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# TRAINING YOUR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS

EMOTIONAL WELLNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS



# CULTURE SHOCK & STRESS VIDEO



[www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/explained/culture-shock-and-stress-video.php](http://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/explained/culture-shock-and-stress-video.php)

# PRESENTERS



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# AGENDA

- What's Going On With Our Students?
- Understanding the Challenges
- Overcoming the Challenges
- Programming That Works
- Resources
- Discussion & Questions

# WHAT'S GOING ON?

40% of students so depressed they found it difficult to function

61% of students felt "overwhelming anxiety"

13.9% of entering freshman anticipate a "very good chance" of seeking counselling

38.5% felt things were hopeless

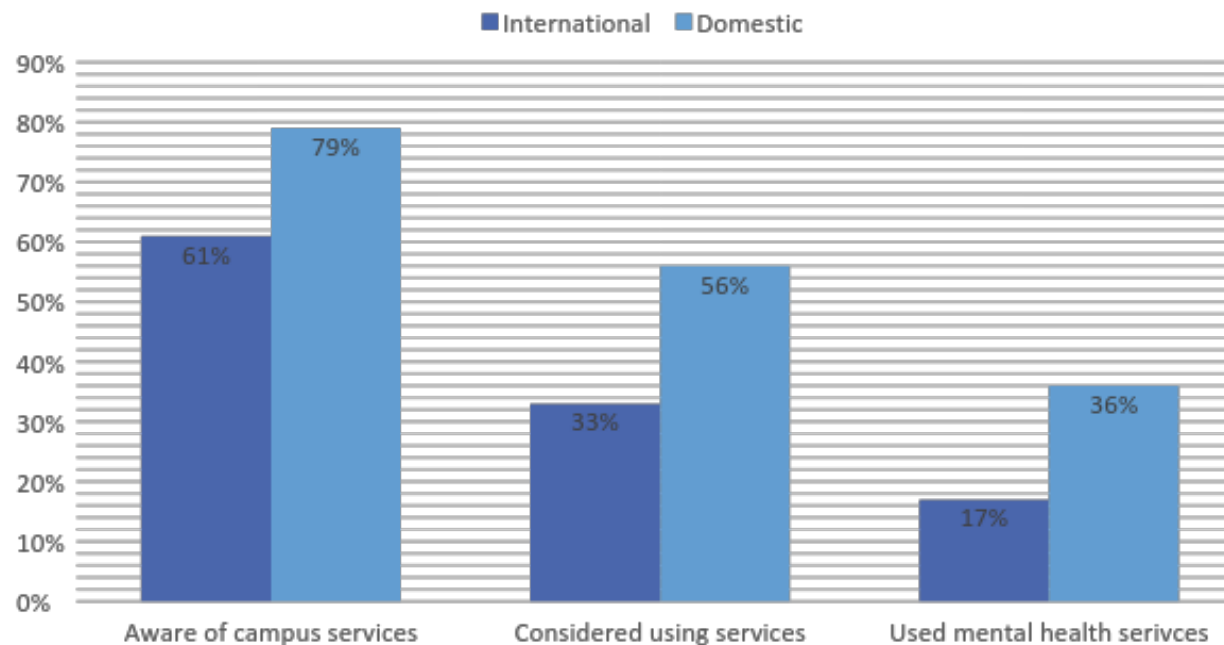


**49%** of adolescents ages 13-18 experience mental health disorders

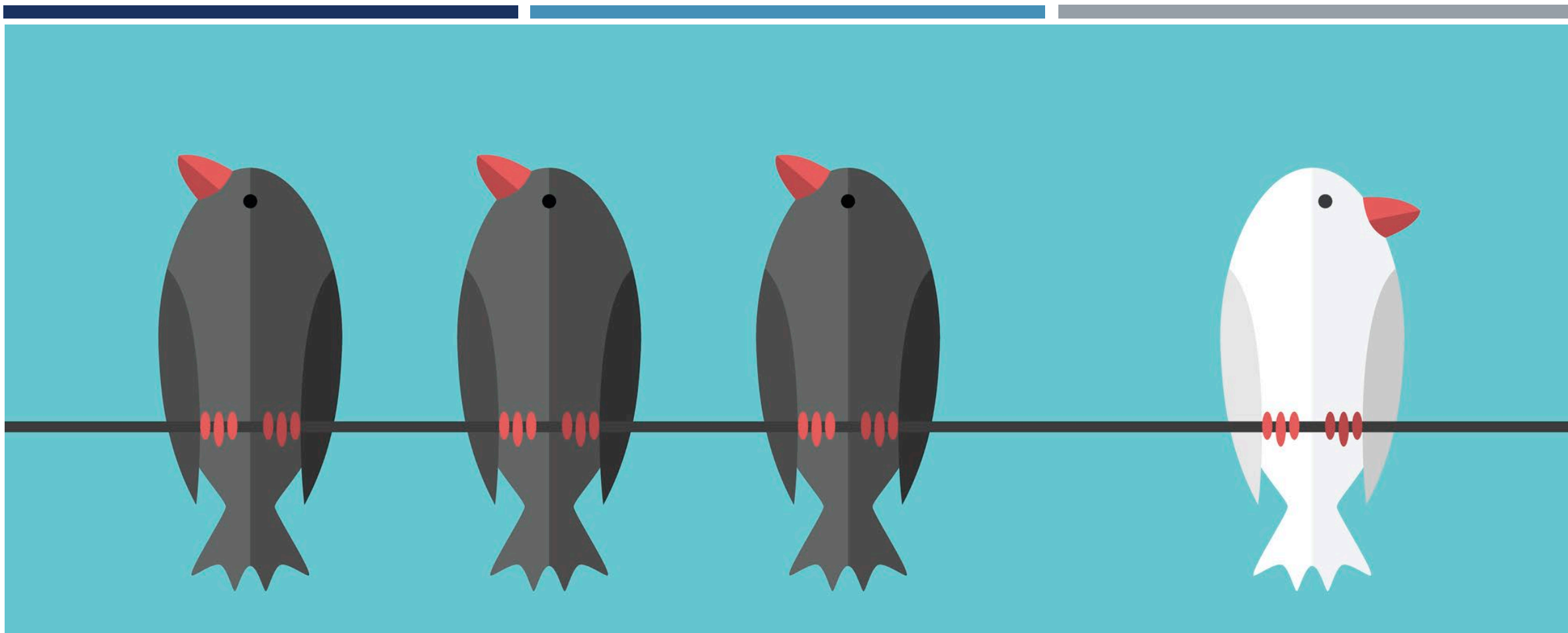
# WHAT'S GOING ON? - MENTAL HEALTH CARE UNDERUTILIZED

## Mental Health Need, Awareness, and Use of Counseling

Services Among International Graduate Students, Journal of American College Health



Source: Hyun, Quinn, Madon, & Lusting, 2010



UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES

# CULTURE IMPACTS - ALL ASPECTS OF ILLNESS



- Expression of symptoms outwardly and inwardly
- Experience of symptoms
- Coping
- Where to seek care
- Management of symptoms
- How they seek help



# UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES – COMMON ISSUES

## Seeking Care

- Location of counseling center
- Cultural understanding

## Second language anxiety

- Daily routine
- Communicating with professors and classmates
- Coordinating a living situation
- Asking for help

## Interpersonal

- Cultural Boundaries
- Differences in relationships
- Peer pressure
- Parental expectations

## Identity

- Acculturation
- Social class
- Race
- Discrimination
- Political Oppression

## Career planning

- Finances
- Area of study
- Planning

## Academic

- Teaching styles in other countries
- Presentation styles
- Academic pressure



# BARRIERS TO TREATMENT

- Lack of mental health literacy
- Unaware of services
- Language barriers
- Role of psychiatry in other cultures
- Stigma (Family & friends)
- Location of counseling center
- US therapists lacking cultural understanding
- Lack of support



