



Department of Psychology
The University of Hong Kong

香港大學心理學系

Departmental Seminar

Learning Sustainable Well-Being (LSW): A New Initiative for Enhancing Well-Being in Students (and Faculty!)

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon | March 24, 2025 (Monday)

Room 813, 8/F, The Jockey Club Tower | Centennial Campus | The University of Hong Kong



Karen Dobkins, Ph.D.

Professor of Psychology
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Abstract

Our society is facing an unprecedented mental health crisis, with nearly one in two people affected by mental health issues at some point in their lives. This issue is particularly pronounced among college students, who navigate complex transitions in social, familial, and academic responsibilities. In response, my colleagues and I advocate for a comprehensive approach that goes beyond traditional college mental health services (see *Frontiers* 2023). We propose a preventative mental health model that fosters resilience by offering for-credit courses designed to equip students with the skills needed to live consciously, responsibly, and meaningfully.

To this end, we developed an experiential, workshop-style, 1-unit, pass/no-pass course titled "Learning Sustainable Well-being" (LSW). This course empowers students to explore, strengthen, and sustain their mental well-being. LSW integrates insights from diverse fields, including mindfulness, psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, religion, poetry, and cinema, offering a holistic approach to personal growth. This lecture will trace the evolution of the LSW initiative, from the course's inception in 2014 to its expansion across campus as an institution-wide program, launched in Fall 2024. We will discuss the course's content and modules, pedagogical approach, and potential limitations, along with data demonstrating its positive impact on student well-being.

About the Speaker

Karen Dobkins received her PhD in the Neuroscience in 1992 and has been a professor of Psychology at UC San Diego since 1995. Although she studied brain development in children for many years, in 2019, she switched her research focus and is now the director of the Human Experience and Awareness Lab (HeaLab), which investigates why humans flourish vs. flounder (through studies of *connection to nature, mindfulness, romantic relationship satisfaction, self-talk, derogation of others*). Complementing her research, in 2019, she created a 1 unit P/NP course in Psychology entitled "Learning Sustainable Well-Being (LSW): Compassion for Self and Others" and her lab recently published a *Frontiers* paper arguing the need for the course and presents data showing its efficacy in improving well-being. In Fall 2024, she became co-director of the first-ever Learning Sustainable Well-Being program at UCSD, in which other faculty are trained to teach the compassion course in their home department.

~All are Welcome~

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