



COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES BULLETIN

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MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

It is important to take good care of our mental health while navigating through the highs and lows of university life. This can be done by opting for counselling sessions and showing compliance to them, which indeed goes a long way in improving performance and generally feeling good.

Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at LUMS provide an opportunity for self-exploration, skill building, and stress management through therapeutic counselling sessions. Having a counsellor on campus also strengthens our support system. Scientific research consistently show that students who utilise counselling Services in their university life are more academically successful and undergo personal growth. Counsellors play an essential part in the development and success of our students since they offer safe and supportive atmospheres for students to share their challenges and find ways of dealing with them on their own.

In case you have academic pressure or personal issues, or even if you just want someone to talk with for your emotional and psychological problems, don't hesitate to reach out to any of our counsellors at student.counselling@lums.edu.pk. CAPS is willing to help you always succeed as well as prosper throughout your stay at LUMS.

Best wishes,
Dr. Tahira Haider

TOXIC POSITIVITY

Sabeen Khan

The phrase 'toxic positivity' embodies the idea that the only ideal way of living is to sustain a positive attitude and a positive approach (Lukin, 2019). Toxic positivity refers to constantly portraying oneself as happy, thus discarding any negative emotions. It coerces individuals to behave as though everything is going well, irrespective of the reality. Those who practice toxic positivity, also referred to as poisonous energy, tend to avoid addressing negative emotions, believing them to be harmful and avoided at all costs. This approach can lead to suppressed emotions, behaviours such as self-isolation, and an atmosphere where others' feelings are shamed or discounted (Cherry, 2021).

Silencing is one of the methodologies people use to deal with their doubts, sorrows or any feelings that they would rather not show to others. Yet, suppressing feelings won't help individuals alleviate fear; instead, it amplifies it. In a study carried out by Dillard et al. (2018), it was reported that suppressing emotions fails to eradicate fear (Portage et al., 2018). Individuals with a toxic positive mindset tend to isolate themselves and avoid seeking mental health care because they continuously deny their negative feelings. On the other hand, those who receive toxic positive advice may feel isolated and believe their emotions are unimportant, leading to the invalidation of genuine human emotional experiences (University of Minnesota, n.d.).

The behaviour of toxic positive individuals also affects those around them, as they tend to shame people who don't maintain a positive outlook. An example of this is emotionally harassing others by telling them that they should be hopeful, that they are misrepresenting what is going on, or that they have no great explanation to encounter harmful emotions.

SIGNS OF TOXIC POSITIVITY

Here are some common expressions and experiences of toxic positivity that depicts how it manifests in daily life:

- Pushing away or covering your genuine feelings
- Suppressing/overlooking an emotion to 'kindly go ahead with it'
- Being repentant for feeling what you feel
- Disregarding others' feelings with 'inspirational' assertions or remarks
- Trying to give own perspective (e.g., it could have been worse') instead of somebody's emotional experience
- Disgracing or reprimanding somebody for showing frustration or some option other than being positive
- Overlooking those things that hurts you with an 'it is what it is' thought pattern

COPING WITH TOXIC POSITIVITY

Here are some ways of dealing with toxic positivity in your life:

- Being honest and realistic about how you feel
- Developing a mindset that 'it is alright to not be okay'
- Dealing with your pessimistic feelings without denying them
- Paying attention to what other people say and showing support
- Not hesitating for even a moment to challenge the individual being toxically positive
- Realising that feeling more than one thing is alright
- Searching for meaning behind the thing you're going through
- Noticing how you feel
- Putting your feelings into words

NAVIGATING THE ACADEMIC MAZE: HOW COUNSELLING EASES ACADEMIC ANXIETY

Maha Iftikhar

In the challenging terrain of academia, where deadlines loom large, and expectations run high, academic anxiety can become an unwelcome companion for many students. However, there's a guiding light amidst the stress: counselling. Here's a snapshot of how seeking support can make a significant difference:

1. Understanding Anxiety

Counselling provides a platform for students to identify and comprehend the root causes of academic anxiety. Through open conversations, students gain insights into their stress triggers, fostering a deeper understanding of their challenges.






2. Coping Strategies

Armed with a toolbox of coping mechanisms, students learn to navigate academic pressures effectively. From time management techniques to mindfulness exercises, counselling equips individuals with practical strategies to tackle challenges head-on.



3. Goal Setting and Planning

Counsellors assist in setting realistic academic goals, breaking them down into manageable steps. This structured approach helps students build a roadmap to success, alleviating the overwhelming feeling often associated with academic pursuits.

