Mental Health: Considerations for Postsecondary Educational Institutions

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Outline

• Mental Health: Where are we.... and
• What has happened?
• Mental health on campus: Goals and .... suggestions
• “Special Topics”
What is Mental Health?

A state of successful performance of mental functions, resulting in:

- Productive activities (e.g., work, academics)
- Fulfilling relationships (e.g., friends, family)
- Ability to adapt, change, and cope with adversity

We are content and we can deal with stresses
What is Mental Illness?

A term used to describe a range of mental disorders affecting:

- **Thinking** (e.g., difficulty in concentrating, memory)
- **Mood** (e.g., feeling sad, lacking a sense of pleasure, loss of hope)
- **Behaviour** (e.g., restlessness, difficulty sleeping)

Associated with distress and impaired functioning
NCHA findings

In the last year:
Felt things were hopeless

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## NCHA findings

**In the last year:**
Felt overwhelmed by all you had to do

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NCHA findings

In the last year:
Felt so depressed that it was difficult to function

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### NCHA Findings

#### In the last year:

**Seriously Considered Suicide**

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WHAT HAS HAPPENED?
Mental Health on campus: Goals and suggestions

An Informed and Healthy Community
The Mental Health Continuum

Healthy

Normal functioning

Mild Disruption

Common and reversible distress

Moderate Disruption

Significant functional impairment

Severe Disruption

Clinical Disorder. Severe and persistent functional impairment
Supports and Resources

- Healthy
- Mild Disruption
- Moderate Disruption
- Severe Disruption

- Self-care and social support
- Professional Care
What is Mental Illness?

• Mood (e.g., feeling sad, lacking a sense of pleasure, loss of hope)
Depression

How is depression different from a “bad mood”?

1. Lasts more than two weeks and is **persistent**
2. More disruptive:
   - Interferes with ability to work/study & have satisfying relationships
   - Causes **physical symptoms** and affects **thoughts, emotions, & behaviours**
3. Lack of precipitants or “triggers”
What else do faculty/staff/student leaders want to know?

Behaviours of concern and what to do

FOCUS ON:
Specific behaviours
  Signs of distress
  Markedly unusual thinking/behaviour
  Performance issues
  Provocative/aggressive behaviour
  Disclosure of distressing experience

Development of effective, compassionate response
• Behaviours of Concern Form

• Available at St. Lawrence Collage

• Click on MENTAL HEALTH – BEHAVIOURS OF CONCERN
What else do faculty/staff/student leaders want to know?

CONSULTATION WITH FACULTY/STAFF/STUDENT LEADERS

“If in any doubt, call”
“We like false positives”

Encourage behavioural description
TAKE CARE OF YOUR “FIRST RESPONDERS”
Mental Health on campus: Goals and ... suggestions

Encourage Helping and Help-Seeking Behaviours
TREAT SELF-DISCLOSURE AS AN ACT OF COURAGE
Social Stigma

Stupid
Inadequate
Crazy
Nut-Job

Scary
Incapable
Strange
Faker
Weak
Self-Stigma

Embarrassment

Burden

Stupid

Inferior

Weak

Nut-job

Weird

Crazy

Scammer
“THE EFFECT OF HUMAN KINDNESS AND FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTION AND SUPPORT CANNOT BE OVERVALUED”
Mental Health on campus: Goals and …… suggestions

Effective, Responsive Care
Care: Considerations and Principles

• Layered
  • Peer support
  • Counselling/Health – rapid access, needs-based, crisis-responsive, short-term
  • Access to specialty care
  • Linkages to the community – vital

• Limits of services
  • Policy support
    • Voluntary and Involuntary withdrawal
WE TEACH MINDFULNESS

Do we practice it, model it?

Speaking of mindfulness........
I saw a father in a coffee shop hand his young son a laptop to keep him busy.
The father was reading a book titled:

"The Presence Process:
How to Be There in the Moment"
SPECIAL TOPICS
CHALLENGES OF ACCOMMODATION

Recent changes
Procedural and Substantive Fairness
Flexibility
Information for students/parents

Student Handbook
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Elements of Adjustment
The Safety Net
Instilling HOPE