

PROMOTING RESILIENCY AT EACH STAGE OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT JOURNEY

A case-based presentation



Presenters



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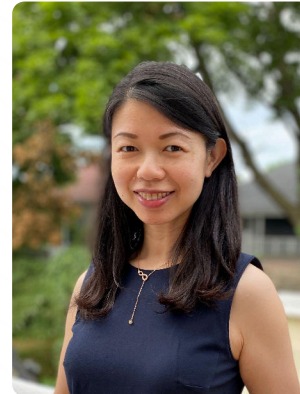
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Agenda

1.

What's going on

2.

Case study: A tale of two students

3.

Questions & answers

What's Going On?

01

Half of college students reported they had been diagnosed with a mental health disorder at some point in their lifetime

02

73% of students reported moderate or severe psychological distress. The percentage of students experiencing mental health problems has increased nearly **50%** since 2013

03

International students were less likely than domestic students to report a psychiatric diagnoses. International students were more likely to report suicide attempts and feeling overwhelmingly depressed.

[2022-2023 National Healthy Minds and Journalism of American College Health Studies](#)





1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year

Source: nami.org National Alliance on Mental Illness

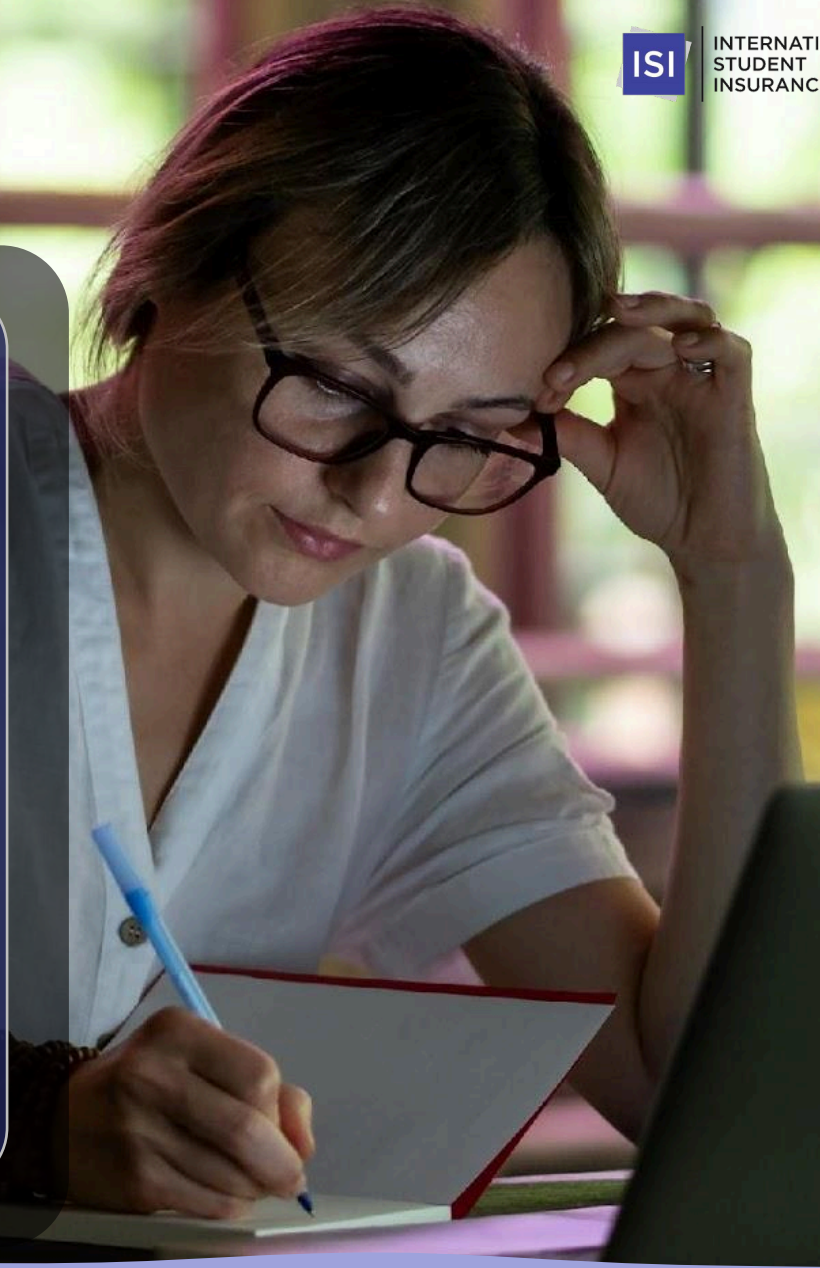
Case Study 1

Adjustment Concerns

A 30-year-old international student comes into your office asking for advice finding an on-campus job. She shares that she encountered more “start up” expenses than anticipated, like high rent, winter clothing, and rideshare charges she didn’t anticipate.


As you talk to her more, she mentions she’s wondering when she’s going to feel like she fits in. The food is different, friendships and social norms are new, and classroom practices are very different from what she’s used to. She mentions she misses her favorite dish from home and hasn’t been able to find the ingredients to make her favorite meal. She also has a big paper coming due and has never written a lengthy research paper in English before. She’s started having trouble sleeping and avoiding some social events.

Where to start?



Overcoming Stigma: Mental Health Awareness for International Students & Scholars



 Wednesday, June 1st, 2016

 2:45pm to 3:45pm

 Room CCC, 501-501

Are We Talking Too Much About Mental Health?

Recent studies cast doubt on whether large-scale mental health interventions are making young people better. Some even suggest they can have a negative effect.

▶ Listen to this article • 11:50 min [Learn more](#) [Share full article](#) [Bookmark](#) [Comments](#) 671



Lucy Foulkes, a research psychologist at the University of Oxford, wants school systems to proceed cautiously with large-scale mental health interventions. "It's possible that something very well-intended has overshot a bit and needs to be brought back in," she said. Sandra Mickiewicz for *The New York Times*

The New York Times

May 6, 2024

Recent studies cast doubt on whether large-scale mental health interventions are making young people better. Some even suggest they can have a negative effect.

