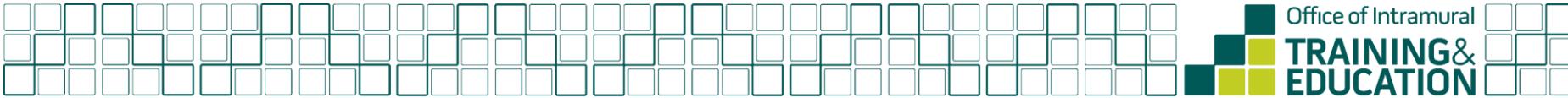

Developing A Wellness Program For NIH Intramural Trainees

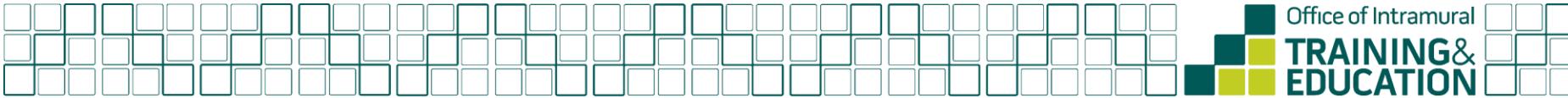
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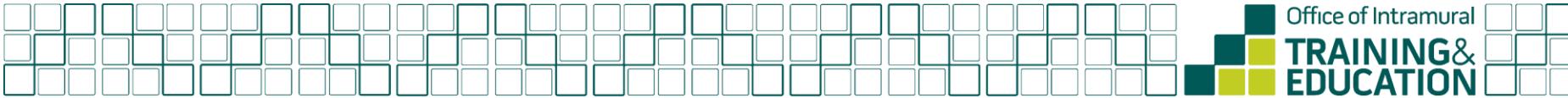
We Train Thresholders...

- Who May Be Dealing With Complicating Contextual Factors
 - Financial strain, including food and housing insecurity
 - Extent of support network, family challenges/problems
 - Immigrant status/International background
 - Membership in marginalized community(ies)
 - 1st generation college/graduate student
 - Previous (or recent) trauma
 - [Chronic] illness including emotional/mental health concerns
 - Culture/atmosphere of program/lab
 - News events, both nationally and internationally
- And who are smart problem solvers who have accomplished a lot to get in their (relatively) short educational careers



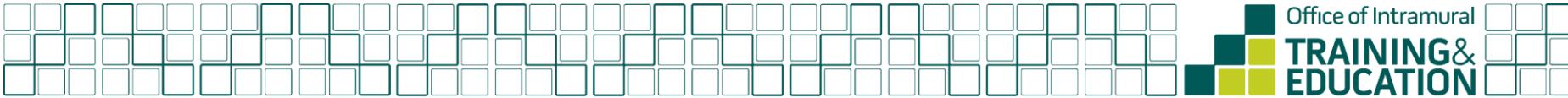
Three Overlapping Goals

- To help trainees appreciate the link between stress management/wellness and school/career/life ‘success’
- To help trainees work through acute stressors with minimal disruption of their academic and research progress
- To better prepare ourselves to deal with more serious mental health concerns that impact some members of our community
- Requires two things:
 - That we frame this as a wellness, not an illness, issue
 - substantial culture change at all levels



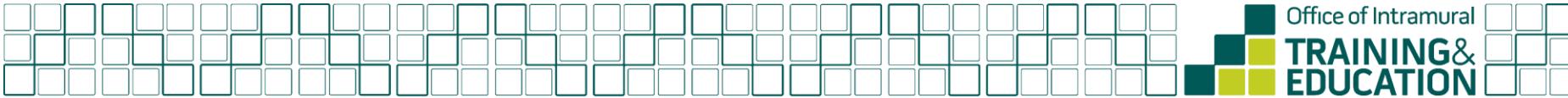
What We Are Doing (I)

