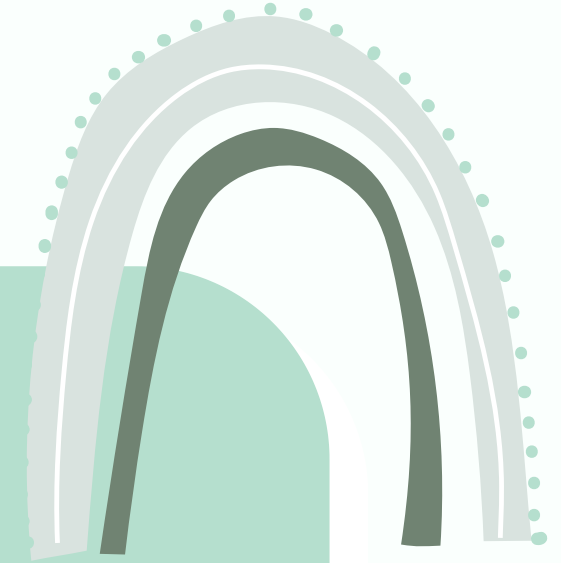


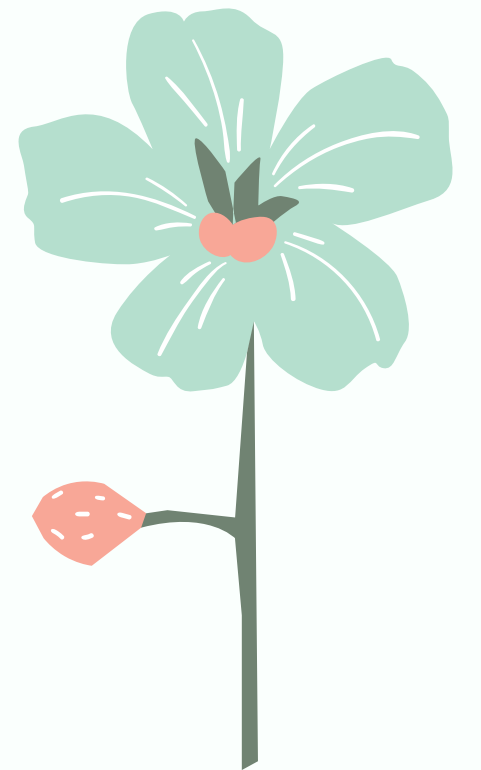
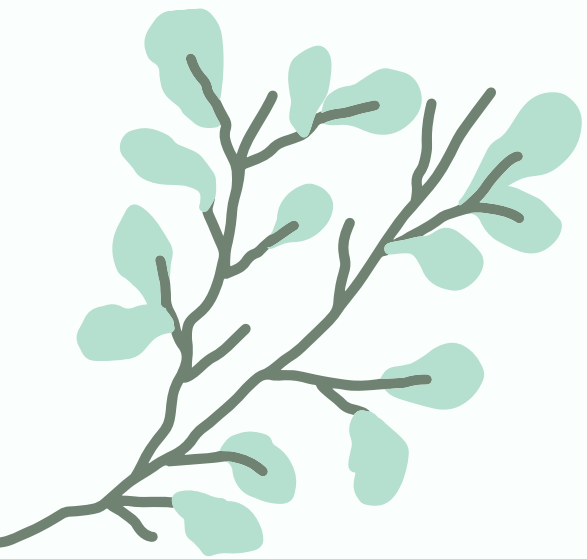
NEOTECH

NEW ENGLAND OT EDUCATION COUNCIL



SUPPORTING STUDENT AND FIELDWORK EDUCATOR WELL-BEING DURING FIELDWORK

Erin Connor, OT, MA, OTR
Amanda Lizotte, OT, OTD, OTR



SPEAKER INFORMATION



Erin Connor

Quinsigamond Community College
Academic Fieldwork Coordinator

NEOTEC

OTA co-chair for NEOTEC

Favorite Well-Being Practice

I like to sing it out! Pick a favorite song and sing it at the top of my lungs alone in my car!