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(Sandra Mickiewicz for *The New York Times*)

Recognizing the difference between “normal” adjustment vs. illness



Adolescence and young adulthood are inherently stressful



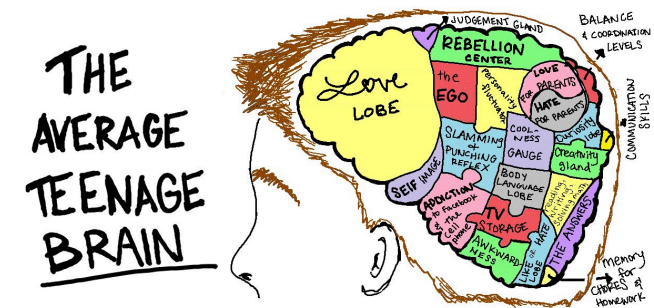
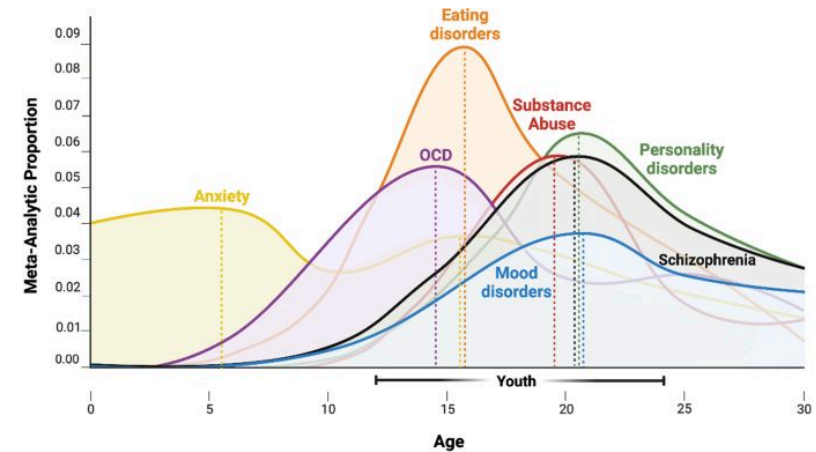
International students face even more psychosocial stressors



Challenge: When does “normal” adjustment become an illness?



What are the best tools for addressing different student challenges?



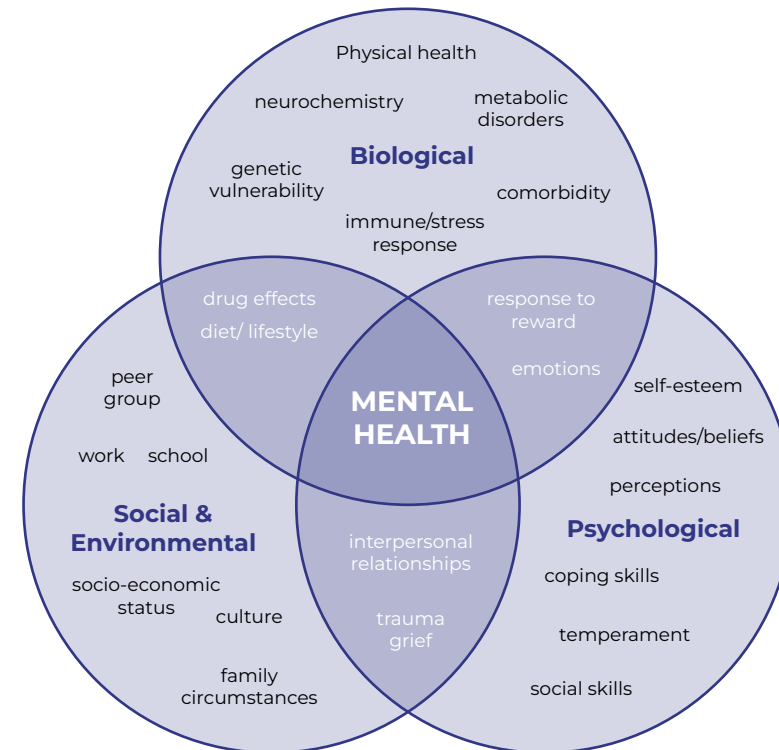
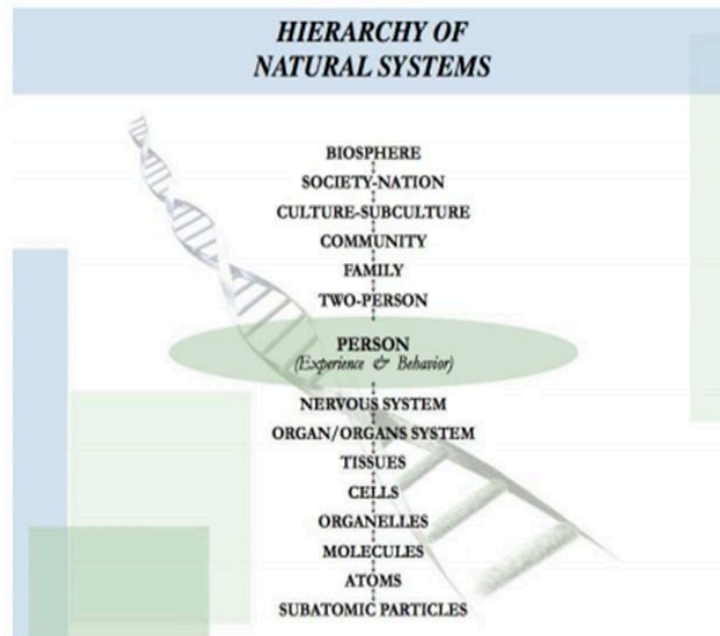
The Biopsychosocial Model: Expanding the causes and treatment of illnesses

