



NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL
AND TECHNICAL STATE UNIVERSITY

***IDENTIFYING AND HELPING
STUDENTS IN DISTRESS***

AGGIES **DO**

Objectives

- Explore current mental and emotional health challenges on our college campus and in the nation
- Learn signs of a student in distress and how you can help – create a campus wide effort
- Explore the resources available through Counseling Services



Why this Presentation

- Mental health has increasingly become a primary issue of concern on college campus
- Tragic events have heightened concerns about personal and community safety
- Mental health affects student success
- Mental health affects the student, the learning environment, the institution
- Need for a community-wide effort
- It starts with education

Why is this Happening?

- Characteristics of the Millennium Generation
 - Helicopter parenting
 - High expectations and minimal coping skills
 - Emphasis on performance and achievement
- Less family stability
- Over stimulating and competitive world
- Effects of psychotropic medication
- Increased alcohol and drug use
- More cultural diversity

Why is this Happening? (Cont.)

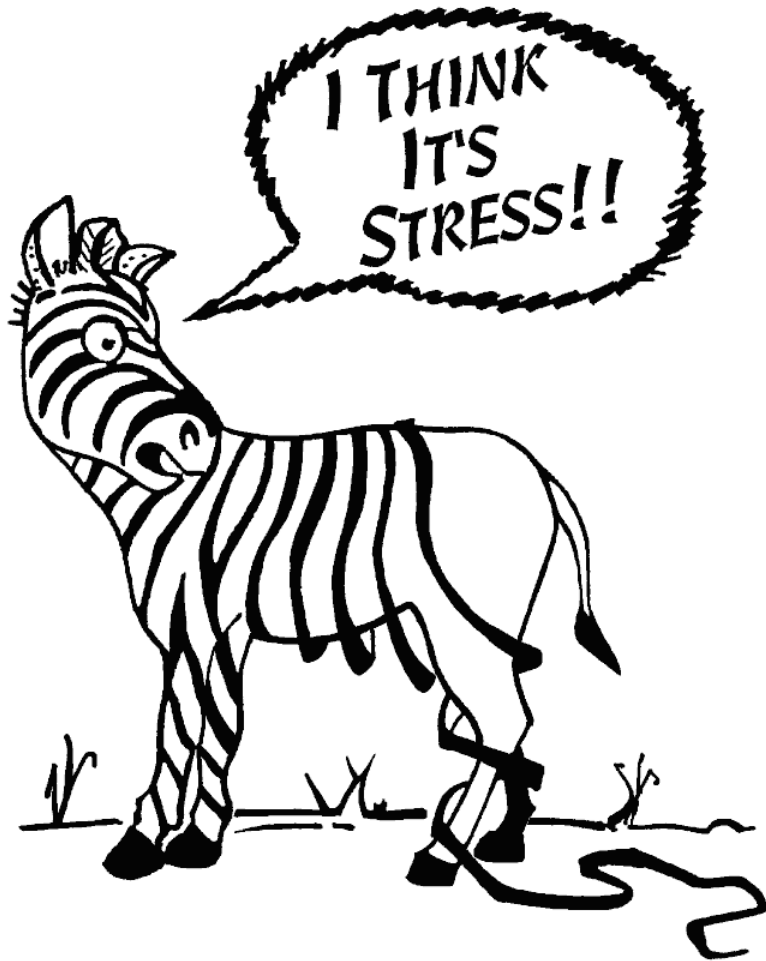
- Greater media attention on mental health problems
- Positive shift in attitudes about mental health care
- Reflection of general society
 - 27% of 18-24 year olds have a diagnosable mental illness (NAMI)
 - 14% of college students treated for depression before entering college
- Traditional college adjustments and challenges
- War and the economy

Student Client Characteristics (n = 1009)

- 21% in counseling prior to college; 15% after; 13% both
- 12% on medication prior to college; 17% after; 11% both
- 5% hospitalized for mental health reasons prior to college; 3% since; 1% both
- 13% engaged in self-injury prior to college; 5% after; 9% both

Student Client Characteristics (n = 1009, Cont.)

- 13% considered suicide prior to college; 6% after; 10% both
- 8% attempted suicide prior to college; 2% after; 2% both
- 14% had unwanted sexual experience(s) prior to college; 8% after; 5% both
- 22% experienced harassment or abuse prior to college; 7% after; 18% both
- 2% sought drug/alcohol treatment prior to college; 3% after; 1% both



What Students are Facing

- Social and sexual pressures
- Temptation of: alcohol, drugs, and unhealthy food
- Stress, friends, homework, jobs, and leadership positions
- Caring for family members while in school
- The challenge of getting enough sleep
- Sexual assaults
- Emotional concerns

Mental Health and College Students

- Anxiety – 41.6%
- Depression – 36.4%
- Relationship Problems – 35.8%

www.apa.org/monitor/2013/06/college-students.aspx

A&T Trends (2013-2014)

- Anxiety – 53.5%
- Stress – 32.6%
- Depression – 30.3%
- Romantic Relationships – 30.2%
- Self-Esteem – 25.6%
- Family of Origin Issues – 20.9%
- Alcohol Abuse – 18.6%
- Academic Problems – 16.3%
- Interpersonal Skills – 16.3%
- Sexual Assault – 14%

Stress or Crisis?