- Formal group activities
 - Workshops on assertiveness, wellness, resilience, performance anxiety, etc.
- Key Point – we use captive audiences
 - Material embedded into orientation programs and most workshops
 - We highlight wellness and resilience at all major events



OITE Resilience Workshop

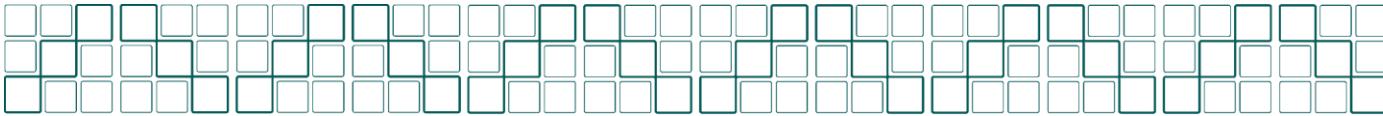
- Knowledge, behaviors and attitudes with goal of building a “resilience toolkit”; topics covered:
 - Fostering a growth mind-set
 - Negative self-talk, imposter fears and cognitive distortions
 - Holistic self-care (brief intro followed by in-depth workshop)
 - Shame and shame resilience (sometimes)
 - Feedback resilience (becoming a stand-alone workshop)
- Key micro-messages:
 - Resilience = people + process + preparation
 - To do well, we have to be well



OITE Wellness Workshop

- Based on a four-quadrant model for wellness
 - Physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health
- Components
 - Discussion of the short- and long-term impact of stress
 - The benefits of mindfulness
 - Self-compassion
 - Holistic health and self-care
- Includes a self-care assessment and a short meditation

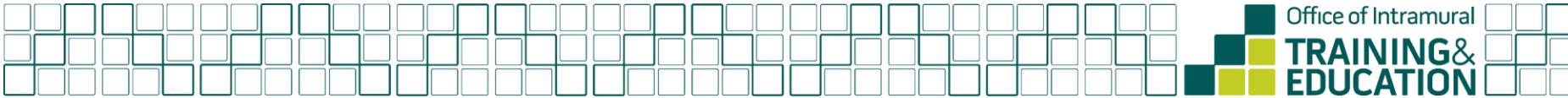
NOTE: We present a workshop covering both resilience and wellness at National meetings and on university campuses



What We Are Doing (II)

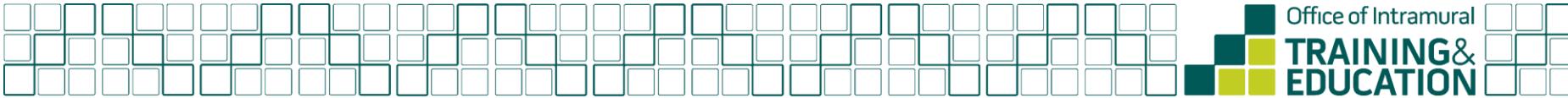
- Less formal group activities
 - Drop-in meditation groups
 - Resilience Discussion Groups
 - Wellness Wednesdays
 - Monthly wellness/community building events
 - Affinity group activities and brown bag lunches

NOTE – We see both formal \longleftrightarrow informal



OITE Resilience Discussion Groups

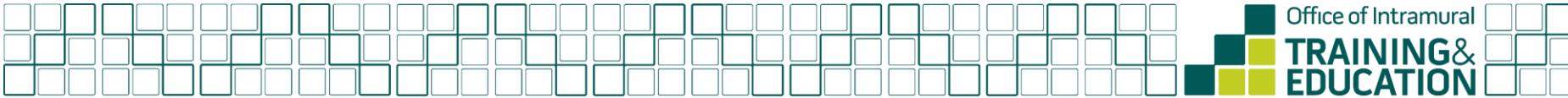
- Facilitated by a therapist with knowledge of NIH
- Popular topics
 - Job search stress
 - Conflict and difficult conversations
 - PI and lab group challenges
 - Imposter fears, assertiveness and self-confidence
 - Application anxiety/career decision making stress
 - the stress of national and international news
 - self-compassion and kindness
 - For trainees....
 - navigating NIH and life while dealing with emotional or psychological challenges
 - who are care-givers
 - who are living with chronic illness and disability
 - who are international
 - who are LGBTQ+
 - who are People of Color