SCIENCE

8 April 1977, Volume 196, Number 4286

The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine

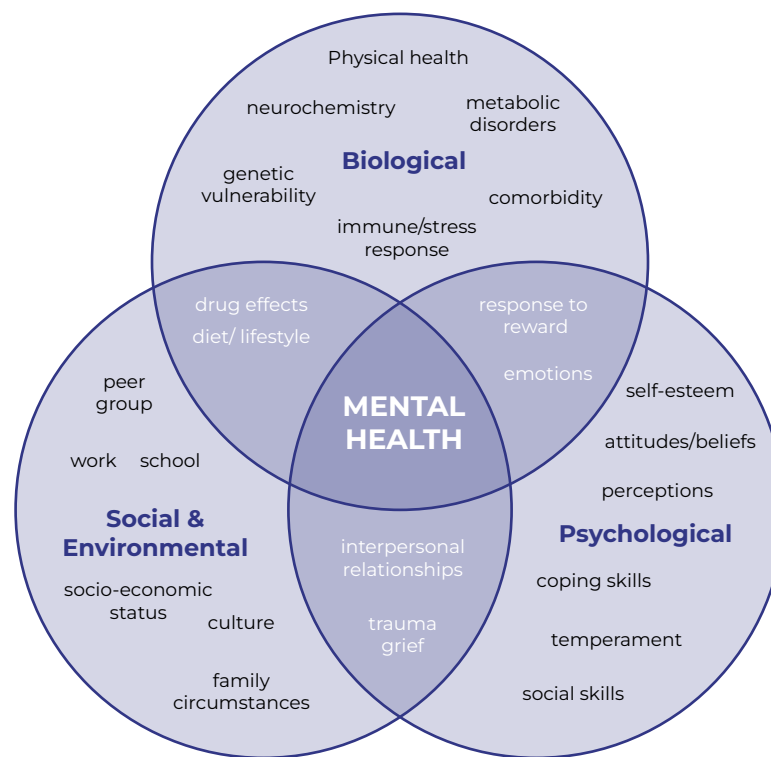
George L. Engel



Examples of added psychosocial stressors for many international students

SOCIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL

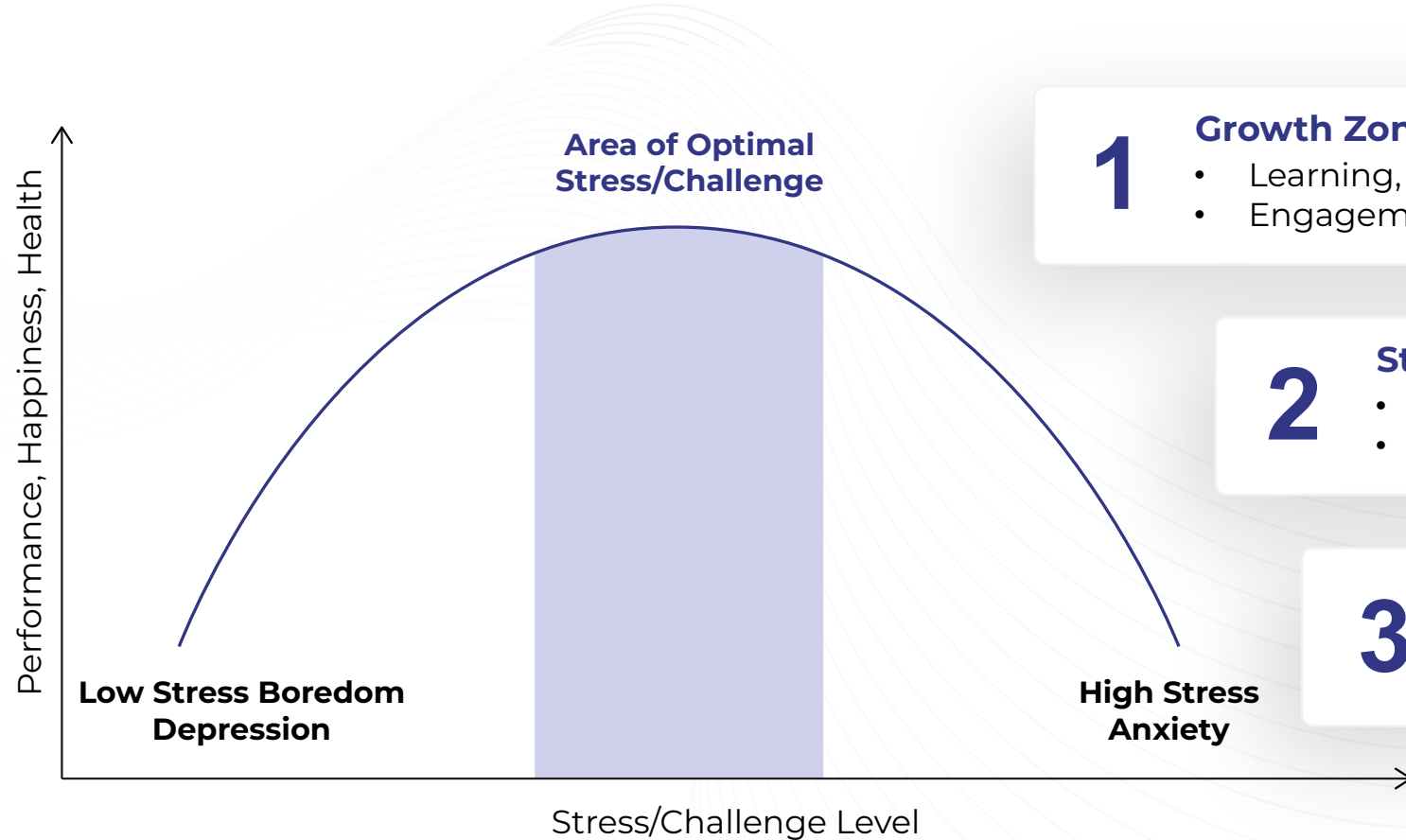
- Language barriers
- Social isolation
- Loss of familiar cultural cues (foods, built environments)
- Differences in education systems
- Cultural and spiritual/ religious differences
- Financial pressures
- Immigration concerns
- US economy, home economy, political instability
- Adult responsibilities partner, children, relatives back home



PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Acculturation process
- Challenges with identity formation
- Racialization
- Variation in self-expression

All organisms have a range of inherent resilience and vulnerability to stress/challenge



- 1 Growth Zone**
- Learning, growth, positive self-esteem
 - Engagement, productivity, altruism

