

UPDATE

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LIVING WITH UNCERTAINTY

By Robert Feldman, Ph.D.

The challenge for so many of our traditional students studying at the university is to declare a major which will supposedly set the wheels in motion for a smooth ride on the track of life. However, living with uncertainty is a problem that we cannot solve simply by finding an appropriate field of study. It is a problem that affects our entire adult population at all levels and stages at the university.

Many of our faculty and staff, who long ago identified an area of specialization as undergraduates and then went on to pursue a degree in graduate school, come to the university with hopes of applying their knowledge and skills as teachers. While we are no longer subject to the pressures of succeeding as students, we do experience new pressures, in our new roles as teachers, of being able to communicate effectively to students in our fields of expertise.

So living with anxiety and uncertainty never ends; it just reaches new heights. It is nice to receive job security in the form of renewed contracts and tenure. Even though it provides the opportunity for instructors to continue teaching, it cannot guarantee that teaching will be successful. However, just as students acquire confidence by completing their general education requirements and then focusing on courses in their major, so do teachers achieve a sense of mastery by offering required introductory courses followed by upper-level courses in their specialty areas.

For students and faculty and staff, experience may be the best teacher of all. Students learn from their instructors, but instructors also learn from their students. In particular, instructors learn what are their students' interests, needs, hopes, and fears. While instructors can adequately prepare lesson plans, there is always uncertainty as to how the material will be received by the students. Still, uncertainty does not always have to be seen in a negative light.

Uncertainty is scary but exciting. We can never know what will work in the classroom until we try it. However, if life were predictable, people would lose motivation to pursue goals. Uncertainty keeps us on edge because we know that we may fail in our endeavors. However, we can learn from our mistakes and consequently, improve our approaches to, methods of, and techniques for teaching.

No matter what stage of life we are at, we will be faced with uncertainty. No matter how many times we teach the same courses, each one will present a different set of parameters. Students have individual personalities, experiences, and opinions, so if the instructor were to teach the same courses and use the same texts over the years, there would still be varying reactions to the material. These variables are welcome because they prevent boredom. Attitude is all. We can fret about life's uncertainties, or we can rise to the challenge by viewing uncertainty as an opportunity to enhance our lives with learning, development, and meaning.



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Recognizing Students in Distress

What are some signs of possible distress that might alert me to consider approaching a student?

People who hang around your office more frequently than you feel is necessary to answer their questions or appear to be looking for an opening to talk more personally.

Students who do not appear to be coping very well with loss, including death or debilitating illness in the family; loss of friend or a serious relationship; chronic academic difficulty or failure or a sudden drop in what has been satisfactory academic performance; their own serious illness or injury (automobile accidents are common); parental/family conflicts, including separation and divorce.

Concern on your part or the student's that perhaps s/he has not made a well-considered choice of major and/or career field indecisiveness regarding major.

Students who appear to be depressed, isolated or alienated from peers, display evidence of anxiety and/or miss a lot of class time.

References in papers or other classroom work to suicidal thoughts, doing harm to others, depression, sexual abuse or assault, eating disorders and other serious issues.

Repeated evidence that students are experiencing test anxiety which is seriously effecting their academic achievement in your course, or are experiencing communication or mathematics anxiety.

Sudden, perhaps frequent, emotional outbursts of crying or anger and hostility directed at you or other students.

Evidence of a pattern of alcohol or other drug use which results in repeated absences, poor quality work, problematic relationships, and financial, medical or legal consequences.

Evidence of sudden disruption of regular habits, such as sleeping too much or too little; substantial increases or decreases in food intake; and physical complaints such as severe headaches, stomach trouble and/or chronic fatigue.

1. Speech, written work, or personal notes written to you where thought patterns are disconnected, rambling, confused or nonsensical.
1. Overly high academic expectations that aren't being realized.
2. Changes in dress, appearance or grooming which convey a sense of neglect, hopelessness or loss of self-esteem.

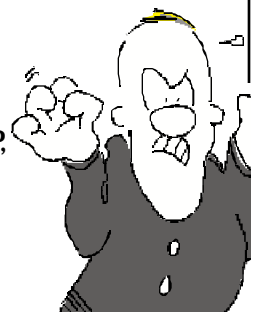
Now that you recognize distress? What do you do?

The staff of the Employee Assistance Program and University Counseling Center are available to talk with you about friends, acquaintances, co-workers, students who are showing signs of distress. If you are worried about someone you know, you can call to talk with a staff member, or make an appointment to meet in person. Our staff is available to talk about what behaviors you have observed that concern you, whether you are in a position to be helpful, and what other kinds of action or intervention might be helpful. There is no concern that is silly and it is likely that in our experience we have seen a similar concern.

Phone: 920-424-1078
Monday – Friday 8:00AM – 4:30 PM.

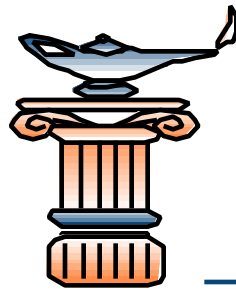
For additional information on Employees with specific problems and how to make a referral to EAP, you may access information on line:

“Tips for Recognizing and Managing Employees in Distress”
<http://www.uwosh.edu/eap/>



All Employees and Students October 5th Screenings Day

A "screening" is a brief questionnaire that offers feedback on symptoms related to low mood, anxiety, or eating problems as well as educational information about whether further evaluation is recommended. Screenings are widely used to promote health and for early intervention to prevent potential problems from getting worse. The Staff of the Employee Assistance Program and University Counseling Center will offer the screenings free of charge. Look for more specific information on times and location.



Health Place Immunization Clinic

The College of Nursing Health Place will once again offer a flu immunization clinic this fall. Immunizations will generally be available on Mondays, usually in October and November. Please watch the Bulletin for days and times. The Health Place must wait for the supplier to send the shipment. If you have any questions, please call the Health Place after September 11th. 920-424-1242.

UPCOMING

EAP Brown Bag Seminars

Humor in the Workplace or How Will \$1.05 Investment Bring you 60 Humorous Stories?

Ted Balsler – Director of Career Services.
Wednesday, September 20th
Noon-1:00PM
Reeve 214

Humor helps us to kick the blues, recharge our batteries and keep us spontaneous with our families, friends and coworkers. We will develop a laugh action plan to help us with the new changing world of work. Be prepared to solve puzzlers: "What goes tick, tick, wolf, wolf?"

Osteoporosis Screening (co-hosted by the Student Health Service)

Introductory Comments by Gail McNutt, MD.
Thursday, October 19, 2000
Noon – 3:00PM
Room 201

Participants must be 40 years old. Testing will be done by sign-up. The screening takes just a few minutes and will be offered continuously for those three hours.

Raising Drug Free Kids in a Drug filled World.

Joe Abhold, Ph.D.
Thursday, November 16th, 2000
Noon- 1:00PM
Reeve Union 214

This interactive presentation explores the important role of parents in preventing their children's drug use. The critical ages for discussing drug/alcohol issues and the specific how-to's of these conversations, bring this vital information "home" in a clear and practical manner.

MINDING YOUR HEALTH

According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, stress is associated with 80 percent of all physical illnesses in which people see a doctor, ranging from the common cold to heart disease.

EAP Update Staff:

For further information contact
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at 920-424-1078

Susan E. Barbour, Ed.D., EAP Director

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