S	Specific	Make your goal specific and narrow for more effective planning	
M	Measurable	Make sure your goal and progress are measurable	
A	Achievable	Make sure you can reasonably accomplish your goal within a certain time frame	
R	Relevant	Your goal should align with your values and long-term objectives	
T	Time-based	Set a realistic but ambitious end date to clarify task prioritization and increase motivation	

indeed

4. Stress Reduction Techniques

Beyond academic skills, counselling introduces students to stress reduction techniques. Whether it's incorporating regular exercise, embracing creative outlets, or practicing relaxation methods, these tools empower students to maintain a healthy balance in their academic lives.

5. Positive Mindset Cultivation

Counselling encourages a shift from negative to positive thinking. By challenging self-limiting beliefs and fostering a growth mindset, students develop resilience and confidence, creating a foundation for sustainable academic success.

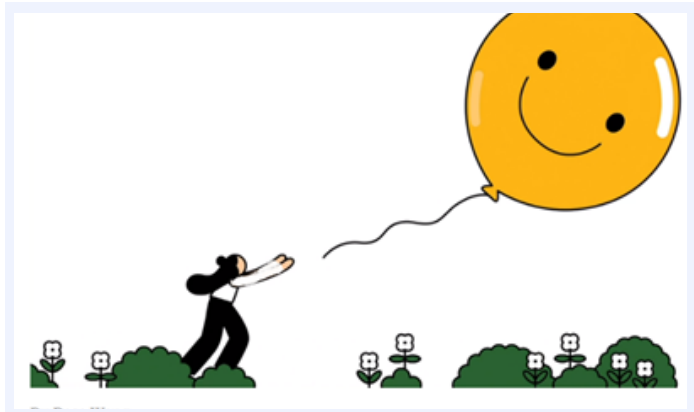
In the academic maze, counselling serves as a guiding force, empowering students to not only overcome challenges but also to thrive in their educational journey.

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Zainab Muazzam

“People wait all week for Friday, all year for summer, and all life for happiness.”

We all seek it – but what is happiness? Although it is defined by the American Psychological Association as “an emotion of joy, gladness, satisfaction, and well-being,” the aspects of life which bring joy and happiness, may vary for different people (Martin, 2012). For instance, some may derive deep fulfilment from connecting with those around them, themselves, and with their successes. Others may experience joy from working on a career or a hobby that excites them, while also bringing meaning to their life. Moreover, commitment to faith, religious values, and spirituality, is a means of inner satisfaction and contentment for many. Psychologists suggest that each of these components is a significant means of achieving joy and happiness, and improving our overall well-being (Seligman, 2002).



From amongst the various emotions we experience, happiness probably feels the best – and that is why it is natural to want to feel happy at all times. However, it is essential

to be aware of the fact that life has its ups and downs, and feeling differently in different life situations is what makes us human. Expecting to never experience sadness, anger, or grief will only end up making us feel disappointed (Seligman, 2002).

Nevertheless, consciously engaging in certain activities, and making healthy mindset changes (like the ones described below), increases our ability to experience happiness and foster well-being, while bringing joy into our lives and in the lives of those around us. Some examples of these are listed below.

1. Connecting with Others

Forming close bonds and positive relationships based on trust, friendship, and love can be some of the most rewarding experiences in life. Touching the lives of those we care about, by spending time and sharing our feelings with them, is one of the foremost ways to combat stress and depression (Diener & Seligman, 2002).

2. Acts of Kindness

Caring behaviour, compassion, volunteering, and random acts of kindness elevate positive feelings and well-being, while also acting as a buffer against stress (Aknin et. al., 2012).

3. Healthy Lifestyle

A healthy lifestyle, involving physical exercise, a nutritional diet, access to sunlight, and proper sleep, is associated with mental, emotional, and physical well-being (Veenhoven, 2008).

4. Flow

Being actively involved and striving towards a goal in life gives one meaning and purpose. Flow can be experienced in both, professional goals or personal hobbies, and leads to positive feelings, and a long-term commitment to an activity of interest (Collins et. al., 2009).

5. Faith and Finding the Meaning of Life

People engaged in religious practices and spirituality often report higher levels of satisfaction and well-being. Faith, religious practices, and spirituality often involve a deeper search for the meaning of life, self-transcendence, compassion, contribution to community, and congregation-based social support. These factors may alter positively the way these individuals respond to life-stressors, anxiety and failures (Lim and Putnam, 2010).

