LET’S TALK MENTAL HEALTH

Session 2: Breaking the Silence: Starting Conversations About Mental Health
Wednesday, 6 November 2013, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m. Engineering Graduate Lounge

Moderator: Tine Lathouwers, Human Resources
Note Taker: Kathy Harrison, School of Child and Youth Care

Resource Persons:

Nabiha Rawdah, Advisor, Centre for Accessible Learning
Pamela Savage, Education & Administration Coordinator, Society for Students with a Disability
Martine Conway, Ombudsperson, UVSS
LilAnne Jackson, Associate Dean, Engineering Undergrad Programs
Rita Knodel, Director, Counselling Services
Andrea Paquette, Executive Director, Bipolar Disorder Society of B.C.
Laurie Whyte, Chief Steward, CUPE 951
Ruthanne Tobin, Faculty, Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education

1. If you suspect someone is struggling with mental health how do you start the conversation?

- Use respectful language
- Be non-judgmental
- Establish rapport
- Use “I” statements
- Acknowledge their experience
- Feedback your observations for the individual
- Don’t be argumentative
- Create a safe environment
- Stay calm – anxiety can be a contagion
- Offer resources and an acknowledgment they are confidential
- Awareness that it takes a risk to disclose a mental health issue
- Acknowledge and affirm the disclosure
- Use “active” listening skills – paraphrasing, reflect feelings, open-ended questions

2. If someone discloses mental illness what can you say or do?

- Be patient
- Acknowledge what they are saying
- Thank them for telling you
- Show interest by questioning
- Show compassion
- Be non-judgmental
- Offer support and/or resources
3. **How can we assist a colleague or student returning to the work place/school after being away for a mental health related illness?**

- Create a safe environment
- Create a caring community
- Sensitivity
- Awareness of the language we use i.e., insane, crazy
- Awareness that it takes “acts of courage” to reengage
- Be proactive – make a connection with that person
- The individual returning also has a responsibility (when they are well) to be open and discuss their illness if the environment feels safe
- Understanding that when an individual returns they may not be 100% initially
- Essential to have a return to work plan (accommodation for employee)
- Requires leadership from the supervisor/instructor to welcome the individual returning
- Have a set of standards in the workplace around mental health
- Employee Assistance Program can offer assistance in best practices for individuals returning to work
- Centre for Accessible Learning can provide assistance for students/Instructors
- Promote mental health generally – more conversations – don’t wait until an issue arises

**Training Opportunities/Links to more mental health information**

ASIST Suicide Intervention Training -  

Mental Health Works – workshops for employers through CMHA - [http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/](http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/)

Healthy Minds Healthy Campuses - [http://healthycampuses.ca/](http://healthycampuses.ca/)

Mental Health First Aid – Mental Health Commission of Canada -  
[http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca/EN/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca/EN/Pages/default.aspx)

**Recommendations**

More posters that promote mental health around UVic campus

One UVic link or site for individuals to go on-line for mental health resources