



## **ADDRESSING THE EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF COLLEGE STUDENTS THROUGH A THERAPEUTIC COOKING CLASS**

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The purpose of this study was to evaluate a class that teaches emotional health through the techniques of cooking. Emotional eating is a growing concern in our society today, especially, among young adults attending college. Cooking classes are an important prevention tool, which aid in overall wellness and have potential to address emotional eating.

The cooking class evaluated in this study was the Thrive Lab, an 11-week cooking skills program focusing on the seven dimensions of wellness. The lab is a supplementary course for the basic nutrition class offered at the University of Utah, Nutrition 1020. Each week is designed to teach a set of cooking techniques and a lesson covering one of the seven dimensions of health, which include physical, emotional, social, occupational, spiritual, environmental and sexual health. This study concentrated on the two weeks where emotional health was the main focus. Emotional health was tied to cooking skills through mindful eating exercises and using cooking as a therapeutic outlet.

The participants in the Thrive Lab were distributed three surveys. The first two surveys were taken at the beginning of the semester to evaluate overall emotional health. The third survey was taken before and after each emotional health lesson to evaluate the effectiveness of the class. A sample of 40 students were recruited from two different Nutrition 1020 classes to evaluate confounding variables. This group was given the same two surveys at the beginning of the semester, but did not take the third survey.

