

Overcoming Stigma: Mental Health Awareness for International Students & Scholars

Tuesday, October 25th
10:15am to 11:45am



Presenters



Patricia Burak

Director
Slutzker Center for International
Services
Syracuse University



Jennifer Frankel

Marketing Director
International Student Insurance



Peggy O'Connor

Staff Therapist,
Counseling Center
Syracuse University



Cory Owen

Assistant Dean of International
Advisement & Diversity Initiatives
The Juilliard School

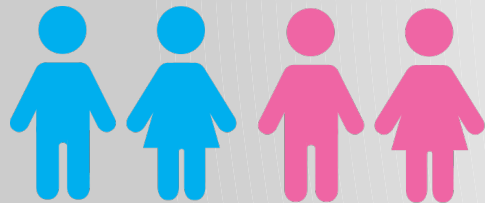
Agenda

- What's Going On With Our Students
- Understanding the Challenges
- The East Asia Example
- Seeking Care
- Programming That Works
- Resources
- Discussion & Questions

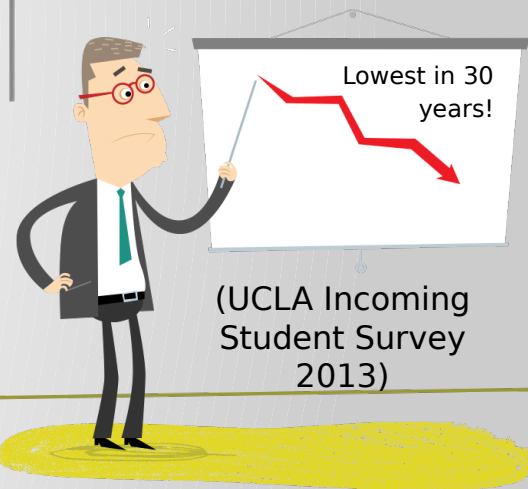
What's Going On?



(ACHA, Spring 2013)



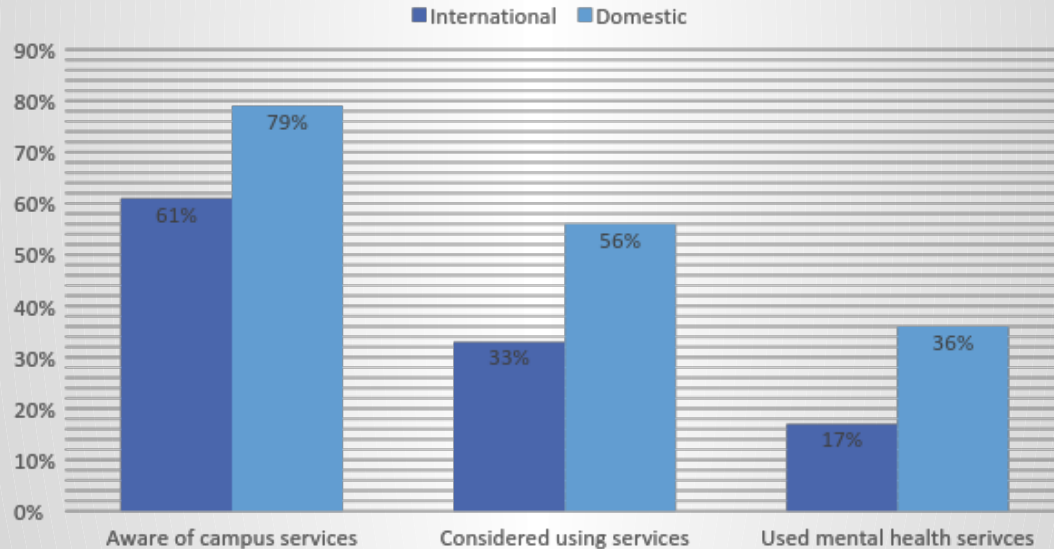
46% Diagnosed
(NIMH, 2013)



(UCLA Incoming Student Survey 2013)

