Mental health 101: teaching students and campus leaders how to help those in crisis

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Presentation content:

- Depression:
  - A serious mood disorder characterized by loss of interest in life extreme sadness, and hopelessness
  - A person with depression isn’t always sad, but their happiness is often associated with guilt.
  - When someone battling depression, be kind and express empathy, know the resources available for help, allow them to talk freely, and avoid minimizing their feelings or tell them how to feel.
  - Risk factors for college students: homesickness, seasonal depression, adjusting to a new lifestyle (i.e. freshmen year), stress, and strain on relationships.

- Eating Disorders:
  - Defined as extreme emotions, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding weight and food issues. They are serious emotional and physical problems that can have life-threatening consequences for females and males.
  - Warning signs include: dramatic weight loss, anxiety about weight and food, bingeing/purging, refusal to eat, excessive exercise, disordered teeth, food rituals, or connecting food to emotions.
  - To help someone you believe is at risk for an eating disorder:
    - Set up a time to talk and address them in a private setting.
    - Give specific examples of concerns: "I noticed you ate only one meal on Wednesday.
    - Be supportive, do not place blame, shame, or guilt.
    - Avoid using words such as weight, calories or talking about their appearance.
    - Do not diagnose them, or promise they will get better.

- Anxiety:
  - Characterized by frequent feelings of intense, and persistent worry about everyday situations. Commonly accompanied by panic attacks.
  - Most common types: Generalized anxiety disorder, Social Anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Panic Disorder.
  - Anxiety affects each person differently and the smallest things can trigger it, do not belittle their anxiety or try to change them.
  - Be there for them, and celebrate their victories over anxiety.

Outcomes:

- This presentation was implemented with:
  - The Department of Housing and Residential Life Professional Staff and Resident Advisors.
  - The members of We’re Offering Women Wisdom (WOWW).
  - Student mentors of the URI Eating Concerns Advisors (Ultra)
  - A Student Senate sponsored open forum.

- Results of meeting with URI Students and the Dean of students
  - URI is making strides in establishing student advocacy groups.
  - Faculty members underwent Mental Health First Aid Training.

- A clear protocol for helping someone in crisis is being established.
- Providing educational sessions to many students and leaders on campus raised awareness of mental health issues, therefore helping to erase the stigma.

Presentation Content - QPR: Suicide Prevention

Question:

- Know the warning signs which are categorized as direct or indirect verbal clues, behavioral clues, and situational clues.
- Examples: saying "I am going to kill myself" or giving away prized possessions and getting your affairs in order.
- If you think there is the slightest chance they could be suicidal, don’t hesitate, ask them.
- Avoid being judgmental, don’t belittle their feelings or tell them they are being selfish.

Persuade:

- Know the resources available and offer to go with them to talk to someone.
- Ask them to promise to keep living until they have found help.
- Offer hope, your willingness to help will cut through their isolation.

Refer:

- The best referral involves taking them directly to an agency or professional that can offer help right away.

Self Care:

- Talk to someone after helping an individual at risk for suicide, this can weigh on you if you don’t practice self-care.

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URI’s Mental Health Resources:

- Counseling Center
  - 2nd Floor Roosevelt Hall, 401-874-2288

- Health Services
  - Potter Building, 401-874-2675

- Psychological Consultation Center
  - Chafee Building Room 100, 401-874-4263

- National Hotlines
  - 1-800-SUICIDE, 1-800-273-TALK

References:


