



COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES BULLETIN

September | Issue 2

As the Fall semester starts remotely, we at Counselling & Psychological Services (CAPS) remain committed to offering support to our students virtually. The last few months have been challenging, and we have seen an increased number of students reaching out for support and access to our services, which has been encouraging. Virtual therapy has posed challenges but also provided opportunities to offer continuity of care to our students, which was particularly evident during the semester break.

In ordinary circumstances, students living on campus undergoing therapy would travel home during the semester and face-to-face therapy would come to a halt, whereas online therapy facilitates continual access to CAPS regardless of the individual's location. The barriers posed by online therapy mainly include difficulties for students who have limited or no access to the Internet and lack of personal space at home. In response to the concerns, CAPS is offering counselling over the phone to students living in remote areas of Pakistan with limited or no access to the Internet. The second initiative we introduced was askcaps@lums.edu.pk, which gives students the space to email their concerns to us in their own time, and our counsellor then responds to these emails. Additionally, we also introduced a closed Facebook group, LUMS-Counselling & Psychological Services (CAPS). The purpose of this group is to assist students and provide them access to a variety of mental health resources that they can view in their own time.

Our students continue to inspire us by rising to the many challenges life throws at them. Our message from CAPS to our students is simple: "We are here for you and are committed to supporting you to the best of our ability."

Good Luck for Fall 2020!

By Dr Tahira Haider

Head of Department, Counselling & Psychological Services
Adjunct Faculty, Mushtaq Ahmed Gurmani
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Transforming a Stress Response

By Maria M. Ayub

Our minds and bodies are programmed with an in-built alarm system that activates automatically when we are in any danger. As soon as that alarm activates, it prepares our body to face the threat in the environment. The process involves certain physiological changes that instantly begin when the brain (mentally or physically) perceives a threat through the help of our five senses. The primary ways of the body dealing with something dangerous are fight, flight and freeze. These self-protective mechanisms work well when there is actual danger, but sometimes, certain anxiety provoking situations set off false alarms and our brain misinterprets these harmless situations as dangerous. Whether you are a fighter, flee-er or freezer, mastering these responses can help you utilise them more efficiently.



Fight

The first automated response to gain safety is to look and behave aggressively as this increases our chances of survival. In such situations, deep breathing, grounding activities, setting some boundaries or channelling your energy into vocalising your complaints etc. can help you engage better with the trigger.



Flight

This response is activated when we feel that we cannot stand up to the threat, therefore running or escaping from the situation can ensure our survival. If the situations cannot be fixed or improved, leaving might not be a bad solution. But if situations like, giving a presentation or public speaking etc. provoke anxiety, then calming activities, safe place visualisations, and understanding short and long-term costs of escaping can help you face the situation.



Freeze

This response puts a stop to the other responses of fight and flight. Here a person becomes unresponsive until the threat or problem goes away. If you are paralysed in an anxious situation, calling a time-out, practicing mindfulness, focusing and creating space for different possibilities etc. can be helpful. Since these responses are automatic and instinctual, how we respond to a threat is not our choice; but by conscious practice and self-awareness we can direct ourselves towards a different reaction that may facilitate us.

FREEZE



Gratitude Practice

By Sabeen Khan

It is impossible to feel grateful and depressed in the same moment

In Positive Psychology research, gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships. The following are some ways to include gratitude in our lives:

1. Journal about things, people, or situations for which you are grateful. Consider including negative situations like avoiding an accident, for instance.
2. Think about someone for whom you are grateful.
3. Write a gratitude letter to someone for whom you are thankful. Consider sending it or giving it to them in person.
4. Do the “Count Your Blessings” exercise and at the end of the day, write down three things for which you were grateful.
5. Practice saying “Thank You” in a real and meaningful way. Be specific. For example: “Thank you for taking the time to read this article and leaving a comment.”
6. Recall a negative event that happened in the past. Doing this helps you appreciate your current situation.
7. Be mindful of your five senses. How does each of them enhance your life?
8. Create visual reminders to practice gratitude. Sticky notes, notifications, and people are great for this.
9. Focus on the good that others have done on your behalf.
10. Actions lead to gratitude. Smile, and say thank you.
11. Look out for opportunities to feel grateful.
12. Give something up. We tend to adapt to newness; sometimes it is a good idea to give something up so that we can increase our appreciation of it.
13. Think about what your life would be like if a specific positive event wouldn't have happened. Write all the decisions and events that would have been different in your life. For example: what if you did not meet your spouse? What if you did not get the dream job you have now?