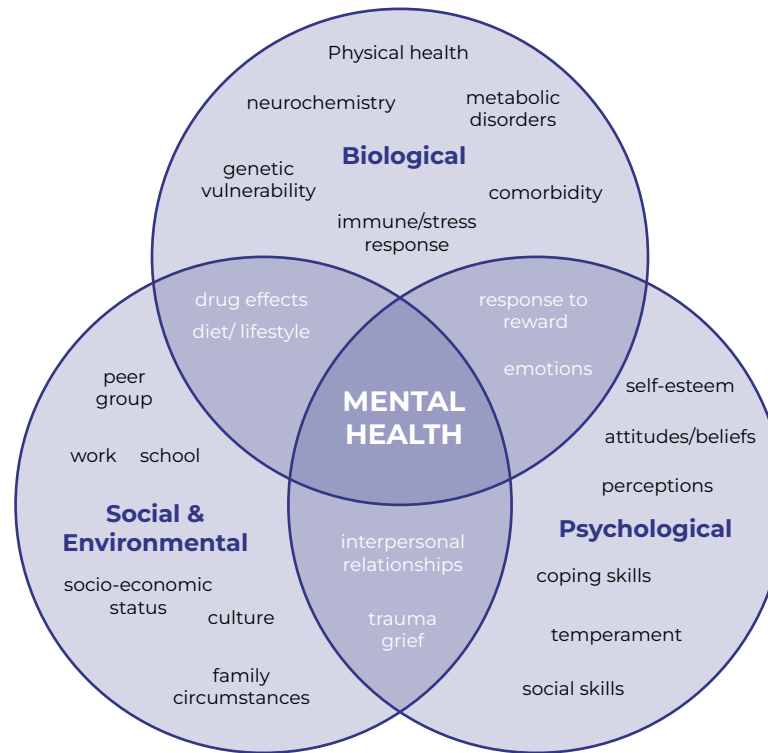
- 2 Struggle Zone**
- Stress, shorter fuse
 - Decreased self care, conflict

- 3 Toxic Zone**
- Anxiety, depression, anger
 - Isolation, substance misuse, damaged relationships

Treatments for mental illness can also be understood through BPS framework

SOCIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL

- Social supports
- Cultural affinity groups
- Religious/spiritual communities
- Access to resources that support biological approaches above (housing, transportation, insurance, healthy and culturally congruent food + exercise options, etc.
- Campus information fairs
- Peer groups with common experiences/struggles



BIOLOGICAL

- Medications
- Other somatic treatments (TMS, ECT)
- Diet/exercise/sleep optimization

PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Individual psychotherapy (e.g., skills-focused)
- Group psychotherapy

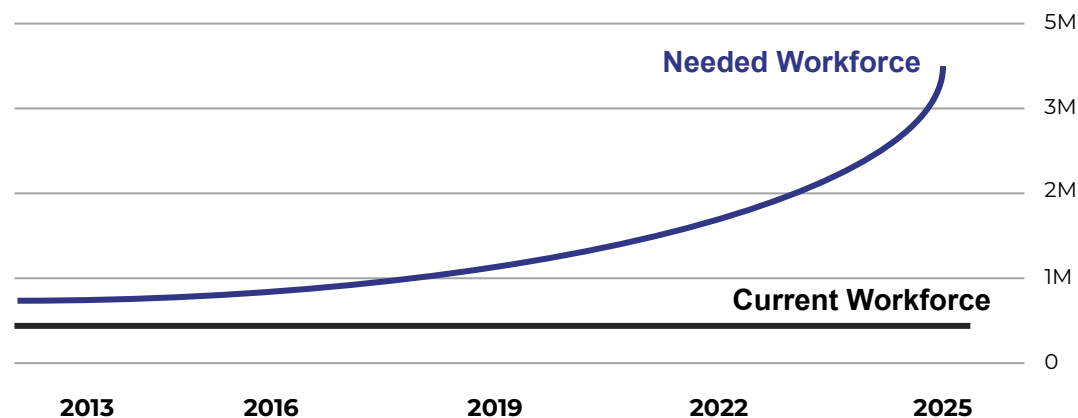
There will never be enough clinicians to meet the need

Workforce crisis has left behavioral health staff at "breaking point"

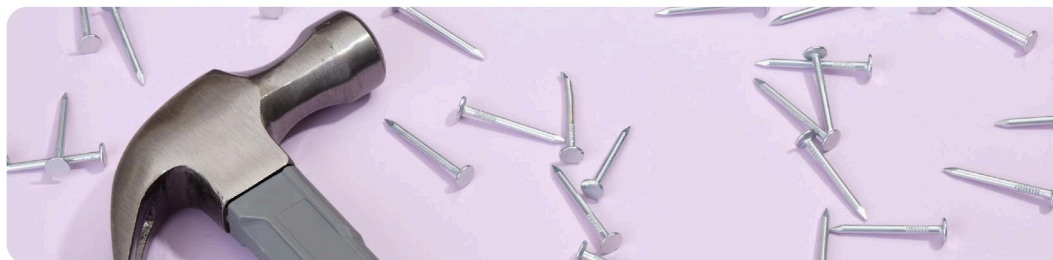
The COVID-19 tsunami fuels growing clinicians shortage with 4.5 million more behavioral health professionals needed in U.S - **a shortage of 87%.**

We need to bridge this gap!

