

European Association of Study Abroad Community Chats Series: Study Abroad Students Post Pandemic

Oct 13th, 2022

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Today

- What do we know about the impact of the pandemic on college/university students?
- Possible signs to look out for.
- How can staff help each other and students.



Caring for Carers

- Identifying personal stressors.
- Noticing our own personal coping styles
 - Adaptive/maladaptive?
- Knowing how to help ourselves and ask for help from others.
- Setting personal boundaries and being clear about our roles as teachers/helpers.

Mental Health and College Students (Pre-Pandemic)

- FACT: MH issues were already on the rise.
- WHY:
 - The root causes of the rising numbers in mental illness and diminished mental health extend beyond the campus. Causes may include: family issues, social media, economics and racial injustice.
 - College students face a host of additional potential stress points including academic pressures, finding a job after graduation, and, for many, the challenge of adjusting to life away from home.



Mental Health and Students Abroad

- “Students experience the same types of mental health challenges abroad as they do at home,” says Barbara Lindeman, Director of Study Abroad and Assistant Director of the International Center at the University of Missouri (2017).
- These range from anxiety disorders, depression, eating disorders and addiction.
- *However, such mental health conditions don't preclude students from having a positive study abroad experience.*



Current Data Post-Covid – Third Level

Students

- Based in the research to date, it is clear the pandemic has had an impact on mental health. Different groups, such as young people and individuals with health concerns, have been more impacted than others.
- In the post-pandemic era, it has been seen college students have (Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, volume 670, 2022):
 - depression,
 - anxiety and panic,
 - sleep disturbance,
 - confusion,
 - fragmented learning,
 - anger and rebellion.





Current Data Post-Covid for Adults

- COVID-19 pandemic has triggered 25% increase in prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide.
- Multiple stress factors have led to this such as the social isolation which impacted ability to seek support from others.
- Young people have been one of the groups who have been the worst hit. Currently, they are disproportionately at risk of suicidal and self-harming behaviours.
- Women have been more severely impacted than men.
- People who had pre-existing medical conditions such as asthma, cancer and heart disease, have been more likely to develop symptoms of mental disorders (WHO, March 2nd, 2022).

Signs Someone May Not Be Coping As Well As They Used To (Staff or Student)



- increased anxiety,
- feeling stressed,
- becoming irritable more easily,
- feeling insecure or unsettled,
- recurrent thoughts/talk of death (not just fear of dying), recurrent thoughts/talk of suicide, or a suicide attempt,
- having trouble sleeping, nightmares,
- feeling helpless or a lack of control,
- having irrational thoughts,
- major changes in eating pattern.



Signs Someone May Not Be Coping As Well As They Used To (Staff or Student)

- substance abuse (alcohol or drug or both) can also be a sign of an underlying condition as people try to alter or mask symptoms they have noticed but have not addressed with a professional,
- fatigue or loss of energy,
- feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt,
- diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness,
- use/misuse of alcohol or drugs,
- feeling numb and empty.

How to Help Staff & Students – HEART Model

Hear - Stop what you're doing and really listen to what the student/co-worker is saying . Try and speak in private.

Empathize - Acknowledge what you have heard and let the person know you understand. Express concern and interest.

Assess - Ask them, “What have you thought about doing?” Discuss the pros and cons of different courses of action. It is more effective if the student or staff member comes up with possible plans for action so try and facilitate this when possible.





How to Help Staff & Students - HEART Model

Refer - Be honest about your concerns and limitations of your role since the person may need professional help. Also, do not agree to be secretive about his or her problem (i.e. what are the parameters of confidentiality? This should be part of pre-departure information and/or employee handbook information for both students and staff), and help the person find appropriate resources.

Tell - Do not ignore comments about suicide, violence, or harm to others. Seek professional assistance and include the appropriate individuals, as outlined in the university protocols, in discussions, choices and interventions.



