STRESS AND WELLNESS CLINIC (SWC) IMPROVES COLLEGE STUDENT SUCCESS AND WELL-BEING

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PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- Research on the benefits of the Stress & Wellness Model
- Services/interventions provided at the SWC
- Experiential section: Case study & example interventions
- Impact of the SWC on the center functioning
- Discussion and Questions
THEORY AND RESEARCH ON THE BENEFITS OF THE SWC MODEL

Focus on benefits of SWC in two areas:

- **Student Success**
  - Meeting the needs of diverse students
  - College adjustment
  - Retention

- **Psychological Well-Being**
  - Stress-related disorders
  - Mindfulness
  - Coping skills
THEORIES SUPPORTING SWC

- **Positive Coping** (Cummins & Nistico, 2002; Greenglass & Fiksenbaum, 2009; Shiota, 2006)
- **Self-Regulation** (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Higgins et al., 1999)
- **Positive Psychology** (Seligman et al., 2005)
- **Prevention**
RESEARCH ON SWC AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Meeting the needs of diverse students

- Racial/ethnic minority students, student veterans, athletes, and International students are examples of student groups who collectively experience higher than average rates of stress compared to majority students (Moradi & Hasan, 2004; Wilson & Pritchard, 2005; Shenoy, 2000).

- Reducing stress through SWC services may expand the coping resources of underrepresented students and promote a psychologically healthier campus climate.
Research on SWC and Student Success (Cont.)

- **College adjustment**
  - Typically, academic and demographic variables have been evaluated in relation to academic adjustment.
  
  - Emotional health of students is a predictor of GPA, specifically higher stress levels is associated with lower GPA and intent to dropout (Pritehard & Wilson, 2004).

- **Retention**
  - SWC services that reduce stress are promising for increasing retention, especially for underrepresented students.
Research on SWC and Student Well-Being

SWC helps students develop and practice specific coping skills. The skills developed in SWC align with current research on the benefits of:

- **Mindfulness practices** (Davis & Hayes, in press; Delgado et al., 2010; Jimenez et al., 2010; Williams et al., 2007);

- **Biofeedback** (Hassett et al., 2007; Karavidas et al, 2007; McCraty et al., 1998; Siepman et al., 2008; Thurber, 2006);

- **Self-care** (Herman & Davis, 2004; Li et al., 2009; Tempesta et al., 2010).
CASE 1: MARY

- 22 Married non-Hispanic White Female

**Presenting Concerns:** high levels of anxiety, obsessive thinking, self-esteem issues, difficulty managing stress; some marital issues

**CCAPS:** Gen. Anxiety (70, high) & Family Distress (60, high)

**Self-Care:** no exercise, lack of appetite, difficulty falling asleep; no substance use

**Social Functioning:** spousal conflict; no friends; church

**Academic Functioning:** GPA 3.5, regularly attends class

**Current Coping:** working hard in school, cleaning, controlling husband

**Spirituality:** LDS (Mormon), religion – source of support
CASE DISCUSSION

- How would you work with Mary within your center?

- What do you wish you could do that your system does not offer?
STRESS AND WELLNESS CLINIC
WHAT DID WE WANT?

- Holistic approach
- Individual attention
- Ability to serve many clients
- Alternative to traditional therapy
- No diagnosis
- Clinical time savings
MISSION OF SWC

Our mission is to improve and promote well-being of UT students through services focused on the development of stress management and general coping skills.
SWC vs. Traditional Therapy

- Structured & goal-oriented
- Very brief (3 hrs tops)
- **Counselor’s major role**: provide information, teach skills, give recommendations, & provide referrals
- Process: more linear
- Focus: coping skills & behavioral change

- More flexible & exploratory
- Longer-term
- **Counselor’s major role**: provide guidance & support in self-discovery & change
- Process: more non-linear
- Focus: transformation & growth
Psychotherapy

Experiencing

Community Intervention

Teaching

SWC
RAISING AWARENESS OF STRESS & WELLNESS ON CAMPUS

Goals:
• Informing students of services
• Raising awareness of wellness
• Providing tools to manage stress and improve quality of life

