



# Improving Mental Health Awareness Among International Students

NAFSA Region III Conference 2015



# Presenters

**Victoria Troupe**



**Justin Wyckoff, PhD**



**Shanna Blount**



**Stefan Johnsson**

UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON**

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OFFICE OF THE PROVOST  
International Student and Scholar Services

# Agenda

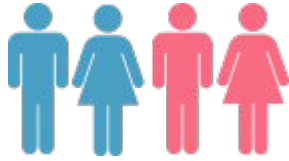
- Mental Health is a Community Problem
- Stigma
- Myths
- Warning Signs
- Boundaries
- Helping Students Seek Care
- F1 Visa Reporting and Mental Health
- Insurance
- Creating Awareness / Resources
- Discussion

# What is Mental Health?

Mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”

- Centers for Disease Control

# Mental Health is a Community Issue



18-25% affected at  
some point



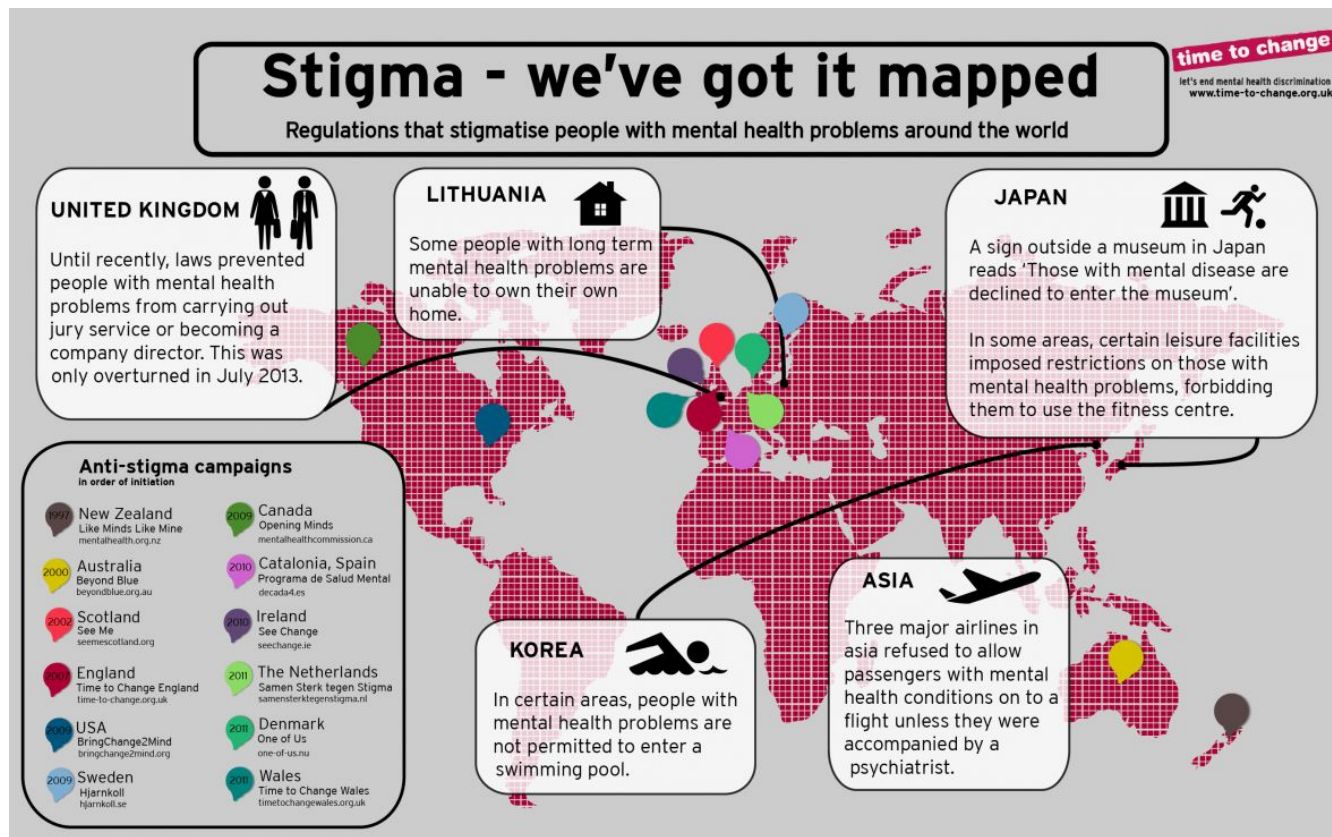
450 million people affected

Source: National Institutes of Health, 2013

Source: World Health Organization, 2002

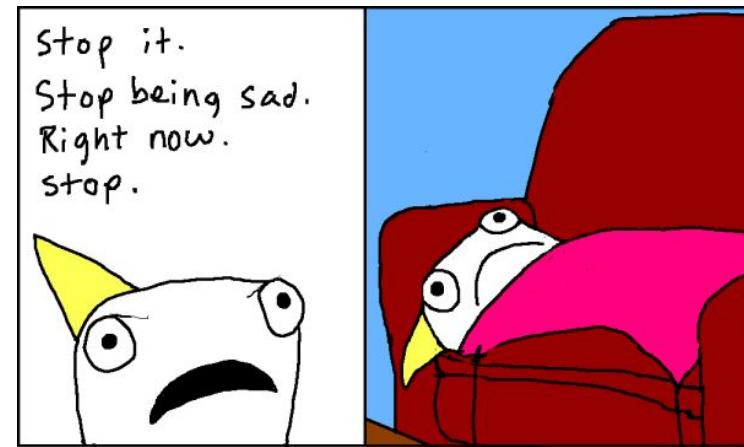
# Worldwide Stigma

Mental health concerns often go undiagnosed and untreated among international students due to the negative connotations associated with the subject around the world.



# Common Myths

"Counseling is for crazy people"



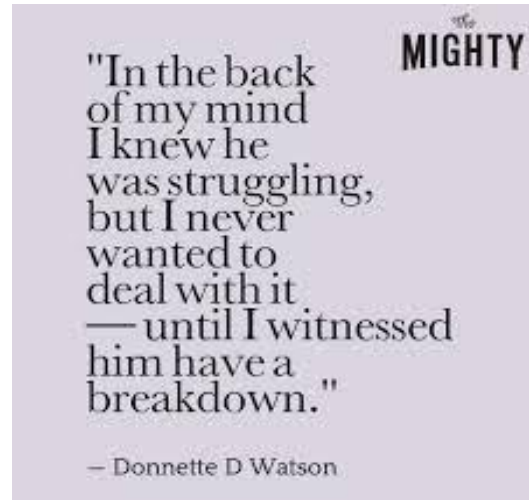
"Everyone will know I saw a counselor"



"I can handle my own mental health problems, if I can't, that means I'm weak"

# Warning Signs

- Academic Problems
- Social Isolation
- Noticeable Changes in Mood
- Unusual or Odd Behaviors
- Drug/Alcohol Abuse
- Threat of Harm to Themselves or Others





