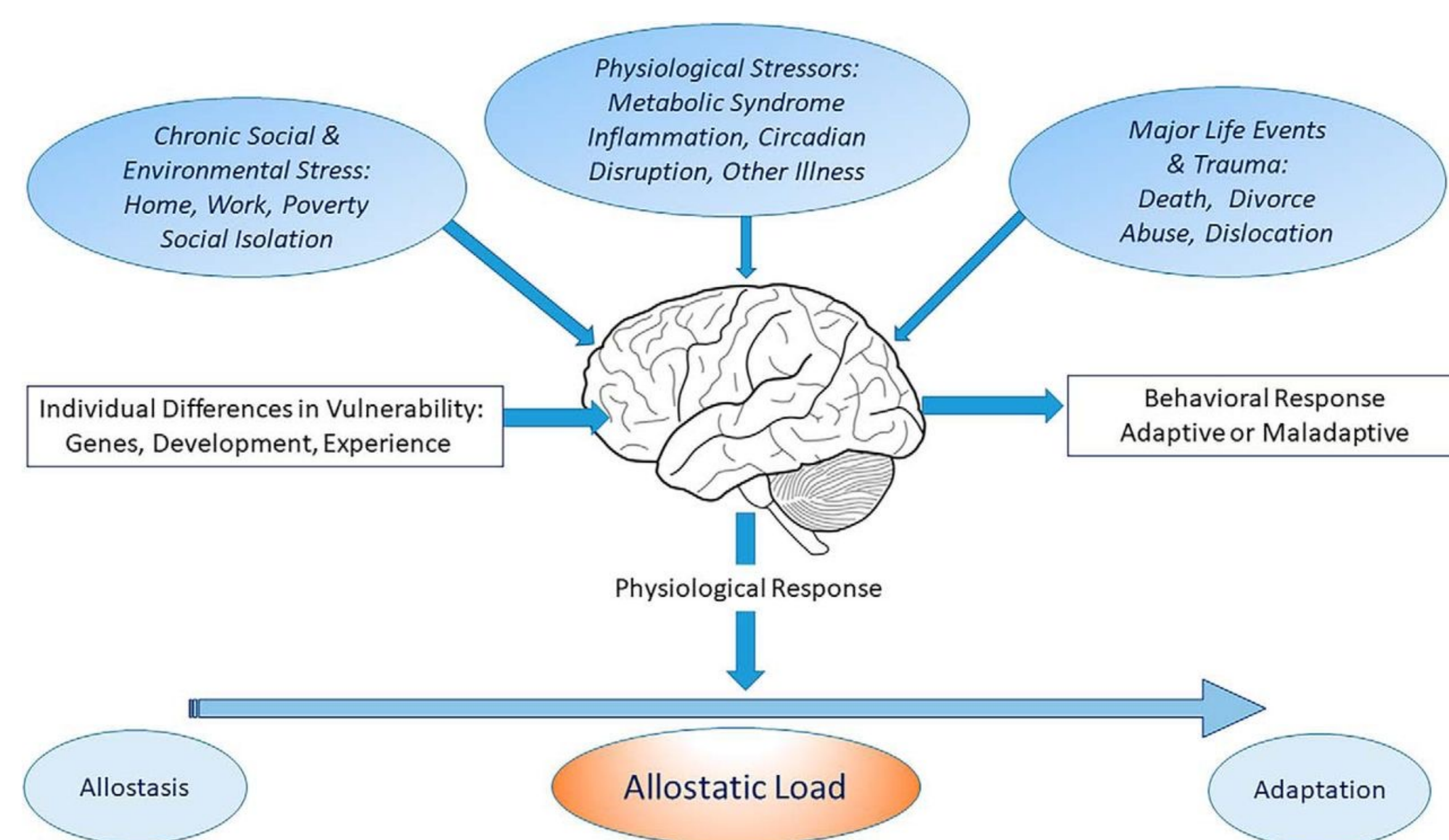


Background

Navigating higher education can be an exciting time where new opportunities and challenges can serve as a positive stimulus launching students towards academic success. However, students enrolled in health profession programs are a higher risk for stress and decreased quality of life than the general college student population (Alkatheri et al., 2020). Health profession students must learn to balance their rigorous academic coursework with their personal competing commitments. Additionally, health profession students are often required to complete license mandated clinical hours which may further encroach on their ability to effectively prioritize and manage their time (Luberto et al., 2020). The arduous demands of healthcare profession programs can result in psychological disharmony due to the challenging academic coursework and complex training coupled with financial, social, and family obligations (Pospos et al., 2018). This high level of stress can affect students learning and academic performance further contributing to the psychological distress often experienced by health profession students (McConville et al., 2017).

Stress Theory

McEwen's Theory of Stress describes how the human body strives for allostasis whereas a healthy lifestyle and effective coping behaviors allow the person to maintain homeostasis (Capriotti, 2020). Ineffective coping mechanisms and poor lifestyle choices can lead to allostatic overload and consequently disease and illness (McEwan, 1988). By utilizing a multipronged approach to promote healthy lifestyle style choices and effective coping mechanisms among health program students, faculty can positively impact a health profession students' quality of life (Alkatheri, et al., 2020).



(McEwens & Akil, 2020)