Amanda Lizotte

Bay Path University
Academic Fieldwork Coordinator

NEOTEC

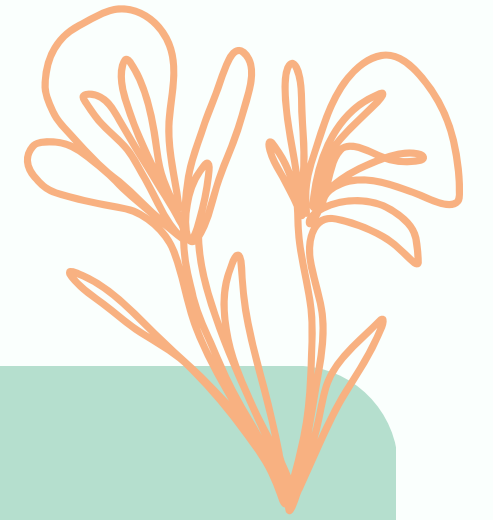
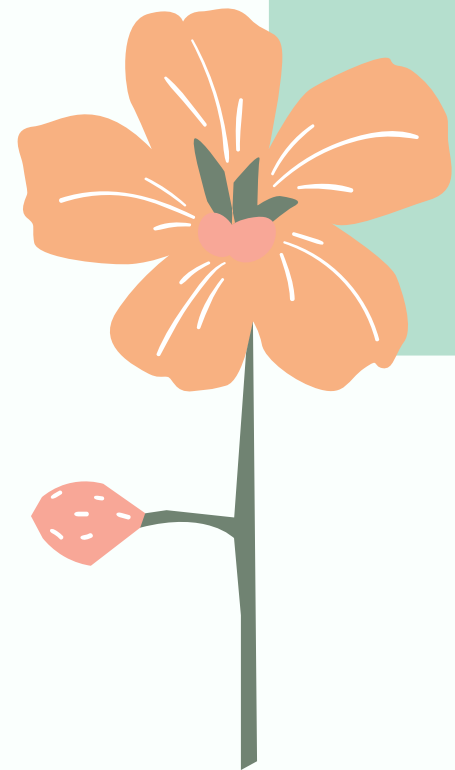
Social Media Coordinator

Favorite Well-Being Practice

Step #1 – Step away from the inbox
Step #2 – Find fresh air. Bonus points if it's near the ocean.



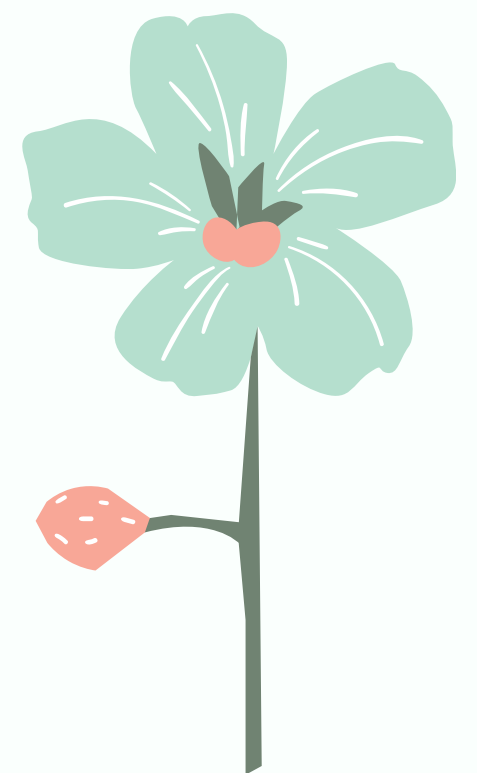
MINDFULNESS MOMENT



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the session, participants will:

1. Recognize the emotional demands fieldwork places on both students and FW educators
2. Reflect on how expectations and communication impact well-being during placement
3. Identify practical strategies that support student growth while maintaining standards of practice



EMOTIONAL REALITY OF FIELDWORK

Fieldwork is emotionally demanding for everyone involved.

- This session is not about “fixing” difficult students
- This session is about sustainable, supportive, and realistic fieldwork education
- Well-being is relational, not one-sided
- Can be a parallel experience for the student and FWE
- You don't need to manage this alone!

ANONYMOUS WORD CLOUD

What is emotionally difficult about being a fieldwork educator that people outside this role may not fully understand?



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RESULTS

What is emotionally difficult about being a fieldwork educator that people outside this role may not fully understand?