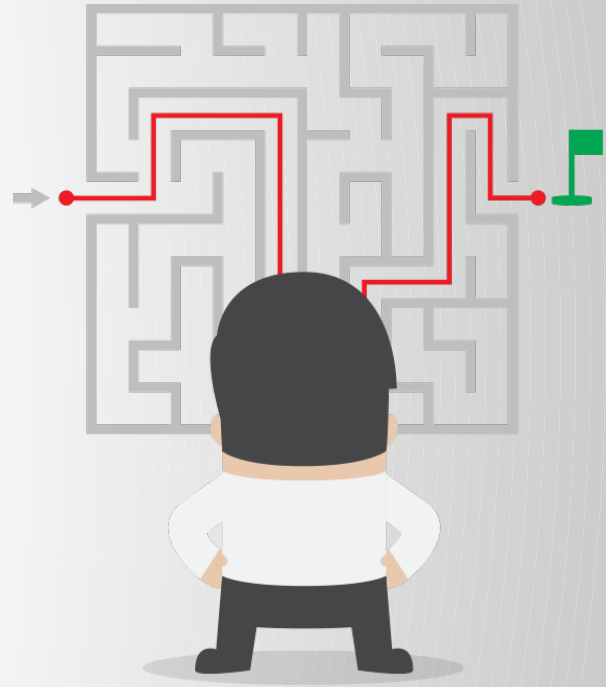
Mental Health Care – Underutilized

Mental Health Need, Awareness, and Use of Counseling Services Among International Graduate Students, *Journal of American College Health*



Source: Hyun, Quinn, Madon, & Lusting,

Understanding the Challenges



Common Issues

Communication styles

Verbal v. non-verbal

High-context vs. low-context

Interpersonal

Boundaries

Cultural differences in relationships

Peer pressure

Parental expectations

Career Planning

Finances

Area of study

Planning

Second language anxiety

Daily routine

Communicating with professors and classmates

Coordinating a living situation

Asking for help

Identity

Acculturation

Social class

Race

Discrimination

Political

Oppression

Academic

Formal vs. informal classroom

Presentation styles

Outcome vs. process

Syracuse University - International Student Data

of students seen at the Counseling Center

Country of Origin	2014-2015 #	2014-2015 %		2015-2016 #	2015-2016 %
Southeast Asia	70	31		88	34
Hispanic/Latino	43	19		43	17
Middle East	20	9		21	8
India	21	10		24	9
Europe	31	14		34	13
Africa	12	5		14	6
Canada	9	4		10	5
South Pacific	11	5		12	5
Unidentified	3	3		13	4

Note: # of students includes only intakes and does not include students seen on Day Call or in crisis.

Total students seen at CC regardless of country of origin:

2014-2015: 1364

2015-2016: 1421

Syracuse University - International Student Data 2014-2016, Continued.....

DIAGNOSIS:

- Anxiety 56%
- Depression 43%
- Academic Career 36%
- Relationship issues 36%
- Adjustment 23%
- Attention 18%
- Suicide 3%

Note: Percentages for 2014-2015 & 2015-2016 are similar & no significant difference in percentage.

REFERRAL SOURCE:

- Self 50%
- Friend 16%
- Faculty 12%
- Other offices: 20%
- Family 2%

Note: Other offices includes: ORL-3%, Health Services-8%, ESF-1% & other unk-8%

Common Myths

Only someone from my home country will understand my problem.

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

Counseling is for "crazy" people.

I could lose my visa status.

"Everyone will know I saw a counselor."

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



Yeung A, Kung W. *Psychiatric News*. 2004; 21(1): 34-36.

Kim BSK, Omizo MM. *Couns. Psychol.* 2003; 31:343-46.