I enjoy reading your contributions because they broaden my understanding of this subject.”

Mindfulness

By Adam Kureshi

Mindfulness can be explained in many ways but it is something that has to be experienced. It is the ability to be fully aware of your environment, where you are and what you are doing. Essentially, mindfulness is about being present in the moment and, at the same time, being able to not get affected by what is happening in your surroundings.

You need not be limited to any particular belief system to reap its benefits as science has made it accessible for all. Research suggests that mindfulness not only changes our perspective but also rewires the brain for increased decision-making and focus — while decreasing stress, anxiety and fear. The grey matter in the brain also increases

in volume aiding in emotional regulation, planning, problem solving, learning and memory. Countless benefits exist and various studies show that as little as 3-weeks of mindfulness practice may lead to increased compassion, reduced aggression, greater positivity and well-being. Mindfulness can be practiced while seated or on the go. Or it could be simply allotting a specific time in your daily schedule from a minute to an hour or more; in this time you merely bring your attention to your breath with the aim of catching your drifting mind and gently refocusing it to the present moment or sensation.

You can even practice mindfulness during your daily life activities such as eating, washing, etc.

by simply honing your senses on the task and becoming more aware. Many resources are available to help you begin your practice. As the Zen proverb goes:

“You should sit in meditation for twenty minutes a day, unless you're too busy. Then you should sit for an hour.”

Goals and Grit: Developing Passion and Perseverance

By Anushay Khan

According to Angela Duckworth, New York Times bestselling author and psychologist:

Anyone striving to succeed—be it students, educators or business people—the secret to outstanding achievement is not talent but a special blend of passion and persistence.

Duckworth calls this phenomenon “grit” (Duckworth, 2016). Her research shows that gritty people are hardworking, self-directed, self-motivated, persistent and they are able to bounce back from setbacks and get back on track.

But how do they do this? Gritty people stay focused on one important long-term goal that drives them to work even harder

and be more persistent and resilient. This creates passion which is the driving force behind self-motivation. Therefore, it is like living life as a marathon and not as a sprint. Angela Duckworth explains the self-made businessman Warren Buffett's strategy for identifying the most important goal that deserves the most grit in the following steps:

- 1) List upto 25 goals.
- 2) Circle the five that are the highest priority i.e. those that align the most with what is important for you in life.
- 3) Look at the goals that you did not circle and do not pay much time and energy toward. These goals are most likely to distract you from your top goals. (Remember: what you are not going to do is as important as deciding what you will do!)
- 4) Make a plan for achieving your top five or fewer goals.
- 5) Ask yourself to what extent do my top five goals serve a common purpose?
- 6) By aligning your goals, the effort you put into one of your top goals is likely to benefit your other goals as well.



Resources

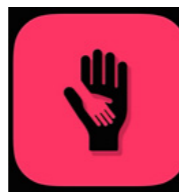
Self-esteem Blackboard

This Android app was developed by a clinical psychologist using the methods of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) to help improve self-esteem. This app may be for you if low self-esteem is affecting your relationships or preventing you from being successful, or if you are having problems with anxiety or depression.



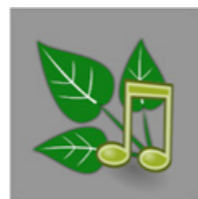
What's Up? A Mental Health App

It is a fantastic free app for iPhone and Android devices, utilising some of the best CBT and Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT) methods to help you cope with depression, anxiety, anger, stress and more. With a beautiful, modern design, simple heading and easy-to-follow methods, you can get to what helps you the most.



Nature Sounds Relax and Sleep

This Android app lets you choose from a list of six different good quality sounds of nature which include thunder, ocean sounds, sea, birds sounds, rain, night in jungle, water sounds, waterfall, to help start your personal audio therapy.



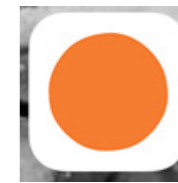
DBT Self-Help

This iPhone and Android app is designed to help you cope with overwhelming emotions and impulsive behaviours. It will also assist with relationships and help you cultivate mindfulness.



Headspace

Headspace is meditation made relevant to modern life. Get unique daily-guided meditations, science facts and figures, and progress reports, all designed to make it easy for you to get some calm and clarity.



References

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