

STUDENT FOCUSED STORIES FROM THE FRONT CASE STORIES

ISSUE: Student Experiencing Anxiety and Low Mood

SOLUTION: Clinical Support

For students, traveling abroad can present with varying levels of transition and anxiety. Some may encounter language barriers, being away from natural supports, and acclimating to new cultures and customs. Students are going through these new experiences all while keeping up with their academic responsibilities. Understandably, students may reach out for support to help navigate these changes and use strategies learned during their semester abroad. Below, you read about one such student.

The student sought counseling after experiencing increased anxiety while studying abroad in Peru. She expressed that she'd been suffering from crying spells, fatigue, trouble sleeping, and feeling frustrated. The student stated that her Spanish was not the best, and she lived in an area where most, including her host family, spoke Spanish. The student expressed feeling overwhelmed with schoolwork. Additionally, the student expressed concern that she was spending too much time on social media during her time in Peru.

As the student engaged in counseling, the clinician utilized active listening and validation to acknowledge the student's concerns. The clinician used solution-focused techniques to identify and recognize the student's resilience and the steps the student was taking to limit her use of social media. The clinician implemented cognitive behavioral therapy techniques to support the student in managing contributors to anxiety, such as negative thinking. The clinician encouraged the student to implement practices that improve self-validation and decrease anxiety-provoking thoughts. The clinician affirmed the student's intentionality in improving her self-care. By the end of the therapy sessions, the PT reported increased confidence and that she'd implemented techniques to manage anxiety.

ISSUE: Coping with Anxiety While Studying Abroad

SOLUTION: Clinical Support

For students traveling abroad, managing all the moving parts impacted by their travel can become stressful and overwhelming. They are often adjusting to a new environment, being away from loved ones and friends for an extended period and keeping up with schoolwork as they study abroad. At times like this, it can be easy to become homesick and miss those they hold dear.

This student presented counseling to learn ways to support herself as she went through a recent breakup, worked part-time, and went to school full-time while abroad. The student expressed that she was suffering from low mood, stress, and anxiety.

During the counseling sessions, the clinician empathized with the student's worries and concerns and validated the student's emotions. The clinician actively listened, using techniques

such as reflections, to ensure an understanding of the student's goals and needs in counseling. The clinician took the time to utilize solution-focused techniques to acknowledge the student's actions to remedy her concerns. The clinician used Cognitive Behavioral Therapy techniques to help the student recognize cognitive distortions that had a negative impact on the student's well-being.

By the end of counseling, the student reported an improvement in her ability to manage feelings of stress, anxiety, and sadness. The student learned techniques to implement outside counseling to lessen the impact of contributors to anxiety, stress, and low mood. The student expressed satisfaction and gratitude towards the support she received from her counselor.

ISSUE: Experiencing High Stress and Anxiety in College

SOLUTION: Clinical Support

Students are often facing high stress and anxiety while in college. They are often managing living on their own, away from their family and friends – and experiencing a wide variety of adult responsibilities for the first time. For some students, this is coupled with studying remotely – especially as Covid 19 has kept many students in their hometown, country, or state. This can lead to stress in relation to students navigating family life, time zone differences in classes, isolation from campus life, and balancing the work / school / home life aspects of going to college.

With this student, our clinical team was able to speak with her to understand the unique situation that she found herself in and how this was affecting her both in her school and personal life. The student shared the stressors she faced and how they were uniquely affecting her – not only was she managing classes, completing internships, and trying to be part of clubs – but she was working on setting boundaries in her school and family life.

The counselor explored the specific triggers, situations, and reactions that this student faced and, while doing so, helped with identifying a plan to address these situations when they arose. The student and counselor worked on role-playing the situations that may come up and how the student could actively set boundaries, identify ways to practice self-care, and prioritize the different work and tasks she needed to complete in all aspects of her life.

By the end of the sessions, the student reported a much better understanding of how to set boundaries professionally and personally and prioritize self-care to get ahead of feeling overwhelmed and burnt out.

ISSUE: Struggling with the Side Effects of ADHD Medication

SOLUTION: Clinical Support

A student called the Student Assistance Program for in-the-moment support. She was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and was under medication. She reported anxiety and shared that she had low motivation and self-doubt. She explained that she was suffering from the side effects of the ADHD medication and struggled with school. Though she explained that she had an appointment scheduled with a psychiatrist, there was a long

waiting 6 period. She reached out for emotional support to discuss the emotional side effects of her medication.

The clinician provided active listening, empathy and emotional support, and delivered psychoeducation on ADHD and anxiety. The clinician normalized the side effects of mental health medication and validated the student's feelings. The student was encouraged to do things within her control to fight anxiety. The clinician emphasized the importance of self-care and suggested an online psychiatric consultation.

