

# Women in wellness, changing lives one student at a time

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Life has changed in ways that we could never have imagined - from daily routines to the way we socialise and communicate. Adapting to change, in a short period, can affect one's mental health. Now, more than ever, it is essential to look after your mental health to ensure that you step out of lockdown stronger than before.



IIE Rosebank College believes in producing well-rounded individuals, and wellness is very close to our hearts. We spoke to Ncumisa November, a student wellness manager at IIE Rosebank College's Pretoria Sunnyside campus, about her experience in the wellness industry and taking care of one's mental health.

## Which qualification did you study?

I studied the Baccalaureus in Social Work.

## How long have you been working with students, and what are the most fulfilling aspects of your career?

I started working with students in 2018, and I love it. Empowering youth is something very dear to me. The most fulfilling aspect of my career is starting a journey with a student who might feel hopeless/helpless and assist in changing their perspective, as we journey through the counselling process. Witnessing personal development is fulfilling. As cheesy as this might sound, there is a degree of intrinsic motivation when I get to hear the words: "Thank you, you have played the role of a mother, sister and advisor and never once did I get a sense of judgement from you."

## What made you decide to pursue a career in wellness?

I believe in helping people, and it stems from how I was brought up. I was raised by a strong and phenomenal woman, my maternal grandmother, who taught me the real value of helping people. She taught me humility – what we know in my culture as the spirit of ubuntu. She is the primary reason I work in wellness today. I am where I am supposed to be.

## What challenges are you mostly faced with?

The price of being selfless can be bittersweet. In my line of work, it could be easy to forget about 'me' - that I, too, am

human. It's important to acknowledge and accept that working in wellness is a journey, and that change takes time. I also have to continually work on my insecurities to ensure that I keep myself 'full'. As the saying goes: "you can't pour from an empty cup."

### **Which areas of wellbeing do you focus on and why?**

I focus on all aspects of wellbeing. Mental wellbeing is essential to ensure that you are mentally healthy so that you can focus on the present. Emotional wellbeing - you need this to make sound and logical decisions and to understand that you won't necessarily get acceptance or approval from everyone. Spiritual wellbeing is vital for me as I always have to remember that I am human before I am a mother, partner and therapist. Aligning myself with my beliefs keeps me rooted, humble and encourages me to keep going.

### **Being a woman in the industry, do you ever have a challenge where male students do not want to consult with you based on your gender?**

No, I think that I am at a point where I am comfortable with what I do. I trust my abilities. I have made it my mission to build trust with the student body early to get them to be comfortable around me and to understand that irrespective of what we discuss, they will never feel judged.

### **How do you ensure confidentiality for each session?**

Whenever I have consultations, my door is always closed. I make sure that I eliminate disruptions. The consultation rooms are also situated far from high traffic areas, so students can feel comfortable when coming for a session. I also space out my appointment times, so that students have enough time to leave a session without running into the next person. Being on time is vital to ensure the student feels comfortable, and it is also a sign of respect. After the session, I make sure that I don't leave any process notes lying around, I file and place everything in a secured space.

### **What can one do to maintain their mental wellbeing?**

Try to maintain some aspects of your usual routine, get enough sleep and stay hydrated - water, exercise and self-care are essential. Filter your sources of information and stick to credible sources. Stay connected with family and friends. Try volunteering; it's incredible what giving back can do for you.

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