**“ ONLY SOMEONE  
FROM MY HOME  
COUNTRY WILL  
UNDERSTAND MY  
PROBLEM. ”**

**“ counseling  
is for  
“crazy”  
people ”**

**“ I can handle  
my own  
mental health  
problems. If I  
can't, that  
means I'm  
weak. ”**

## **COMMON MYTHS**

**“ Everyone will know  
I saw a counselor ”**

**“ I COULD  
LOSE MY  
VISA STATUS ”**



OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES

# SUPPORTING YOUR STUDENTS



## 1. Help Create A Community

- Connecting students prior to their arrival in the US
- Awareness of clubs, teams and organizations on campus
- Scheduling events regularly, and especially during holidays

## 2. Regular Check-Ins

- Being able to identify students who are struggling
- Noticeable changes in dress, appearance, demeanor
- Being available to talk, and to speak with others in the community

## 3. Internal Training

- Identify and respond to students in distress
- When to connect students to resources (we are not counselors!)
- How to listen actively, empathetically, and without judgement



# SCHOLARS VS. STUDENTS

In difficult conversations:

- Where do scholars fall in the international community at your campus/university?
- What services are available for scholars?
- What can you do about it?



# BUILDING BRIDGES



## Mental Health outside of the Mental Health sphere

- Depression Screening at Student Health Center
- Establishing a knowledge-sharing community (know your partners)
- Highlight Counseling Center events through newsletters, social media, etc.
- Know the services offered around campus, and form connections
  - Support groups/medical practitioners who speak other languages
  - Ombudsperson Office
  - Dean of Students
  - Child and Family Studies on campus
  - Chapel and community religious/spiritual support centers

# CULTURE OF CARE: SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Advisors can support students with counseling skills, including:

- Demonstrating Empathy
- Reflecting and Paraphrasing
- Asking Open-ended Questions & Building rapport
- Keep confidentiality (a professional code of public silence) - FERPA
- Learn How To Pronounce Names Correctly
- Have a support team available in times of crisis
- Support the community, not just the affected student/family





# HOW TO REDUCE STIGMA

- Dispel the myths: What is mental health and counseling
- Know the facts about cultural differences around counseling
- Invite on-campus counselors/psychologists to orientation and meet & greets
- Educate counselors/psychologists on how to communicate across cultures
- Give testimonials even anonymously, and perhaps in their native language
- Normalize students' concerns and stress
- Creative ways of introducing counseling
- Demystify seeking treatment (i.e., types of providers, where to go, what to expect)

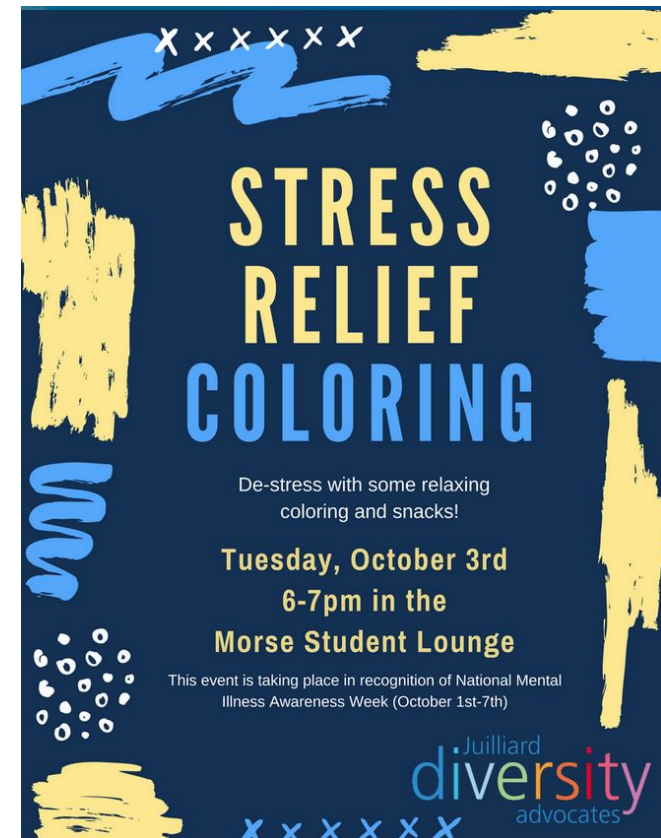


# PROGRAMMING THAT WORKS

# MARKETING YOUR PROGRAM

Think about ways to approach the topic indirectly:

- Making friends in the US
- Managing stress
- Time management
- Eating healthy
- Staying fit on campus

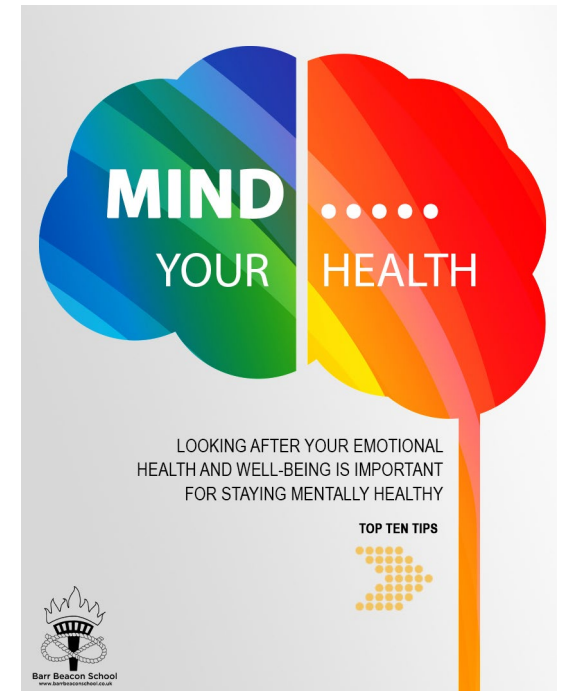


# PRE-DEPARTURE PROGRAMMING

*“The first day of a student’s orientation is too late to be discussing student mental health for the first time.”<sup>1</sup> - “It’s Never Too Soon To Talk About Mental Health”<sup>2</sup>*

Prior to student’s arrival, think of ways to prepare students or address the topic in pre-departure materials:

- Introduction materials about the Counseling/Wellness initiatives available on campus with pictures and phone numbers/emails
- Testimonials from current students about homesickness, culture shock, stress, anxiety, and depression (perhaps in video format)
- Quotes about acceptance of mental health and counseling (like “Common Myths”)
- Create Buddy programs
- Collaborate in residence halls on outreach programming



<sup>1</sup> Lee Burdette Williams. <sup>2</sup> The Chronicle of Higher Education, 10/14/2016, p.A56.

# MENTAL HEALTH IN ORIENTATION

These are a few things you can keep in mind for your international student orientation:

- Educate students on challenges and cultural adjustment issues that may arise
- Invite Counseling Center or other mental health professionals to introduce mental health service/host a luncheon
- Educate students about campus/community resources
- Train your peer leaders and mentors to be knowledgeable enough about these issues to help guide students
- Collaborate in residence halls on outreach programming



# PROGRAMMING THAT HELPS

- Buddy/Peer mentor programs
- Workshops (e.g., “Decoding U.S. Culture”, “Lost in Translation”, “Culture Shock”)
- “Let’s Talk” Drop-in Hours
- University 101-type courses/Freshman Orientation courses
- Social organizations/student clubs
- Summer/Holiday programs
- Friendship family programs
- Discussion/Support Groups
- Creative initiatives (e.g., “Welcome to My World Photo Exhibition”)



# VIRGINIA TECH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE INSTITUTE

## Programming Solutions in Progress

- Close contact with counselors at the Cook Counseling Center
- Understanding the “counseling process”
  - What must a student do when arriving at counseling center?
  - Who are the crisis counselors?
  - Are there counselors that speak other languages?
  - How does a counselor decide the student is in crisis?
  - What is the process should a student be committed?
  - What information release process must be in place?

