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Welcome to the University Life website!

The Office of University Life is your hub for University-wide student life information and initiatives.

Office of University Life

Welcome to *In Session*

The University Life Professional Development Series

Addressing Student Anxiety

Panelists:

Anne Marie Albano, PhD

**AMAZING
THINGS
ARE
HAPPENING
HERE**



Addressing Student Anxiety

Anne Marie Albano, PhD, ABPP

Columbia University Clinic for Anxiety and Related Disorders
3 Columbus Circle, Suite 1425
212-342-3800 (referrals)



**Weill Cornell
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3.27.2018

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COMMENTARY



High Anxiety: How Can We Save Our Students From Themselves?



Randy Enos for The Chronicle

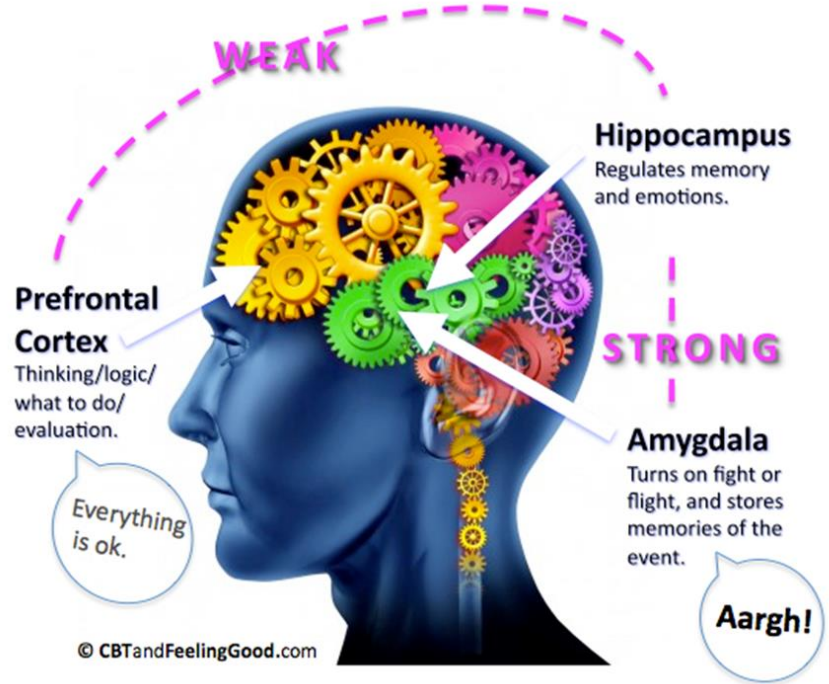
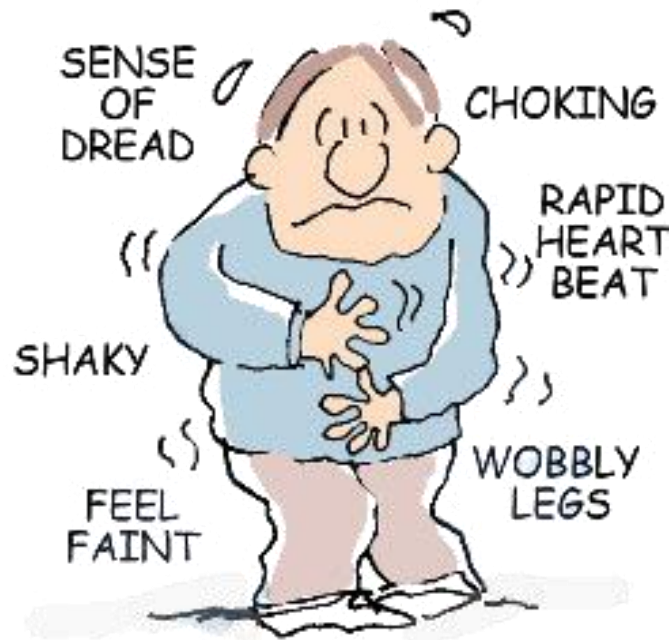
By Jonathan Zimmerman | OCTOBER 20, 2017

When Stephen Paddock killed 59 people including himself in Las Vegas this month, Americans broke into predictable political camps. Gun-rights advocates called for expanded mental-health services, insisting that no law could have stopped an obvious madman like Paddock. Nonsense, gun-control supporters said; whatever Paddock's mental state, the easy availability of firearms makes violence more likely.