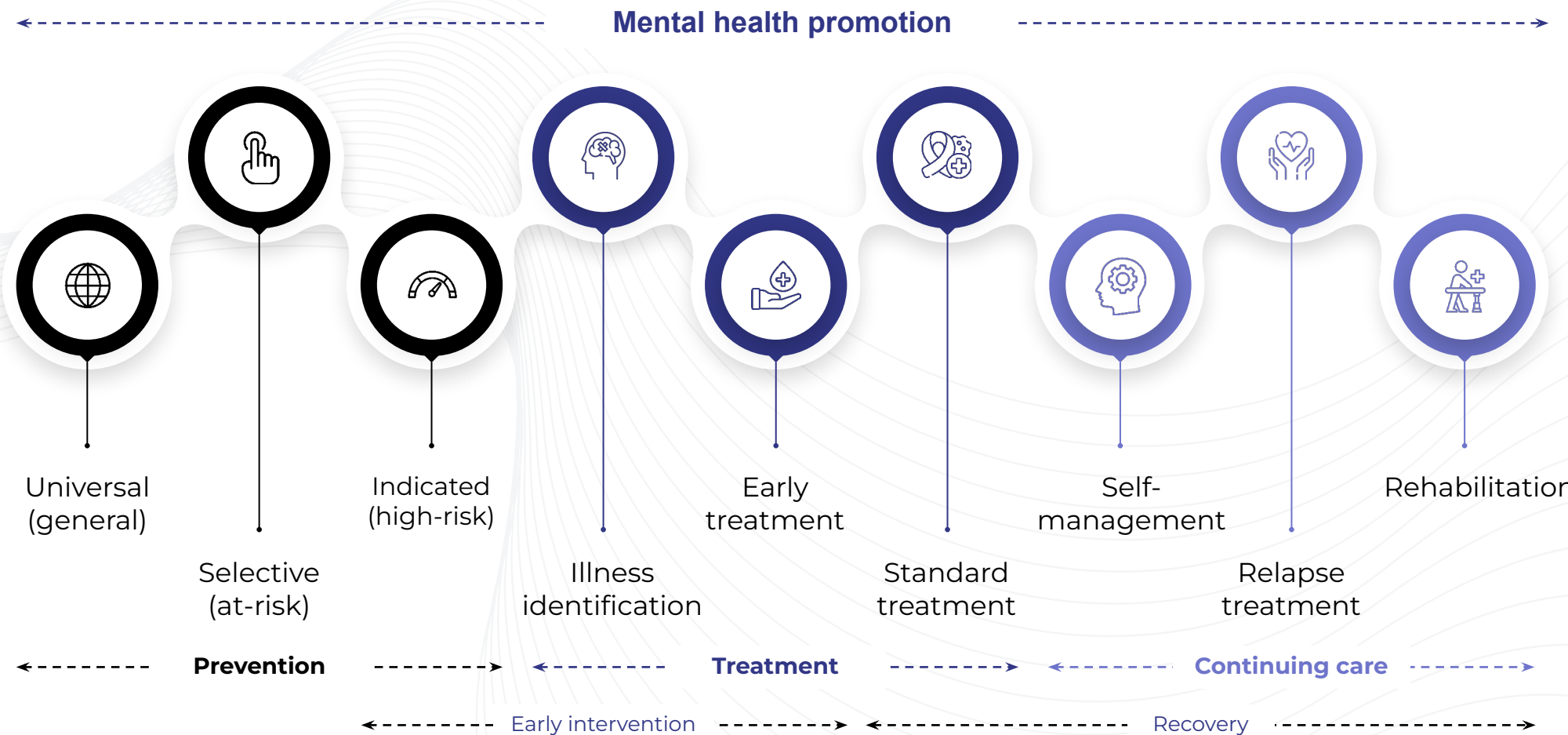
Behavioral Health Workforce (U.S)



Source Bnaval Heathert SAMHSA (2000)
National Projections of Supply and Darsand US Deputet of the L



Schools must address multiple levels, from prevention to treatment and recovery



Summary: Biopsychosocial model can help clarify international students' needs



Mental illnesses - and their treatments - can be understood through biological, psychological, and social (/cultural/spiritual) lenses



Many stressors faced by international students fall in the psychosocial category, and may benefit from interventions at those levels



For more severe symptoms, a greater focus on biological (e.g., psychiatry referral) and/or psychological (e.g., counseling/psychotherapy referral) may be needed



Educators may benefit from being able to distinguish between these two, and having ready resources for both

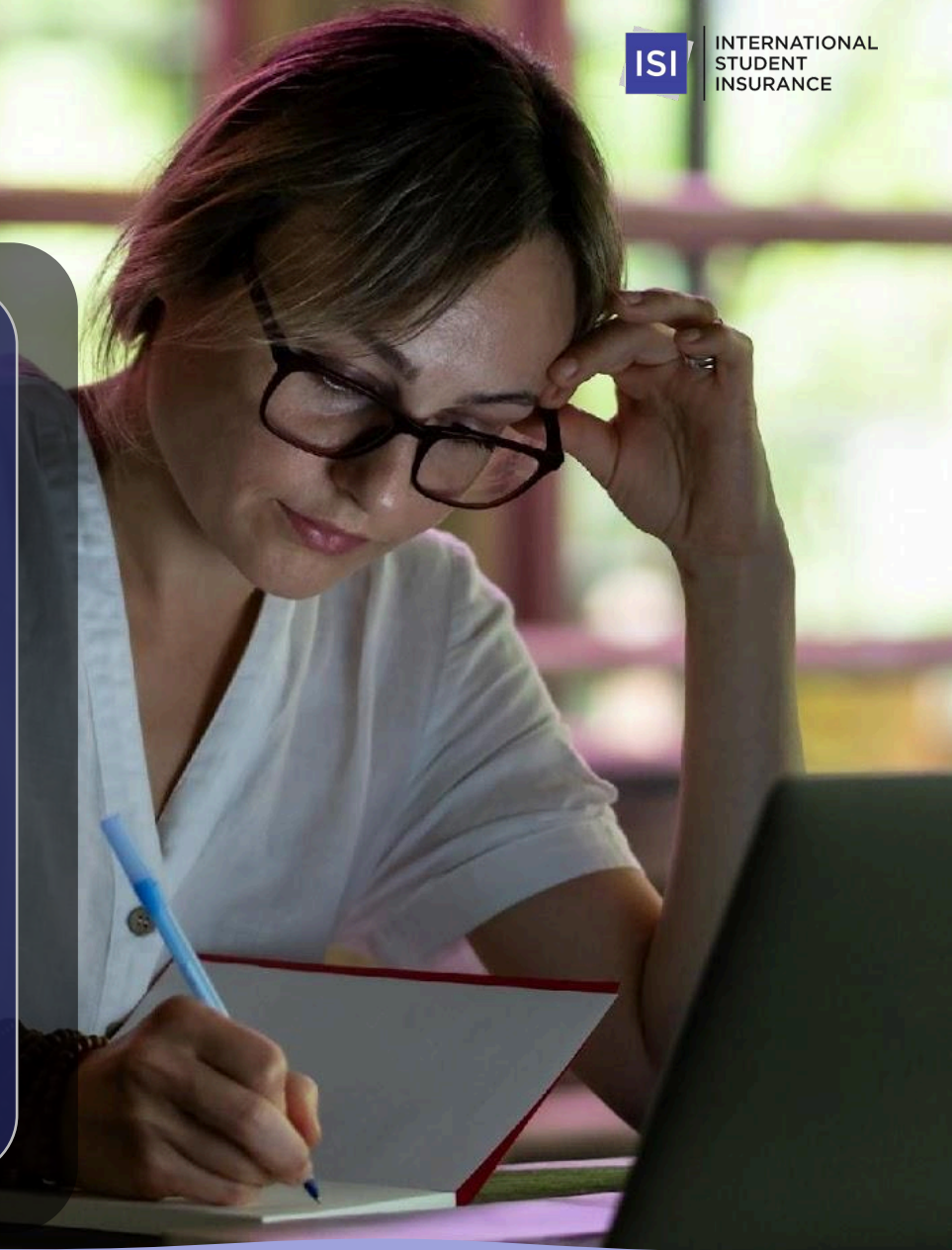
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Where to start?