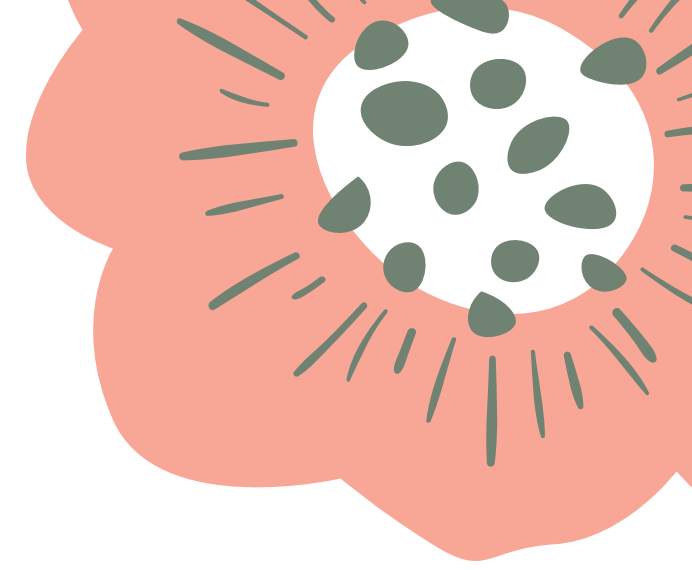


FW EDUCATOR WELL-BEING



- Compassion fatigue
 - Burnout in clinical education
- Emotional labor of teaching
 - Feeling responsible for student success
 - Fear of failing students
 - Carrying difficult placements alone
- Productivity and professional pressures
 - Balancing client care and student learning
 - Demand on your time
 - Managing billing and practice restrictions

YOU'RE NOT MEANT TO CARRY THIS ALONE



What Belongs to the Student

- Engaging in feedback
- Reflecting on performance
- Seeking support when needed
- Taking ownership of growth and learning

What Belongs to the Fieldwork Educator

- Providing clear expectations
- Giving timely feedback
- Maintaining standards
- Creating a supportive learning environment

What Belongs to the Academic Program

- Coaching and consultation
- Providing resources
- Helping problem-solve concerns
- Supporting difficult conversations

HAVE YOU EVER ... ?

Have You Ever Delayed Contacting the Academic Program Because...

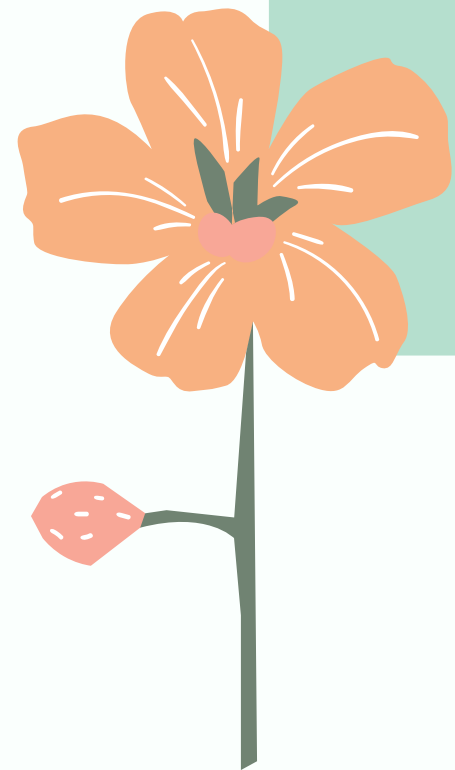
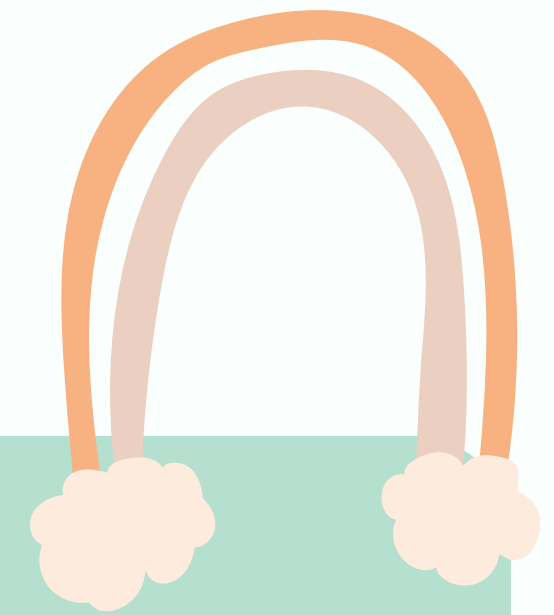
You hoped things would improve