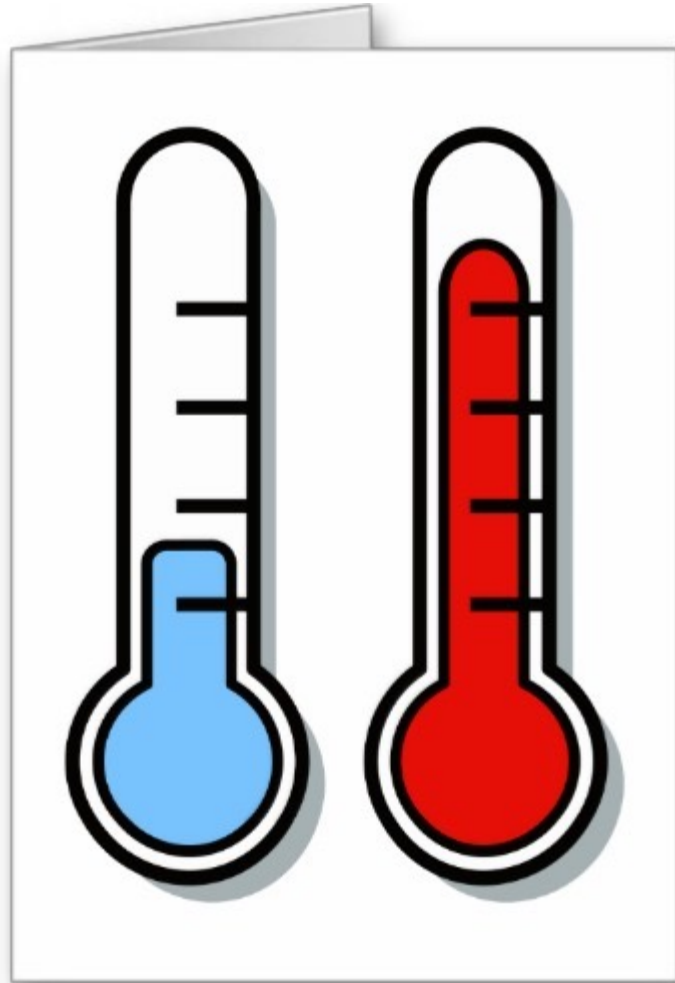
General Tips for Staff and Students

- Remind people to be aware of how 'It's okay to feel how you are feeling'.
- Encourage staff and students to maintain a daily routine.
- Practice good sleep hygiene.
- Connect with others.
- Take a break.
- Support them to seek help if need be, and this can include assistance from friends, therapist/psychiatrist, college chaplain, doctor, if need be.

What Not to Say

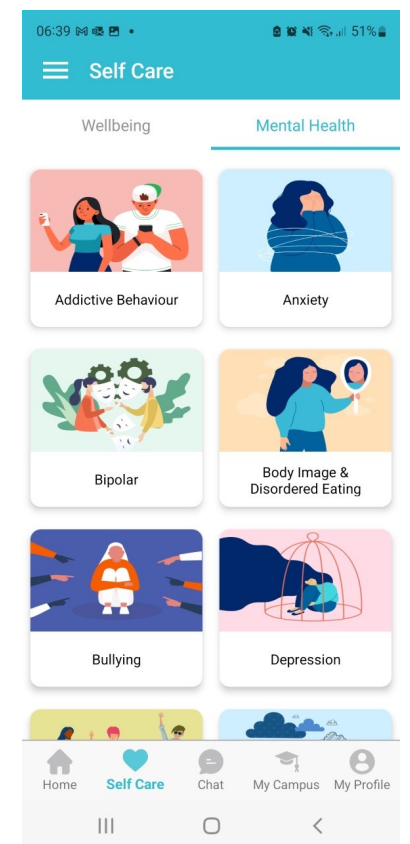
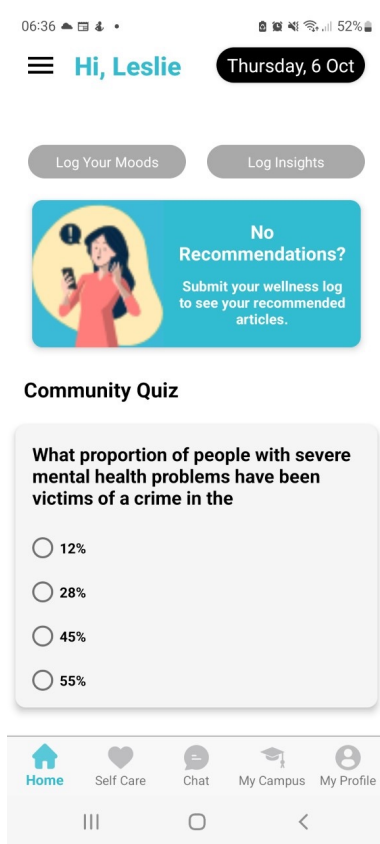
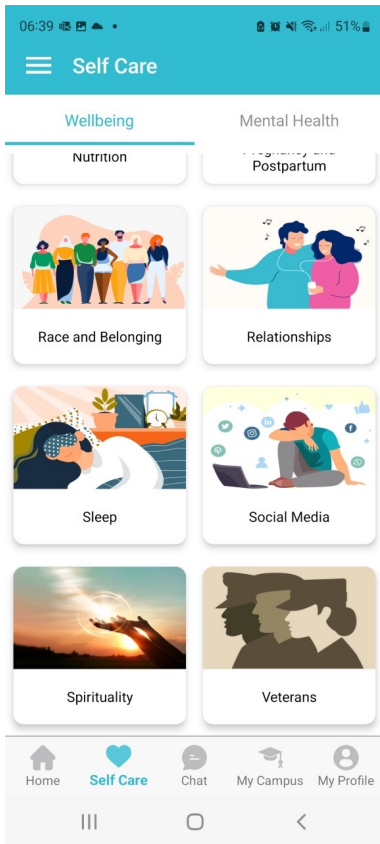
- “This will make you stronger.”
- “Time heals all wounds.”
- “I know how you feel.”
- “It could be worse.”
- “It will work itself out.”
- “Don’t worry.”
- “Be strong.”
- “Snap out of it.”
- “Just try to be positive.”





A Helpful Tip - Creating Shared Understanding

- Sometimes it may be hard to gauge how serious a difficulty is which can make it tricky to know what to do next.
- Ask the person to describe the severity of the problem on a scale of 1 – 10 (with 10 = 100%).
- This will help to establish how serious a situation is and how someone is feeling. Also, it will increase a shared understanding between you and the other person plus help to inform the next options.



Oasis App - <https://oasisapp.com/>

Three Step Breathing Space

- Becoming aware
- Gathering, focusing attention
- Expanding attention



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

ANY QUESTIONS?