International Students at Brandeis



Until grades or legal status are in jeopardy, students may put off seeking help for mental health concerns



Pressure to find work in the US (on campus or practical training)



US economy, home economy, political instability



Grad students are observed to have vulnerabilities - often less well funded at Brandeis than undergraduates

- Adult responsibilities partner, children, relatives back home



Message for students to promote resilience



Acceptance



Build and maintain a structure



Connection Matters



Celebrate small wins



Self compassion

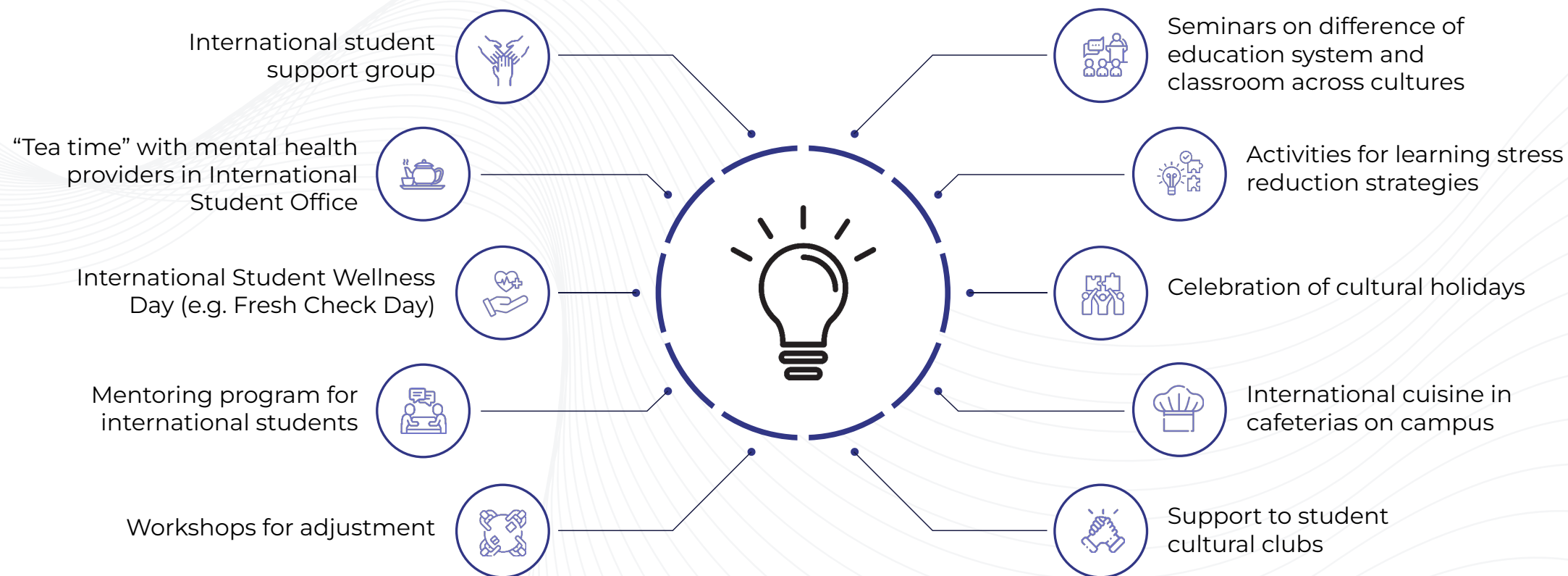


Stress reduction



Seek professional help

Ideas of prevention focused programs on campus to promote resilience



Ideas of prevention focused programs on campus to promote resilience

01

Best intervention will look different depending on your campus (Alabama football vs. Northeast liberal arts college examples)

02

Core is fostering inclusion/social support

03

To prevent worsening and later development of mental illness requiring more intensive intervention



Campus Outreach at Brandeis University

- QPR Training for staff and faculty across campus
- Grief Groups
- Connecting students with therapists in their own language, when requested
- Protocol includes a 365 24/7 interpreter service
- Fresh Check Day (Jordan Porco Foundation)
 - Increase awareness of mental health and suicide prevention resources
 - Reduce stigma to treatment
 - Empower peers to be “gatekeepers” and being aware of warning signs
 - Increase willingness to ask for help



Highlights of Mental Health Care at Brandeis University, Waltham, MA

Field clinicians scattered across campus



Academic Services, Graduate Schools,
Athletics, Library, Intercultural Center



Not formal therapy



Students can schedule sessions at the
last minute as long as there is availability



