

Recognizing and Referring Emotionally Distressed Undergraduates

A guide for university teachers

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Introduction

There are increasing number of reports of university students with psychological problems in Sri Lanka. These students may have difficulties in adapting to life in the university as they transit from school; leaving behind the support of family, friends, and familiar surroundings to an environment where there is minimal adult supervision. This may place them at risk of academic, personal, and social difficulties together with pressure to succeed.

These mental health issues, may interfere with the students' impulse control, interpersonal relationships and their overall ability to function successfully. Early diagnosis and treatment may promote, their functioning in the university setting and may also lessen the stigma associated with mental illness and reinforce students' willingness to accept help.

Even though every member of the academic staff, appointed as a student counsellor or advisor is not trained in conducting mental status examinations or diagnosing mental health issues they can act as gatekeepers of students' mental well- being and be able to recognize distressed students, to do basic counselling

and refer these students to the appropriate services when needed.

In this book, we try to highlight the symptoms of psychological conditions encountered among the university student population and the referral process. However, the range of conditions covered is by no means exhaustive and is offered as a guide only.

Contents

Foreword	iii
Foreword	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Introduction	vii
What is Personality?	1
What is a Conflict?	2
What is Stress?	3
What is Anxiety?	3
Psychological symptoms of anxiety.....	3
Somatic symptoms of anxiety.....	4
Aetiology of psychiatric illnesses	4
Some of the important psychiatric conditions among university students and their presentations	6
1. Anxiety disorders	6
1.1. Social phobia.....	6
1.2. Agoraphobia.....	7
1.3. Specific phobia.....	7
1.4. Panic disorder.....	8
1.5. Generalised anxiety disorder.....	9
2. Acute stress reactions and adjustment disorders	9

3. Post - traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	11
4. Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)	12
5. Depressive disorder	13
6. Manic episode	15
7. Hypomanic episode	16
8. Bipolar affective disorder	17
9. Schizophrenia	17
10. Delusional disorder	18
11. Substance misuse/dependence	19
12. Personality disorders	21
What can the student advisor do?	24
Conflict resolution skills	24
Coping with stress	25
Maladaptive methods of coping.....	26
Adaptive methods of coping.....	27
Some treatment modalities	29
Cognitive behaviour therapy.....	29
Behaviour therapy.....	29
Medication.....	30
How to make a referral	31
Whom to refer to	33