

Graduate School Primer Series: The Basics of Mental Health and Well-being

[AUDIO LOGO] JANNA LAMEY: I think we have everyone in. And so I want to welcome everyone. This is part of our Primer Series. My name is Janna Lamey. And I use the she/her pronouns. And I am the senior assistant dean for student life here at the graduate school. This is one session out of many that we're calling the Primer Series that's designed to help support you in coming to Cornell and being a successful graduate student here. And so anyways, I welcome you. And I am so glad that you took the time today to spend this hour with us so that we can chat about mental health in particular. Before we get going, I just want to make sure that folks know that there are captions available. So if you go down to the-- scroll at the bottom, you can see Show Captions. And if you can't see that, there's dot, dot, dot, and then you can get into that. So if anybody has any questions, feel free to email me or Zenobia. And we'll make sure that you have captions here today. I do want to make sure that I acknowledge this Primer Series is a team effort from us at the graduate school. And fortunately, we have Zenobia Lee-Nelson here today. And so she is our administrator on call that does a lot of the events planning through the graduate school. So you'll see Zenobia, I'm sure, in other forums as you get here, which is exciting. Again, my name is Janna Lamey. And what I do here at the graduate school, I just want you to know, is I work with students. And so I have the pleasure of meeting with students at any time with any questions, concerns, or just want to chat. Just know that the Office of Graduate Student Life is made up of two of us in Angela Yantorno and I. We meet the students. So just keep us in mind as a resource, hopefully a friendly face and a resource to be able to help support you. The other thing that I do here at the graduate school is help to support a healthy student-life experience. And so I could go on with a list of what that means. But basically, our orientation program is one thing that we want to make sure that you're set up for success. And so that's where my involvement is in trying to help support you. I do a lot on campus concerning mental health and wellbeing. And so that is what leads us here today. My background is actually health education. So this fits really nicely into what my training has been over time. So I see a lot of black boxes here. And so I am hoping that we can be as interactive as possible. So I welcome you or invite you to be able to turn on your cameras and join us. I have a lot of interaction. I typically do this talk face to face. And so this is going could be a little bit different for me. But please join us because I think we're going to have some good conversation given your participation. So I'm going to get started here. How many of you have talked about mental health before? Give me a thumbs up or a high-five or whatever it is. OK, let me ask you this. In the chat, can you tell me what mental health is for you? When I say the word "mental health," what does that mean? I can also tell you that if you're coming to Cornell, people talk about mental health all the time. And so let's figure out what that means. [CHUCKLES] There's no right or wrong answer. "About finding balance," absolutely. Give me two more. I'm doing this right at the beginning, and I probably should do this [CHUCKLES] at the end. But "regulating feelings and the brain stuff in addition to other aspects of health," absolutely. If you leave here with anything, I want you to know that mental health is how we think, how we feel, and how we behave. So it's really all things. "Working towards striving," absolutely. Going to put a little bit of

value on it as far as that we want to be mentally healthy so that we can thrive in what it is that we need to do. "Mental health is treatment of everyday mental wellbeing," yep. Taking care of ourselves and our wellbeing is absolutely part of it. So I'm going to share my screen. And I hope you don't mind, but I am going to turn it on, turn it off so that we can have some conversation. I can't wait to hear from you. Now, yesterday I had some issues with this. I think I took care of it. Can you all see my slides? And hold on. I'm going to move you around so I can see you, as well. Does that look right? Give me a thumbs up. Does that look right? AUDIENCE: Looks good.