ISSUE: Student Experiencing Anxiety and Low Mood

SOLUTION: Clinical Support

When the time comes for young adults to start their professional studies, very often they need to move away from their parents' house, find a new home, and often times, in a new city as well. During that period of transition, they may experience difficulties in social interactions or feelings of loneliness. They can lose their motivation to get involved in new activities.

A person reached out seeking support regarding her low mood. She is a university student who had moved away for her studies. She reported that recently she had been experiencing low mood and had been comparing herself to her fellow students, whom in her mind were "performing better" than her.

She also reported having negative thoughts about herself, such as, "I am not as good as others, "and" I am not worthy if I am not perfect in my projects. "Additionally, she felt that her friends were teasing her and even though she was bothered by the teasing, she chose not to express her frustration and resentment in order to avoid conflict.

The clinician actively listened to the participant's concerns and completed a risk assessment. After validating and normalizing the participant's concerns, the clinician identified that the participant was experiencing intense anxiety and symptoms of depression. The clinician also identified that the participant had difficulty setting boundaries in her peer group and was not assertive because she did not want to create a "negative atmosphere" in social interactions. The participant was then referred for individual counselling sessions. The participant thanked the clinician for listening to her concerns and validating her feelings. She was appreciative of the support she was given and looked forward to the individual counselling sessions.

ISSUE: Feeling Drained and Anxious

SOLUTION: Clinical Support

A student reached out for support after finishing a state university entrance exam. She had been studying and doing a very intensive course for weeks. She reported feeling anxious as she did not know the results yet. She explained that after the exam, she felt that she was very irritable and did not have the energy to do anything. She spent a lot of time in bed without feeling motivated to do her normal activities. She was having a hard time socializing and felt insecure.

She mentioned that before the pandemic she did not feel this way. But since then, she felt that she lost the energy to be around people, and that it took her a lot of effort to socialize.

After providing a safe environment for her to express her feelings and emotions, the clinician worked with the student on the following:

- The importance of restorative rest.
- Modifying sleep routine by going to bed earlier to achieve a deep and restful sleep.
- Finding some rituals that help induce sleep.
- Turning her phone and computer off at least one hour before bedtime.
- Making a list of pending tasks.
- Practicing breathing techniques.
- Performing physical activity daily to activate the circulation and in turn discharge any tension.
- Connecting with her emotions and expressing her feelings.

By the end of the first session, the student was grateful and receptive to all of the clinician's recommendations. She felt positive about moving forward and making changes in her daily life.

ISSUE: Facing Anxiety in College Life

SOLUTION: Clinical – Video Counselling Support

A student reached out seeking support for anxiety whilst they were studying abroad. He reported that he will be studying abroad until the end of the semester and has been experiencing intrusive negative thoughts which have increased his anxiety, specifically when thinking about the future. During the intake call, the clinician walked the participant through grounding and breathing techniques, which he reported helped him immensely, before additionally connecting him to another clinician for continued support whilst he was living abroad.

ISSUE: Student Struggling with Isolation

SOLUTION: Work-Life, Daily Living Support

A student called in for support dealing with social isolation. As the daughter of a first-generation immigrant, and from a remote town, she always struggled to make friends, which was continuing in university. After speaking with the clinical team, the participant wanted information on local support groups to help her stop self-isolating and meet new people. The Work-Life team provided a referral to a group within a 20-minute drive specific for self-isolation. The Work-Life team was also able to provide information on their school's mental health center that offered a variety of services, student activities on campus and tips for coping with and overcoming isolation.

ISSUE: Frustration with Remote Learning

SOLUTION: Clinical Support

Many schools have moved to virtual learning since the pandemic. This transition has been difficult for students and teachers alike, for multiple reasons. Students are missing out on interaction with friends, whilst teachers are struggling to revamp their curriculum to an online format.

A teacher called for support because she struggled with adjusting to challenges she faced with remote learning. She said she was used to working with students in person and teaching online made her feel like things were out of her control. She also shared that she was exhausted and felt guilty about not spending time with her family in the evenings.

The counselor shared that it was important and healthy to express her feelings related to changes in her job duties. The counselor also suggested that the teacher be more generous towards herself, allow for more understanding and compassion. Change requires adjustments and it takes time for that to happen. The counselor also asked the teacher to reflect on when she first started teaching and how long it took to adjust to the classroom experience.

The teacher was thankful for the perspective and committed to practicing more self-care.

ISSUE: Coping with emotional distress

SOLUTION: Clinical Support

Any time a person's integrity is called into question, stress, uncertainty and fear are common natural responses. A teacher with more than 20 years of experience and a spotless disciplinary record called the service at a very difficult time. This person had been accused of abuse by a student and had been suspended while the matter was being investigated.