“Limit” of 3 per semester



May be their first point of contact with
therapy

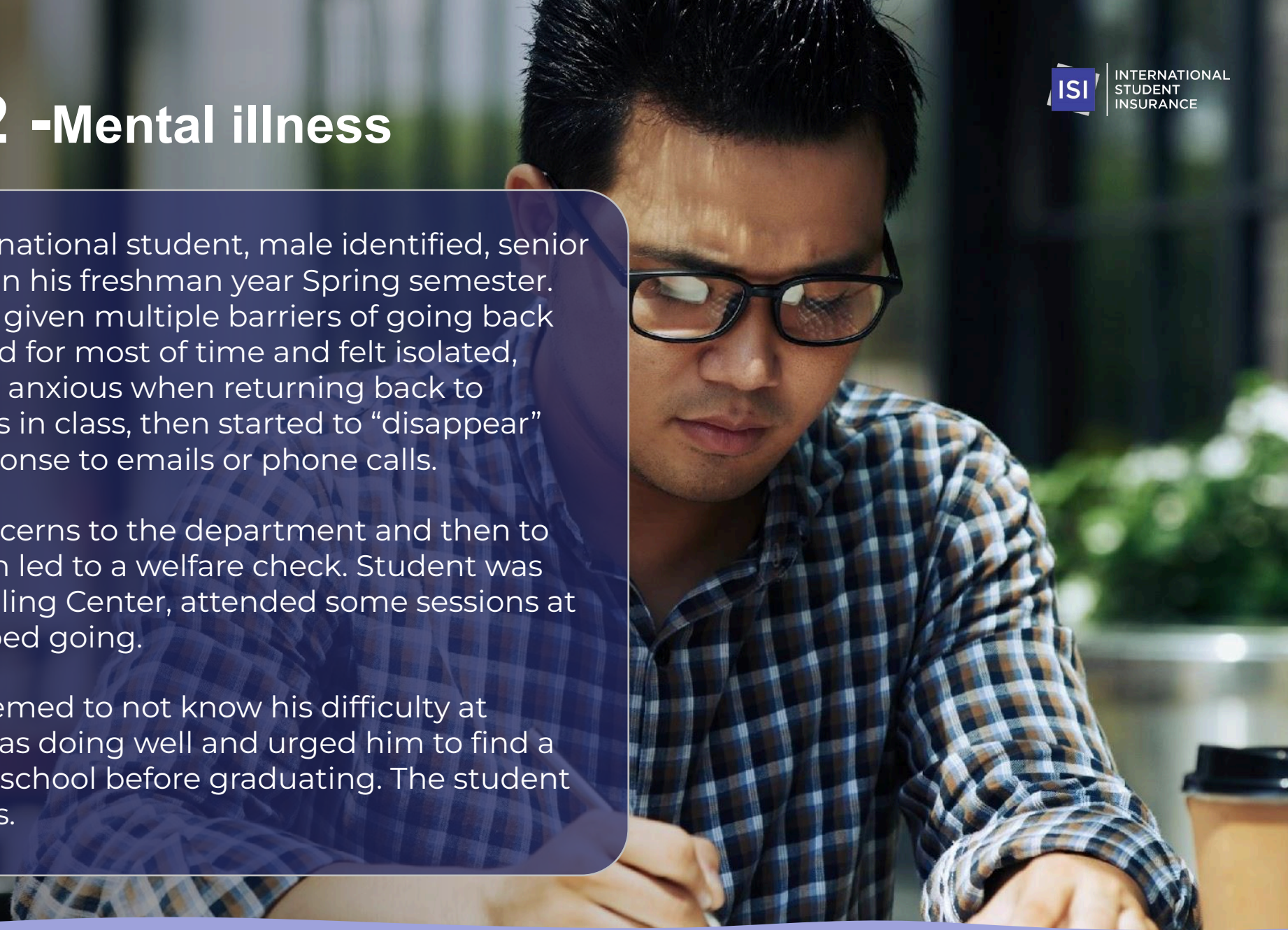


Case Study 2 -Mental illness

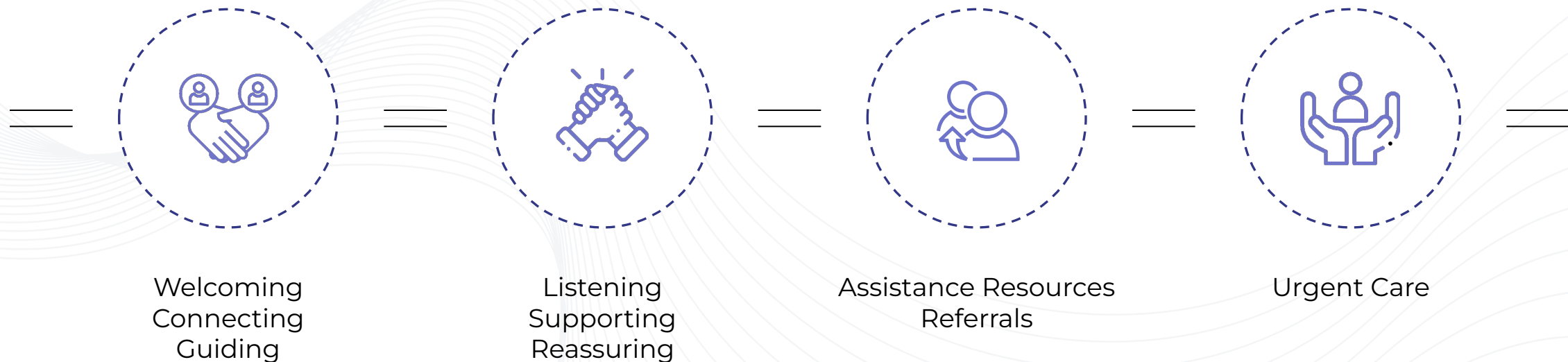
22-year-old Chinese international student, male identified, senior year of college, Covid hit in his freshman year Spring semester. He had to stay in the U.S. given multiple barriers of going back home, stayed quarantined for most of time and felt isolated, gained much weight, felt anxious when returning back to classroom, had difficulties in class, then started to “disappear” from classes, had no response to emails or phone calls.

Professors expressed concerns to the department and then to the Student Affairs, which led to a welfare check. Student was connected to the Counseling Center, attended some sessions at first, but eventually stopped going.

His family back home seemed to not know his difficulty at school and thought he was doing well and urged him to find a job or apply for graduate school before graduating. The student appeared to be in distress.