JANNA LAMEY: Thank you very much. Thank you very much. So today, what we're talking about is supporting mental health at Cornell and beyond. And I do want to acknowledge that a lot of my work is done in collaboration with the Skorton Center for Health Initiatives. And I've worked closely with Catherine Thrasher-Carroll and Abby Dubovi. And so anyways, this is something that we want to make sure that we're consistent across campus as to what we're talking about when we say mental health and wellbeing. So what we're going to do is we're going to spend a little bit of time talking about what's going on as far as mental health, what is it, what's going on here. And then we're going to talk about how to manage stress and what we do to promote wellbeing. And then, finally, I'm going to end with Cornell resources. Like I said, I normally do this as a person. So I'm going to try this online. And I'm hoping that we can have conversation throughout. So please feel free to interrupt, send a chat, or just raise your hand or whatever it takes for you to be able to get to me so that we can have some conversation about this. Related to it, sometimes folks get a little bit nervous about talking about mental health. And so I want to acknowledge that. And so while we're in the space for the next, I don't know, 45, 50 minutes together, I just want to put out there that we're going to be respectful, empathy, and no judgment. I am going to ask you to share. And so I haven't decided if we're going to do breakout rooms or if we're going to share here. It depends on where we're at. But I do want to acknowledge that you may want to share, and I hope that you'll share. But share at your own comfort level. I'm hoping that this can be a conversation. And like I said, we might break out. And so hopefully we'll have some space for each of you to share. And I want to finally say that the lessons leave but the stories stay. And so I don't know if we'll get too much of that being on Zoom. But I just want to acknowledge that, hey, look, mental health can be a challenge to talk about. And it's important to say, hey, look, here's the parameters to what it is that we're doing. Is there anything else that this group would like to say as far as a working agreement so that we can talk candidly about mental health? I see six faces, five faces. And so they're indicating that we're OK. So we're just going to move on. And so let me show you this cartoon. So if you type in "mental health graduate students," this is what you get. "Not sure if actually depressed or just in graduate school." I am going to ask you-- I see some smiles. So hopefully this is resonating quite well. But what do you think of this? [CHUCKLES] Somebody said "me," absolutely. What else? What do you think about this statement? "Not sure if actually depressed or just in grad school." You're starting your graduate program. Somebody wrote "graduate school is stressful," yep. What else? Can be. What else do we think? OK, I did say that I was a health teacher for many years in high school. And so I can outwait anybody. [CHUCKLES] "The more you progress in education, the more one feels challenged and questions his or her own abilities," yep. "Graduate school has a reputation for being overworked, burnt out, and depressed." Yeah, I want to talk a little bit about that, Amelia, as far as that-- yes. There's a little bit about expectations setting here as far as that. I found this very sad. That's why I include this in here, as

far as that if you type in "graduate student mental health," this is what you'll get as far as a meme coming up. And so I don't have an answer for that. But there is an expectation of, wow, am I going to be depressed during graduate school? Or is this part of my normal experience? I have a lot of students that come to me, and they want to talk about how they're feeling and what they're experiencing as a graduate student. And often they'll say, well, I don't know if I'm depressed or if it is graduate school. And I often say, it probably doesn't matter. It might be both. But if this is how you're experiencing your world right now, maybe we need to do something more about it. So yeah, we've got a lot of work to do in graduate education as far as making this not the narrative. But I want to acknowledge that this may be something that you looked into before you came to graduate school or people are talking to you about this as far as that, wow, you're going to graduate school? Depression, anxiety. Wow, that seems like a lot. So other comments here. I'm just going to move on so that we can continue to talk about it. I did ask you what mental health is. Let me ask you this. How many of you do have mental health? Raise your hand if you think you have mental health? We have mental health. Couple of hands raised. I don't see as many as I should. Everybody should be raising their hand, OK? I want to normalize this. So if I don't see you, please, yeah, give me a thumbs up or something as far as that. The take-home point is that we all have mental health, absolutely. Sometimes it may be flourishing. Sometimes it may be challenging. But we all have a status of mental health, absolutely. And so the World Health Organization-- this is a definition that we can use. And I can't see it all on my screen, so forgive me. But it's, "A state of wellbeing in which every individual realizes their own potential, can cope with normal stressors of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community." So sound like a good definition? I think there might be a question. Jason, go ahead. Or maybe not. AUDIENCE: Oh, sorry, I was just raising my hand. JANNA LAMEY: Oh, that's OK. I'm glad to see a hand. It's always a good thing. So anyways, so we know that this is what the World Health Organization says about mental health and wellbeing. Basically, like I said, it's how you think, how you feel, and how you behave. Mental health is a part of it. When I often meet with students, they'll say, hey, look, I have mental health concerns. And I'm like, OK, what does that mean for you? Is it something going on in your