Other Factors

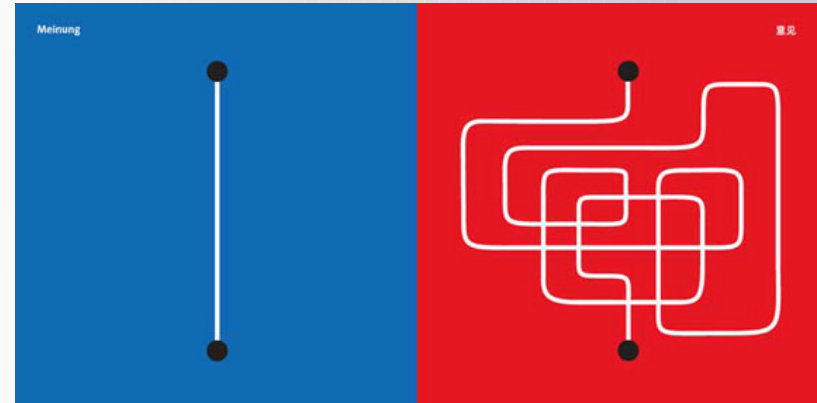
- Social Media
- Text Messaging

Culture and Mental Health

The East Asia Example

East Meets West On Campus

- 1978: China's economic opening to the West
- Pedagogical difference
- Communication styles
- Social norms
- Vulnerable transition period for individuals of all cultures



Pinder-Amaker S, Bell C. Harv. Rev. Psychiatry. 2012; 20:174-188

Chen J, Liu L, Zhao X, Yeung A. J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry. 2015 Nov;54(11):879-880.

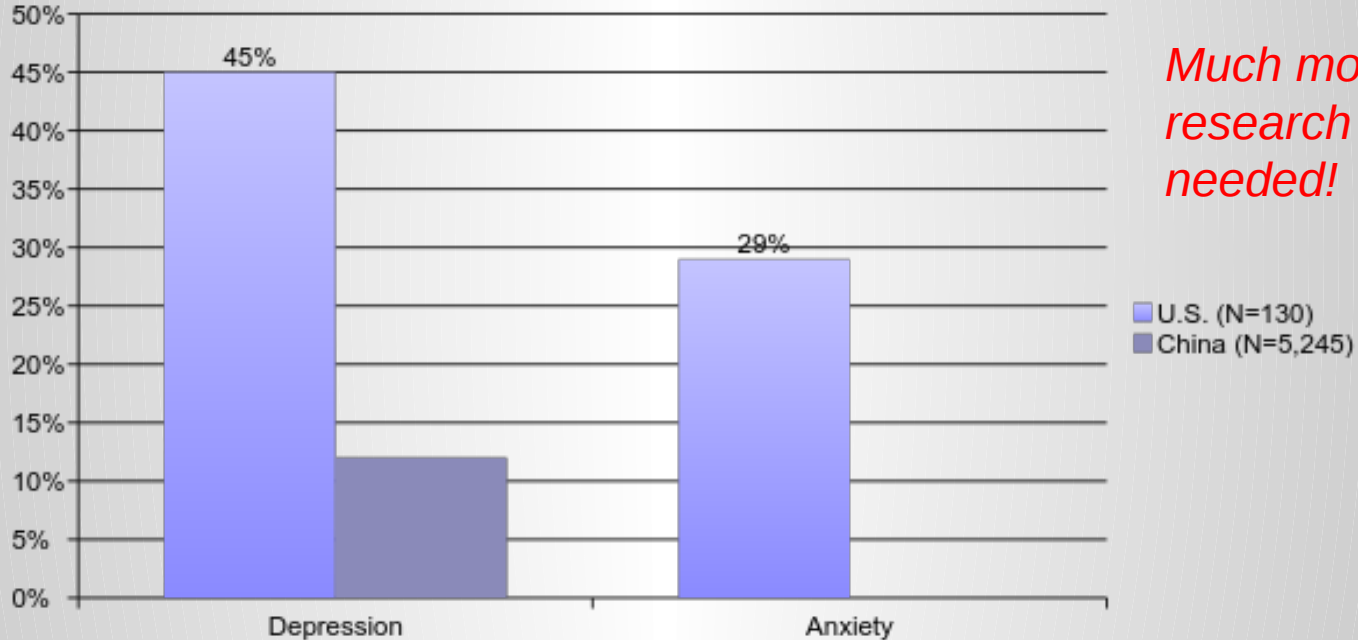
“All decent parents want to do what's best for their children. **The Chinese just have a totally different idea of how to do that.**”