Ways to support student mental health



On campus staff from variety of offices

to Mental health professionals

When to refer for further assessment

Observation on non-verbal clues & verbal reports from self and others

- Deterioration in personal hygiene or dress
- Dramatic weight loss or gain
- Noticeable change in mood or cognition (e.g., being disoriented)
- Appeared to be in distress
- Prolonged impairment in daily function
- Excessive absence
- Academic problems
- Social isolation and unusual behaviors
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Threats of harm to themselves or others



Things to consider when making referrals



Listening helps



Expressing concerns and cares



Acknowledging common myths about counseling and helping to address them



Making no assumptions and asking for preference of provider



Building connections with providers on and off campus



Taking the first step together with the student to connect with a provider



Checking on their progress after referrals were made



Counseling is voluntary

Message for students to promote resilience



- Seeking help is okay
- Self care is necessary and important
- Set mini goals
- Take small steps
- Celebrate small wins
- Positive self talk
- Connection matters
- Hold on the hope

Key Campus Connections for International Students

- Multicultural Center
- International Office
- Counseling Center
- Residential Life
- Dean of Students
- Public Safety
- Off-campus treatment partners



Building your Toolkit: Health Insurance



International students top stressors include finances



Health insurance provides students with access to care and minimizes how much they will pay



Are your international students covered?

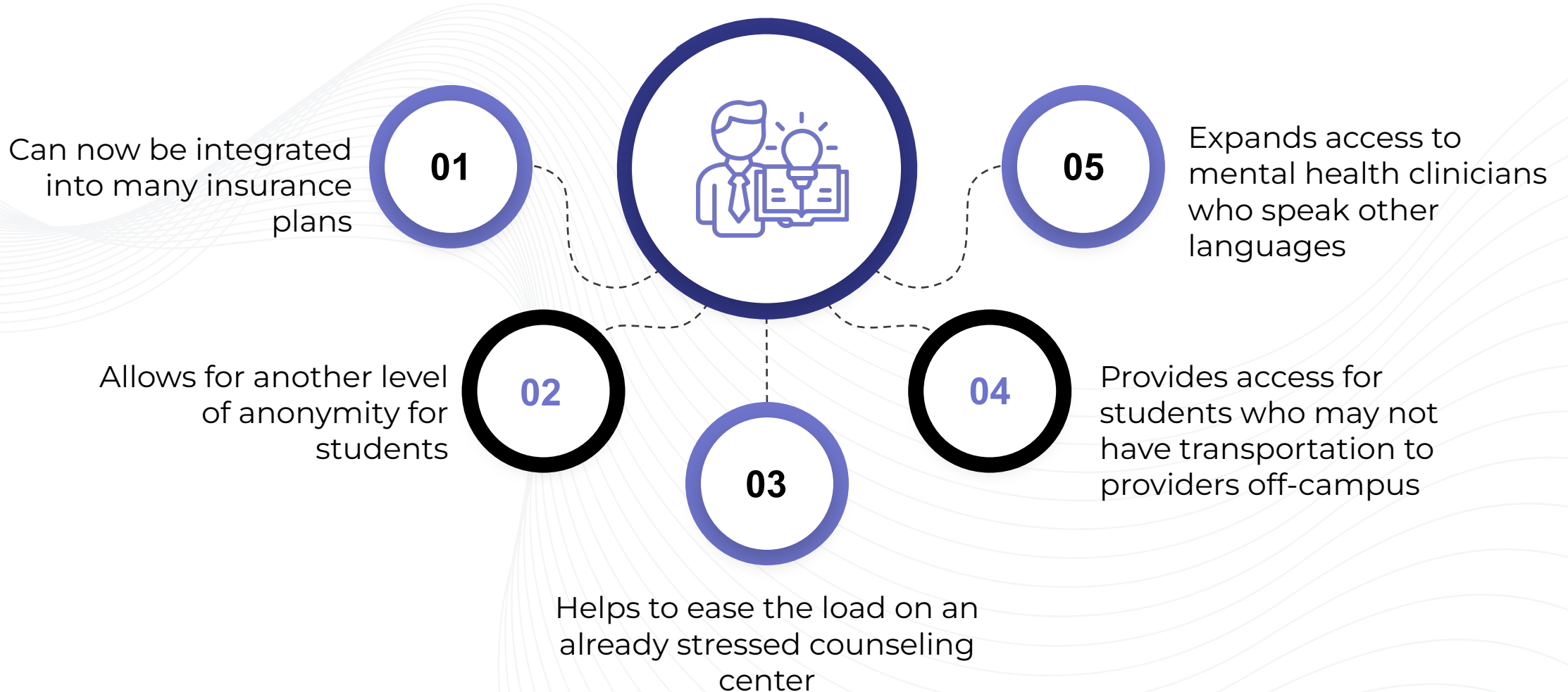
- Does that include coverage for mental health?
- What does the network look like?
- How much do students pay when they seek help?
- Is it easy to use?



How do you educate students on their plan?



Why Telecounseling?



Emotional Wellness Training Program for International Students



Powerpoint Presentation

Professionally designed presentation to walk your students through the training.



Video Content

Two videos on mental health awareness and student perceptions on culture shock and stress from around the world.



Student Handout

A downloadable student guide take-away, or we can supply hard copies, to distribute to students.



Interactive Activities

Activities that encourage dialogue on many of the larger issues such as myths surround seeking help.



Proctor Guide

Complete guide to walk you or your staff through the training, including a full script and talking points.



<https://administrators.internationalstudentinsurance.com/resources/>

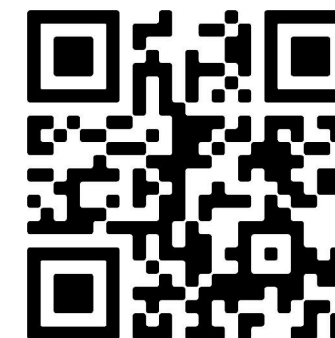
In Partnership
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The MGH Center
for Cross-Cultural Student
Emotional Wellness



INTERNATIONAL
STUDENT
INSURANCE



QUESTIONS