mind, something going on how you feel, or something going on how you interact with others? And depending on your answer, it may lead us down a different path as far as what the struggles may be. Christiana, "I have mental health concerns." Want to comment a little bit more about that? Are you defining? Or what are you thinking? And as you're talking about balance? Oh, absolutely, as far as that, how do we get back to homeostasis? Especially when, as a graduate student, we're coming to a new place, there's a lot of extra stressors that are associated with it, absolutely. I want to bring up something that sometimes students, and everybody, might be confused about. And that is, what is the difference between mental health and mental illness? So oftentimes students will come and they'll be like, oh, I have poor mental health. I've been diagnosed as depressed. Or I have panic attacks, or whatever. And I don't know if it really matters so much that we spend a lot of time on this, but I like this grid because it helps us to understand that we all have mental health, absolutely. And we all may have mental illness, where it may be that we are surviving with mental illness, or maybe we're floundering with mental illness. Or maybe we don't have mental illness. I'll put that on the continuum, as well. But basically, we may have good mental health, where we're flourishing. And then we may be struggling when we have poor mental health. And

we may have mental illness, and we may not. And there are people that may have mental illness and have positive mental health. That's a configuration that one can have. Or one may have poor mental health but not have mental illness. So I think this is important as far as how we try to dissect as far as what the difference is between mental health and mental illness. I want to give you a little bit of stats and information as far as what's going on in mental health. If anybody's looked at anything in the literature, you'll know that mental health concerns are on the rise amongst PhD students in the US system. I think there are some international studies, as well. But in the US systems, we're talking about mental health concerns a lot for doctoral students. We also know that about 40% of our PhD students-- and this is national numbers; this isn't of Cornell-- but of national numbers have reported symptoms of generalized anxiety, major or minor depression. And this has doubled since 2020. So this number is really important to us. And that's significant as far as 4 out of 10. I also want to note that not everybody experiences mental health the same way. And this information is evident of national literature. But also here at Cornell, we learned during COVID as far as the evidence of significant physical and mental health disparities among graduate student populations is true. So we know that there's higher rates of distress, depression, and other mental health concerns among the BIPOC community, LGBTQ+, low socioeconomic status, and first-gen graduate students. And then, also, we know that the impact of bias and discrimination, microaggressions of minority status stress can also serve as risk factors for physical and mental health concerns. And so, again, my point basically here is that not everybody experiences the mental health the same way and that there may be different and additional stressors based on what communities you come from. And then, finally, we also know that mental health can absolutely impact academic performance. And so there's a link here. And somebody wrote something, so I just want to look at that real fast. Yeah, mind-blowing, isn't it, as far as Mariana-- yeah, absolutely. So here are some of the common stressors. And you might already know this, but I just want to talk about it. And I put these in two different columns because before the COVID stuff, this is what I was talking to students about-- depression, loneliness, jobs, harassment, non-academic careers, discrimination, imposter syndrome, stress. These were typical as far as what stressors were named. And I want to say, post-COVID, post-2020, as far as our political structures and some of the social items that were going on in the US at least, the pandemic came. And these are the kinds of things that we were talking about-- funding, a big concern, relationships, social isolation, sexism, racism, xenophobia, academic demands, grief and loss, dissertation. I'm just adding a lot more stressors here. And so I'm going to say, post-2020, and here you are, the incoming 2023, I'm not sure where you're at with these kind of stressors. But I'm going to guess it's part of your experience. And so again, we're highlighting the level of stressors that one may be having. And then, finally, this is my beautiful graph that I like to show a lot. I hope that you all came in with a smile-- maybe, maybe not. And I hope that what you're thinking is that, wow, if I'm here longer, when I'm done, this is going to be me with a really big smile. I'm talking about transitions right now because what we tend to think is that, hey, look, when you start something new, you're excited about it, and that, wow, I'm going to be more excited about it here in three, four, five, six years. Is that true? Is that what you're thinking? OK, so this is what we expect. [INAUDIBLE] OK, I think that was a yes. I'm going to interpret that as far as that was a yes, you agree with us. But I want to show you what graduate student life tends to be like. And I don't mean to sound funny, but this isn't really a secret to graduate students, this is of all life experience, is that the reality is