When is anxiety problematic?

- Impairing emotion



Slide courtesy of Carolina Zerrate MD & Rebecca Erban PsyD

<https://iveronicawalsh.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/fofbraindiag.jpg>

When to be Concerned about Anxiety (or any other emotion)

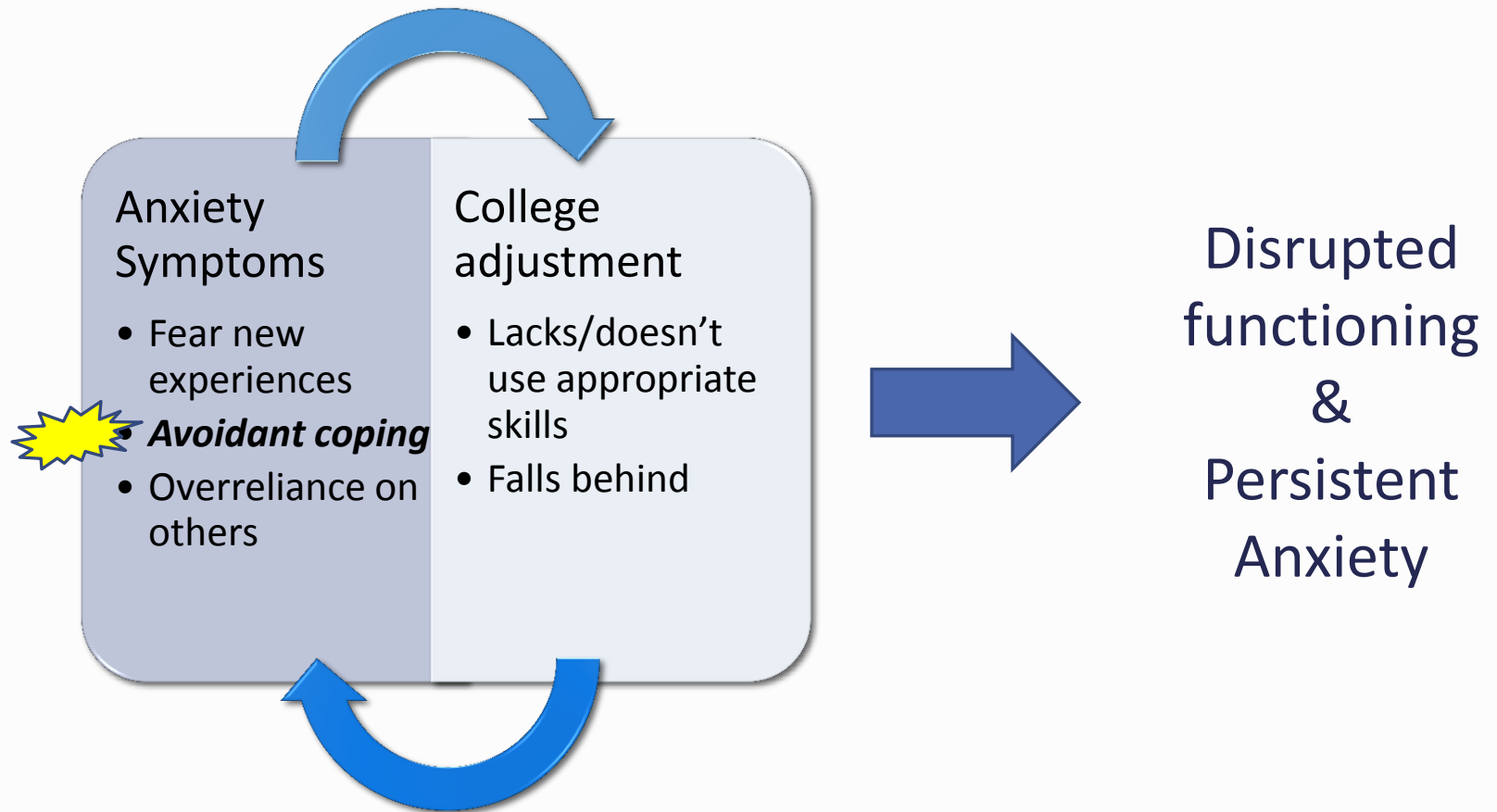