# VIRGINIA TECH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE INSTITUTE

## Programming Solutions in Progress

- “First Contact” identified – advisors/instructors
  - University policy on reporting students
  - Training to identify signs of distress
  - Communication and relationships with advisors and instructors
  - Be there for training, so they know you
  - Share some regulation information: full time required, reduced course load



# VIRGINIA TECH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE INSTITUTE

## Programming Solutions in Progress

- Best advice so far
  - Let the students know you are there
    - Just asking makes a difference
  - Call the counseling office with your concerns
  - Gather resources:
    - Training from campus
    - Local support groups
    - Women's center
    - Crisis hotline



# RESOURCES & HOTLINES

PRE-DEPARTURE, ORIENTATION, ONLINE

# EMOTIONAL WELLNESS TRAINING



**Powerpoint  
Presentation**



**Video Content**



**Student Handout**



**Interactive Activities**



**Proctor Guide**

In partnership with:



The MGH Center for  
Cross-Cultural Student  
Emotional Wellness

 **International**  
Student Insurance

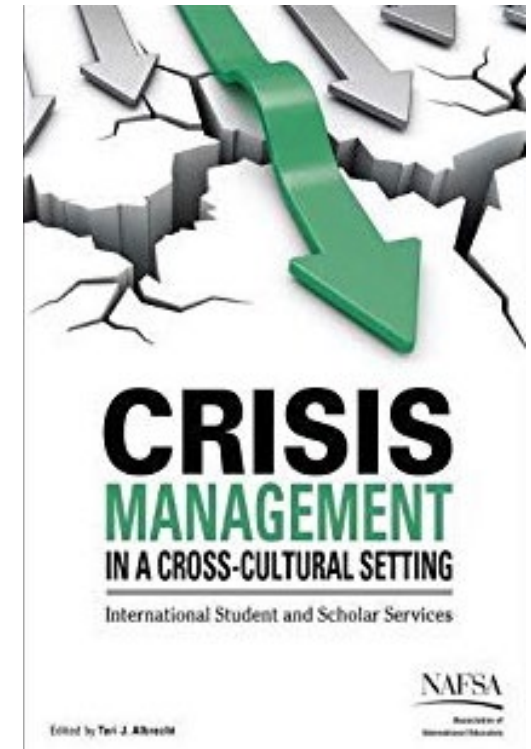
# RESOURCES – FOR PROFESSIONALS

## ■ NAFSA Resources

- Best Practices in Addressing Mental Health Issues Affecting Education Abroad Participants [shop.nafsa.org/detail.aspx?id=102E](http://shop.nafsa.org/detail.aspx?id=102E)
- Crisis Management in a Cross Cultural Setting: ISSS [shop.nafsa.org/detail.aspx?id=992](http://shop.nafsa.org/detail.aspx?id=992)
- NAFSA Book/E-book: Mental Health Issues and International Students - AVAILABLE DECEMBER 2018

## ■ Other Resources

- Massachusetts General Hospital Center for Cross-Cultural Student Emotional Wellness (MGHCCCSEW) [www.mghstudentwellness.org/consortium-landing](http://www.mghstudentwellness.org/consortium-landing)




# SERVICES & HOTLINES – FOR STUDENTS



## Online and phone counseling services

- Hotlines and services
  - National Suicide Prevention - 1-800-273-TALK  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
  - The National Domestic Violence Hotline - 1-800-799-SAFE  
[www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)
  - It Gets Better Project (LGBTQ) 1-866-4-U-TREVOR  
[www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/get-help](http://www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/get-help)
  - Trans Lifeline (transgender specific)  
[www.translifeline.org](http://www.translifeline.org)
  - Crisis Text Line - Text 741-741  
[www.crisistextline.org](http://www.crisistextline.org)



**“International students who reported a **more functional relationship** with their advisors **were less likely** to report having an **emotional or stress-related problem** in the past year.”**



# QUESTIONS?