You weren't sure the concern was significant

You didn't want to hurt the student

You felt you should handle it yourself

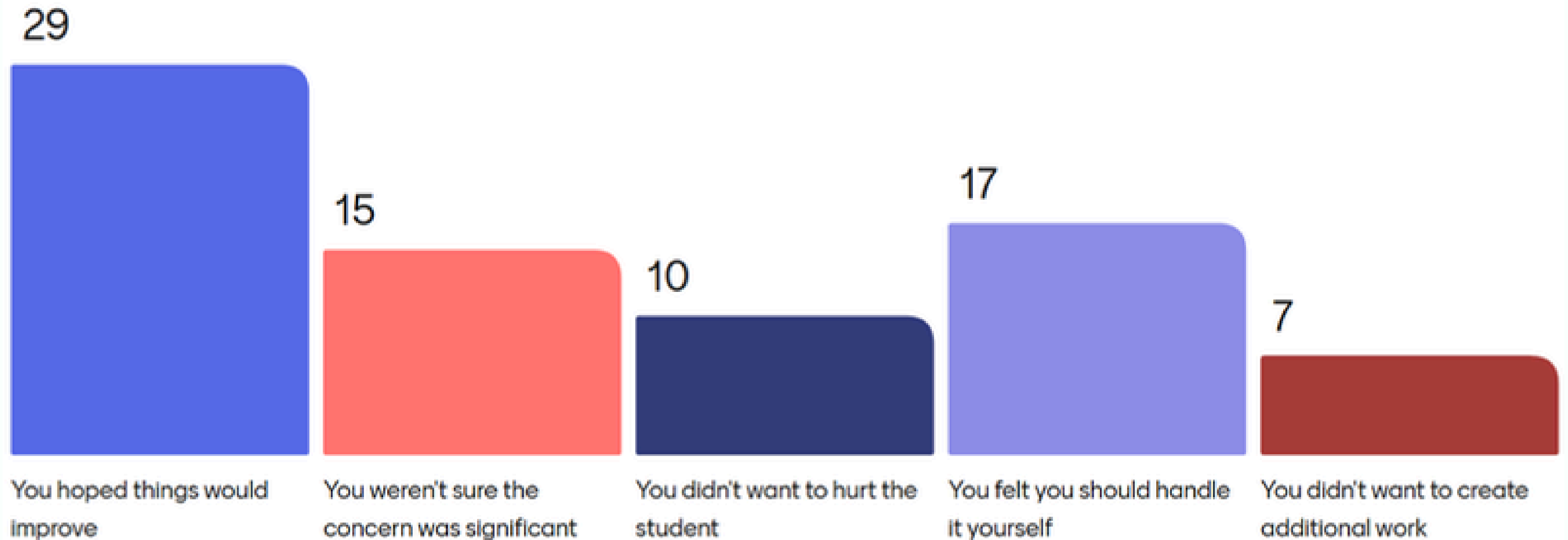
You didn't want to create additional work



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RESULTS

Have You Ever Delayed Contacting the Academic Program Because...



FW EDUCATOR WELL-BEING

Before Concerns Arise

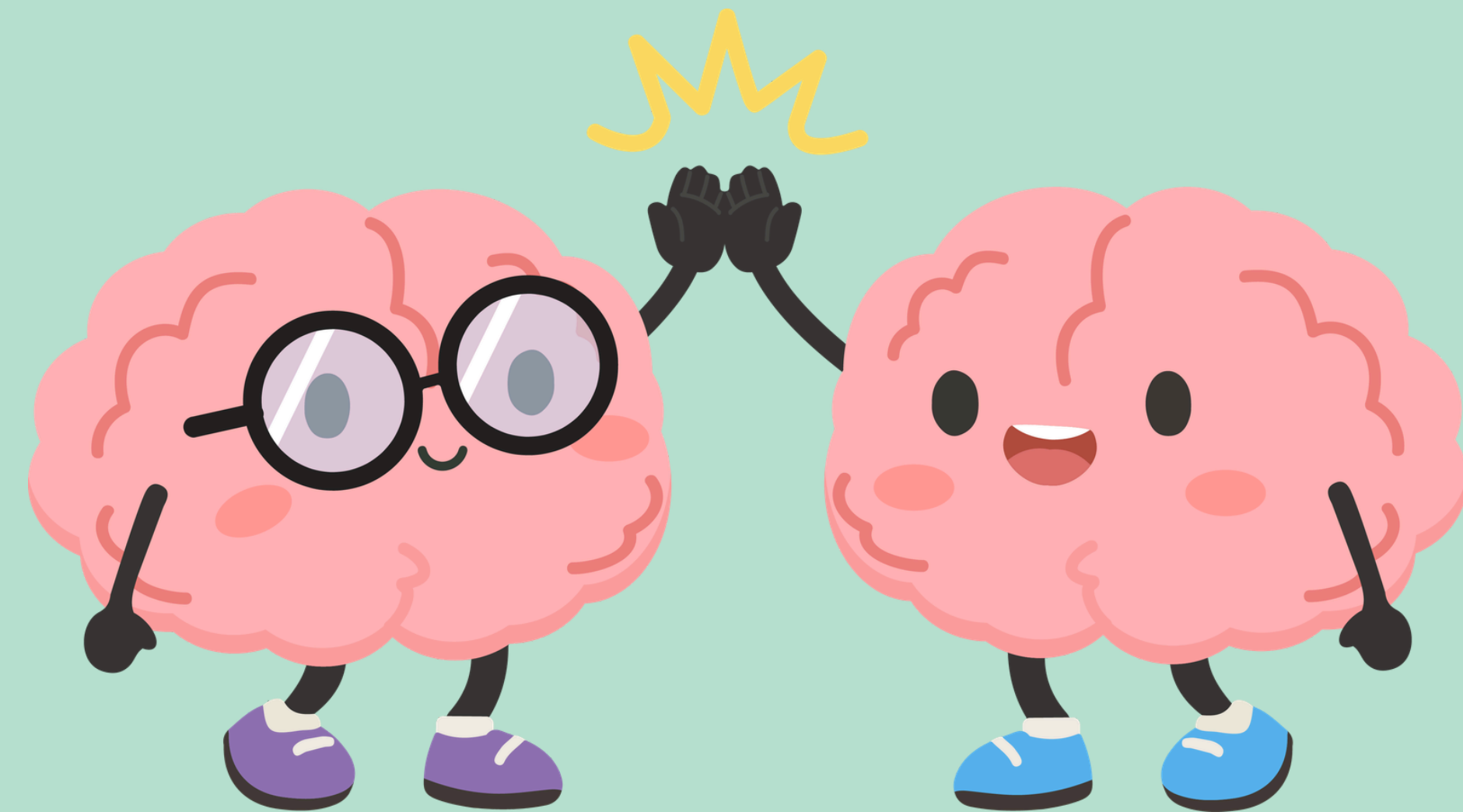
- Set clear expectations and boundaries
- Establish communication routines
- Know your program contacts