Healthy

- Reasonable
- Manageable
- Mobilizing
- Time limited

Problematic

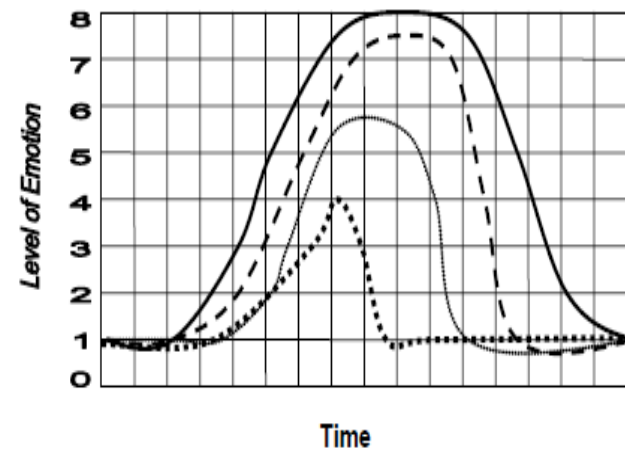
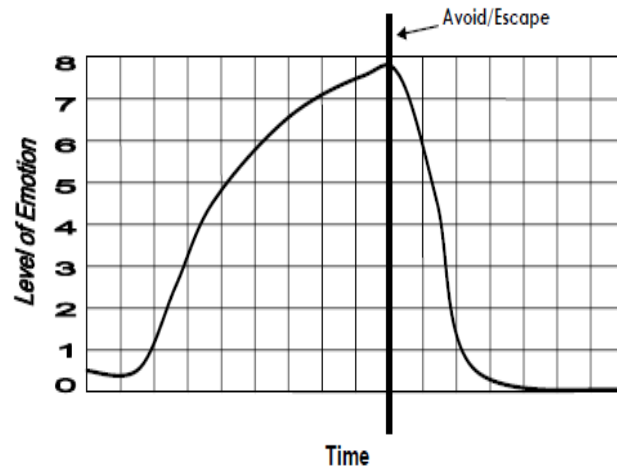
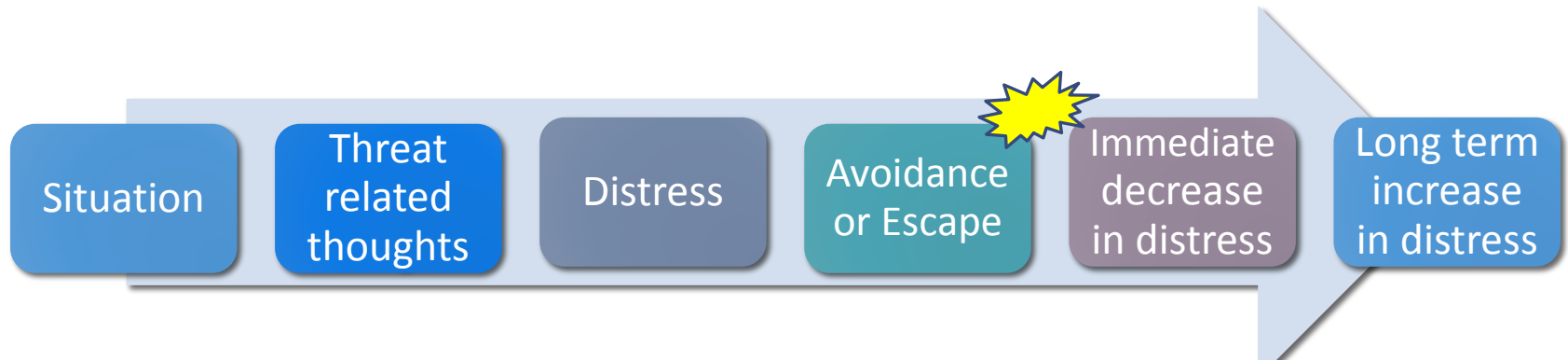
- Excessive
- Uncontrollable
- Paralyzing/Restricting
- Chronic

What if Anxiety Is Excessive?