Why Facilitated and Not Peer Driven

- The facilitator is skilled in....
 - discussing confidentiality and creating a supportive environment
 - making sure everyone has a chance to speak while respecting and working with individual differences
 - summarizing, validating emotions, and generalizing information
 - making referrals when needed
 - reporting back to me about general issues I need to address or know about

NOTE: Trainees engage in five ways – **required**, **voluntol**, preventative, acute need, maintenance after a major stressor

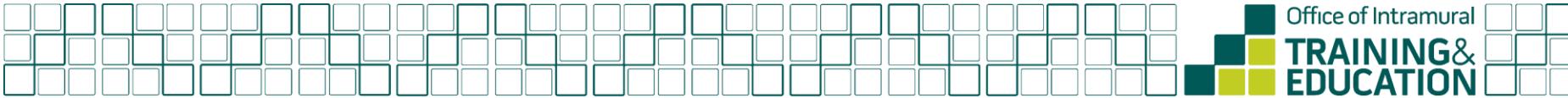


What We Are Doing (III)

■ Individual activities

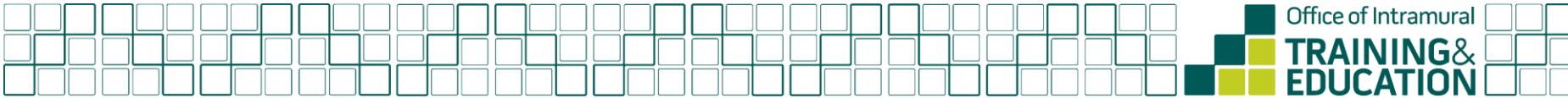
- Offering individual wellness advising
- Asking/sharing about self-care and stress management when talking with trainees (100% of the time)
- Asking about and discussing counseling, providing referrals and addressing concerns (stigma, privacy, monetary, specific language and/or identity needs, about getting the most out of it)

NOTE: For me, finding someone happy to make therapist referrals based on the specific situation has made a big impact



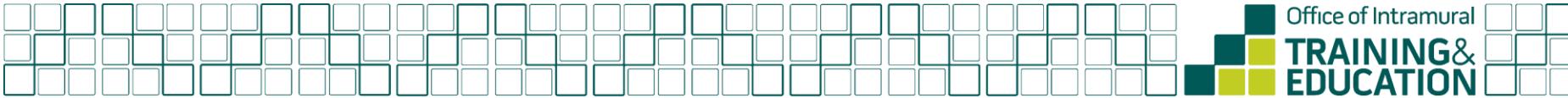
Wellness Advising

- Wellness advisors are trained professionals
- Short- and long-term (in aliquots of 8; may decrease number due to greater need)
- Trainees self-refer and are referred by peers, PIs, OITE and other NIH staff
- This is NOT therapy
 - BUT many fellows who seek out wellness advising, eventually ask for a referral and most follow through
 - An excellent way to help trainees work through stigma and cultural barriers to counseling



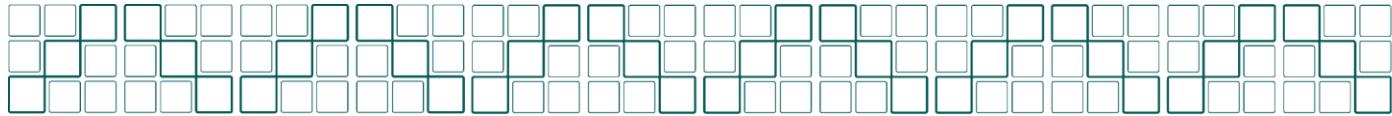
PIs Are More Engaged In the Process

- Resilience and wellness is now embedded into the training we offer tenure-track investigators at NIH (from both sides)
- PIs who hear us speak (about wellness, leadership or about our services) are significantly more likely to reach out.
- Recently offered a workshop, “Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Intramural Trainees” for PIs and admin staff
- Piloting a coaching program for PIs

