


# Trent University Counselling Centre



## Information Booklet for Faculty and Teacher's Aids

The Trent University Counselling Centre provides personal counselling services to full and part-time undergraduate and graduate students in Peterborough and Durham. Our mandate addresses the educational, developmental, preventative and remedial needs of our students. Services include individual therapy, group therapy, crisis counselling, psychiatric assessment and care, faculty and staff consultation.

The Trent Counselling Centre has created this booklet in order to provide helpful information about the Counselling Centre and your role in meeting the holistic needs of our students. We hope that you will find this information useful.

### **Student/Faculty Contact**

Among the many principles that define good teaching practise in higher learning, frequent student-faculty contact both in and out of the classroom is one of the hallmarks at Trent University. In promoting student motivation and involvement, a concerned and responsible faculty member will be attentive to our student's holistic needs. Many professors will ensure that they talk to our students on a personal level in their role as instructor, mentor, and advisor. As relationships develop and trusting alliances form, some students may divulge personal challenges and faculty are there to listen and help our students maintain emotional objectivity and regain a focus on their academics.

## How to Help

Faculty are often among the first to notice that a student is experiencing personal problems. Often one-on-one contact and the opportunity to express oneself with a caring other is not only necessary, but sufficient for positive change to occur. The following guidelines are offered in adopting a counselling role with our students:

- Listen and permit the student adequate time to express their thoughts and feelings.
- Accept the student's thoughts and/or feelings without judgment.
- Communicate empathy by reflecting back to the student your understanding of both the content and feeling they are identifying and expressing.
- Clarify vague or confusing statements.
- Attempt to understand how the student has attempted to resolve their problems.
- Focus on solutions, using the student's strengths and successes as building blocks.
- Encourage the student to identify past strategies that have proven successful in coping with similar challenges.
- Instil hope by identifying options/resources.
- Maintain privacy but do not promise confidentiality.

## When to Refer

At times our instincts tell us that a particular student may be experiencing difficulties that require more specific guidance or therapy.

We may need to remind ourselves, despite our caring intentions and natural helping skills, that we are the professor, not the parent, friend or counsellor. Some students may see us as

authority figures and this perception may make it difficult for us to be helpful.

Other students will see us as friends which may compromise our role as instructor.

Faculty must remain aware of limits and boundaries, and know when to refer for professional services. A referral may be required when:

- The problem is more serious than you feel comfortable handling.
- The student requests information that you are unable to provide.
- You are beginning to feel overly responsible for the student's well being or safety.
- You are spending more time talking about personal issues than academic concerns.
- You have talked to the student as much as you can and the student does not appear to be progressing.
- Helping the student further may compromise the faculty/student relationship.
- There are personality differences or personal feelings which may interfere with your ability to work with the student.
- The student admits that there is a problem but is unwilling to talk about it.



## What to Look For

A majority of university students will experience some personal, social, or academic stress at some point in their education. Many of these challenges are successfully met through internal strengths and external supports. However, those students with few protective factors, can have difficulties managing life demands and may well be at academic and/or personal risk. There are many indicators that may assist in identifying students who are facing significant emotional and/or psychological difficulties:



### 1 Changes in performance or behaviour

- Decrease in achievement (quality/quantity of written work or class participation)
- Excessive absence or tardiness
- Social withdrawal
- Loss of interest and a decrease in overall motivation
- Repeated requests for academic consideration

### 2 Unusual behaviour or appearance

- Abrupt change in manner, style, or personal hygiene
- Depressed mood
- Restlessness/agitation
- Ritualistic or repetitive behaviour
- Expressions of sadness or tearfulness
- Disorganised thinking, speech, or incongruent emotional expression
- Expressing thoughts of persecution
- Indications of substance abuse
- Significant weight gain or loss

### 3 Indicators of self-harm

- Communicating thoughts of suicide or self-harm directly or indirectly
- Expressing thoughts of hopelessness/helplessness
- Termination acts (i.e.: giving away possessions, saying good byes)
- Repeated reference to death

The presence of any one indicator alone does not necessarily mean that the student is at marked risk. It is however good practise to pay attention to any of the above indicators and meet with a student to check your concerns and identify a pattern that may suggest a need for clinical intervention.