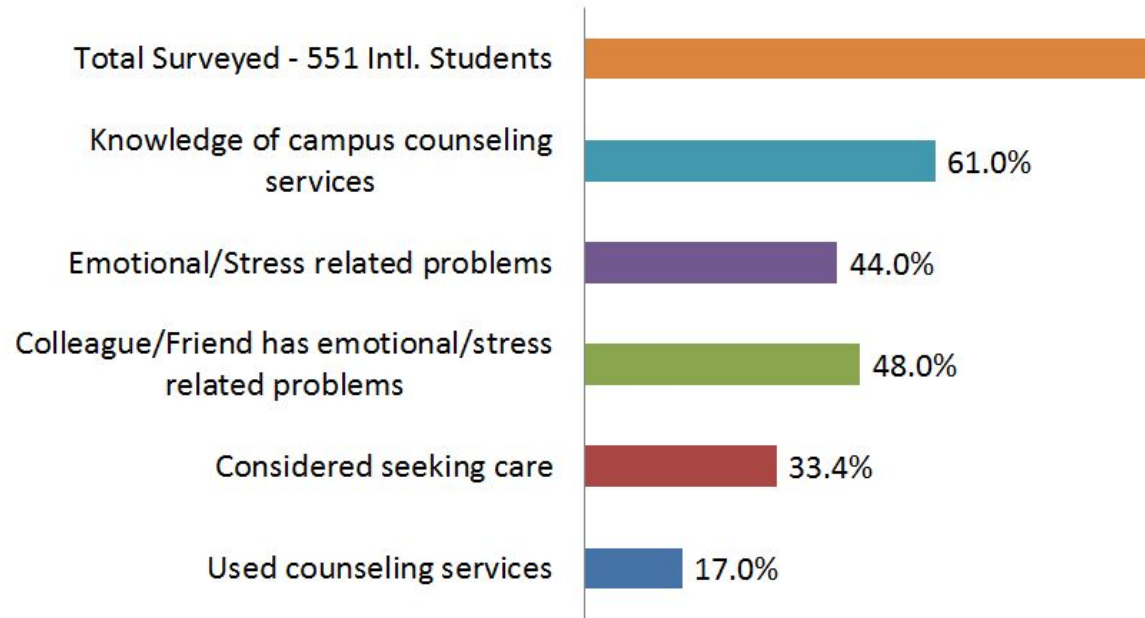
# Boundaries



- Educators must know their role with students
- Educate yourself on what to do if you suspect mental illness
- Reach out to your campus mental health professionals for some training
- Do not cross the line between educator and mental health professional



# International Students are Not Seeking Care



# Helping Students Seek Care

## On-campus Assistance:

- Mental Health Staff
- Hours
- Average Cost

## No counseling center?

- Relationships with other providers
- Suggestions from other departments
- Helplines



# F-1 Student Reporting and Mental Health

- 30 day reporting deadline
  - New students (30 days from start of I-20)
  - Active students needing to be registered full-time (30 days from last day to register)
    - No enrollment vs. Part-time enrollment
- Reporting deadline is the most common way to find students needing help.
  - Is student in hospital during reporting time frame?
  - Can reporting be postponed to maintain student's status?
    - Is documentation available?
- Medical Assistance
  - University Health Insurance policy
    - Coverage without enrollment
  - Seeking Medical attention abroad (licensed doctor)

# Insurance and Mental Health

What is Legally Required?

Nothing!

**Mental health insurance coverage is not required by the government for international students.**

## **Questions to Consider:**

1. Do the students' insurance plans cover mental health?
2. Does the insurance company offer language support?
3. Do students realize that claims are confidential?

# Resources and Awareness

**NAFSA provides the following publications:**

Health and Wellness for  
International Students

Best Practices in Addressing Mental  
Health Issues Affecting Education  
Abroad Participants

[www.nafsa.org/Find\\_Resources/](http://www.nafsa.org/Find_Resources/)

**Mental Health Awareness Video Resource:**



[www.  
internationalstudentinsurance.  
com/explained/mental-health-  
video.php](http://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/explained/mental-health-video.php)

# Resources - National Hotlines

- **National Suicide Prevention**
  - 1-800-273-TALK
  - [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**
  - 1-800-SAMHSA-7 or 1-877-726-4727
  - [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)
- **National Institute of Mental Health Information Line:**
  - 1-800-647-2642
- **NAMI Helpline**
  - 1-800-950-NAMI
- **National Mental Health Association**
  - 1-800-799-SAFE
  - <http://www.thehotline.org/>
- **National Hopeline Network:  
(American Association of Suicidology)**
  - 1-800-SUICIDE
  - [www.hopeline.com](http://www.hopeline.com)

# Increasing Awareness

Goal: Normalize and increase comfort in reaching out for support

- Incorporate a wellness conversation into your daily interactions.
- Use positive, easy-to-understand language, and let them know that it's common!
- Invite counselors and other providers to orientation.
- Put out materials on the subject through various channels (i.e., newsletters, social, pamphlets).





# Discussion

How do you overcome mental health issues and the stigma associated with it?

# Discussion

What boundaries do your institutions set for you, or do you set them for yourself?

# Discussion

What obligation do advisors have to hold student information in confidence?

Thank you!

**Contact Us:**

Victoria - [vtroupe@internationalstudentinsurance.com](mailto:vtroupe@internationalstudentinsurance.com)

Justin - [jwyckoff@ou.edu](mailto:jwyckoff@ou.edu)

Shanna - [shanna-blount@utulsa.edu](mailto:shanna-blount@utulsa.edu)

Stefan - [sjohnsson@uh.edu](mailto:sjohnsson@uh.edu)