Avoidance Maintains Anxiety

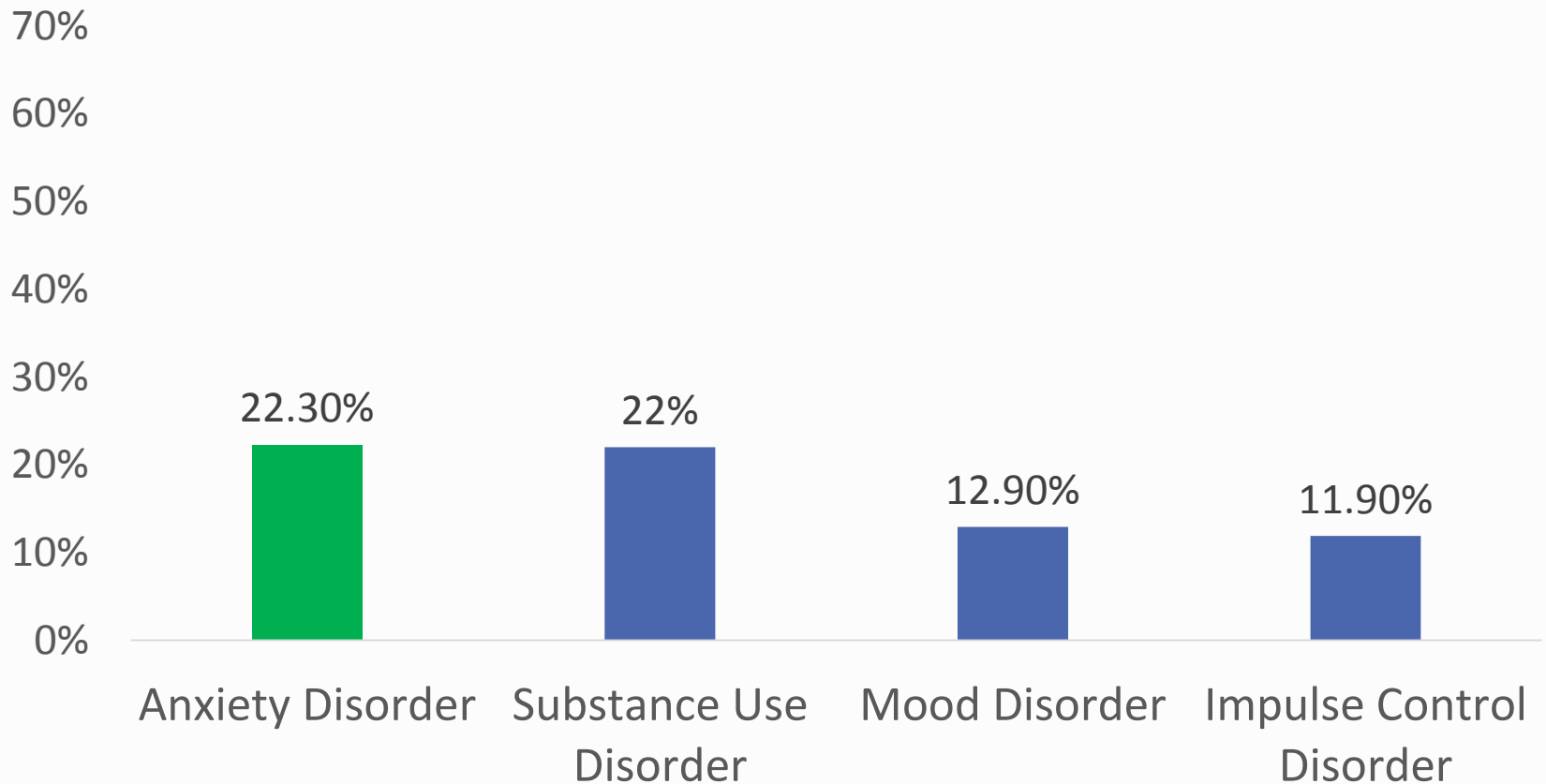


Anxiety Disorders

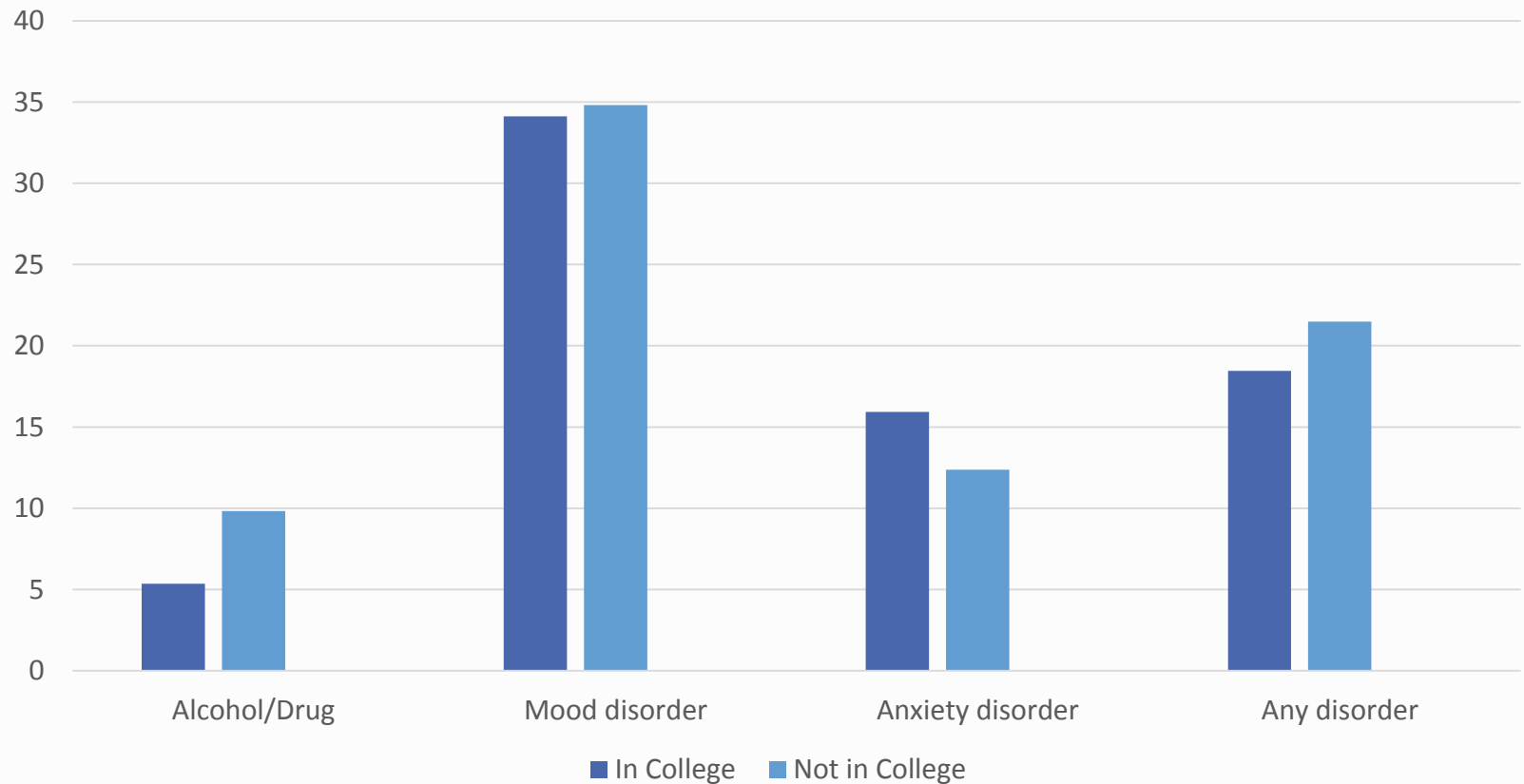
- *Avoidance*
- Functioning declines
- Distress
- Duration



Prevalence Rates for Psychiatric Disorders: 18-29 yo (n=9282)



Prevalence of Mental Health Service Utilization Among College Students and Non-College-Attending Individuals



In college, n=998
Not in college, n=1325

Situations prompting anxiety & worry

- Interviews
- Speaking in class/small groups
- Dating
- Casual social situations
- Meeting unfamiliar people
- Initiating or maintaining conversations
- Accidents of all sorts
- Being alone
- Boredom
- Conflict
- Deadlines
- Silences
- New situations or environments
- Community & world events
- Having to trust others
- Finances
- Family relationships
- The news
- The unknown
- Health and medical appointments, issues
- The future
- Assertive behavior
- Authority figures
- Being observed by others
- Exams
- Homesickness
- Making independent decisions
- Being wrong
- Performance situations
- Being the center/focus of attention
- Being embarrassed
- Lateness
- Sexual interactions
- Being excluded
- Travel
- Changes in routines/plans
- Having certain knowledge
- Health issues
- Uncertainty
- Elections
- Witnessing conflicts, crime, bullying, someone being harassed
- Career/Work
- Being bullied

