco drawing and her song requests. She is such a sweet girl and any connection I can make with these students is so gratifying and heart-warming for me. Additionally, Dr. Perron's interactions and love for this group of students is always so inspiring to witness".
- "He discussed with me after the lesson how he really liked Paul Eugene and how he was surprised at the level of exercise he got in while staying seated".
- "I liked the meditation because I went to a magical place where I was able to walk on clouds!"
- "A personal accomplishment for me was forming a friendship with one of the CCS students. Talking with her really gave me a love for the CCS students and how intelligent, funny, and kind these individuals are".