that there's highs and lows, correct? Like, we may get to a better place of productivity, happiness, life satisfaction. But it comes a little bit wiggly. Now, I'm going to do one better for you because you are first-year students. I hope today that you're sitting here a little hopeful. Is that true? Excited, you know what to do. This is exciting. You may have some doubts and some insecurities and just not sure. But overall, you're starting something new. And wow, I can't wait to get my hands on this. I can't wait to get involved. I hope that's where you're at. Now, in a couple of weeks from now, you might be like, [MOCK WEAKLY CHUCKLES] what am I doing here? This is part of transitions. I'm not suggesting that necessarily your mental health-- that you have mental illness. I'm not suggesting that your mental health will be homeostasis. I'm actually suggesting the transition is coming. And there's going to be highs and lows. And so you know the high of being hopeful. And you probably know the low of, gosh, what do I do, just general confusion, and that's normal. You might get to a point where you're like, hoo. Now, how you got from this low of, gosh, confusion, overwhelm, to, hoo, I'm relieved, you likely already know. You've had experience in your life. You know what you need to do. Does anybody want to tell me, what do you do when you're in a low and you got to get to the, [EXHALES]. Give me some things. What have you done in your life when, hey, it might have been a low and you want to get back to a little bit more of a high. What have you done? This one I'm going to wait for you. "Cry it out," absolutely. "Ice cream." I'm going to expand on those a little bit. "Ice cream" as evidence that you may be taking care of yourself, absolutely. "Cry it out"-- again, you're acknowledging that, wow, I need to feel something before I can get back up, absolutely. "Go on a spiritual retreat," "listen to your insides," absolutely. "Spend time with family," "yoga," "running time in nature," absolutely. "My cat," "talk to family, friends"-- oh, I love it. "Reading," "basic needs of sleep, social connection, self-care, walking [INAUDIBLE]" absolutely. You know this. I'm going to add one here that you didn't talk about, which is use your resources. Know the people that you need to get information so that you can get to a point where, I'm not feeling overwhelmed, OK? Now, not to expand, but yeah, I had to do this. You may feel like this during your first semester, which is, gosh, I worked so hard. And I didn't get the grade or the feedback that I thought I would. Gosh, what am I going to do? And I'm going to tell you, you're going to go back to some of these things-- self-care, meeting the basic needs, reading, talking to friends, family, mentors, walking, whatever this is, whatever it takes for you to get to a place of, OK, I got this, is what you're going to do. I'm trying to normalize, especially this first semester, because there will be highs and lows. And finally, I just want to acknowledge that, hey, look, you may get sick. This was real relevant a couple years ago with the pandemic. You may get to a point where, gosh, I can't do anything. My body's telling me I can't. And so again, you're going to go back to the basics about taking care of yourself, that we know, to get us back into homeostasis. That expected line is what we expect, is that homeostasis, is basically what it is. Does that make sense? OK, this isn't going to be all-- I hope I didn't depress you. [CHUCKLES] That's not what I'm trying to do here. But I do want to give us a couple of minutes to talk about being an incoming graduate student can be difficult. And so what are some of your stressors? What are you experiencing right now that you would put on either that line of transitions, which can be a stressor, or that you would put on the stressors that were named beforehand? What are you experiencing right now that would be a stressor to you? Chat it up or unmute yourself, whatever you'd like to do. "Job application," "adjusting completely to new academic and social environment," "uncertainty," "worrying about classes, parents." Anything else? "Trying to

navigate the relationships with my advisors," "anxiety to not knowing what my day-to-day would look like," "nervous about managing class and lab," "moving across the country and the world," absolutely. "Expectations of my work," absolutely. These are great, not great as far as feeling. But these are absolutely, completely normal. "Concerns my own abilities," there's a lot here. And I thank you for taking the time to share with each other. I hope by reading these that you're saying, oh, yeah, yeah. There's a lot of commonness amongst our first-year, first-semester student experiences, absolutely. And these are often the fears that we hear from students. So thanks for sharing that. But like I said, hopefully this will allow you to feel a little bit more in control or a little bit more not unusual. I want to go into a little bit about stress because I want to move us to understand stress. And then we're going to move to what you can do. So I'm not going to sit you too long in this space. And this basically is we want you to be in a place of manageable stress. And basically, how we look at this is that sometimes when the resources-- we want our resources to be able to deal with the stress to be greater than the actual pressure itself. And there's a lot of research on this, on what we call the stress continuum. And what we know is that stress is actually inevitable, and it's part of life, a life well lived. We know that when we recognize the first signs of stress, that it's too high or overwhelming, we need to do something and that, routinely, we actually need to bolster our internal and external resources to be able to manage this. I'll also say, though, that this peak-performance idea requires some stress. And when we learn and grow, we need some stress to be able to do so. The problem is we want you to be in this green area as long as we can. And that means that we're balanced and we're managing well. We're motivated. There's a healthy tension, and we're focused. However, when we get to this yellow-orange area, that's where we need to be concerned. Actually, we want to be right on top. We want enough stress so that we can manage that and that we can grow from this. But we need to be concerned that if we go downwards, what it can lead to as far as collapse and burnout. And I ask, how many of you have felt that before as far as burnout and collapse? Yeah. I see some hands. "Yep, me," absolutely. Yep. So what I've experienced