When Concerns Emerge

- Address issues early
- Document patterns
- Consult rather than speculate

When You're Feeling Stuck

- Reach out to the academic program
- Seek peer/colleague support
- Remember shared responsibility



SUPPORTING STUDENT WELL-BEING

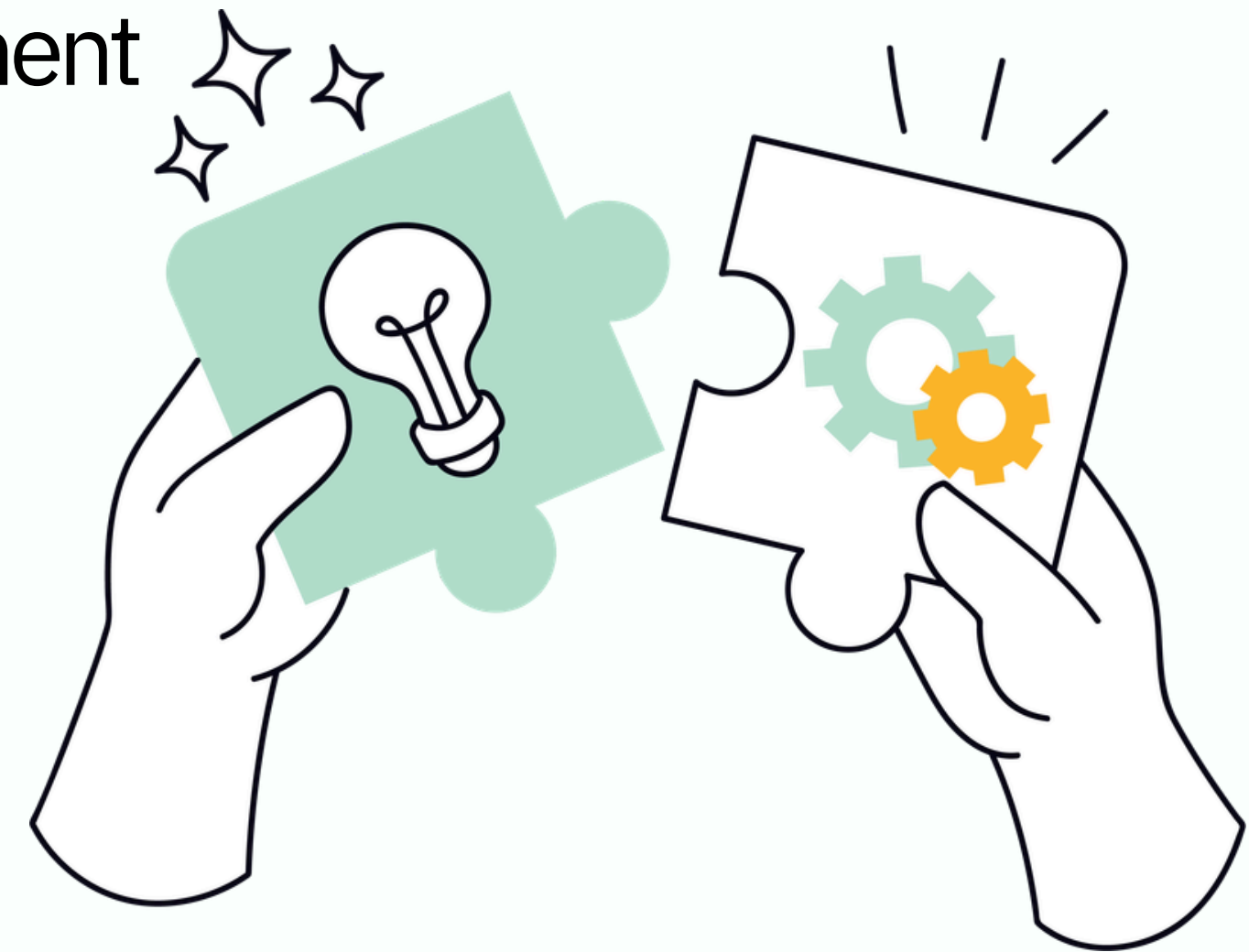


Students may be navigating:

- anxiety
- perfectionism
- imposter syndrome
- disabilities or accommodations
- neurodiversity
- fear of failure
- financial stress
- personal/family responsibilities
- transition stress
- performance pressure

SUPPORTING STUDENT WELL-BEING

- Increase empathy without removing accountability
- Explore what students may be bringing into placement
- Differentiate support from lowered expectations
- Role model professional coping strategies
- Normalize that stress is part of professional growth
- Share appropriate examples of how you manage challenges in practice



COMMON MISINTERPRETATIONS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS

What do educators sometimes misinterpret?

- Anxiety = laziness
- Quietness = disengagement, unprepared
- Overexplaining = lack of clinical reasoning
- Emotional reactions = lack of resilience, unable to handle feedback
- Excessive questions = dependent, lacks confidence
- Over-documenting = inefficient

