LET’S TALK MENTAL HEALTH

Session 1: Supporting Your Mental Health: Making Connections on Campus
Wednesday, 9 October 2013, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Engineering Graduate Lounge

Moderator: Chris Smith, Libraries, Systems Support Services
Note Taker: Kathy Harrison, School of Child and Youth Care

RESOURCE PERSONS:

Crystal Seibold, Coordinator of Indigenous Student Support, Office of Indigenous Affairs (INAF)
- Elders in Residence available Mondays through Thursdays, 10:00 to 3:00 p.m.
  - Connecting with culture and tradition
- Food available – free lunches available on Wednesdays
- INAF holding a Week of Wellness from November 18 – 22nd
- 2 Indigenous Counsellors available on-campus – one Male and one Female
- Writing Support available First Peoples House Wednesdays from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.
- Academic Advising available at First Peoples House Wednesdays from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m.
- First Peoples House open Monday to Thursdays until 8:00 p.m. – study rooms

Emma Mason, Counsellor, Counselling Services, Peer Helping Program with Brooke MacDonald, Kaitlin Blackwood and Alix Causer-McBurney, Student Peer Helpers
- Peer Helping has two drop-in centres for one on one support
  - McPherson Library (Learning Commons), Room 135e, Monday to Friday, 9:30 to 4:30
  - Residence Resource HUB, Health and Wellness Centre (HAWC), Sanderson 102, Mondays and Wednesdays 2 to 4 p.m.
- Coffee House, Thursdays 4 to 6 p.m., Residence Resource HUB, Health and Wellness Centre, Sanderson 102. Free coffee, tea, snacks and friendly conversations.
- Counselling Services offers group programs and workshops specifically related to social connections and gaining social confidence.
- Mindfulness and meditation

Henry Lock, Chaplain, Multi-Faith Services for students, staff and faculty
- Offers spirituality resources
  - Spiritual Learning
  - Spiritual Practice
  - Spiritual Community
  - Spiritual Service
- Meditation – Mondays and Thursdays
- Relationship with the Earth (Sacred Ecology)
- Contemplative Practices
- Mindfulness Course
- Pot Lucks
Grace Wong-Sneddon, Director, Academic Leadership and Initiatives, VPAC
- Supports equity and diversity across the University of Victoria campus
  - Offers workshops on this topic to staff and faculty

Fiona Puszka, Personal Safety Coordinator, Campus Security Services
- Link to Off-Campus Support – Police; Emergency Mental Health; Emergency Medical Responders etc.

Cliff Haman, Digital Media Technician, Visual Arts
- Creating a community of creative expression

Anne Cirillo, Student Advisor, International Office Student Experience
- UVic Global Community
  - Develops and fosters a sense of community for international students
  - Button campaign
  - Mentor Program – has 36 mentors that meet every week
  - Domestic students are part of the 36 pods

DISCUSSION

What difference does it make to have friends?
- Validity of support
- Sense of belonging
- Laughter
- Permission to be vulnerable – model this as it normalizes that we all have struggles
- Camaraderie
- Acquaintances can be equally as beneficial as close friends
- Opportunity to contribute
- Opportunity to cross boundaries

BARRIERS/ CHALLENGES
- Workload of first year students in some programs is extensive
- Belief is that it is a “culling” of weaker students
- Those students who are unsuccessful often never return to post-secondary – are devastated by the experience
- Staff and Faculty feeling “under pressure” based on greater workloads due to financial cutbacks
- Idea that “busyness/overwork” relates to importance. Creates a culture of unhealthy working habits.
- Social inequality
OVERCOMING BARRIERS/STRATEGIES/EVENTS

- Mental Wellness is part of the UVic strategic plan
- Out of the Shadows and into the Sunshine a bi-annual event – next offered Fall 2014
- Jamie Cassels, UVic President, holds runs every Friday
- Faculty of Law has seconded a counsellor from Counselling Services on a half time basis to hold Health and Wellness activities
- Acknowledgement of individual student needs
- Helpful to have additional support/events for students (after the initial Student Orientation) and for staff (after initial hiring procedures).
- Educating others on depression – being open – not saying anything can be worse