working with students over the years is that, yeah, you're high-performing, absolutely. You expect a lot of yourself. You got into Cornell for a reason. And likely, you are really maybe a perfectionist. I wouldn't even say that word. I would say that you were hard-charging. And so perhaps your resources didn't meet the stresses that were coming on you. And maybe you know what that feels like, that collapse, burnout, and exhaustion. I would caution you, hopefully you get some help beforehand. And I don't mean to suggest that you're going to get there. But I hope that when you do, that you know you have resources to go to. I'll share something private as far as a couple of years ago, it was right around COVID, and I burnt out bad. And I've never had that happen before. And I'll tell you, the most surprising thing is-- and I know all this stuff-- the most surprising thing to me was how much time it took me to get back to focused. And I was like, oh, that's a message. It doesn't go just to burnout and, wow, I can get back to focused. Like, it took me a good four or five months to get to a point where I was really loving what I was doing and I was able to focus, I was able to give what I needed to. And so if that's helpful to you, I do encourage you to watch yourself. And that what we're going to talk about it in just a second. The other piece-- hold on. Oh, I already did that. That's where we want you to be. Obviously, you need to be a little careful of the yellow and red zone. I want to talk a little bit about this, which is what I just mentioned. Our body knows about our stress, absolutely, long before we might experience it. And so because there's a few of us in here that have felt

burnout, you may also notice that our body felt this, too, which is physiological. We might have had low energy, digestive, respiratory problems, headaches and pains. Emotionally, we might have been anxious, irritable, feeling helpless, negative feelings towards work. We might not have been able to think, trouble listening, or trouble with our memory. Finally, behavioral. We might have been over- or under-sleeping or eating. We may have increased our alcohol or other drug use, something we don't talk about with graduate education, but that absolutely is there. And we might be avoiding people, things, or activities. Now, I told you in the beginning I talk to students all the time. But I also talk to faculty, too, as far as faculty concerned about their students. And often they'll say, wow, this student's avoiding me. I don't know where they are. And so that may be a sign that, hey, look, something stressful is going on and the student doesn't have enough resources to be able to meet that stress. So I'm going to ask you right now as far as when do you know? What does your body tell you when you're overstressed? That's my next question here. "Tension on my shoulders," "can't sleep," absolutely. What else? You're a typing group, so type to me. [CHUCKLES] "Sleep all day," "feeling tired," "feeling tight of breath," "inability to perform even the small tasks," "insomnia," "brain fog," yeah. "Inability to focus," "irritability"-- that's what I've learned about myself. "I always feel tired," yeah. This is really key for you. So as you're learning to become a brilliant scientist, a brilliant scholar, whatever it is that you're doing, I would encourage you to start learning about yourself because that's going to give you the motivation, the power, the fuel that you need crucially to be able to be successful as a graduate student and beyond. And so if these are the kinds of things that you already know about yourself, learn to listen to that. And go back to some of the basics. When we transition and things, we know what we need to do to get there. So hey, I'm feeling like I'm losing my appetite. Ugh, is my stress too high? I may need to be to back up off. Does that make sense? OK, I'm going to check in a little bit. We're going to go to something a little bit more positive. So I've just set the stage for you as far as knowing what's going on nationally and some numbers kind of thing. But now I want to move into-- we just talked a little bit about stress and how it works in our body, what it can tell you. And now I want to talk a little bit more about a wellness plan, so what you can do yourself. And I hate to tell you, but some of this you probably have already heard. I just hope that hearing it from the graduate school may help to make it a little bit more like, wow, this is important as a graduate student, too. And so first-- we talk about a wellness plan. You're going to talk about a study plan. You're going to talk about your first-semester plan, all these plans that you got. I just want to acknowledge that you do need a wellness plan. How are you going to take care of yourself? How are you going to be able to make it across the finish line? Well, it's going to be talking about these other kinds of things, emotional, relational, vocational, cultural, spiritual, all the different components of health. That's basically what that is. And so whatever one is resonating with you, take some time to be able to come up with a plan so that you can meet your needs. And it may not be all of them all the time. But what gives you the most energy, what gives you the most fuel to be able to keep going? OK, so positive ways to meet the stress with your resources. And again, this may not be real exciting. You probably already know this. But you want to move your body-- regular exercise, right? Structured planned activities that you are scheduled to do for the benefit of your body. What do you guys do right now? How many of you do exercise? Let me ask you that. So what do you do? What do you do for exercise? Do we got any rowers, runners, walkers? "I love climbing," "go to the gym," absolutely. What else? "Jump rope and weight lifting," "weight