COMMON MISINTERPRETATIONS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS

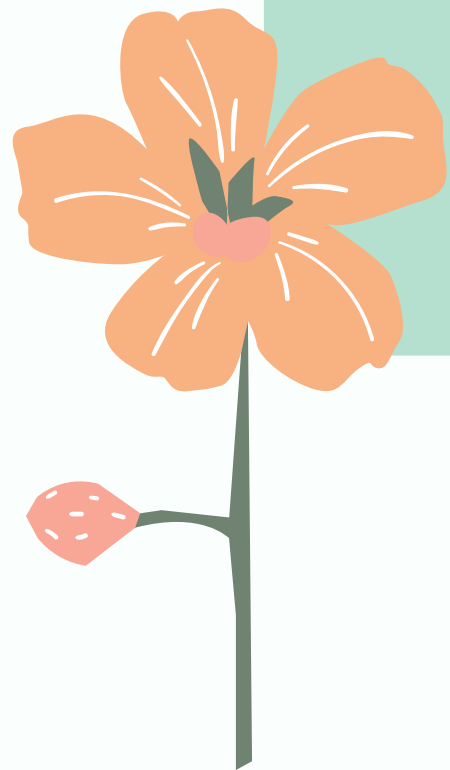
What are students often misinterpreting about the fieldwork educator?

- *Direct feedback = I'm failing, they don't like me*
- *Educator fatigue = my educator is annoyed with me*
- *Silence/thinking time = I gave the wrong answer*
- *Increased independence expectations = I'm not being supported*
- *Constructive critique = I'm not good at this*
- *Brief communication = I'm a burden*
- *Encouraging problem-solving first = They don't want to help me*



REFRAMING EXPECTATIONS

*Learning is often uncomfortable;
discomfort alone is not evidence that
something is wrong.*



LIVE POLL

A student becomes tearful after feedback but returns the next day engaged and professional. During treatment, they appear hesitant and seek repeated reassurance before proceeding.

Is this ...

Developmentally expected

Mild concern

Significant concern



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DEVELOPMENTALLY EXPECTED VS. CONCERNING



Needs extra processing time	Unsafe clinical judgment
Anxiety before treatment	Repeated refusal of feedback
Difficulty with time management initially	Dishonesty
Over-documenting	Persistent lack of engagement
Asking repeated reassurance questions	Unsafe lack of insight