– Amy Chua

Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother

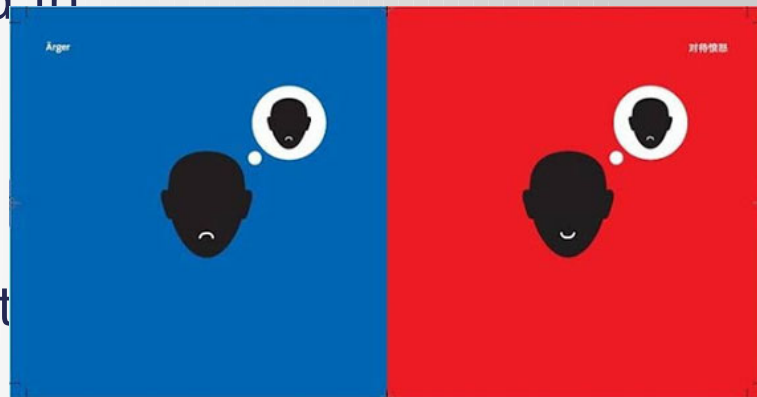
What is the Data?



[Han X, Han X, Luo Q, Jacobs S, Jean-Baptiste M. *J Am Coll Health*. 2013;61:1-8.](#)
[Chen L, Wang L, Qiu XH, et al. *PLoS One*. 2013;8.](#)

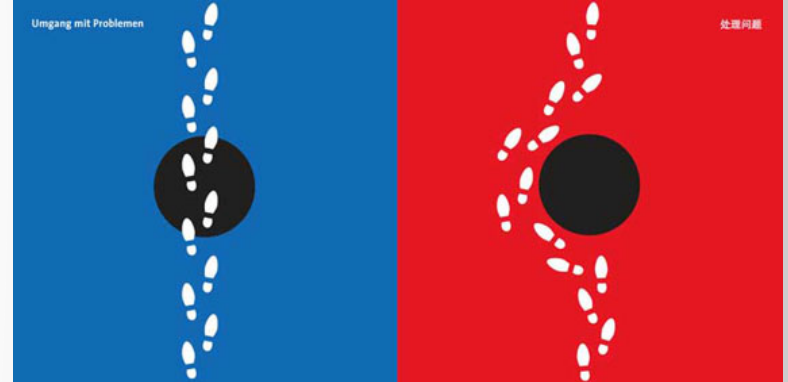
Culture and Stigma

- Mental illness is highly stigmatized in Chinese culture (~ psychosis)
- Implications for marriage
- “Neurasthenia”(神经衰弱)
- “Physical complaints as a legitimate metaphor to indirectly express personal/interpersonal problems”



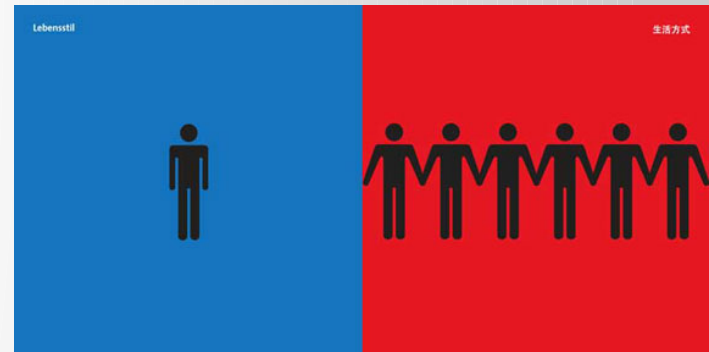
Top 4 Psychological Challenges

1. Separation from parents
2. Face and shame
3. Clash of cultures
4. Identity formation



Face and Shame

- “Face” (面子 / 臉)
- “Men cannot live without shame. A sense of shame is the beginning of integrity.”– Mencius (孟子)
- Comparisons
- Focus on external
- Shame linked to suicide