## How to Refer

Most often an honest and direct approach where one reflects a genuine sense of concern for the well being of the student is recommended. It is advisable to discuss a referral to counselling when the student is calm and able to accept your recommendations without feeling rejected. In a matter-of-fact and supportive manner, you should explain your own professional limits by role and scope of practise. Advise the student the Trent counselling services are free and confidential. Encourage the student to call the Counselling Centre and attend one intake appointment to learn more about the services offered and make an informed decision. If necessary, help the student make the initial phone call from your office. The Counselling Centre will not normally accept appointments made by a third party.

The Counselling Centre operates on an appointment basis. Students should call 748-1386 for an intake appointment. Appointments are sometimes available on the same day although during busy times of the year a student may wait up to 10 business days for an appointment. At least two emergency appointments are available each day, usually in the afternoons. The administrative assistant and/or coordinator will screen and triage requests for emergency sessions.

It is advisable to keep a written record of your contact with students when a personal concern is present. Note the date and action taken or recommended.

## What if the Student is Reluctant

Some students will not wish to pursue counselling due to fear or anxiety of the unknown. Other students may believe that asking for help is admitting a failure or may simply not be ready to acknowledge their needs and receive help. Attempt to normalise the process of counselling and encourage the student to take one step at a time. Reinforce the notion that they are in control of their own counselling experience. Perhaps they would benefit from first visiting the Counselling Centre website and checking out the staff and/or virtual pamphlet collection. Remind the student that facing one's problem is a sign of strength not weakness. Some students believe that their problems are not severe thus counselling is not warranted. Help the student understand that they don't have to be in severe crisis and that counselling services are helpful with all types of problems of varying intensity. Encourage a proactive focus for health and wellness.

If a student outright refuses to follow-up with counselling services, it is important to respect their wish and acknowledge your own limitations both with the student and most importantly with yourself. Do not personalise the situation. Help the student explore other alternatives and keep the lines of communication open. Suggest the student think about your suggestion and set a time to follow-up.

*Counselling services can only be suggested not mandated*

## What to Do When Unsure

When unsure, it is helpful to approach your colleagues to get their objective impressions of a situation. The staff at the Counselling Centre are also available to consult on student concerns by phone or in person. Our therapists may assist in discussing general mental health issues, or in reviewing a particular situation and providing suggestions on how best to proceed in supporting a student or facilitating a referral. This consultation can occur without identifying the student. However, if the student is identified and they are known or refer themselves subsequently, the consultation may become part of the counselling record, to which the student has access.

## Dealing With a Crisis

Most students can wait a few days for counselling services, however there are situations that require immediate attention, support, and supervision.

Examples of a crisis may include the following:

- A student is experiencing suicidal ideation
- A student is overwhelmed with severe feelings of panic
- A student is dealing with the news of death or illness of a loved one
- A student has experienced an assault
- A student has been involved in, or was witness to, a traumatic event (i.e. car accident)

## For a Crisis On-Campus

**For a crisis on-campus during business hours, please call the Counselling Centre at 748-1386. Advise our Administrative Assistant of the urgency. At times it may be helpful to escort the student to the Counselling Centre.**

**We are located in Blackburn Hall (113) Regular business hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.**

**For emergencies in the evening or on the weekends, notify Trent Security (x-1333)**



If you believe that a student is likely to hurt him/herself or others in the near future, or is actively suicidal or homicidal, do not leave the student alone.

Send someone for help if possible. It may be necessary to call 911 for an ambulance to transport a student to hospital.

## Teaching Sensitive Topics

At times course content, particularly when addressing human nature, can touch upon thought-provoking and personal material that may trigger an emotional or behavioural reaction from our students. University professors have an ethical responsibility to ensure that any course content students may find sensitive is dealt with in an open, honest, and flexible manner.

The American Psychological Association provides an interesting article on this topic that you may find useful in anticipating and mitigating adverse reactions, while still being able to stimulate critical thinking and challenge our student's beliefs. ([http://www.psychologicalscience.org/teaching/tips/tips\\_1100.cfm](http://www.psychologicalscience.org/teaching/tips/tips_1100.cfm))

## Confidentiality

The Trent University Counselling Centre has an important legal and ethical responsibility to ensure client confidentiality. The therapeutic relationship is built on trust, and privacy is of utmost importance in building and maintaining rapport.