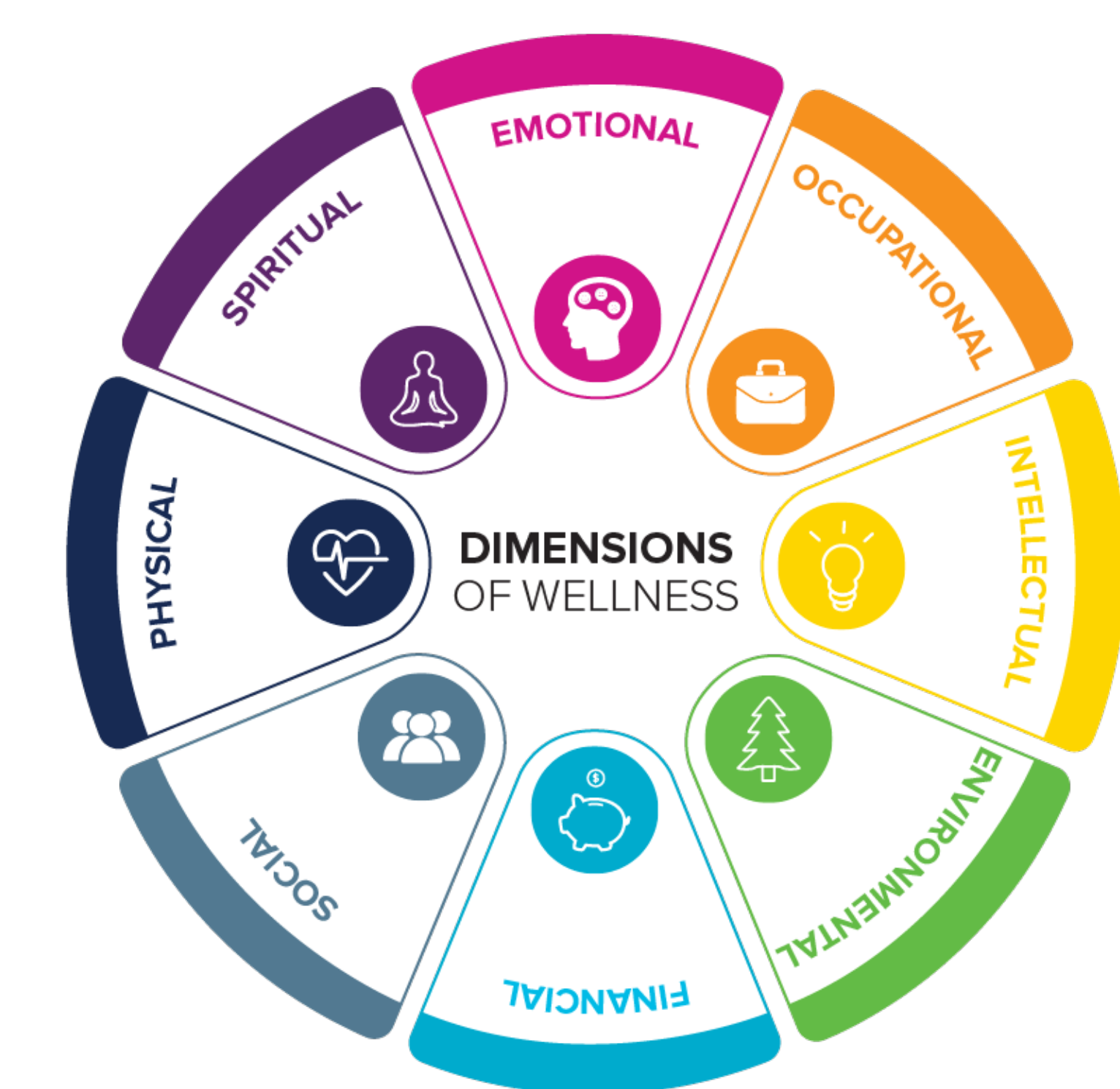
Opportunities to Nurture Wellness

1. Mindfulness meditation has reflected benefits to executive functioning, including inhibition, working memory, and mental shifting (Gallant, 2016). Using guided imagery has become a common form of meditation such as the HeadSpace App (Luberto et al., 2020)
2. Breathing exercises have shown to have a positive impact on stress, anxiety, and a decrease in cortisol levels (Toussant et al., 2021). Apps such as Breath2Relax can guide breathing exercises (Pospos et al., 2018)
3. Yoga is made up of elements of science and spirituality which directly fulfill humans physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually (Labde & Sunill, 2015). Yoga can be practiced at local studios or independently with various poses.
4. Gratitude Journals have been found to enhance gratitude, optimism, life satisfaction, and decrease negative affect (Schnitker & Richardson, 2019).
5. Counseling typically utilizes frameworks such as the *Indivisible Self* model of wellness, which understands an individuals well being is based on the whole person and not a singular element of their life or personality (Wolf et al., 2012).
6. Sleep Hygiene is crucial for wellness. Poor sleep has been associated with deficits in attention, social relationships, depression, poorer help, and more (Dietrich et al., 2016). Experts recommend that adults sleep between 7 and 9 hours a night.
7. Nutritional Counseling is a collaborative process between a counselor and a client to achieve better outcomes for health and diseases (Neri et al., 2024).
