Welcoming, Identifying and Accommodating Students with Mental Health Disabilities

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Agenda

- Overview
- Welcoming
- Identifying
- Accommodating
- Educating
• How many of you know someone who has struggled with the symptoms of a mental illness? (e.g. depression, anxiety, post traumatic stress disorder, eating disorder)

• How many of you know someone with a mental illness who is professionally successful?
• What are some characteristics of those individuals you know who are professionally successful and have a mental illness?
Myths and Facts

1. Half of all college students report feeling so depressed they have trouble functioning.
2. 23% of freshman come to campus with mental health diagnosis.
3. 5% of freshman come to campus on psychotropic medications.
4. The most common barrier for students with mental health disabilities is stigma.
5. Most college students think others will think less about them if they seek mental health treatment.
My name is Alice Johnson. I'm a student at the University of Minnesota and involved in the group Active Minds. I began having issues with anxiety and depression in high school. I had always been a worrier and was extremely aware of my social surroundings. I avoided situations. I've come to understand that social anxiety is a part of who I am. I've learned to cope and personally work through it. I've also learned that it's important to seek help when needed.

I'm sharing my story to encourage others who may be going through similar issues. My hope is that my story will help them see that they are not alone and that they can seek the help they need.

Everyone is affected by mental illness. Let's start talking about it.

www.mentalhealth.umn.edu/sos
Mental Illness Affects School Performance

Over Half Report Negative Impact on School Performance

- 2013 BHS College Health Survey
Less than Half of Depressed Students are Receiving Treatment
Major depressive disorder is the leading cause of disability among Americans age 15 to 44.

Majority, even those with the most severe depression, can get better with treatment.

Medications, psychotherapies, and other methods can effectively treat people with mental illness.
The earlier that treatment can begin, the more effective it is.

There are many barriers to seeking treatment:
- Stigma
- Access
- Lack of awareness

Onset of most serious mental illnesses begin between ages 18-24.
Transition
Why Should we be Concerned?

When health is absent, wisdom cannot reveal itself, art cannot manifest, strength cannot fight, wealth becomes useless and intelligence cannot be applied.

Herophilus of Chalcedon
Negative Impacts
Who are we working with?
Welcoming

• Art/Posters
• Syllabus statements
  – Mental Health
  – DRC
• Provide examples of disability conditions (Ensure mental health disabilities is included)
• Follow-up on missed appointments
• Student groups
  – Active Minds
  – NAMI on-campus
Mental Health Syllabus Statement

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student’s ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via www.mentalhealth.umn.edu

Developed by Provost’s Committee on Student Mental Health 2006
Endorsed by Senate Committee on Educational Policy 2009
DRC Syllabus Statement

The University of Minnesota is committed to providing all students equal access to learning opportunities. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is the campus office that works with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations.

- Students who have, or think they may have, a disability (e.g. mental health, attentional, learning, vision, hearing, physical, or systemic) are invited to contact DRC to arrange a confidential discussion at 612 626-1333 (V/TTY)

- Students registered with DRC, who have a letter requesting accommodations, are encouraged to contact the instructor early in the semester to discuss accommodations outlined in their letter

Additional information is available at the DRC website: https://diversity.umn.edu/disability/home
Welcoming

• Other ideas?

Identify two additional ideas for creating a welcoming office environment for students with mental health disabilities.
Identifying

• Listen for examples of mental health challenges
  – Problems with sleep
  – Concentration changes
  – Significant losses
  – Flat affect, lack of interest

• New student orientation
  – Make sure mental health resources/supports are represented.
  – Normalize help-seeking
Identifying

• Ensure departments know how to refer to the Disability Resource Center (DRC)
  – Have presentations from DRC staff
  – Have words and examples ready ahead of time

• Be aware of community resources students can access or know who on campus has that information

• Other?
Accommodating

• When does a mental health condition become a disability?
  – Diagnosis from the American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fifth Edition
  – Symptoms significantly interfere with a major life activity
Life Activities

- Eating
- Sleeping
- Concentrating
- Thinking
- Learning
- Communicating

- Working
- Motivation
- Stress Management
- Managing Distractions
- Self-care
Accommodating

• Student’s input and medical documentation determine if student has a disability

• Documentation
  – Current dx
  – Describes how student is impacted
  – Identifies side effects of medication
  – Optional: Recommends accommodations
Accommodating

• On a case-by-case basis
• An individual assessment
• An interactive process
Interactive Process

Student

Disability Resources

Faculty
Accommodating

• Barriers to learning/working/participating
  – Course specific barriers
• Communication to faculty
• Same benefits/experiences as peers
• Does not place undue burden on the student
Common Conditions

- Major Depressive Disorder
- Anxiety Disorders
  - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
  - Generalized Anxiety Disorder
  - Panic Disorder
  - Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Bipolar Disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Eating Disorders
Common Accommodations

- Reduced courseload
- Private test environment
- Extra test time
- Modified deadlines
- Modified schedule

- Modified attendance
- Notetaker
- Priority seating
- Extra feedback
- Financial aid adjustments
Less Common Accommodations

• Service Animals

• Emotional Support Animals
  – Local ordinances
  – Fair Housing
    • The existence of a disability
    • Relationship between the disability and the relief the animal provides
    • The need for the animal in order for the student to use or enjoy on-campus residence
    • Be clear regarding student responsibilities
Educating: Students

- The Jed Foundation
- National Alliance on Mental Illness
- NAMI On-campus
- Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
- MentalHealth.gov
- The National Institute on Mental Health
- Active Minds
- Campus Specific Information
  www.mentalhealth.umn.edu
Educating

• Campus partners
  – Counseling, Health Center, Sexual Violence Center
  – International Student and Scholars Office
  – Learning Abroad
  – Registration
  – Judicial Affairs

• Provide cross-training

• Formal liaison relationships
What is your campus doing to...

- Educate
  - Students
  - Faculty
  - Other departments?
Removing Barriers
Changing the Environment
Create environments conducive to seeking help and develop culturally appropriate messages to de-stigmatize mental illness and mental health treatment.

Report to the President: On Issues raised by the Virginia Tech Tragedy
June 12, 2007
What is your campus doing to:

Create an environment that is conducive to seeking help and developing culturally appropriate messages to de-stigmatize mental illness and mental health treatment?