

# Expressions<sup>1st</sup>

THE NEWSLETTER OF

Thrive. Connect. Transition. Evolve. Advocate.

Generation  
@Scripps College

Scripps College

November 15, 2017

Edition 5, Volume 2

## *A Letter from the Editors*

Dear Readers,

Thank you for all of love and support we got after publishing the first newsletter! We love knowing that you read it, and we love hearing the feedback! This month's theme is focusing on wellness and self-care. The semester has been flying by, especially for us, so we wanted to support those who may be stressing at this point of the semester through the newsletter. As first-generation students, sometimes it is hard to know where there are resources for you, who to ask for help, or even bringing yourself up to asking. But that is why we are here for anyone who needs some guidance or someone to listen to or study with! We are in the final stretch of the semester, so do what you need to do, but also remember to take some time to check in with your body and your mental health.

We have contributions from all over campus, so get excited! We have thoughtfully written pieces from First-Gen seniors; staff member at the LASPA Center, Lauren Bartlett; and tips from First Gen staff at Monsour, Elizabeth Poloskov. We hope you enjoy this month's newsletters, and take some time to enjoy the end of the semester! Stay tuned for our next issue in the spring!

With love,

**Evelyn Gonazalez '18 and Clarisse Salazar '18**  
*Program Co-Interns*

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# What is Self-Care? A Word from our First-Gen Seniors

*We connected with two First Gen seniors to ask about what self-care and wellness means and look like to them. Here are their thoughts! After all, this is their fourth year navigating the Scripps and Claremont life.*

## Giovani Barrios-Arciga

1. *What does self-care/wellness mean to you? Is it informed by your first-gen identity?*

Growing up as first-gen, I always internalized this pressure to keep keep keep working. It wasn't something that my parents ever pressured me into. They would have rather I had majored in art than in a "high-paying" field, if it meant me being happy, even if we're a low-income family.

Still, I always saw them as busy, and always working so hard at the expense of their own health. So, I started to internalize that from a young age, that since I'm first-gen and low-income, I have to work harder than everyone at all times. But that's not true, and also super harmful! I'm already working hard on default, and putting more pressure on myself is only going to backfire immensely.

Every time I take care of myself then--whether it be physically, emotionally, or mentally--I'm taking steps to confront this idea and tear it down. Because I'm from a first-gen and low-income background in an institution that can work counter to my existence, I deserve to be easier on myself, more forgiving, and more compassionate. It's a marathon after all, not a sprint.



2. *When did you start practicing self-care? Have you made this a habit?*

When I was studying abroad I made a better effort to take care of my physical well-being. I went running and started cooking for myself. Those habits carried over this semester.

However, lately I've been getting so stressed out, that it gets to a point where I actually can't get anything done, even when I do things that make me feel good. I started realizing that I wasn't doing anything fun and stimulating (running gets boring after a while), so there's that emotional component of self-care that I'm also trying to work in on a regular basis.

3. *What do you do to recharge/unwind? Do you have a go-to list of self-care activities?*

I don't have a list, but if I had to make one, it would look like this:

- Running
- Reading for fun
- Writing
- Cooking
- Stretching
- Meditating
- Art + Self-expression

4. *How do you treat yourself?*

I might take myself out for dessert or tea and do some reading or wander a place I haven't visited before, such as an art gallery. Or spend two hours just watching something on Netflix.

5. *What do you do when you are having a stressful day/week/semester?*

Ideally, I'll stop whatever I've been doing, and start writing and get my thoughts in order. Then I'll meditate and make sure to go outside or to some kind of event where I can escape, whether it's going to get groceries or watching a performance.

6. *Other thoughts?*

Obviously, I don't always do this, but it's super helpful when I do.

## Michelle Blanken

1. *What does self-care/wellness mean to you? Is it informed by your first-gen identity?*

As a student, practicing self-care is my way of reminding myself that there is more to me than my academic performance and that its okay to spend time and energy on the other identities that make me who I am. Particularly as a first-gen student, self-care is reminding myself that I deserve to be here just as much as anyone else and that I am fully capable of success.