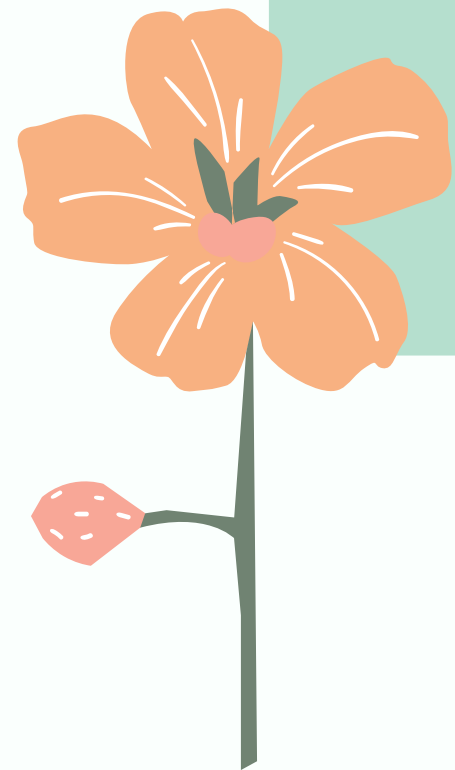
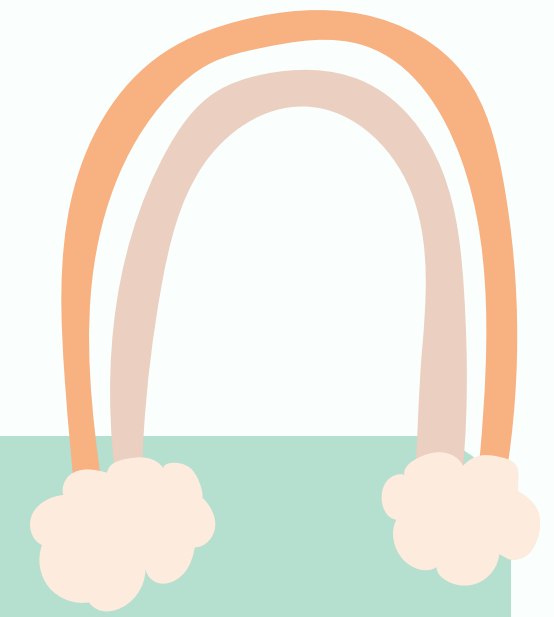


PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IN FIELDWORK

Psychological safety ≠ absence of challenge

It means:

- safe enough to ask questions
- safe enough to make mistakes and learn
- safe enough to reflect honestly
- safe enough to receive feedback



SUPPORTING GROWTH WHILE MAINTAINING STANDARDS

Supportive Practices

Clear expectations

Timely feedback

Reflection

Coaching

Communication

Standards-Based Practices

Accountability

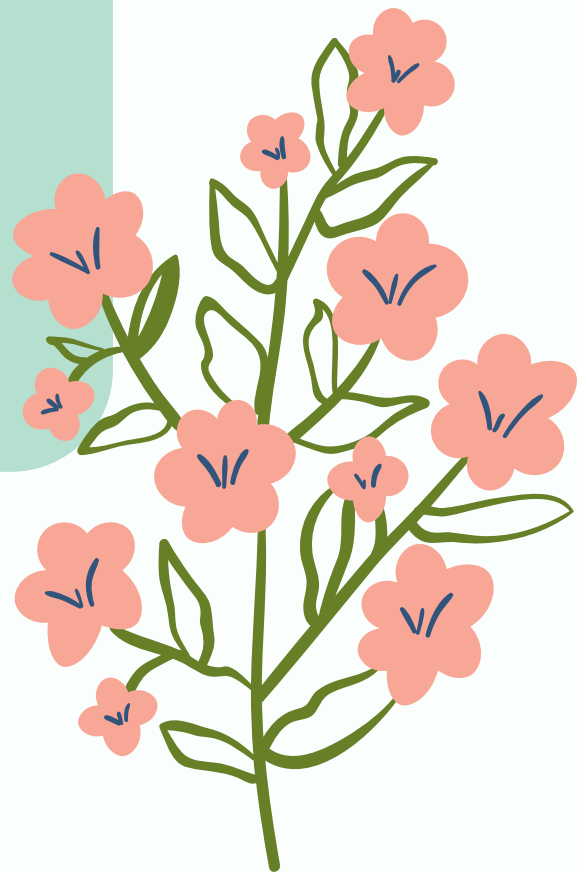
Safety expectations

Professional behavior

Increasing independence

Performance discussions

These are not opposing goals.



BEFORE WE DIVE INTO THE CASES

These cases focus on:

- ✓ anxiety
- ✓ perfectionism
- ✓ self-doubt
- ✓ communication challenges
- ✓ adjustment to fieldwork expectations
- ✓ situations where growth remains possible, but outcomes may still be uncertain

These cases do NOT focus on:

- ✗ significant safety concerns
- ✗ severe professionalism violations
- ✗ major clinical reasoning deficits
- ✗ remediation plans already initiated

These situations impact educator well-being too, but they require a different conversation and a different set of supports.