STUDENT STRESS AND ANXIETY NATIONALLY, BY THE NUMBERS

The American College Health Association **Spring 2014 National College Health Assessment** found students reporting that in the previous 12 months:

21.9% anxiety affected their academic performance	13.8% depression affected their academic performance	30% stress affected their academic performance	20% sleep difficulties affected their academic performance	
47.7% feeling that things were hopeless	85.6% feeling overwhelmed by all they had to do	56.9% feeling overwhelming anxiety	34.5% feeling so depressed that it was difficult to function	1.4% attempting suicide
15.8% diagnosed with, or treated for, anxiety problems			13.1% diagnosed with, or treated for, depression	

Joel Brown, BU Today, 10.2.16

College Students with Anxiety

“Failure to Launch”

Peer relationships suffer

Academic decline - school/college refusal

Work/Career issues

Lower self esteem / self-efficacy

Family conflict

Comorbidity builds over time

Gateway disorder for substance use

Limits independent functioning

Failure to achieve developmental milestones



STUDENTS



'I Didn't Know How to Ask for Help': Stories of Students With Anxiety

You don't have to look far to find them. Here's what they want you to know.

By Sara Lipka | FEBRUARY 04, 2018 ✓ PREMIUM



Chronicle photo by Julia Schmalz

Genesis, at Howard U.: "I'm not that kid that's going to waste my money and not show up to class, but sometimes it is hard."

You don't have to look far to find a student suffering from anxiety. But it might be hard to tell.



In Higher Ed's Mental-Health Crisis, an Overlooked Population: International Students

By Clara Turnage | AUGUST 09, 2017 ✓ PREMIUM

It's like a garden, Muyi Li remembers thinking when she first walked on Emory University's campus, in 2016. Among the tall trees and stark, white buildings, she says she felt hope for her first day of classes, her first time living alone — for her future.

Ms. Li grew up in Beijing among tall, crowded buildings and busy rivers of people. Coming to Emory was like taking a trip to the country. The campus was warm and sun-soaked, and she loved it.

She packed only two suitcases for her first semester: one for clothes and one



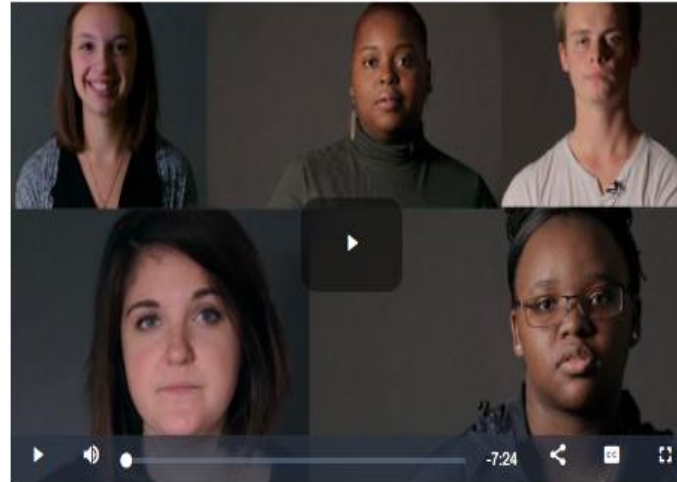
Courtesy of Mui Li

Mui Li, a rising sophomore from Beijing at Emory U., says having a mental illness in Chinese culture means that "you almost must have a kind of flaw in your personality — if a person is depressed, then this person must be weak."

Facing Anxiety

Students share how they cope and how campuses can help

By Julia Schmalz | December 11, 2017



Anxiety eclipses depression among college students, and the number who say it's overwhelming them is on the rise. Campus counseling centers confront many challenges in trying to serve students, not the least of which is that mental health still has a stigma on campuses.

Here are the voices of five students explaining how they cope, what they'd like their professors to know, and what their peers need to hear. Sharing their stories, they hope, will lead to more open discussion of the daily struggles students face, and the support that could help them thrive.

