The Importance of Mental Health In Our World of Science

A closer look at the impact of emotional distress, coping skills and building resiliency
Before we jump in... a moment for mindfulness.

**WHAT WE DO TO BE MINDFUL**

- **Observe**
  - Notice body sensations
  - Pay attention on purpose to present moment
  - Control your attention
  - “wordless watching”

- **Describe**
  - Put words to the experience
  - Label what you observe
  - Who, what, when, where - just the facts
  - If you can’t observe it through your senses, you can’t describe it

- **Participate**
  - Staying in the present moment completely
  - Go with the flow

**HOW WE DO MINDFULNESS**

- **One mindfully**
  - In the moment
  - Doing one thing at a time
  - Let go of distractions
  - Concentrate

- **Non judgmentally**
  - Not labeling as good or bad
  - Acceptance towards self
  - Push away any judgements

- **Effectively**
  - Awareness of goals for the moment
  - Focus on what works for you
  - Do what is needed for the moment
Mindfulness moment

Reflect on when you started on your higher education path.

What stands out the most?
What feelings were most prominent?
What were you thinking about yourself, others, your new environment?
What body sensations arise as you reflect?
Establishing a baseline

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS
Graduate students are over **six times** more likely to experience mental health issues (Evans et al., 2018).

Women and transgender and gender-nonconforming students were at **a higher risk**

Depression rates are between **15-30% higher** in medical school programs (Dyrbye and Shanafelt, 2016)

**Over half** of pharmacy students (50.1%) reported being clinically distressed (Henning, Ey, and Shaw, 1998)

For dental students, psychological distress **rose from 36% in the first year to 44% in the final year**, (Laurence et al., 2009).

Nursing Students reported **38.7% had mild to severe depression** (Rezayat and Nayeri, 2014)
Unique challenges for the Learner in a health science field of study

- Stigma towards seeking mental health support
- High pressure to perform/achieve
- Minimization of symptoms
- Maladaptive coping mechanisms
- Isolation/ lack of support
- Well being/ self care first sacrificed
Reasons Students Seek Services at SCC

• Stress
  • Academic and social

• Relationships
  • Faculty and interpersonal

• Anxiety
  • Performance and Communication

• Depression

• Academic Concerns

• Grief

• Suicidal Ideation

• Trauma

Over 26% of UT Health Student seek services at the SCC
Taking a closer look

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONAL DISTRESS
Naming and understanding emotions

WHAT ARE THEY

• Immediate reactions to things happening around us - they do not require thought and happen quickly

GOAL OF EMOTIONS

• To grab our attention, to get us to respond, motivate us towards action, communicate to others and ourselves

WHAT TO REMEMBER

• Emotions are neither good or bad they just are
• Emotions are constantly changing
• You are in charge of your emotions
Why is it important to understand our emotions?

Emotions are felt physically as well.

Emotions can not be ignored- we can push them away and left unresolved they build up and so does our reactions to everyday stressors.

Impact our stress levels and functioning.

[Diagram showing a wheel with various emotions such as Happy, Angry, Sad, etc., and their related feeling states.]
Understanding and naming vulnerability factors

**WHAT ARE THEY**

• Circumstances and experiences that affect your ability to cope well or regulate your emotions

**WHAT IS THE GOAL**

• Help us understand how reactive we may be based on what we are experiencing

**WHAT TO REMEMBER**

• Identifying vulnerability factors help you better measure your emotional distress and ability to recognize and respond to your needs
• When distressed- we are likely to engage in unhelpful behaviors
## Ways Vulnerably Factors Show Up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXTERNAL</th>
<th>INTERNAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Major life changes</td>
<td>• Inability to accept uncertainty</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Work/ Academics</td>
<td>• Hunger</td>
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<td>• Relationship difficulties</td>
<td>• Negative self-talk</td>
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<td>• Financial problems</td>
<td>• Unrealistic expectations</td>
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<td>• Being too busy</td>
<td>• Perfectionism</td>
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<td>• Children and family</td>
<td>• Lack of sleep</td>
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UT Health
San Antonio
Student Counseling Center
Taking a closer look

THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS
Cognitive Symptoms

• Memory problems
• Inability to concentrate
• Poor judgment
• Seeing only the negative
• Anxious or racing thoughts
• Constant worrying
Emotional Symptoms

- Mood Swings
- Irritability or short temper
- Agitation, inability to relax
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Sense of loneliness and isolation
- Depression or general unhappiness
Physical Symptoms

• Aches and pains
• GI Upset
• Nausea, dizziness
• Chest pain, rapid heartbeat
• Restlessness/ Fidgeting
• Loss of sex drive
• Frequent colds
• Loss of energy
• Insomnia/ Hypersomnia
Behavioral Symptoms

• Eating more or less
• Low motivation/ lack of interest in doing things previously enjoyed
• Isolating/ withdrawing from others
• Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
• Using alcohol, nicotine products, or other substances to relax
• Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)
• Neglecting hygiene habits
• Reactivity towards others
How to respond to distress

RESILIENCY AND COPING WELL
Naming and understand resiliency.

