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Understanding and Supporting the Mental Health Needs of Faculty, Ras, Staff

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www.nyp.org/youthanxiety
Agenda

• Anticipating Psychological Needs of Faculty, Staff, and Residential Advisors

• Systemic Support

• Psychological First Aid

• Toolkits for Coping
Campus leaders, including faculty, staff, and RAs are having to engage in a balancing act

Needs of Student Body

Managing Personal Stressors
Higher Baseline Stress
Physical Responses

- Body Tension
- Sweating
- Butterflies
- Restlessness
- Racing Heart
- Fatigue
- Difficulty Sleeping
- Loss of appetite
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Headaches
- Blurry vision
- Heaviness
- Upset stomach
Systemic Support

Academic

Work/Life

Campus
Questions to Ask: Academic

- What schoolwide policies can be implemented around extensions, withdrawals, leaves of absence?
- How can we increase use of academic accommodations among students, like RAs, who are typically high achieving?
- How can junior faculty be connected to more established professors to provide mentorship and guidance?
- Can faculty be allowed to pause promotion timelines or given alternative ways to meet expectations?
- What other concerns are we hearing from our personnel and how might we address them?
Questions to Ask: Work/Life

How can we ease childcare concerns for faculty and staff?

How can we normalize the difficulty balancing work and home life?

Are we able to increase available sick leave/family leave?

Where can we create more flexibility in terms of hours, remote work, etc.?

How do we promote faculty and staff using vacation time?
Questions to Ask: Support on Campus

1. How can we adapt campus to make life easier for personnel, including safe, socially distanced spaces for peer support?

2. Are we able to supply free/Supplemented food/parking?

3. How can we create clear signage or markers to help with distancing (e.g., 6ft. Apart circles on campus quads)?

4. Can campus security or admin teams help enforce COVID-guidelines so it does not all fall on RAs, faculty, etc.? 

5. How can we increase accessibility to COVID testing for those who want/need it?
Setting Expectations

- **Establish role expectations** to decrease worry and confusion
- **Create tip sheets** around new campus guidelines
- **Outline chain of command** so personnel know who to talk to about questions or concerns
Psychological First Aid
Short-term, Crisis Based Help

• Psychological First Aid is a flexible, modular evidence based response to acute stress that focuses on adaptive coping and providing psychological and logistical support

• Use of PFA to provide short-term access to a high number of students/faculty/staff in an efficient way

• Training Reslife/Student Counseling Services/Student leaders interested in helping

• Triage those in need and refer for ongoing help
Eight Core Actions of PFA

Contact and Engagement
Safety and Comfort
Stabilization (if needed)
Information Gathering on Current Needs/Concerns
Practical Assistance
Connection with Social Supports
Information on Coping
Connection with Collaborative Services

“Look, Listen and Link”
Brief Crisis Counseling Model

1-3 Sessions

- Establish Rapport
- Validate emotional responses (Psychoeducation to normalize responses)
- Identify Immediate Concerns (Problem Solving, Acceptance strategies)
- Coping Skills & Self Care (Relaxation, Grounding, Routines, Activities)
- Assess and Review what’s helpful
- Refer if/when needed
Suggested Crisis Counseling Tools

1. Ask open-ended questions to understand experiences
2. Reflective Listening to communicate understanding
3. Affirm strengths, resilience, and innate coping
4. Use brief skill modules
Brief Modules & Tool Kits for Copings

- Emotional Awareness/Management
- Relaxation
- Problem Solving Vs. Acceptance
- Behavioral Activation
- Building Coping Plans
- Seeking Support
Module 1: Emotional Awareness and Management
Emotion Management

Positive & negative emotions are normal – try not to judge

Come & go

Range in intensity

Avoiding, uncomfortable feelings doesn’t make them go away!
Emotions are Normal, Necessary, & Harmless

★ Everything you are feeling right now is valid and you are not alone

★ Emotions give us important information about what we need to do
  ○ Fear  Survival
  ○ Anxiety Planning for the Future
  ○ Sadness Acknowledging a loss
  ○ Anger  Fix an injustice