A crisis is a situation in which an individual's usual style of coping is no longer effective, and the emotional or physiological response begins to escalate out of control. As emotions intensify, coping becomes less effective, until the person may become disoriented, non-functional, or attempt harm to self or others.



Signs of Distress

- Isolation
- Anger
- Withdrawing from friends
- Unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Excessive absences
- Decline in academics
- Agitation and crying
- Self-harm
- Anxiety
- Grief
- Suicidal threats
- Dramatic mood changes
- Feeling desperate or trapped
- Engaging in risky activities
- Poor physical appearance



Signs of Mental Health Crisis

- Loss of contact with reality
- Stalking or highly disruptive behavior
- Inappropriate communications
- Suicidal thoughts or threats to harm others
- Destruction of property or other criminal acts
- Extreme anxiety resulting in panic reactions
- Inability to communicate



Helping a Student

- Talk to the student in private
- Be direct and nonjudgmental
- Listen sensitively
- Refer
- Follow up



What would you do?

A student in your class is unusually quiet and is just sitting at her desk. She appears to be holding back tears. You ask if anything is wrong and she tells you that her grandmother died unexpectedly last night. She tells you that she has missed all of her classes today but she came to class because she needs to take the exam.

What would you do?

A student in your class receives a disappointing grade that upsets him. He comes to your office during office hours looking tense and angry.

You explain why he received his grade but he will not accept your answer. His voice keeps getting louder as he keeps repeating “this is not acceptable!”

What would you do?

A student is standing outside of your class waiting for the previous class to exit the room. Several students are standing around waiting to go inside the classroom.

As you approach, you notice this student is acting strangely, seems disoriented, and is making odd comments to people near her. She keeps repeating a non-sensible phrase. The other students are looking at her somewhat anxiously and appear to be keeping their distance. She seems agitated but is not being violent.

What would you do?

One of your reliable student workers has not shown up for work for two days and has not called in to report her absences. You are aware that she and her boyfriend recently broke up and she has been very upset about it. You have called but have only gotten voicemails.

What would you do?

A student shows up in your office late for work. He appears anxious and rattled. He apologizes for being late and tells you that he had to take the long way across campus because there are people watching him and tracking his every move electronically.

He says he doesn't know who they are for sure but believes that they are people hired by his church to watch him to make sure he does not commit moral sins.

Ways Faculty and Staff can Help...

- Attempt to recognize student problems
- Consultations with COD at Counseling Services
- Reach out and make active referrals
- Attend and promote Gatekeeper MH trainings
- Follow up

Help students learn how counseling may help...

- Reduce the stigma
- Referral is not about severity
- Reassure counseling serves students for range of concerns
- Seeking professional help is a sign of strength
- In non-emergency situations, leave the option to the student

Guidelines: Helping Students in Distress

- Accept what is said and respect the student's value system
- Focus on what is manageable
- Avoid easy answers such as, "everything will be all right."
- Help identify resources needed to improve things
- Let others know your concerns
- Do not swear secrecy, promises, or offer confidentiality to the person
- Encourage the person to seek help

When to Suggest Counseling

- The problem or request is beyond your expertise
- There is a mental health concern
- There is danger to the student or someone else
- The student feels uncomfortable talking to you about the problem
- You are feeling overwhelmed



Counseling Services

Personal Counseling

Academic Skills Training

Career Appraisals

Testing

Collegiate Recovery Community



**Free & Confidential
Walk-in Appointments Welcomed**

Other Services Offered

- Groups and workshops
- Open house and receptions
- Classroom presentations and training
- Psychiatric services
- Consultations and referrals

Typical Access to Counseling Services

Our process includes:

- A screening session (non appointment, walk-in)
 - Complete intake paperwork (10-15 minutes)
 - Meet with a counselor (20-30 minutes)
- Intake session (50-minute appointment scheduled during screening) or referral

Services are **free and confidential** to currently enrolled NC A&T students

How to Refer Students

- Call (336) 334-7727 or visit Counseling Services in 109 Murphy Hall
- If urgent situation, ask to speak to the Counselor on Duty
 - Describe your concern about a student's mental health or life situation
 - Provide student information
- If the student is violent, suicidal, has severe loss of emotional control or gross impairment in thinking ability
 - Call UPD at (336) 334-7675 or 911 off-campus

After the Referral

- Counseling invitation sent to student
- Clinical Counselors will follow up with student

NOTE: Counseling Services **can neither confirm nor deny** whether a student has visited or is being seen.

Student mental health is a campus challenge requiring a collaborative campus-wide effort.