8. Reiki is based on the principle that fields of energy and information surround individuals and can be influenced to stimulate the healing process. Reiki practitioners allow energy to flow through their hands into the client (Dyer et al., 2019).
9. Acupuncture originated from traditional Chinese medicine and promotes healing and wellbeing by stimulating the body to heal itself (Guo et al., 2022).
10. Nature walks have been associated with improved emotional well-being and cognitive functioning. For those unable to get outside, YouTube offers virtual walks through a project called OSF. (Brancato et al., 2022)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the journey through higher education, particularly for students in health profession programs, presents both exhilarating opportunities and formidable challenges. As highlighted by research, the unique demands of these programs often place students at a higher risk for stress and diminished quality of life (Alkatheri et al., 2020). However, understanding stress theory, particularly McEwen's framework, sheds light on the importance of maintaining balance and adopting effective coping strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of academic rigors and personal obligations (Capriotti, 2020). It becomes imperative for institutions and faculty members to adopt a comprehensive approach that not only prioritizes academic excellence, but also fosters the holistic well-being of students. By promoting healthy lifestyle choices and providing support for effective coping mechanisms, educators can play a pivotal role in nurturing the resilience and overall quality of life of health profession students, ultimately enhancing their capacity for success in both academic and professional realms.

References



(UCD, 2019)