Marketing:
• SWC Posters
• SWC Website
• SWC Brochure
• Campus events, tabling (e.g., VOLAWARE)
• Students listserve
“Stress is the trash of modern life - we all generate it but if you don’t dispose of it properly, it will pile up and overtake your life.” ~ Jeb Dickerson
“The time to relax is when you don’t have time for it.”
~ Sydney Harris

counselingcenter.utk.edu/wellness
SWC Intake

Individual follow-up

Other referrals

Biofeedback

SWC classes

SWC workshops
THE SWC INTAKE

- Holistic Assessment:
  - Presenting concern
  - Sources of current stress
  - Symptoms
  - Current coping
  - Lifestyle/health habits
    - Sleep, Exercise, & Eating
    - Substance use
    - Spirituality/religion
    - Social support
    - Academics & work
    - Physical health
    - Leisure
DEVELOPING AN INDIVIDUALIZED WELLNESS PLAN

- Identifying and setting goals
- Identifying targets
- Plan of action
SWC Interventions: Classes

1. Meditation
2. Coping with Anxiety
3. Mindfulness for Stress Reduction and Wellness
4. Making and Keeping Friends
5. Yoga for Emotional Well-Being
YOGA FOR EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

- Focusing on both mind and body through:
  - Guided meditation
  - Breathing techniques
  - Movement/poses

- Each class is built around a specific theme:
  - E.g.: Letting go, Joy, Good Enough, Balance, etc.
  - Theme is continuously explored throughout the class & connections to the life off the mat are being made

- Students feedback (Survey):
  - “Felt more peaceful afterwards”
  - “Feeling of joy persisted throughout the week”
  - “Made me feel calm and relaxed. Helped me to release some of the issues I had in my head”
Yoga Break

- Breath of Joy
- Goddess pose
SWC Interventions: Workshops

- Assertiveness
- Cognitive strategies for stress reduction
- Coping with panic
- Improving sleep
- Managing the stress of finals
- Mind-body strategies for stress reduction
- Overcoming test anxiety
- Time management
SWC Interventions: Biofeedback

- Uses emWave PC stress relief system
- Assists individuals in reaching a state of psychophysiological coherence
- Teaches clients a technique focused on regulating heart rate variability
SWC Interventions: Individual Follow-up

- Up to 5 sessions (30 min long)
- Typically bi-weekly appointments
- **Focus:** education, support, & overcoming barriers to change

**Homework assignments:**
- Practice skills
- Complete readings
- Implement life style changes
- Behavioral/experimental assignments
REVISITING CASE 1: MARY

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CASE 1: SWC INDIVIDUALIZED WELLNESS PLAN

- **Goals:**
  - Reduce anxiety & learn how to manage it
  - Develop stress management skills
  - Address marital conflict (couple’s counseling)

- **Targets:**
  - Exercise
  - Anxiety & stress management
  - Need for control

- **Wellness Plan:**
  - Readings: causes of anxiety
  - Workshops: stress management
  - Biofeedback
  - Mindfulness class
CASE 1: WORKING TOGETHER

- Stress & anxiety management: deep breathing, biofeedback, self-compassion

- Exercise: incorporating yoga and cardio training w/husband

- Identified need to control as an issue – experiential behavioral approach + mindfulness
Case 1: Results

- Reduced need to control & increased acceptance & self-acceptance
- Anxiety & stress reduction
- Consistent exercise routine
- Improved sleep
- Client continues to use biofeedback & attend mindfulness class

How much clinical time spent?
- INDIVIDUAL: 30 min intake, 30 min biofeedback training, 2x30 min follow-ups
- GROUP: 2 hrs of workshops, 8 sessions of Mindfulness class
SWC RESULTS: 2ND YEAR AND COUNTING

- 285 intakes conducted
- 249 follow-up appts
- 70 clts learned biofeedback
- SWC classes:
  - Five 8-session mindfulness classes taught
  - 21 sessions of coping w/anxiety
  - 17 sessions of yoga
  - 16 sessions of social skills
  - 12 sessions of meditation
- Multiple workshops
SWC model strengths & challenges

Strengths:
- Provides needed services for lower priority clients.
- Meets client needs w/customized interventions
- Strength-based; Life skills-oriented

Challenges:
- Helping clients who need more than SWC can offer
- Dealing with clients’ initial resistance to SWC referral
- Staff: Overcoming staff bias towards referrals for individual therapy; Engaging all staff into SWC work
- SWC office space
Practice time:

Grounding Meditation
DISCUSSION
&
QUESTIONS