WHAT IS IT
• The ability to cope/adapt well mentally and emotionally with a crisis/adversity/threat/distress

WHAT IS THE GOAL
• To be able to return to a “pre crisis” stage quickly and effectively

WHAT TO REMEMBER
• Changing your perspective on a situation
• Acceptance v. Change
• Regulating and expressing emotions
• Focus on what you CAN control/change instead or ruminating on what can NOT be changed
How it can help: Building Resilience

- Resiliency
- Organization & Time Management
- Coping Skills
- Social Support
- Distress Management
- Being present/Mindfulness
- Self Efficacy
Naming and understanding coping skills

**WHAT ARE THEY**

• Conscious strategies used to help us deal with, work through or process our emotions

**WHAT IS THE GOAL**

• To help us tolerate, minimize, and deal with stressful situations in life and help us perform at our best

**WHAT TO REMEMBER**

• Coping strategies can be cognitions or behaviors and can be done autonomously or in a group setting
How to cope well

LOOKING AT DIFFERENT WAYS TO COPE
Breathing Strategies

• 4-7-8 breathing method
• Breathing through your nose
• Belly fills diaphragm
• Exhale through your mouth
• Getting ahold of our breathing is the **quickest way** to regulate our system- think like a reset button
• Lets practice!
Progressive Muscle Relaxation

• In distress- emotions impact us physically as well.
• Most common is muscle tension
• PMR is actively tensing and relaxing each muscle group
  • Jaw breaker
  • Turtling
  • Lemon squeezing
  • Toe curling
Taking your emotions on a date

• We have to be curious with our emotions to fully understand them
  • What happened to prompt this emotion?
  • What was this emotion trying to get me to do?
  • What action was my emotion trying to get me to do?
  • Was it valid to the situation?
  • How did this emotion influence me or others?
STOP our reactivity

Stop

• Do not react! Stop! Freeze! Do not move a muscle- your emotions are want to act on the automatic response

Take a step back

• Take a step back from the situation (physically or figuratively. Give your self space to see the situation as a whole

Observe

• Notice what is going on inside and outside of you. What is the situation? What are your thoughts and feelings?

Proceed Mindfully

• Act with awareness, in deciding what to do, consider yours and others thoughts and feelings. Remember your goals. Which actions will make the situation better or worse?
Checking The Facts

The Cognitive Triangle

- Check out whether your emotional reactions fit the facts of the situations.
- Many emotions are set off by our thoughts and interpretations of events and **NOT** by the events themselves.
How To: Checking The Facts

• What emotion I want to change/ questioning

• What is the event prompting the emotion
  • Describe the facts that you observed through your senses. Challenge judgements, absolutes, comparisons, and “black and white” thinking patterns

• What are my thoughts, interpretations and assumptions about the event
  • Think of any other possible interpretations, practice perspective taking
  • Test your interpretations and assumptions and see if they fit the facts

• IS there a threat?
  • Label the threat and assess the possibility that it will actually occur. Think of as many other outcomes as you can

• What is the catastrophe?
  • Imagine that it is actually occurring- if not problem solve or cope ahead

• Does my emotion and or the intensity fit the actual facts of the situation?
Making Time for YOU

Self care is vital, when taking care of others, we must first take care of self...

- Sitting outside
- Recreational reading
- Movement
- Being with others
- What bring you joy and peace
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<td>WORKPLACE</td>
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<td>OVERALL BALANCE</td>
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<td>WHAT MIGHT GET IN THE WAY?</td>
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<td>WHAT NEGATIVE STRATEGIES DO YOU NEED TO AVOID?</td>
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<tr>
<td>IF YOU IMPLEMENT YOUR PLAN, HOW MIGHT YOU FEEL?</td>
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Questions?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COPE WELL
Resources:
UT Health SA Student Counseling Center

Located at: Dental Building 3.100R.1

Call us at: # 210.567.2648

We provide counseling, information and resources for:
- Academic concerns
- Couples and family counseling
- Personal issues
- Individual counseling
- Medication management
- Mental health support
- Psychiatric consultations

We have sessions Monday through Friday 7:00am – 6:00 pm.
*7:00am and 5:00pm sessions are virtual only

Visit us online at: [http://students.uthscsa.edu/counseling/](http://students.uthscsa.edu/counseling/)


