

Helping Students Grow at JMU

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Starting Point

- Goal - get best possible information to support your student during their transition to JMU
- Three strategies
 - Positive psychology
 - Growth mindset
 - Knowing the resources



Positive Psychology

Positive Psychology Background

- Developed out of Martin Seligman's lab at UPenn
- “Psychology and medicine get turned on their heads when we ask about the opposite of pathology: about the strengthening effects of benevolent events” (Seligman, 2011, p. 186).
- Build a positive life that acknowledges goals and skills beyond current emotions that can be relied on throughout life
- SA at JMU – Every student thrives



Positive Psychology Applications



- Understand happiness is multifaceted
 - Engagement
 - Positive relationships
 - Meaning
- Practice gratitude
- Reliving good things with others
- Three Blessings
- Family tree of strengths
- Stories about being at your best

Growth Mindset

Neuroplasticity

- “...belief that human capacities are not fixed but can be developed over time” (Dweck & Yeager, 2019).
- Vetted at a neural level (Moser et al., 2011)
- Developed out of Dr. Carol Dweck’s lab at Stanford
- Muscle analogy
- Setbacks seen as part of growth process, not indicative of “low ability”



Results of Growth Mindset Studies

- Academic
 - “...low-cost treatment, delivered in less than an hour, attained a substantial proportion of the effects on grades of the most rigorously evaluated adolescent interventions of any cost or duration in the literature” (Yeager et al., 2019).
- Mental health
 - “...youths received the mindset intervention recovered from a lab-based social stressor over three times as fast as the control group...linked with faster stress recovery” (Schleider & Weisz, 2016).
- Response to failure
 - Causal relationship between mindset the desire to take on additional learning after failure (Nussbaum & Dweck, 2008)

Family Growth Example

- Our daughter started her first semester strong but after the first few weeks began retreating into herself. She had a hard time staying focused and had to force herself to engage with her schoolwork (even when it was useful and interesting to her). Academically she struggled with study skills, cumulative exams and staying engaged with her course work. She felt overwhelmed balancing an entirely new environment.
- Over winter break we talked as a family about her first semester struggles. She developed a plan of action for her second semester and began utilizing as many resources as she could – her advisor, office hours, LSS (Learning Success Strategies), strengths coaching through the SLC (Student Leadership Center), counselors at the Student Success Center, utilizing U-Rec, friends in classes and in her dorm hall. Eventually she was able to narrow down which resources were most helpful to her. She discovered that making time to connect with others gave her the chance to stay on top of her work and made things that were overwhelming feel much smaller. In turn, this left her more time for self-care and connecting with others on a deeper level (including some of her best friends). She finished her second semester with straight A's and having felt like she'd fully engaged with the course content.

Student Growth Example

- “Find at least one person to talk to, and continue the reaching out process from there. Don’t worry about reaching out to the right person at the right time- eventually, you will get the resources you need. Stay off that phone, it’s ruining your brain (it’s best to think of it as a tool and nothing more). Let yourself be happy when you’re doing well, and set yourself up for future times when you might not do so well. Give yourself grace, but always keep going.”

Incorporation of Growth Mindset with Students



- Not good or bad at various parts of learning, but skills that are developed or underdeveloped
- Praise for things that can be improved upon
 - Effort
 - Patience
 - Vulnerability
- Critical to be tied to strategies

Knowing JMU Resources

Possible Need	JMU Resource	Possible Need	JMU Resource
Something to do	University Program Board	Looking for their place on campus	Student Org Night/ Be Involved App
Finding a place to live off-campus	Off-Campus Life	Mental health questions	Counseling Center
Struggling academically	Learning Centers	Experiencing food insecurity	The Pantry
Physical illness/questions	University Health Center	Class accommodations	Office of Disability Services
Develop as people	Student Leadership Center	Want to volunteer	Community Engagement and Volunteer Center
Play a sport/exercise	University Recreation Center	Don't Know Where to Go	Dean of Students Office