

**Social Sciences and Natural Sciences · Fall 2025**

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**PROBLEM**

Students in high-stakes STEM classes often experience elevated anxiety that negatively impacts test-taking abilities and overall academic performance. Traditional class formats rarely incorporate stress management techniques, leaving students without tools to regulate their stress responses during critical assessment periods.

**PLAN**

This interdisciplinary collaboration between Social Sciences and Natural Sciences addresses student stress in STEM courses through brief, evidence-based interventions. The project implements 5-minute de-stressor activities—including guided meditation, coloring, and reflective journaling—designed to help students manage test anxiety and improve academic performance. Students' test scores will be evaluated and compared with survey results.

*Example of a daily schedule*

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8:00 AM	Breakfast/ Get ready						
9:00 AM	Travel to School	History Prep	Ameri. Lit. HW	Can. Lit. HW	Can. Lit. HW	Open Study	Open Study
10:00 AM	Can. Lit. Prep	Ameri. Lit. Prep	Travel to School	Hist. HW	Can. Lit. HW	Open Study	Open Study
11:00 AM	Poli. Sci	Phil. Prep	Poli. Sci.	Break + Lunch	Hist. HW	Open Study	Open Study
12:00 PM	Poli. Sci	Travel to School	Poli. Sci.	Ameri. Lit. HW	Break + Lunch	Travel to Work	Travel to Work
1:00 PM	Can. Lit.	History	Phil.	Phil. HW	Hist. HW	Work	Work
2:00 PM	Can. Lit.	History	Phil.	Break + Snack	Phil. HW	work	Work
3:00 PM	Can. Lit.	History	Phil.	Can. Lit. Prep	Phil. HW	Work	Work
4:00 PM	Travel /Lunch	Ameri. Lit.	Travel /Lunch	Poli. Sci.	Poli. Sci.	Work	Work
5:00 PM	Free Time	Ameri. Lit.	Free Time	Hist. HW	Poli. Sci.	Work	Work
6:00 PM	History Prep	Ameri. Lit.	Poli. Sci HW	Break + Dinner	Ameri. Lit. HW	Work	Work
7:00 PM	Poli. Sci Prep	Travel Home +Dinner	Phil. HW	Ameri. Lit. HW	Ameri. Lit. HW	Travel Home	Travel Home
8:00 PM	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Phil. HW	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time
9:00 PM	Free Time	Phil. Prep	Free Time				
10:00 PM	To Sleep	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep

**Key:** Self-Care   Commuting   In Class   Free Time   HW/ Study   Work

**ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY**

- Brief interventions: Short 5-minute distressing activities that don't disrupt instructional time were incorporated into CHE1111: General College Chemistry I
- Evidence-based techniques: Students engaged in a specific activity each week, such as meditation, scheduling, and journaling—each with research-backed stress reduction benefits
- Student-centered: Activities were selected based on accessibility and ease of implementation, and students are introduced to each distressing activity with instruction on how and why the activity helps to reduce stress
- Data-driven: Pre/post surveys were administered with each week's distressing activity, and we hope to also conduct test score analysis to measure the impact on performance



*Students meditating in class*

**RESULTS AND DATA**

Survey responses indicate that students found value in these activities:

- Most Effective Activity: *Deep Breathing* was selected by 100% of students.
- Impact on Focus/Mood/Stress: 80% reported some improvement; 20% saw no change.
- Usefulness Beyond Class: 80% believe these techniques could help in other settings.
- Likelihood of Continued Use: 40% plan to use techniques regularly, 20% occasionally, 40% maybe.
- Student Quote: "Thank you for focusing on our mental health."



*Example of a coloring activity*

**CLOSING THE LOOP and NEXT STEPS**

Students' test scores and survey results will be analyzed to assess the value of the activity. Based on our findings, some additional next steps may include:

- Expanding implementation to additional STEM courses
- Conducting a longitudinal study comparing semester-to-semester outcomes
- Developing training materials for part-time instructors
- Creating a student resource guide for independent stress management