2. *When did you start practicing self-care? Have you made this a habit?*

I became more conscious about self-care when I first came to college because I was seeing the things other people did to care for themselves. Since then it has been an experimental process to learn what is best for me.

3. *What do you do to recharge/unwind? Do you have a go-to list of self-care activities?*

It all depends on what I feel like I most need in that moment. Sometimes it's having a loud, laughter-filled dinner with my friends and other times it might be working on an art project alone in my room.

4. *How do you treat yourself?*

Chocolate covered pretzels from Trader Joe's

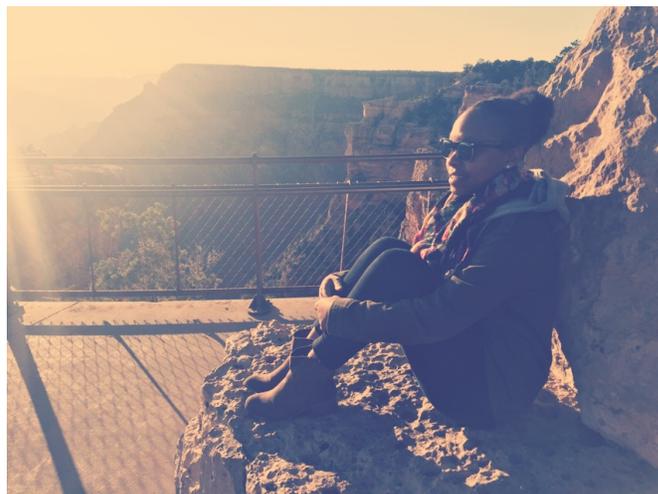
5. *What do you when you're having a stressful day/week/semester?*

I find it soothing to talk to other people about my stress either on the phone or in person or write it down in a journal. Being able to vent my frustration really clears my head and gives me new perspective. From there I am better able to come up with a plan for how to tackle whatever I'm dealing with.

## ***Spotlight on First Gen Staff: Lauren Bartlett***

***Lauren Bartlett is a first gen staff member who joined Scripps this fall in the LASPA Center. Here are her thoughts on self-care and wellness.***

Growing up, wellness and self-care weren't terms I heard my family use often, if at all. I grew up with a lot of strong women of color surrounding me as a child but never heard any of them refer to their individual self-care routine or particular practices of wellness. My mother raised my sister and me in the same household with my aunties and cousins. While it was never explicitly communicated as such among the 12 of us, being in one another's presence often times was our wellness practice. When we all came together, especially over food, we found retreat as a collective. The laughter, the joy, and the sharing of advice, all just reinforced this sense of wholeness, love and wellness. Now, I'm not trying to romanticize my family in any way or the fact that those collective moments of being together were always happy. In fact, I haven't been around my family members in that same capacity in over 10 years. However, what I learned in reflecting back on my childhood is that community is the foundation of my self-care practice that provides me a sense of wholeness.



Here is Lauren relaxing at the Grand Canyon.  
PC creds: Jenn Wells (Dean & Director of SCORE)

During my undergrad at Mills College, I assumed that I would be able to always fall back on family and community as my relief when I was stressed. However, I quickly learned that being first-gen meant my struggles were both foreign to my family as well as to myself. No one could relate or understand what it took to write multiple 10 page papers, work three work-study jobs, and be highly involved in student programming. For my family, these issues did not seem that pressing, and they did not have much advice to give for how to remedy them. Instead, my mother would lovingly remind me that I could take my time in school and take time off to just work if I needed. Taking time off was not what I wanted to do. I wanted to finish for both myself and my family. So, I had to find new ways of

overcoming my stress and anxiety from the demands of my college life. My journey to discovering those practices is still in process today.