★ Some emotions are uncomfortable but they are not dangerous

★ Our emotions are all ok, but the behaviors we choose when we are feeling strong emotions can make a situation better or worse
  ○ We usually need to tolerate some discomfort to make a good choice
Managing Emotions during a Challenging Time

➔ Be kind to yourself (and family, friends, others)
  ◆ everyone is doing the best they can right now

➔ Focus on what you can control
  ◆ daily routine, healthy habits, helpful coping strategies

➔ Ask for help and seek out support when you need it

➔ Keep busy with a variety and balance of activities
  ◆ fun, social, service, achievement/mastery, physical

➔ Beware of excessive media use
  ◆ passive scrolling, non-stop Netflix, too much news

➔ Do not avoid your emotions
  ◆ withdrawal, substance abuse, procrastination
Not avoiding emotions can feel like riding a tidal wave.

Deep breathing and relaxation can help

Break tough tasks down into smaller steps

Be aware of emotions about emotions
Building Emotional Awareness

**Step 1: Tune in and notice how you feel**
- What emotions are you feeling?
- Body sensations and thoughts?
- NOTICE the emotions and name them in your mind

**Step 2: Rate how strong the feeling is (1-10 scale)**
- Feelings Thermometer
- We don’t make our best choices at higher numbers on the scale

**Step 3: Notice patterns in when you feel emotions**
- Situations
- Places
- People
- What are your emotions telling you?
Take Action

Maintain a regular routine
- Bedtime & wake-up time, healthy food, hydration & exercise
- Self-care/fun activities scheduled every day!

Express emotions
- Talk to others (“I” statements)
- Cry (watch or listen to something sad)
- Take small steps to approach something you’d rather avoid

Do something to feel better
- Funny movie or show
- Go for a walk
- Deep breathing, meditation

Stay connected with others
- Message, call & video chat with family and friends
- Plan other fun activities together
- Help others however you can
- ‘Alone’ time from others

Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news
- Access info from reliable sources

Take steps to minimize risk
- Social distancing, gloves and mask, hand sanitizer
Coping with the new normal

Mindfulness Meditation

- Regular practice
- Focus on the breath
- Guided or self practice
- Lots of Apps:

Everyday Mindfulness

- Be fully present in what you are doing
- Use your five senses
- Acknowledge thoughts, emotions and sensations, don’t get stuck
- No judgement
- Bring attention back to what you are doing
  - Eating, walking, showering...
“Toolkits” for coping

- Mindfulness – Free App subscription or recorded scripts
- Physical activity – Provide exercise service subscription
- Social connection – suggested safe spaces to connect
- Access to academic supports – teaching & research tools
- Connectedness to the campus culture

Can be provided electronically for all faculty, students, and staff
Module 2: Relaxation
Introducing and Practicing Skills: ReST

- Relax your muscles
- Slow your breathing
- Think of a peaceful place

(PracticeWise LLC, 2009)
Relax your Muscles

• Starting with your right hand, squeeze your hand into a fist, like you are squeezing a lemon! Hold it for 5 seconds, then release and notice the sensations in your hand.

• Repeat exercise in different areas of the body.

• Focus on muscle groups that are holding extra tension.
Slow your breathing

- Inhale, breathing into the lower abdomen
- Keep lungs full of air
- Exhale slowly
- Keep lungs empty
Think of a peaceful place

Use your five senses to imagine a real or made up place where you can feel safe and relaxed

Where would you go?
What would you see…
Hear…
Taste…
Touch…
Smell…

Close your eyes and picture yourself in this calm, safe place. Imagine each sensation. Breathe. Remain in your safe place for 2 minutes.
“Toolkits” for Relaxation

- Free App subscription or recorded scripts
- Coping cards with skill reminders
- Stress balls for muscle relaxation
- Daily alarms to practice deep breathing
- Picture of your peaceful place
Module 3: Problem Solving Vs. Acceptance
Problem Solving vs Acceptance