As the individual described her emotional struggles and fear for their future, our counselor provided active listening, support and empathy to connect to the caller. By validating this person's feelings of uncertainty and fear, the counselor was able to reframe the situation and help her restructure the negative thought patterns that had become entrenched since the allegations were raised.

Ultimately, the counselor was the resource this individual needed to discuss the situation. Following this initial call, the individual called the counselor back to share that the situation had been successfully resolved and expressed her appreciation for the in-the-moment support. The person said she had been unsure of using the service prior to this incident, but had been sharing her positive experience with colleagues and urging them to call and discuss their own matters ever since.

ISSUE: Researching Colleges and Scholarships

SOLUTION: Work-Life Support

The process of helping your child choose a college is both exciting and frightening. Didn't they start preschool just yesterday? How did time go by so fast?

A participant called in requesting information on potential colleges for her son. Her son was specifically interested in schools that offered life science as a field of study. He also wanted to be less than two hours away from home. The mother was also interested in scholarship and loan information.

In addition, the mother also needed to find before- and after-school care for her 10-year-old daughter.

Our consultant identified three college programs within a two-hour drive that offered life science as a field of study. He also provided information on how to apply for relevant scholarships and private student loans.

For the younger child, the consultant found two-day care centers with openings that provided before- and after-school care, as well as transportation between her daughter's school and the center.

ISSUE: Living with Asperger's Syndrome

SOLUTION: Clinical Support

Learning to live with Asperger's syndrome can be a lifelong challenge for individuals. The participant, diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome since the age of 12, has undergone psychiatric treatment since his diagnosis and was taking fluoxetine daily. Five months ago, he decided to quit taking medication but started retaking it three months ago when he noticed changes in himself, like feeling unmotivated and worried. He stopped going to his classes and began to have suicidal thoughts. The participant had been an undergraduate student but left his studies at the recommendation of his family as they had noticed him sad and stressed.

Currently, the participant spends all day at home and focuses on household chores during the day. He reported that his lifestyle has become very sedentary. He hardly speaks with his acquaintances because he says it is difficult for him to make video calls and feels uncomfortable. The participant also acknowledged that he had not been adhering to his treatment as he sometimes forgot to take his medication.

The clinician validated the participant's feelings and listened actively to allow the participant to express himself freely. The clinician then proceeded to give the participant emotional care and support that focused on helping him manage his emotions so that he could understand how the disorder can impact him individually and the impacts it can have on his family and social life.

The clinician then proceeded to educate the participant about the importance of adhering to his treatment and his approach to receiving care. The clinician worked together with the participant on different strategies to help him organize activities he could participate in. He was encouraged

to resume contact with acquaintances and increase social contact with his close family and friends.

By the end of the session, the participant said he appreciated the attention and support he received from the clinician. He reported that he felt encouraged by having someone listen to him and validate his feelings while offering him support and care.

ISSUE: Making an Effort Toward Positive Change

SOLUTION: Telephone-Based Wellness Coaching

A young man in his mid-20s had recently moved back home to India after attending school in the United States and landing a job with a prestigious international employer. On the outside, everything seemed well. He had a job, he was closer to his family, and he enjoyed the work he was doing – but his new life had him feeling more alone than he ever had before.

During his initial contact with our coach, he described gaining a significant amount of weight after he moved back to India. He said he felt isolated from the connections he had formed during school, and now occupied his downtime alone in his apartment. After work he said he was tired, and simply had fallen into a routine of coming home, eating whatever was readily available, and watching television or reading by himself. He was unhappy with where he was headed, and described knowing that he could do better when he looked in the mirror.

The first thing he wanted help with was establishing a normal exercise routine. He and the coach discussed his personality and his normal routine, and together decided on a plan that had him waking up earlier than he was accustomed with a purpose – to get outside and walk. What started as a simple walk turned into some light jogging, then eventually running some stairs at a local park as the weeks went along.

Beyond the morning routine, he kept himself accountable for what was going in his body with a food journal. He wrote down what he ate for the day, which made him conscious of the amount of sweets and unhealthy snacks that had been expanding his waistline. He added more healthy options, and limited the unhealthy choices to maybe one or two per day.

After several weeks of sticking to this basic plan, he was enthusiastic about the changes he had seen. He said the morning exercise helped his mindset even more than his body. It got him in the frame of mind to tackle the challenges of the day rather than to avoid or dread them. He said he gained more confidence in himself, and felt as if his circle of friends was expanding since he was beginning to be more like the outgoing college student he remembered. In the last session with our coach the man said that for the first time since he'd moved back to India, he considered himself truly content with his new place in life.