



### Learning Objectives

Identify the mental health needs for general college populations	Identify the added some challenges related to mental health distance learners experience	Select appropriate basic strategies for interacting with distressed students
Be able to have a general idea how to provide and recommend students to various resources when they are experiencing mental health distress	Identify what to consider when creating a syllabus that will foster students feeling supported should they experience mental health challenges	**If anything that is discussed evokes a painful reaction or you find it triggering, please feel free to mute me or leave the session**

### Student Mental Health Information and Numbers by Active Minds

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students	39% of students in college experience a mental health issue	50% of cases of mental health issues begin by the age of 14; 75% begin by the age of 24
2/3 of students with anxiety or depression don't seek treatment	280 people decide not to go through with a suicide attempt for every person who dies by suicide	67% of college students first tell a friend they are feeling suicidal before telling anyone else

### Association for University and College Counseling Center Director Survey 2018

The Most frequent for counseling center clients was anxiety and followed by depression	Specific Relationship Concerns (romantic, friendship, professors, mentors, dissertation chair)	Family Concerns (illness in family, financial needs, food and housing insecurity, domestic violence, rejection from family, etc.
Suicidal thoughts, Eating Disorders, Addiction	Academic Performance Difficulties	Sleep disturbance, Social Isolation/loneliness
		Significant Previous Mental Health Treatment and Adjustment to a New Environment

### Possible Challenges for Distance Learners .....

Are sometimes perceived as being more mature and not having the need face to face students have	While online student services have increased the mental health services have not (that may change due to COVID-19)	It can be easier to miss symptoms of students if you are not seeing them face to face. Students may not know of services available to them	It can be more challenging to "connect" with distance learners. Added student fees students may have to pay to receive services from college/university student affairs	Professors not knowing resources because they also may not be on campus regularly
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### Eden's Story

Eden is an 18 year old African American who identifies as female. She came in reporting she was feeling sad and not really meeting new people. Transition to college was hard and describes herself as "shy." Eden did great in high school and graduated at the top of her class. Thinks she may fail the semester. It is now November and "doesn't know what to do." She is doing an online degree program at the University of Florida and lives off campus.

*What could be going on with Eden? Type answers in chat?*

### Eden's Story



- First generation
- Questioning her sexuality
- Has experienced symptoms of depression and anxiety since 9<sup>th</sup> grade but "never said anything" because her family "doesn't believe in mental health problems and are going to tell her to deal with it and stop whining"
- "Rented an apartment in Gainesville to find friends and fit in but really doesn't go anywhere and stays home most of the time."
- Feels really lonely because she is completely isolated
- Has self body image concerns and thinks she is "ugly and unlovable"
- Has a history of practicing Non-Suicidal Self-Injury Behavior
- Has thought dying by suicide daily in the last week

### What are some other challenges college students experience .....

- Housing Insecurity/Homelessness
- Food insecurity
- Immigration status concerns
- Job loss
- Being on the autism spectrum and transitioning to college
- Being a student of color
- LGBTQ
- Victims of crimes
- Not having transportation
- Not knowing how to navigate through large institutions

So now what do I do with this info?



BY BONNIE BARR WROTE: "IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF ONLINE STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION"

**BOLO (BE ON THE LOOK OUT) FOR THREE DIFFERENT TYPES OF BEHAVIORS**

Look to differentiate and identify.....

- **Atypical behaviors**, which may be behaviors that are simply not typical for a particular student.
- **Unusual behaviors**, which Barr defines as "behavior that is abnormal or unusual, even in the college community; such as paranoia, ongoing magical or fantastical thinking, or actions which interfere with the learning atmosphere."
- **Poor academic performance**, which can lead to a downward spiral as emotional issues compromise academic performance, which causes greater distress and anxiety.

Generally, Professors are Comfortable Addressing Behaviors that Impact Academic performance



Not turning in assignments, falling asleep in class, late assignments

Being Disruptive in Class, not returning emails,

Poor attendance, poor participation

## Is Different than

- Content of work becomes negative/dark/odd in tone (atypical)
- Emails are accusatory, manipulative, sexually inappropriate or threatening (unusual behavior)
- Discussion post contents are: Bizarre, fantastical, paranoid, disruptive, confused, or show disorientation (unusual behavior)
- Emails are accusatory, manipulative, sexually inappropriate or threatening (unusual behavior)
- Late assignments from beginning of course, Not turning in work at all. (academic performance)
- Ongoing display of anxiety about assignments (academic performance)
- Not re-doing work when given an opportunity (academic performance)
- Failing quality of work from beginning of course (academic performance)
- Not turning in work at all (academic performance)

<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/supporting-the-mental-health-needs-of-online-students/>

## Why professors may not be reaching out?

- They are being asked to go beyond their job descriptions
- They are not trained
- They may be concerned about blurring boundaries
- They need more professional development
- Grey areas are challenging
- They may be confused
- It may have a negative impact on professor's personal life

◦ *What do you think are some roadblocks?*

## What Can You Do?

- **Mental health education:** Provide links to articles on issues common to college students (e.g. stress, fatigue, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance abuse).
- **Crisis services:** Prominently display phone numbers for crisis and/or suicide hotlines.
- **Self-help services:** Provide access to tools for self-evaluation, with accompanying articles on strategies for coping with common mental health issues.
- **Referral to disability services:** Provide links to the institution's office for students with disabilities. Online students who are new to college may have previously unaddressed disabilities such as attention deficit disorder or learning disabilities. Students with documented diagnoses of mental disorders are entitled to reasonable academic accommodations.
- **Counseling services:** Provide links to the campus counseling center and clearly state what services are/are not available to distance students. Feedback channels need to be in place to insure that students or faculty who make inquiries for services receive a personal response.

<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/supporting-the-mental-health-needs-of-online-students/>



## More specifics of what you can do

- Make sure that prior to class starting you communicate approachability (i.e. If at anytime you are experiencing difficulties in your personal life that are impacting your learning/ academics, I encourage you to reach out to me?)
- Validate students who allow themselves to be vulnerable with you and validate their feelings. You do not have to be a professional to do this ..... "it sounds like you're going through a really tough time – thank for trusting me."
- Offer help that is within your scope of working with student... "If I will work with you on the academic piece, have you reached out to anyone and if not, could I refer you to someone that is better equipped to help you?"

## Making your syllabus mental health friendly

- Consider adding a statement to your syllabus that addresses mental health needs
- Consider adding resources to your syllabus that has information about the resources available at the college the student is registered for
- Research the resources available in your community that may already be posted by the counseling center at their institution i.e. Alachua County Crisis Center (352) 264-6789
- Consider adding the number to a CARE/Support team for the student affairs at the college and familiarize yourself
- Remember that no one entity should be responsible but rather that it takes a village

## Kognito

- Consider taking the Kognito training for faculty because it gives great insight on how to reach students who are experiencing mental health challenges

- <https://www.aacred.org/assets/documents/Survey/2018%20AACCCD%20Survey-Public-June%2012-FINAL.pdf>
- <https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2019/09/04/investigating-mental-health-services-distinctive-needs-online>
- <https://www.bestcolleges.com/resources/top-5-mental-health-problems-facing-college-students/>
- <https://www.western.edu/~distance/online/summer172/sarr172.html>
- <https://www.helppro.com/HP/BasicSearch.aspx>
- <https://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/post>
- <https://www.211.org/>
- <https://www.bestcolleges.com/resources/top-5-mental-health-problems-facing-college-students/>
- <http://www.halfon.com/>

## Sources

THANK YOU!

If you would like resources that you could add to your courses email me at [astutene@uill.edu](mailto:astutene@uill.edu)