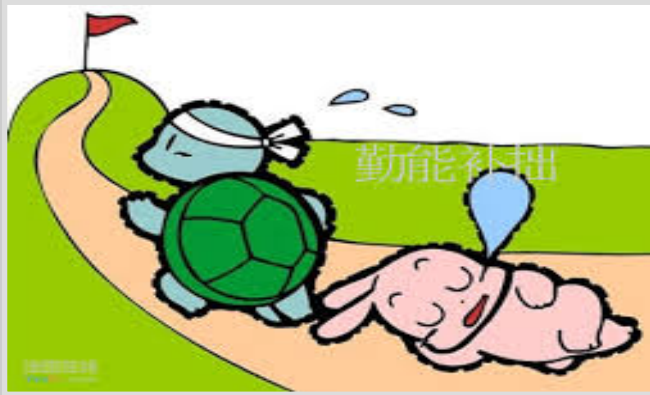
Clash of Cultures



Chinese	Western
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diligence• Obedience• Harmony	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural talent• Independence• Pursuit of individual fulfillment and happiness

Chinese Cultural Narrative

勤能補拙



“Diligence can make up for lack of intelligence.”

不能輸在起跑線上



“You cannot lose at the starting line.”

Observe and Approach

- Noticing difficulties
- Acknowledging and asking
- Being patient and being willing to listen
- Paying attention to non-verbal clues
- Somatic vs. psychological focus
- Academic, medical, or/and psychological interventions
- Seeking consultation

Trauma

When to Refer

- Build a baseline
- Notice the changes
- Things to watch for:
 - Deterioration in Personal Hygiene or Dress
 - Dramatic Weight Loss or Gain
 - Noticeable Changes in Mood
 - Excessive Absences
 - Academic Problems
 - Social Isolation and Unusual Behaviors
 - Drug and Alcohol Abuse
 - Threat of Harm to Themselves or Others

How to Refer

- Introducing counseling
 - As building a relationship
 - As gaining knowledge about oneself, learning skills, connecting to resources
- Make the call, walk in together, or invite the counselor to your office. Due to confidentiality law- encourage the student to sign a release of information for you to the counseling center
- Make no assumptions and ask their provider preference
- Build a relationship with the Counseling Center



Helping the Therapist

- The college curriculum for psychologists & social workers should incorporate specific global differences in mental health perspective/diagnosis/treatment.
- College Counseling Centers - Utilize assessment instruments such as the Cultural Formulation Interview (CFI) within the intake process. Include specific questions within the Intake paperwork to alert counselor to differing cultural views.
- Provide on-going workshops/training for college counseling center therapists specific to the population of international students on their campus.
- Develop a campus International Behavior Intervention Team composed of counselors and staff from the International Program to discuss difficult cases involving emotional distress and treatment.
- Orientation for international students could include discussion on “emotion regulation”, including a discussion on “relationship differences” between cultures. “Emotional experience tends to be aligned with the culturally valued ways of relating” (J.D. Leersnder, M. Boiger, & B. Mesquita, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2013)

After the Counseling Center

- Set a reminder to follow-up with the student
- Ask questions:
 - How did the visit go?
 - Do you have a follow-up appointment?
- Be sure to listen, and see if any barriers
- Encourage to go consistently
- Counseling is voluntary

Programming That Works



Building the Trust – Creating the Connection

“The first day of a student’s orientation is too late to be discussing student mental health for the first time.”
Lee Burdette Williams, “It’s Never Too Soon To Talk About Mental Health,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, 10/14/2016, p. A56.

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”)

“...the quality of the social support system can have both a direct and a buffering effect when international students undergo psychological stress.”

Mental Health in Orientation

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

Programs That Work

Syracuse University

- Connections Mentoring Program
- English Conversation Groups
- Family Hospitality Suite

University of Minnesota

- International Parent Orientation
- Chinese Parent Orientation Program
- NISS: New International Student Seminar
- ISUCCESS (week long International Pre-Academic)

University at Buffalo

- [International Student Wellness Day](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GI68IBmLeKc>

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
- Social organizations/student clubs
- Summer/Holiday programs
- Friendship family programs
- Discussion/Support Groups
- Creative initiatives (e.g., “Welcome to My World Photo Exhibition”)