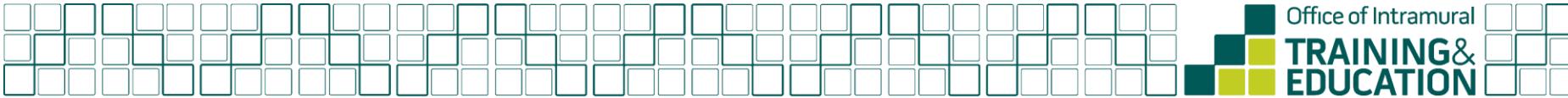


Why We Are Making Progress

- Trainees hear these messages **again and again**, from many different people, in many different contexts, and embedded in all of our programming.
- There are multiple entry points and trainees can choose what makes sense for them.
- Wellness staff are integrated into the OITE Career Center to break down barriers for reaching out.
- Active learning makes the material more fun and personal.
- I use my social capital and institutionally-derived power to get students to participate.
- I take time to address the elephants in the room.

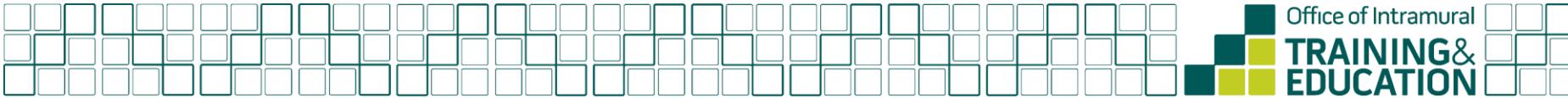


How can one be well in a system that is not well?



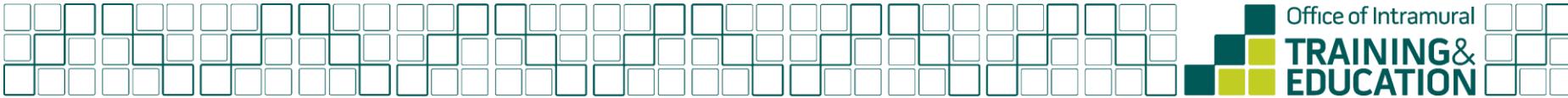
Our Efforts In That Regard

- All harassment cases involving NIH trainees are a collaboration between NIH Civil and OITE and we provide a lot of wellness advising throughout the process
- All trainees must participate in person in a new training – “Your Rights and Responsibilities As An NIH Trainee”.
- We are piloting (with some clear success) a paper-based climate/mentoring survey



An Effort To Expand Our Reach

- Piloting programs for PIs and program directors at national meetings and during campus visits
- Continuing to host the NIH Train-the-Trainers event
 - July 20-21, 2020 here in DC
 - Will involve multiple sessions on student mental health and wellness, with 30 therapists attending on Day 1 to lecture and facilitate role plays for participants
 - Data suggests that participation in this program has a profound impact on staffs' commitment and ability to deliver wellness and resilience programming
- We are in the process of evaluating our programs now, using survey instruments and focus groups



Acknowledgements

- NIH trainees who share their stories, frustrations and dreams with me
- AAMC GREAT group for their enthusiasm, interest and willingness to collaborate on the NIH Train-the-Trainer event
- OITE staff and especially our wellness advisors and career counselors
- Many colleagues who contributed to my learning
 - Hile Rutledge, OKA and Associates
 - Robbye Fox, Parent Encouragement Program
 - Annie Scheiner and Jonah Green from Jonah Green and Associates (and the many therapists from JGA who advise me and who work with our fellows)