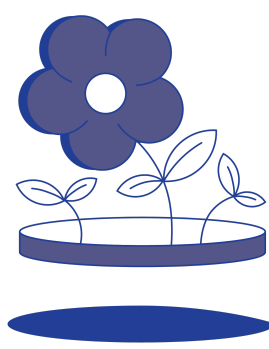


Campus Life

TODAY

WELL-BEING EDITION

September 2025



Environmental well-being involves creating and caring for attractive outdoor and indoor spaces that enrich your sense of well-being.

Outdoor spaces for connecting: Center for Student Wellbeing

During this year's Ignite Pre-Orientation Program, the Center for Student Wellbeing invited incoming students to experience environmental well-being firsthand through a practice called **forest bathing**. Forest bathing, or *shinrin-yoku*, originated in Japan in 1982 and simply means immersing yourself in the sights, sounds, and sensations of a forest environment.



Unlike hiking, which often focuses on reaching a destination, forest bathing encourages slowing down — breathing deeply, noticing details in nature, and giving your full attention to the present moment. Research shows that spending intentional time in nature can lower stress, improve focus, and boost mood by calming the nervous system and restoring mental energy.

Pre-O leaders guided students on a reflective walk through Lullwater Preserve, one of Emory's most treasured green spaces. As students moved along wooded trails, they were encouraged to tune in to their senses — listening to birdsong, observing the play of sunlight through trees, and feeling the texture of leaves or bark.

Laura Calvert, assistant director of Health Education and co-developer of the university's Pre-Orientation Programs, shared the following:

“Forest bathing was an opportunity for many of our pre-orientation students to get their first taste of mindfulness in practice. Some students said they had seen these practices but didn’t know how to start. It was also their first chance to explore Lullwater, where most of the comments were about how they loved how the feeling of being in the city disappeared in the nature preserve.”

Elizabeth Peeler, associate director of Health Promotion, co-developed and co-led this first Pre-Orientation program with Calvert, helping ensure students had a meaningful experience exploring and practicing Emory's eight [Elements of Wellbeing](#). Both emphasized that forest bathing offers a simple, approachable way for students to practice mindfulness techniques they could carry with them throughout the semester.

The beauty of connecting with nature is that it doesn't have to be complicated; research suggests that even glancing out a window or pausing to notice a photo of a natural scene can offer an impactful moment of restoration.

Indoor spaces for connecting: Student Center Operations and Events

Just as time in nature can restore calm and clarity, thoughtfully designed indoor environments also play a powerful role in environmental well-being. Emory's Student Center Operations and Events (SCOE) team has taken this to heart by **reimagining the Rec Lounge** and expanding access to recreation through their RecRe Boxes, guided by student usage and feedback.

The RecRe Boxes — sleek, self-service lockers located in the Emory Student Center and Cox Hall — make it easy for students to check out free games, controllers, and equipment. Last academic year, students rented 5,785 RecRe items, showing how much students value having simple, low-stress ways to take breaks and recharge.

Jackie Grinvalds, director of Student Center Operations and Events, emphasized the connection to student flourishing:

“The RecRe Boxes provide an easily accessible way for students to take a fun break from work and study — and engage with one another. Emory is committed in countless ways to fostering student flourishing. This is one of many ways the university’s commitment is supported by Campus Life student centers, which serve as the living rooms of our campus community.”

Students agree. Daniel Adesina 26C shared the following:

“Discovering RecRe Boxes in my first year at Emory was a pleasant surprise. The RecRe Boxes are a great resource that’s easy to use, and they offer relaxing entertainment. Sometimes that’s just what you need after a tough exam or long research paper.”

Beyond convenience, these updates underscore something essential: the importance of play and joy in supporting well-being and serving as a preventative measure against common concerns like anxiety and depression. Play provides more than momentary distraction. It reduces stress, sparks creativity, and builds bonds among peers.



These investments in the built environment highlight how physical spaces shape environmental well-being. Designing an inviting space often comes down to simple choices, such as:

- Comfortable, open seating that works for individuals and groups
- Good lighting, ideally natural light
- Plants or greenery to bring the outdoors in
- Fidgets, toys, or puzzles that encourage play and creativity
- Artwork that sparks inspiration and color
- Blankets, pillows, or plush items that add warmth and comfort

Even a closet can be transformed into an oasis, as seen in Emory's Department of Economics meditation room. Whether among quiet trails or cozy corners, these examples show how small, intentional choices in our surroundings can make a meaningful difference for student well-being.

What’s one simple way you can support environmental well-being in your space so students can pause, take a deep breath, and enjoy a little moment of ‘ahhh,’ inside or out?

Further reading:

Nature and well-being

- Evans, K. (2018, August 20). [Why forest bathing is good for your health](#). Greater Good Magazine.
- Wald, M. L. (2025, August 14). [A Surprising \(and Easy\) Way to Boost Your Attention Span](#). The New York Times. Retrieved September 8, 2025.

The built environment and well-being

- Nanda, U., & Mantooth, R. (2022, February 25). [Designing for student well-being: Research outcomes from a live-learn lab](#). HKS. Retrieved September 8, 2025.
- HDR, Inc. (2025, July). [Enhancing campus well-being through research-informed design](#). HDR. Retrieved September 8, 2025.

Keep the conversation going

Well-being is something that we in Campus Life are already supporting in thoughtful and creative ways. We'd love to hear your stories and highlight how you are putting the Elements of Wellbeing into action. If you're facilitating one of the Elements – through programs, practices, or everyday interactions – we [invite you to share](#) it with us so we can continue to learn from one another and highlight the incredible work happening across Campus Life.

If you'd like support in applying evidence-informed strategies to enhance student well-being or you are interested in collaborating on a well-being initiative, please reach out to the Center for Student Wellbeing at csw@emory.edu.

Health and well-being resources and news

All Recovery: All students -- undergraduate, graduate and professional -- are welcome to join our weekly *All Recovery* meetings. Whether you are in recovery, sober curious, or supporting a loved one, you belong here. **Wednesday evenings from 6 to 7 p.m.**

QPR: Question. Persuade. Refer. Anyone can learn these three steps to help prevent suicide. Join the CSW for the next trainings:

- Thursday, Oct 23, from 6 to 7:30 p.m.
- Wednesday Nov 12, from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Offices are also welcome to schedule QPR trainings for their staff and students at any time via our [form](#).

Curity Cafe: CSW is looking to partner with YOU! Well-being is found in every Element of our lives, if you know where to look. Using the [Elements of Wellbeing](#) framework, we are partnering with offices across campus to provide programming to highlight their office, staff, and resources. Please reach out to csw@emory.edu today to make plans!