lifting, running," absolutely. "Yoga," "clean the room," well, that would work. "Walk my dog," "drawing," absolutely. These are things that can get your body going. Leah, I love what you said. "If anybody likes climbing, please DM me so we can be climbing buddies." Anyways, yes, please do that. I'm hoping that what you're doing here is learning about each other so that you can make some connections. And again, exercise is critical as far as for mental health and wellbeing. The second one is eat foods that make you feel well. I'm just going to say a little bit about that in that I'm not saying to be on a diet, or I'm not saying to overeat or undereat. I'm just saying that I want to acknowledge that Ithaca can be really limiting as far as the foods that are here. And so whatever makes you feel well and healthy, that's what you should be looking for. Again, if you want more attention or detailed conversation about what you should be eating, we have a healthy diet center in the Cornell Health Center. And so you can absolutely use that. But I'm just saying, make sure that you're eating foods that make you feel well. Adequate sleep or rest. How many hours did you all get last night? Put that in here because I am curious. How many hours of sleep did you all get? "7," "6," "9," "6," "6." "5." "6 and 1/2"-- that's good. And I'd be curious how you came up with that number. [CHUCKLES] "8." "8, but 0 the night before," yeah. So how many hours of sleep do you think we should be getting? The average adult. "7," "7," "7," "at least 7," "7 to 9." It's normally 8 to 10 as far as what they want you to have for sleep every night. It needs to be consistent. Go to bed at the same time, get up at the same time. And I will say that you need more sleep when you're stressed. I'm going to guess that you're all starting a graduate program, you're probably pretty stressed. So that number might want to be increased just to make sure that you're getting enough sleep. I'll also share with you that Cornell Health has a sleep clinic. And they also do a program that's called CU Sleep, like C, the letter, U-- Cornell-- CU Sleep. It's online, and they also do it in person. And the point of this is to tell you that this session is one hour in length. So what can you talk about for one hour in length about sleep? That's a lot of effort to talk about sleep. But it really is designed to make sure that you understand the impact that it's having on your mental wellness and also academically as far as sleep is the number one thing that we should be doing. And so Cornell, a few years ago, decided that, wow, the best thing for its students is really to campaign sleep. And so you'll see some other things about it. I encourage you to check it out, especially if you're struggling with sleeping and just want to learn more about it and the science behind it. There's a huge body of research that talks about the importance of sleep, so check that out. The next one, control what you can and getting organized, absolutely. How many of you think that you're organized? Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, getting organized is going to help you so that you can be in control of what it is that you're doing. It helps control your mental health. And if you're struggling with that, there are some other places that you can go get some help. One would be the Learning Strategies Center. And so they do some sessions about getting organized and how to schedule your time, those kind of things. So you can get some help while you're here. But learn to become organized with what it is you need to do. Practice mindfulness. Anybody do mindfulness activities? I saw some already. What do you do? Put that in the-- "meditation," absolutely. Anybody else? "miMind is a free app once a day." I have not heard of that. I'm going to have to write that one down. Yeah, offer to each other what it is that you're doing as far as for mindfulness. I'll say that you can do meditation. You can also do journaling. Anybody do journaling? Anybody that does gratitude or practice efforts towards gratitude? That would be another mindfulness activity that one can do. "Mindful breathing," that would be another one, absolutely. I used [INAUDIBLE] and

journal," yeah, these are great things. As you're being stressed, your mind is being overwhelmed. And so coming up with ways that you can teach yourself to be able to be present and to slow things down is hugely valuable. I'll offer that you're going to hear during the semester Cornell Health does one every day of a mindfulness opportunity. Some are online, some are in-person. And it's just 20 minutes of face to face or with somebody from Cornell Health that actually does the mindfulness meditation. So that may be something that you're interested in. They also did last year, they started a yoga practice. And they also started walking mindfulness. So they go on some trees. And nature might be another thing as far as mindfulness. If you're on campus, please take advantage of all the nature and the beauty that's around here as an activity to help you with mindfulness. So practicing and getting in a routine of mindfulness will be helpful to you. The other one-- minimize toxins. And I mean alcohol and drugs. And I also mean people. And so be aware that when we're under stress, that may not be the most helpful thing. So just to be aware of what you consume and who you are around. And then, finally, a positive way to meet stress with resources is to reach out for help when you need it. Like I said, Angela Yantorno and I meet with students all the time. So we'd be happy to chat with you. You also have some support with your peer graduate students. And oftentimes, these kind of things you might be able to find some more information about. And also, your GFA, your graduate field assistant, and then also your director of graduate studies. And so in those cohorts, make sure you're using them as far as to figure out what it is that you can do to help increase your resources to manage stress. My next slide I just want to talk a little bit about a couple things that I see from graduate students over the years. And so this is additional thoughts about how to meet stress with resources. One is the growth mindset. I'm assuming that most folks have thought about that. I heard you all say that, wow, you might