Once a referral is made, communication between the student and the Counselling Centre is normally kept in confidence. It is important to follow-up with the student, however one should always convey respect for the student's right to privacy and permit the student to volunteer the information they wish to share. With the written consent of the student, the Counselling Centre can provide relevant information in the best interest of the student involved. At times knowledge of attendance at the Counselling Centre is sufficient to alleviate one's concern and sense of responsibility. Students may provide specific consent to release attendance information only. Consent forms are available online at [www.trentu.ca/counselling](http://www.trentu.ca/counselling).

*Please note that our students have the right of refusal to release information.*

## Community Resources

Canadian Mental Health Association in Peterborough operates the Community Mental Health Crisis Response Program which provides 24-hour telephone support service and mobile response for individuals 16 and older who are experiencing problems affecting their mental health. (745-6484)

The following local agencies may also be of some assistance in a crisis:

- Peterborough Regional Health Centre ..... 743-2121
- Youth Emergency Shelter ..... 748-3851
- Telecare Distress Line. .... 745-2273
- Sexual Assault Response Team ..... 876-5022
- YWCA Crossroads Shelters ..... 1-800-461-7656

## Academic Consideration

The Trent University Counselling Centre strives to ensure that conditions are fair and consistent for all students, and that individual students are not disadvantaged by adverse personal circumstances beyond their control or by the activities of other students.

All extenuating situations resulting in an emotional upheaval will be reviewed and a determination rendered as to the level of disruption to a student's academic progress. There is a clear distinction between longstanding illness or difficulties which prevent a student from attending class or completing required work, and short-term or acute adjustments that may prevent a prepared student from achieving his or her potential (i.e.: environmental or situational trauma). Students with cyclical and episodic psychiatric symptoms (i.e.: mood or anxiety disorders) that have persisted for over one year, may qualify for accommodations based on the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Students with chronic mental health issues are encouraged to register at the Trent Disability Services Office as well as the TCC, although the latter will not provide a student with chronic mental health issues a letter of support for academic consideration beyond the student's first year at university.



- All requests to support academic leniency (i.e.: extensions and adjustments to course requirements) will be processed by the primary therapist. Students requesting academic leniency will generally consult with Faculty prior to approaching the TCC for support. The Counselling Centre will complete the Request for Academic Consideration form which offers an impression of how the student's academic performance may be impacted.
- All requests to support late course withdrawal, incomplete standing, aegrotat standing, and academic suspension will be completed by the coordinator based on a file review and consultation with primary therapist (if available). The student making this request must have had previous involvement with the Counselling Centre.
- In reviewing a file and determining the validity of the student's request for support, the coordinator will take into account the acute nature of the student's situation and the overall effort the student invested to address his/her issues.
- All supportive documentation will be provided at the discretion of the primary therapist and/or coordinator. The academic decisions and responsibility to ensure the essential requirements and integrity of a given course of study are met, rests with the academic department.

## The Staff at the Counselling Centre

The staff at the TCC is a dedicated team of professionals from various backgrounds in education, social work, and psychiatry. Clinical staff are credentialed professionals whose practice is governed by their respective professional associations.

The Counselling Centre acknowledges and celebrates the strengths and fragility of the human spirit. We are committed to providing services which respect the dignity and value of all people inclusive of age, gender, ethnicity, physical qualities, sexual identity and ability.

The TCC staff includes:

<b>Stewart Engelberg</b>	Coordinator
<b>Karen Whalen</b>	Administrative Assistant
<b>Sheila Collett</b>	Psychotherapist
<b>Emmanuelle Festas-Keogh</b>	Social Worker
<b>Deanie LaChance</b>	Social Worker
<b>Dr. Kevin Nugent</b>	Psychiatrist

## Online Resources

The TCC website ([www.trentu.ca/counselling](http://www.trentu.ca/counselling)) has a link to a virtual pamphlet collection which contains a wealth of information on the mental health issues commonly faced by university students

*We look forward to working with you in meeting the holistic needs of our students.  
Please contact us for more information.*



### Trent University Counselling Centre

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Symons Campus

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E-mail: [counselling@trentu.ca](mailto:counselling@trentu.ca)

Website: [www.trentu.ca/counselling](http://www.trentu.ca/counselling)