6. Discovering Your Strengths

Each of us has some unique strengths. We may be good at certain things naturally, and hence often fail to recognise those as our strengths. However, exploring our talents and strengths, working on them, and syncing our careers or hobbies with our underlying qualities is likely to contribute to life satisfaction and greater predictability of reaching our goals (Linley et. al., 2010).

7. Practicing Gratitude and Hope

Being optimistic in the face of difficult life experiences can enable us to look for the silver lining, and find room for hope, gratitude, and personal growth. Both optimism and gratitude are associated with more positive feelings, as well as better psychological and physical health. Being thankful of others also leads to deeper interpersonal relationships (Wood et. al., 2010).

SCREEN ADDICTION: IMPLICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

Munaza Abbas

What is Addiction?

Addiction is defined as a state of mental and/or physical dependence on substances and behaviours/activities that leads to profound changes in the brain, with behavioural, cognitive, and physiological implications. These symptoms adversely affect different aspects of life, such as physical health, occupation, education, interpersonal relationships, and psychological well-being.

Types of Addiction

Addiction can be of two types:

- Chemical/Substance addiction
- Non-chemical/Behavioural addiction

Screen Addiction

Screen addiction is one of the most prevalent types of behavioural addictions, which encompasses the compulsive use of screens, such as mobile phones, laptops, tablets, and television. The excessive use of screens can interfere with one's daily life, causing significant impairments in various areas of functioning. Just like chemical addiction, screen addiction is characterised by a pattern of behaviour that is difficult to control despite the adverse consequences.

Effects of Screen Addiction

Some of the key characteristics of screen addiction include:

- Excessive/Compulsive Use: Spending unrestrained time on screens, often compromising other activities and responsibilities



- **Loss of Control:** Trouble regulating or reducing screen time, often resulting in more extended usage than intended
- **Neglect of Responsibilities:** Excessive or prolonged screen use, contributing to ignoring duties and obligations at work, school, or home
- **Social Isolation:** Fewer face-to-face interactions with family, friends, and colleagues, leading to loneliness and isolation
- **Emotional Dysregulation:** Experiencing anxiety, irritability, or restlessness when not using screens; people may use screens as a way to escape from negative emotions or stress
- **Physical Symptoms:** Physical health issues associated with screen dependence include eye strain, lethargy, headaches, poor posture, neck or shoulder pain, and sleep disturbances
- **Mental Health Issues:** Screen addiction is seen to be correlated with an increased risk of depression, anxiety, attention problems, low self-esteem, and poor work/academic performance

HOW TO MANAGE/PREVENT SCREEN ADDICTION

A few practical strategies to cut back on your screen time include:

- **Setting Time Limits**

To regulate screen time effectively, it is recommended that you limit your screen time to 30 minutes a day. However, if this seems too drastic, aim for one hour of screen time per day. Moreover, a 3-4 hour break from technology can foster a healthier relationship with screens, changing your screen time perspective from an activity or choice to a necessity

- **Trying Digital Detox**

A digital detox can be quite beneficial for those feeling overwhelmed by screen addiction. You do not necessarily have to give up all screen use in a digital detox. It involves cutting down non-work-related activities on screen. Scheduling screen breaks or putting away screens before bedtime can be the first step towards implementing this strategy and establishing healthier screen habits.

- **Making Lifestyle Changes**

Lifestyle changes can yield a more effective and lasting solution to screen addiction and help reduce reliance on screens. These include reducing time spent on screens and substituting it with other activities, such as new hobbies and interests, that do not involve the use of technology.

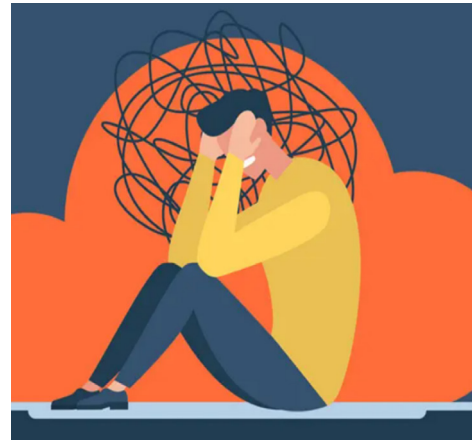
- **Seeking Treatment Options**

Some of the more formal ways of addressing the problem of screen addiction involve behavioural interventions, including behavioural therapy and cognitive behavioural therapy, and fostering healthier coping mechanisms. Additionally, support groups and family therapy can also help in dealing with the relational, occupational, and social aspects of screen addiction.

