



# Words of Wellness

The Wellness Center Monthly Newsletter

## May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Since 1949, Mental Health Awareness month has been observed in May across the country. The [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) shared this month's theme of "Together for Mental Health," to strengthen the awareness, support and to advocate for a better mental health care system.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had worldwide implications that have affected the mental health and well-being of individuals. According to the Center for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMH), students have been one of the most impacted groups. A recent report highlights that [social anxiety](#) and [academic distress](#) notably increased between the Fall 2019 and 2021.

LaGuardia's Wellness Center continues to support the mental health and well-being of students by not only offering free counseling services but also educational programming. The following programs are available to all students:

- **e-Checkup To Go** is a virtual program that provides confidential and personalized feedback on your [alcohol](#), [cannabis](#) and [nicotine](#) use including its effect on your health, relationships and life goals.
- **Togetherall** is a safe, anonymous, online peer community to support your mental health.
- **Alternative wellness classes** such as virtual yoga, in-person tai chi and dog therapy are available to all students, faculty and staff. View our spring e-guidebook for more details.
- **Online mental health screenings** are available for students interested in learning more about their mental health. Screenings have been vetted and counselors are available to go over the results.

In light of this month's celebration, the Wellness Center will be holding an in-person tabling event to highlight the importance of mental health.

A "Wellness Check-In" will be set up in the C-Building lobby where students can learn about services and ask mental health and wellness-related questions to counselors. Further updates about the date and time will be communicated in our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) page.



### Wellness in NYC

Spring has sprung! This season's fresh energy is perfect for renewing some healthy habits that can lift your mental and physical well-being. Self-care in the spring can simply mean finding joy in small things around us such as taking a walk in nature, eating your lunch outside, outdoor meditation or even opening your window on a sunny day.

For this month's issue, Wellness Center counselors share some ways that they do to practice self-care in NYC.

"With spring just starting, my favorite spot in NYC is the Bronx botanical garden. It's orchid season right now so they have orchid shows and of course all the magnolias and cherry blossoms are in bloom. Perfect time to visit!"

**Choden Tenzin, LCSW**  
Counselor, The Wellness Center



"For me, self-care is all about listening to what my body and soul need. As the weather is getting warmer, I like going for long walks, roller skating at LeFrank Center at Lakeside in Prospect Park, wandering through The Whitney Museum and movie nights in WNYC Transmitter Park."

**Desiree Rodriguez, MHC-LP**  
Counselor, The Wellness Center



"I love fresh air, and the springtime is a great opportunity to get some! My favorite place to take walks when the weather is mild is The High Line park in Manhattan. The views are stunning and filled with great architecture, art and culture."

**Dr. Shanté A. Bassett**  
Counselor, The Wellness Center



## NEW STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Andrea Bellissimo (she/her/hers) is a licensed clinical social worker holding degrees from McGill University (Bachelor of Music, 2006) and Hunter College Silberman School of Social Work (Master of Social Work, 2012.) After an internship at LaGuardia Community College and upon graduation from Hunter, Andrea went on to run a college prep program for foster youth and other ACS-involved young people with disabilities for five years. She then worked at The Dormitory Project at Queens College, a program for foster youth attending CUNY schools, and The Door:

A Center of Alternatives. Throughout, Andrea has demonstrated special interest in serving LGBTQIA students, students with mental health issues and in destigmatizing mental illness. As a therapist for online platforms and in private practice, Andrea uses an eclectic mix of modalities including cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, supportive therapy and mindful self-compassion. Andrea is an alumna of the Princeton Alumnicorps Emerging Leaders Program. She lives in Queens with her spouse and two cats.



Michelle Blanco is a licensed mental health counselor who received her master's degree from Hunter College in 2018. She is very familiar with LaGuardia Community College as she graduated with her associates in arts in 2010 and completed her counseling internship at the Wellness Center. Michelle has experience working with all kinds of mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety, major changes in life, grief, trauma and more. She uses techniques such as mindfulness to get to the core of a client's concern. Michelle offers a safe space for anyone to express themselves and is available to hold sessions in English and Spanish.



Katharine Ernst obtained her master's degree in social work from Hunter College Silberman School of Social Work (2019) with a focus on clinical practice with individuals, families and small groups, and a concentration in global social work. She has experience in private practice and has done extensive work around intersectionality and trauma-informed therapy with non-profits overseas and across New York City. She has also worked with diverse populations with an emphasis on adults and adolescents. Her style is eclectic and while exploring how past experiences influence the way you move through the present moment, Katharine may also incorporate mindfulness, psychoeducation, skill building, dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) and narrative therapy when appropriate. Katharine is committed to approaching therapy from a holistic, intersectional, trauma-informed lens grounded in psychodynamic practices, non-judgement and positive regard.



Tricia Palma has a master of science degree in clinical psychology from Virginia Commonwealth University (2000) and an advanced certificate in clinical mental health counseling from Long Island University, CW Post (2020). Tricia's clinical areas of expertise include depression, anxiety disorders, trauma, relationship issues, stress management, self-esteem building, career counseling and personal life adjustment issues. Tricia also has extensive experience working with children, adolescents, young adults and middle-aged adults. Utilizing both a humanistic and cognitive-behavioral approach to counseling, Tricia provides her clients with compassionate care, emphasizing teaching effective coping skills and strategies for improving their lives. In addition to being a mental health counselor, Tricia has been an adjunct professor of psychology at CUNY for over 15 years.

For the full list of the Wellness Center staff, please visit our [website](#).

### For Students:

If you are new to the Wellness Center and would like to access counseling services, please complete our intake form by scanning the QR code or visiting: [tinyurl.com/WellnessCenterIntake](https://tinyurl.com/WellnessCenterIntake)

### For Faculty and Staff:

Please contact the Center via email and briefly describe your concern or visit our webpage at [Helping Students in Distress](#) webpage.



Intake Form

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Dog Therapy**  
**(On campus event)**  
Date & Time: TBA

[Learn More](#)

**Virtual Chat & Chew:**  
**Dating in 2022**  
Date & Time: TBA

[Join Waitlist](#)

## Did you know...

The Wellness Center has a team of multilingual counselors that can offer counseling support in your native languages. We currently provide counseling services in the following languages: English, Hindi, Nepali, Spanish, Tibetan and Urdu.



**LaGuardia's**  
**Wellness Center**  
**wants to hear from you!**

Your feedback will help us better understand your mental health and wellness needs.

[Take Survey](#)

## RESOURCES



In crisis? Text "CUNY" to 741741 to text confidentially with a trained Crisis Counselor for FREE, 24/7.



If you need to speak with someone immediately, please contact NYC WELL for services at: 1-888-NYC-WELL or 1-888-692-9355 or text 65173.



In the event of an emergency, please call 911.