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## A meaning-oriented intervention to enhance effective adjustment to the daily and COVID-related stressors among psychology undergraduates

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### **Abstract:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has put college students at high risk for health problems and mental health issues, as they have experienced unprecedented changes in daily life, difficulties with online learning mode, and limited social contact with friends (Li et al., 2021). Facing such massive life changes and prolonged stress, college students reported increased health problems (e.g., sleep difficulties, eating disorders, internet addiction; Gavurova et al., 2022; Wieman et al., 2022). They may feel a sense of uncertainty about the pandemic and develop a fear of infection and insecurity (e.g., Feng et al., 2021). Existing evidence has shown that this population reported an increased prevalence of anxiety and depressive symptoms compared to the pre-pandemic period (Chang et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021).

Under the COVID-19 related stressors, meaning making would serve as a coping strategy to help individuals make sense of the pandemic (Park, 2010). Based on the theory of meaning making, an integrative framework of meaning therapy assumes that humans are bio-psycho-social-2

spiritual beings with emphasis on personal meaning as its central construct (Wong, 2010, 2020). This framework proposes that meaning construction contains four components: purpose, understanding, responsible action, and evaluation. Besides, meaning therapy suggests that meaning making can achieve sustainable flourishing via narrative and sharing. However, this theoretical framework has not been translated into practice yet. Little empirical evidence is available regarding meaning-making interventions targeting college students in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, although a few interventions have been designed to promote mental health of college students during the COVID-19 pandemic, most studies are self-help or internet-based, which are hard to monitor the implementations of intervention and detect the deviations from the intended sessions (Charbonnier et al., 2022; Wasil et al., 2021).

Considering the long-lasting pandemic and the potential consequences for college students, the PI will conduct a brief theory-based meaning-based intervention to promote their effective adjustment to the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposed project will help students familiarize the application of psychology theories to real-life issues and cultivate their preparation for future challenges. As all the target students are psychology major or minor, such a training experience will build their capabilities to transfer knowledge to those in their social circles and cultivate their professional capacities to serve the community in the future.