How to Reduce Stigma

- Dispel the myths:
 - Clearly define/describe what mental health is and what counseling is
- Know the facts about cultural differences around counseling
- Invite on-campus counselors/psychologists to orientation and meet & greet opportunities
- Educate counselors/psychologists on how to communicate across cultures
- Give testimonials even anonymously, and perhaps in their native language
- Normalize students' concerns and stress

Culture of Care in the International Office

Advisors can support students with counseling skills, including:

- Demonstrating Empathy
- Reflecting and Paraphrasing
- Asking Open Questions & Building rapport
- Keep a Professional Code of Public Silence
- ***Learn How To Pronounce Names Correctly***
- At times of crisis, be part of the support team
- Support the ***community***, not just the affected student/family

Culture of Care in the Int'l Office

In difficult conversations:

- Consider student's reaction v. discomfort delivering news
- Don't avoid because it's uncomfortable (ex: suicide)
- Be positive

Planning Ahead: know whom to call and how to behave

**Have interpreters and translators "in the wings"*

Training:

- Step Up Bystander Intervention Trainings
- Campus Connect Training for Suicide Prevention

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





Resources & Hotlines

Pre-departure, Orientation, Online

Resources

NAFSA Resources

Health and Wellness for International Students

Best Practices in Addressing Mental Health
Issues Affecting Education Abroad Participants

www.nafsa.org/Find_Resources/

Crisis Management in a Cross Cultural Setting:

ISSS

http://www.nafsa.org/wcm/Cust/Custom_Cart/Product_Detail.aspx?prodid=450

Mental Health Awareness Video



www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/explained/mental-health-video.php

Services & Hotlines

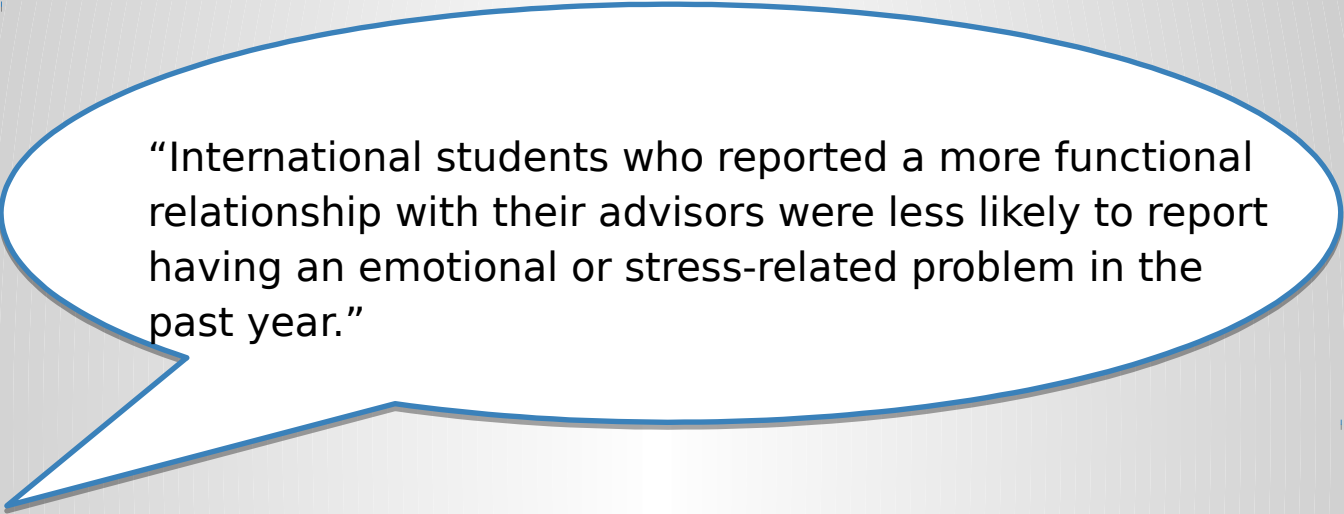
Services

- Crisis Text Line
<http://www.crisistextline.org/>
Text 741-741

Hotlines

- National Suicide Prevention
1-800-273-TALK
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- The National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE
<http://www.thehotline.org/>
- It Gets Better Project (LGBTQ)
1-866-4-U-TREVOR
www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/get-help





“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?