SECONDARY TRAUMA AND THE INVISIBLE WOUNDS OF THE GAZA WAR

Aiza Imtiaz

The war on Gaza, marked by extreme violence, has had a significant influence not just on the region's physical terrain, but also on its citizens' mental health, particularly students. While the direct consequences are clear, it is critical to shed light on the often-overlooked issue of secondary trauma, which investigates how conflict experiences can echo across communities and affect students' psychological well-being.



In academia, where knowledge and personal progress are prioritised, it is critical to recognise and treat the possible impact of secondary trauma. Secondary trauma, also known as vicarious trauma, is the emotional and psychological toll suffered by individuals indirectly exposed to catastrophic situations. While the primary focus is frequently on individuals directly affected, identifying and addressing secondary trauma is critical to fostering a healthy and supportive community.

Exposure to Media and Secondary Trauma

In our globalised age, students are continuously struck with images and information about the ongoing violence in Gaza via various media platforms. Repetitive exposure to unpleasant pictures and narratives can result in vicarious trauma, in which individuals develop symptoms comparable to those who experienced the trauma. This might show heightened worry, guilt or irritability, grief, hypervigilance, constant reliving of traumatic events, and a general sense of helplessness among individuals.

Impacts of Secondary Trauma

Secondary trauma may disrupt interpersonal connections as individuals deal with their own emotional loads, while also attempting to support friends and family members directly touched by any personal trauma. Individuals withdraw from social activities to cope with their internal challenges, which may lead to increased social isolation. The breakdown of a supporting social network might amplify the detrimental influence on students' mental health. It can lead to concentration issues, sleep disturbances, and difficulties in academic engagement.



PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST-AID TECHNIQUES

Following are some psychological first-aid techniques to cope with secondary trauma and promote one's well-being. While such approaches might be beneficial, seeking professional support from mental health specialists is vital to individuals experiencing significant distress.

Self-Awareness and Acknowledgment of Emotions

- Encourage self-awareness by detecting and acknowledging secondary trauma-related feelings.

Mindfulness and Relaxation

- To relieve tension and promote relaxation, try mindfulness meditation and deep breathing techniques.
- Yoga or gradual muscular relaxation are examples of practices that promote present-focused awareness.

Reducing Media Exposure

- Set media intake limits to minimise overexposure to upsetting news and visuals.
- Set aside certain periods to catch up on news, and keep in mind the impact of media on emotional well-being.

Seeking Social Assistance

- Share your thoughts and feelings with trusted friends, family members, or support groups.
- Create a sense of solidarity by engaging in open discussion with others who may be going through similar circumstances.

Choosing a Healthy Lifestyle

- Prioritise a balanced and healthy lifestyle that includes decent eating, regular exercise, and adequate rest.
- Excessive usage of substances such as caffeine can worsen stress and anxiety.

Creating a Routine

- Create a daily routine to provide structure and predictability, as well as a sense of stability during turbulent times.
- Reduce emotions of overload by breaking down work into smaller, more attainable goals.

Cognitive Reorganisation

- Question and reframe catastrophic or unreasonable beliefs to challenge negative cognitive habits.
- Encourage a positive outlook by focusing on parts of life over which one has control.

Participating in Meaningful Activities

- Find and engage in activities that bring you joy, purpose, and a sense of accomplishment.

Become Informed About Trauma Reactions

- Learn about common trauma reactions and how secondary trauma effects are a normal reaction to aberrant experiences.

Professional Assistance

- Recognise when further assistance is required and be proactive in getting expert assistance. CAPS is available to provide you with experts who can help you.

POURING MY HEART (POEM)

Hafsa Azam

I tripped on my way by a rock stuck in the soil
The ground made my head pound and my heart boil
I smiled through my lips revealing my teeth
Didn't want anyone to see the pain underneath
Happy and content was what I looked
But, no one knew the way I was crooked
They heard my laughter and saw me enjoying
I wish they could feel my distress and see me dying
Here I am pouring my heart into these words
Wishing that it would do something to my fresh wounds
I fell, got hurt, but got back up
Wanted someone to hold my hand and bring me up
Didn't have anyone except myself
Wish there was someone who could offer me help



Note: This poem describes the experience of someone going through depressive symptoms, feeling hopeless and helpless, thinking there is no help available to get out of the dark hole they feel stuck in. If you ever feel this way, just know that the CAPS team is here to help.

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