CASE #1

Week 3

OT Level II Placement

Scenario

You are supervising a Level II OT student during Week 3 of a 12-week placement. The student is professional, motivated, and eager to learn.

However, you continue to observe concerns with:

- **prioritization, confidence in decision-making, translating knowledge into practice, and independently applying feedback**

During a scheduled feedback meeting, the student becomes tearful and says, *“I feel like I'm trying really hard and still falling short.”*

Over the next week, the student becomes increasingly hesitant and frequently seeks reassurance before making decisions independently.

CASE #1

Week 3

OT Level II Placement

What Might Be Happening?

Student Lens

*What may be contributing to this response?
What assumptions might we unintentionally make?*

FW Educator Lens

*What emotions might this create for the educator?
How do you balance empathy and accountability?*

Support Lens

What support might help both?

CASE #1

Week 3

OT Level II Placement

Practical Strategies: Supporting Growth While Maintaining Standards

- Provide specific behavioral examples rather than general feedback
- Normalize that feedback is part of professional growth
- Continue to increase independence expectations
- Schedule regular check-ins
- Document concerns early
- Contact the academic program when concerns persist

Scenario

CASE #2

Week 8

OT Level II Placement

You are supervising a Level II OT student during Week 8 of a 12-week placement. The student demonstrates strong clinical reasoning and excellent rapport with clients.

However, despite coaching and feedback since midterm:

- ***They stay 1-2 hours late almost every day***
- ***Documentation takes significantly longer than expected***
- ***They repeatedly revise notes before submitting them***
- ***They over-prepare for treatments***
- ***They appear increasingly tired and overwhelmed***

Recently, the student shared, "I just don't want to miss anything or make a mistake." You are also noticing your own workday extending because you feel responsible for staying and supporting them.

CASE #2

Week 8

OT Level II Placement

What Might be Happening?

Student Lens

*What strengths do you see in this learner?
What might be driving these behaviors?*

FW Educator Lens

*How might this affect your own well-being?
What boundaries become important?*

Support Lens

What would you try next?

CASE #2

Week 8

OT Level II Placement

Practical Strategies: Supporting Growth While Maintaining Standards

- Model efficient documentation practices
- Help prioritize essential versus ideal tasks
- Set expectations around workday boundaries
- Encourage reflection on perfectionism
- Reinforce progress, not perfection
- Explore whether current approaches are sustainable for long-term practice

CASE #3

Week 3

OTA Level II Placement

Scenario

*You are supervising an OTA student during Week 3 of an 8-week placement. **The student: arrives on time, is respectful toward clients and staff, rarely initiates conversation, asks few questions, appears low-energy throughout the day, and provides brief responses to feedback***

You begin questioning whether the student is fully engaged in the learning process.

During a scheduled check-in, the student shares, "I spend most nights worrying about whether I'm doing a good job. I'm not sleeping much, and I'm afraid of saying the wrong thing."

CASE #3

Week 3

OTA Level II Placement

What Might be Happening?

Student Lens

*What assumptions might we initially make?
What concerns remain?*

FW Educator Lens

*How might this change your perspective?
What boundaries become important?*

Support Lens

*How do we support without becoming the
student's therapist?*

CASE #3

Week 3

OTA Level II Placement

Practical Strategies: Supporting Growth While Maintaining Standards

- Clarify expectations explicitly
- Use structured check-ins
- Encourage self-assessment
- Ask open-ended reflective questions
- Connect students with appropriate supports
- Maintain professional expectations

COMMUNICATION AND USING THE PROGRAM AS A PARTNER



Contacting the AFWC does NOT mean:

- The student is failing
- Formal remediation is required
- You need to have all the answers first
- You're not a good fieldwork educator
- You've failed as the fieldwork educator

Academic programs can:

- Provide coaching
- Contextualize concerns
- Assist with difficult conversations
- Help determine severity
- Support both the educator and the student
- Make connections or referrals to university resources

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- High standards and supportive supervision are not opposing goals
- Students and FW educators often experience fieldwork stress in parallel
- Early communication supports both student growth and educator well-being
- Support does not mean lowered expectations
- Supporting student well-being does not guarantee student success
- Student success is a shared responsibility
- You are not meant to manage fieldwork challenges alone

RESOURCES

- WORK WITH YOUR LOCAL SCHOOLS, WE HAVE LOTS OF RESOURCES!!!!
- [AOTA OPEN SOURCE RESOURCES](#) FOR FIELDWORK EDUCATORS
- [AOTA WELL-BEING](#) OPEN SOURCE
- [THE OT TOOL BOX](#) WELL-BEING HANDOUTS
- [CEU AND CERTIFICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS](#)