have experienced-- not all, but most of you might have had some experience with perhaps burnout in some kind of forms. And so the idea of growth mindset is the idea that perhaps a failure is an opportunity to learn. And so it's cultivating this growth mindset that may be really helpful to you. And I think for incoming graduate students or graduate students in particular, not sure if you belong here, well, you do belong here. [CHUCKLES] Let's back up and try to figure out, what can you learn from perhaps your mistakes or failures? And so there's some good information. And we do do some sessions about growth mindset. There's things that you can actually do and challenge yourself as you're thinking about things. But the idea is that, what can you learn here? OK, I haven't been able to do this. Well, add on the word "yet." Or "I can't do this," well, maybe tomorrow you can. And so it's really about translating and telling yourself about the experience in a way that's much more positive. The other one is self-compassion and self-talk. We've often heard, what would you say to a younger sibling or a kid that you know about, hey, look, you fell off your bike? We probably would say, well, get back on it. And so how we talk to ourselves about experiences can be really helpful or harmful to our mental health and wellbeing. So be willing and able to think about that and try some self-compassion. This next one I just want to mention because I think first-year students struggle with this a lot, which is persistence over perfection. A lot of you have come here with high-charging and really already notable things that you've done or have accomplished. But do you need perfection all the time? Or is persistence more important? And so when is "good enough" OK? And so what I see in first-year students is they come in, and everything needs to be at 100%. So how do you manage that? Do you need to read all the articles before a journal club at 100%? Well, probably not. So how do

you pick and choose what your efforts should be on? So that's probably a big challenge. And it may be that you need to talk to other people. But understanding persistence is probably more important than perfection. So just be mindful of that. Another way to come up with more resources is engaging in meaningful activities. So this idea that service helps our soul is an idea that's true. So if there's something that you find some value in, go after it and do that. And then this other idea about reconsidering time. So ideally, you're going to be wanting to be what it is that you're doing. And oftentimes, first-year, first-semester students are craving a lot of time because this is an incredible opportunity. You get to study in an area that you want. And so you may need to look at time a little bit differently. You may need to be like, OK, I need to pause here so I can recharge because I can't go on at this level forever. Or you may need to think about this the other way, which is that, hey, look, I need to give most effort this week because, well, next week, I can do this kind of activity. So it's just thinking about time a little bit differently for graduate students so that you can manage the long term. This is a marathon. This isn't a race. And so keep in mind trying to figure out what it is that you need. So I'm going to ask here, what are some positive ways that you meet your stress with resources? What does that look like for you? What do you do? ""[INAUDIBLE] has been very helpful," absolutely. Absolutely. "Meet with my therapist," "reach out to people I can trust," absolutely. As you're thinking about some other things that you do-- "reconnect with surroundings when overwhelmed," absolutely—be thinking about this. I want to say something about connections. And so somebody said, reach out to people, or talk to people that I can trust. And when you look at the research about resilience, if you look at the research about mental health and wellbeing, often what they'll say is, over and over and over, the number-one way that you can be resilient, thrive is forming and maintaining social relationships that are built on trust and respect and acceptance. And so I didn't mention it beforehand, because I wanted to call this out and point this out. And I also want to note that how you use support as a graduate student may look a little bit different. I'm not suggesting that you need to have 800 million friends and family to go to. That's not what I'm saying. And I'm not suggesting that all these people that you have in your circles need to do all sorts of things to you. But what I'm showing you here is different types of connection and support that you can look for and actively try to figure out, who's in your circle right now? You can look for somebody that can give you emotional support, instrumental support, informational support, and appraisal. It may be one person. But I'm going to guess that it's different people, depending on your relationships that you have with one another. And so I would encourage you to be thoughtful about who's in your emotion—who can give you some empathy and love and trust and caring because if you get that bad feedback or negative feedback and you're like, oh, I'm not in the space to say that I'm going to grow from this, who's going to listen to you? And this may be close family members or friends. But all they need to do is just provide a supportive ear. You may have somebody that can give you some tangible aid. That's to say you got some negative feedback, and wow, your roommate is going to cook for you all week so that you can decide to rewrite the paper, or whatever it is. But they're doing something for you. They may not know anything that's going on, but they're giving you something instrumental. And so that would be a really good person to have in your circle as far as connections and support. Informational-- quite frankly, we have a ton of people here at Cornell that can help give you advice, suggestions, and information. And often what you're going to find is that's what we do. My office is one of them. I can get into the emotional space.