Strategies to problem solve challenges within your control
• Define the problem
• Discuss possible solutions
• Create Action Plan
• Schedule pleasurable activities
• Seek social support
• Practice assertive communication to get needs met

Strategies to tolerate distress from stressors outside your control
• Validate own thoughts and feelings
• What have you learned from past hard experiences?
• Define values to organize & prioritize experiences
• Mindfulness Exercises
• Helpful Thoughts/Coping thought
“Toolkits” for Problem Solving vs. Acceptance

- Problem Solving Handouts
- List of trusted social supports
- Communication Skills Script
- Values Card Sort
- Coping Mantra
Module 4: Taking Action
Myth of Mood
Dependent Behavior
5 Types of Activities

Physical

Fun

Service

Mastery

Social
Make Active Choices

• When you have the urge to avoid or withdraw, consider active choices

• Find small ways to engage

• Consider your long-term values to help motivate action
“Toolkits” for Taking Action

- List of activities for each domain accessible on campus
- List of activities for each domain accessible online
- Calendar to schedule activities
- Values Card
Module 5: Coping Ahead
Anticipating Stressors

Anticipate
- Anticipate upcoming stressors

Identify
- Identify emotions and thoughts that are likely to arise

Acknowledge
- Acknowledge unhelpful urges you may have

Create
- Create a plan to help you cope in the moment
# Sample Cope Ahead Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Example 1</th>
<th>Example 2</th>
<th>Example 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Use a helpful thought</td>
<td>“I can always ask for help?”</td>
<td>“The weekend is almost here?”</td>
<td>“I’m not alone, everybody is struggling right now”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Self soothe task</td>
<td>Go for a walk</td>
<td>Put on your favorite song</td>
<td>Read a book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Relaxation Exercise</td>
<td>Progressive Muscle Relaxation</td>
<td>Slow your Breathing</td>
<td>Visualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Think of who you can call for support</td>
<td>Best friend</td>
<td>Teacher/Co-worker</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Toolkits” for Coping Ahead

- List of common stressors, responses, and urges
- Cope ahead worksheet
- Coping thoughts
- Relaxation exercises
- List of social supports
Module 6: Seeking Support
Seek support when:

- You are having a hard time identifying or using coping skills
- You are using coping skills but still find yourself struggling
- Friends, family, or colleagues are noticing that you do not seem like yourself
- Anxiety, mood, or other symptoms are getting in the way of things you care about

AND...

If you want it! EVERYBODY can use support, and it is a great thing to carve out time for yourself no matter how well you are doing.
Finding Appropriate Support

Reach out to other people for help:

• Trusted family or friends
• Coaches
• Teachers/Advisors/Mentors
• Campus Health Services
• Religious Groups
• Community Leaders
• Community doctors, counselors, social workers
“Toolkits” for Seeking Support

- School Swag with mental health contact information
- Online list of campus support resources
- Online referral list for local providers/community resources
- Sample script for how to ask for help
- Personalized list of social supports
Beyond Self Care Skills

- Problem solving skills
- Assertiveness skills
- Emotion regulation skills
- Realistic thinking
- Perspective taking
- Stress/time management skills
- Flexibility and expectation management
- Social Support – we’re all in this together
Extending Skills to the Campus Community

- Can use these toolkits to help your Ras, faculty, and staff
- Lead trainings with RAs and within departments
- Distribute tips sheets
- Collaborate with ResLife to hold “ResHall” meetings where you introduce a toolkit
Questions?

Thank You!

www.nyp.org/youthanxiety
Upcoming Webinars and Workshops:

• The Assessment and Treatment of Anxiety/Mood Strategies – 10/14/20, 1 pm EST

• Strategies for Promoting Resilience, Wellness, and Coping Skills for the Campus Community – 10/28/20, 1 pm EST

More Youth Anxiety Center Webinars and information available at: https://www.nyp.org/youthanxiety/important-notice