During college, I accepted my friends as my new community and family away from home. We created space for one another that felt familiar because it reminded me of my childhood: we would cook together, laugh, cry and share advice. We became sources of support, and living reminders for one another that we had to unlearn many unhealthy habits so that we could thrive collectively. It was with my friends that I developed many of my self-care practices, and continue to grow them today. For us, self-care was not tied to just distracting ourselves from our present woes, but instead, really assessing what was causing us to feel detached, stressed or anxious. We supported one another in our process of discovering what wholeness felt like for each of us individually and supported one another in actively seeking a constant state of wholeness. That did not mean that we were in a perpetual state of wellness, or that we did not continue to experience stress from various aspects of our lives. Presently, I often times find myself feeling anxious or stressed over seemingly very small tasks, however, I've learned how to ask myself questions about the root cause of my stress and work from there using various activities that restore a sense of wholeness when I feel most disconnected. All in all, my self-care practices and understanding of wellness is deeply tied to my values of community and family. Connecting with others, I believe, has best taught me how to better connect with my inner-self and my state of wholeness.

### **Here is my go-to list of self-care practices:**

- **meditation**
- **yoga**
- **journaling**
- **crying**
- **dancing**
- **cooking with others**
- **running**
- **listening to old music from my childhood**
- **exploring new music**
- **binge watching Netflix or Hulu**
- **calling my family**
- **calling friends**
- **taking a walk**
- **exploring new places**
- **sleeping and staying in my pjs all day**

# *Tips on Wellness from First Gen Counselor*

*We reached out to First Gen staff, Elizabeth Poloskov, who works at Monsour Counseling and Psychological services, and here are some tips she offered for first gen students.*

## Tips for First Generation College Students

### **1. Get Involved**

One of the keys to feeling like you belong on campus is to get involved in student groups and meet others with similar interests. Campus has a plethora student groups, intermural teams, clubs and other organizations looking for new students. Try out several options and see which ones best fit for you. If there isn't a club that fits your passion, create one!

### **2. But Not Too Involved**

Overbooking and over involving yourself is not good for anyone. You will end up overstressed and probably not doing as well as you could if you did less. Be sure to know your limits and don't burn out!

### **3. Know Your Campus Resources**

Take advantage of mentoring programs as well as the variety of offices and programs designed to assist you. Asking around and doing research may put you in connection with a resource you did not even know existed. Check out the cultural centers, chaplains' office, advising programs, tutoring programs, financial aid programs and counseling center. Their services can help you navigate the college terrain as well as feel understood and connected. Take full advantage of every resource at your disposal.

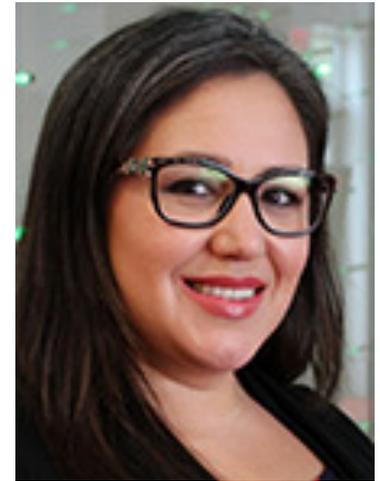
You can also benefit from getting to know an upper-level student who can show you the ropes. Finding a first-generation college student who has already been there a few years can be especially helpful as he or she can share tips on how to deal with the first year of college.

### **4. Learn about your financial aid options**

First generation college students often think of the cost of their education as a burden as opposed to an investment. Further, they may choose to take out private loans before exhausting their federal loans. Visit the Financial Aid office to discuss how to finance your education.

### **5. Get to Know Your Professors**

Make sure your professors know who you are. Sit in front of the room in your classes and join discussions. Take advantage of their office hours and introduce yourself. If you are having difficulty in a class, ask your professor for help. Additionally, your professors can serve as a very valuable resource as they know the higher educational system well and probably have very



valuable insight into what you are experiencing or doing. Although they can be intimidating to talk to, you can get some great advice, a possible future letter of recommendation or even a mentor!

#### **6. Ask questions...lots of questions**

Since you may not have some of the home insight that your 2nd or 3rd generation peers have, it is important that you ask questions if you are unsure of something. This is no time to fake it 'til you make it. In fact, this is one of the few times in your life when it's perfectly acceptable to not know. If you don't know, ASK!

#### **7. Expand your horizons**

Take every opportunity to expand your consciousness. Make friends with people from totally different backgrounds, attend seminars that feature speakers with opposing views from you, apply for opportunities to study abroad. Make it a personal goal to leave college a more well-rounded individual.