Eh. Instrumental-- I don't really do much of that. I do informational. My point is that when activating your resources, this is where you're going to get a lot of folks from. The appraisal one I think is really helpful for first-year students because you may come to a time where you're like, wow, what does this mean for me? Am I good enough? Like, help me assess, is this the place for me? And so to have somebody in your corner to be able to tell you that, gosh, yeah, you're right for graduate school, can be really helpful. It also is important, because you've now just made a transition, for you to spend some time talking to that people or that person who helped get you here. And so keep those connections strong. I see a lot of first-year students forgetting where they came from, and don't do that. Those mentors, those friends may be really helpful in providing you an assessment of your worth here at Cornell. The other one that I think is really helpful is that a close friend from home can remind you that, wow, you got through some other hardships. You know how to overcome this. And most importantly, you're a worthy human being. And so we don't find that so much here at Cornell. I believe it, and I think people believe it, but we don't necessarily talk about it. And you may not believe it as much, because, well, we don't know you so well. And so having somebody that you trust from your past may be a really good place. So again, I just pull out because all those things that you can do-- sleeping, exercising, eating right-- all that is very helpful. Self-care is absolutely. But when you look at the research over and over again, you need a community. You need support. And I'm giving you this matrix to tell you that it doesn't mean that I'm saying you need 800 million people. It just means that you need to be strategic about who's in your circle for what because this will be stressful. And where do you go for help when it's stressful? It can be a therapist. It can be other people that you can trust. But build your networks. Build them wide is what I'm suggesting. I want to make sure that I save you all some time to talk to one another. So I'm going to go through some of the resources that are here just so you can hear about them. And these obviously are focused on mental health. And then we're going to break up in a minute. So one, I just want you to know about our Cornell counseling and psychological services. I'm assuming that most folks have heard about them. They do do individual counseling. They have a Let's Talk program, which allows students to stop in at any place across campus just to talk to a provider. Students like that because often what they're doing is they're saying, hey, look, is this a worthy thing that I should be going to counseling with? Or can you give me some feedback, how do I handle this situation? They do workshops, as well. And they do a lot of group therapy for graduate students. And what I hear from students is they love the group therapy. So there's a women's group. They have a group on procrastination. They have a group on transitioning into graduate school. So there's a lot of different therapies. We will post those in our announcements as they become available, so that you know. They also have what's called the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program. There's some other campus resources that I think incoming students should know about. One is Student Disability Services. So if you have been documented as a disabled student, you may be able to receive some accommodations. I want to acknowledge that mental health, mental illness can be a disability. So let me make that link there. And they may be able to provide you some accommodations to be successful. If you have questions about that, know that I talk to a lot of students about this topic as far as how that resource can help you. So I'm happy to do that. The Office of Global Learning for our international students, they do a lot of support out there for [INAUDIBLE], and immigration paperwork, and then also community development. And so that may be something of interest to you. The Office of the University Ombuds is a completely

confidential place that really doesn't have any reporting structures to the University and can be a place for you to go to if you have any questions about policies or what you're seeing or you just don't know where to go or what to do in a situation. And then, obviously, your GFA, DGS, and other academic advisors can be really helpful to you, as well. I want to note that we have a lot of opportunities to be involved in some organizations. And so here's some graduate students organizations that promote diversity and inclusion that have a relationship with the graduate school. So there's about 14, I believe, at this point. And so our associate dean, Sara Hernández does a fantastic job providing connection and opportunity. Identity doesn't necessarily matter. Anybody who wants to attend these sessions or these groups are able to do so. But it's a highlight as far as what we're committed to here at the graduate school, making sure that we provide some support for our students to help diversify the Academy. The other thing is the Big Red Barn. So I hope that you've heard about us. This is an actual unit. This is what it looks like. It's our Big Red Barn on campus. It's our Graduate and Professional Student Center. It's a fantastic opportunity to get involved and meet others. And so we have what we call Thank Goodness, It's Friday on Friday night. If you're in Ithaca right now, you can come this Friday. We now have air conditioning in this building, which we're pretty excited about. And so you can come, and it's \$1 beer. And it's just a nice opportunity to meet with other graduate students. So that's every Friday. And they do other things like knitting circles and language circles. And trivia night tends to be really popular, as well. And so students that want to use the facility can and scheduled events. And then there's other events that we help to provide to give some support. So again, this is just a great opportunity for you to connect with others. This is myself a long time ago and also Angela Yantorno. Like I said, we're always happy to support and talk to students about anything. So know that that's always open to you. And then, finally, we have what's called the Mental Health at Cornell. This is a website that has some great services and some information about self-care. And so this is the repository of all information about mental health here on campus. I will just say that we've gone through a review. And it says, review. And we are in the process of gathering information and actually implementing some strategies to help support our environment in acknowledgment that your stress levels are absolutely impacted by the environment that you're in. And so trying to figure out what kind of environment should we be striving for is what we're talking about. I'm happy to talk about that at length as far as what we should be doing. This presentation was designed to give you some tools and some information about what you could do for yourself. But I don't want to be neglectful to not mention that, gosh, yeah, our environment absolutely impacts our health and wellbeing. So I want to do this final check-in. And I thought what we could do is break out into groups. The whole Primer Series is an opportunity for you to get to know one another. And so I'm going to suggest that as you break out, we'll break our groups between six and eight. If the person's whose birthday is closest to today can lead the conversation, that'd be great. And what we'll do is introduce yourself and your program, where you're from. And then I'd like you to just offer to each other, what are you going to start/continue that resulted from this session or that helps to support your health and wellbeing as a graduate student? Fair enough?