#### **8. Don't Forget Self-Care!**

Last but not least, self-care!! Too often, first gen college students try to do it all alone and do not take time for themselves and to relax. College students very often forget about this and may end up burned out.

Tips for First Generation College Students compiled from the following sources:

- <https://counselingcenter.illinois.edu/brochures/first-generation-college-students>
- <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/17-pieces-of-advice-for-first-generation-college-students>
- <http://www.marquette.edu/counseling/documents/1stgenerationcollegestudents-websitematerials.pdf>

## Other Helpful Behavioral Tips for Managing Mood

1. **Get sunlight:**

Aim for 5 to 15 minutes of sunlight a day.



Sunlight increases the brain's release of serotonin, which is associated with boosting mood.

2. **Get a massage:** Massage boosts serotonin and decreases stress hormones. Try giving yourself a massage by lying on or leaning against a tennis ball or rolling it against your muscles.

3. **Practice Yoga:** Yoga works to

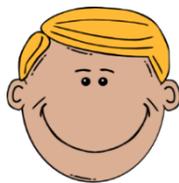


improve mood and has benefits similar to that of exercise and relaxation techniques.

Yoga poses that incorporate back bends and opening the chest help to increase positive emotions.

4. **Stand up straight:** Your body tells your brain how to feel. Stand up straight and open your chest to feel more confident.

5. **Smile (even if you're faking):** When you smile, you are more likely to perceive positive emotions in other people, which can positively impact your mood.



Smiling will lead your brain to believe that you are happy.

6. **Laugh (even if you're faking):** Your brain does not distinguish between real and fake laughter. If your brain gets signals from your body that you should feel happy, then it is more likely to feel happy.



7. **Do Progressive Muscle Relaxation:** Flex a tight muscle for a few seconds and release. Pay particular attention to your facial muscles as those have the largest effect on emotion.
8. **Create/listen to music:** Music can help regulate your emotions. It can be soothing and help you feel calm and/or it can be energizing and pump you up.
9. **Dance:** Dancing combines music and physical activity so it is a double whammy.



10. **Journal:** Labeling your emotions and writing your story can be cathartic and help you organize your thoughts.

Adapted from Alex Korb's "The Upward Spiral"

## Self-Care in Action!

*Our wonderful and super supportive First Gen staff and Faculty Liasons lead by example and shared a few pics of them taking care of themselves! Have a look!*



(Top Left) Leslie and Daniela are on one of their routine morning hikes.

(Top Right) Mary is having fun with her family on their trip to NYC.

(Bottom Left) Michelle is happily walking around barefoot in the Sierras on a hiking trip with her friend. :)

# ***First-Generation Staff and Faculty***

***Surprise! Some First-Generation Staff and Faculty met up to take a picture together!  
Great way to show solidarity and to show us students that we aren't the only First-  
Generation folks on campus!***





***Other First Gen Staff and Faculty  
who could not make it to the  
photo-op:***

**Neva Barker**

**Scott Busiel**

**Kim-Trang T. Tran**

**Junelyn Peeples**

**Pat Bostock-Smith**

**Tressi Mehana Turkmany**

**Gabriela Bacsán**

**Lola Trafecanty**

## Parting Words

In wrapping up our second to last semester as seniors, our theses now printed and bound, we are reminded of how stressful and difficult the end of the semester often is. However, we are also reminded of how resilient, powerful, and capable our friends, supporters, and communities are. It is important to remember that our wellness depends on collective efforts based on connection and compassion.

There is no survival on these campuses without community, and we are so incredibly grateful for all the first-gen folks who offer up their time and energy to each other.

With so much love,

Evelyn and Clarisse



Before thesis and finals took over our lives! #thriving

## We Want to Hear From You!

To inspire our readers and recognize your accomplishments, we would like to feature your story in one of our upcoming newsletters. Please email us a personal article or poem depicting your experience as a first-gener to [firstgeneration@scrippscollege.edu](mailto:firstgeneration@scrippscollege.edu).