The Chronicle is teaming up with Active Minds, a nonprofit group focused on campus mental health, to hear more about students' experiences. Do you know students with a story to tell? Send them a link to [this form](#).

Julia Schmalz is a senior multimedia producer. She tells stories with photos, audio, and video. Follow her on Twitter @jschmalz09, or email her at julia.schmalz@chronicle.com

Observable signs of high anxiety

- Anxiousness, nervousness
- Poor concentration, seems “lost”
- Inability to follow conversation/directions
- Agitation, shaking or moving about, squirming
- Increased irritability or testiness
- Repeated requests for extensions, retests, accommodation
- Failure to complete/hand in work
- Poor quality of work
- Does not speak up in class/seminar; absence on presentation day
- Increased class absence
- Sleepiness, low energy
- Avoids eye contact
- Overuse of office hours, despite little to say
- Reliance on TA’s or other supports

What to do?

People with no experience of anxiety can say things like...



But finding the courage isn't that easy to do.

Key skills to overcome anxiety

- Self soothing
- Delay of gratification (ouch!)
- Affect regulation strategies
- Positive health behaviors (exercise, diet, sleep hygiene)
- EXPOSURE

Mindfully Keeping Calm

- Goal: Develop tolerance of normal, expected levels of anxiety; engage in healthy habits
- Deep breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Mindfulness exercises
- Yoga
- Exercise
- Sleep hygiene



Core Beliefs in Anxiety

- Stem from anxious apprehension:
- *That terrible thing can happen (again) to me but I can't predict when or where so I must be prepared at all times and yet I don't have the skill, knowledge, ability to deal with it!*

Adapted from D.H. Barlow, 2004

Core Predictions in Anxiety

- Anxiety-provoking situations WILL invariably lead to:
 - Embarrassment
 - Humiliation/Rejection
 - Loss of control
 - Catastrophe
 - Loss of social status
 - Death/Physical Illness

MORNING! Remember that STUPID
thing you said yesterday?
OOF... that
was bad



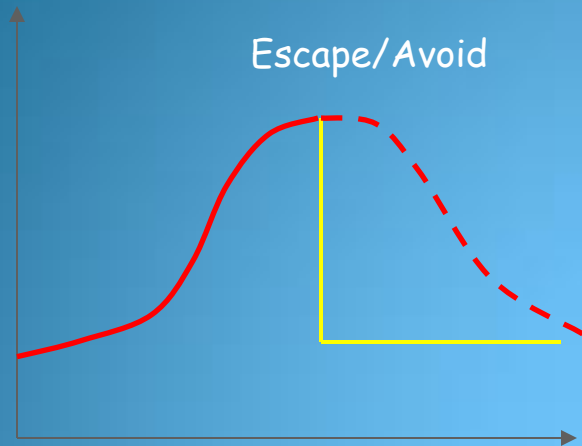
Focus on realities

1. Provide corrective information about anxiety and threat
Let's understand the situation and what's up.
2. Identify anxious thoughts and treat these as hypotheses
What else may be going on?
3. Look at what is realistic for the situation
How likely is that?
4. Think through what is likely and how to handle the situation
Okay, what can you do to handle that situation?

Gentle challenges to the student's thinking

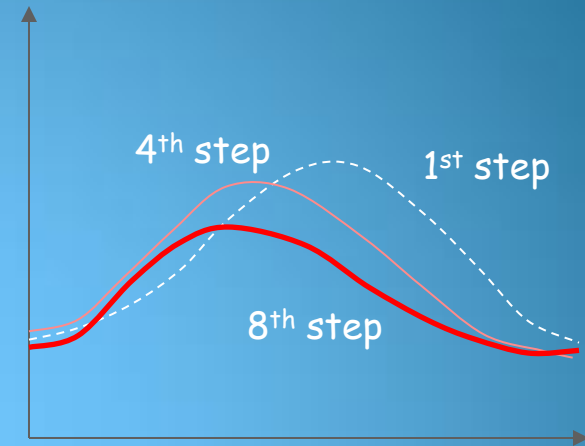
- *How would an objective observer view this situation?*
- *What alternative explanations are there for this situation?*
- *What if you saw a friend struggling . . . What would you think or do?*

Undoing Anxiety



Impact of escape:

- remembers situation at the height of anxiety
- prevents habituation
- no experience of mastery
- escape is reinforced



Impact of sticking with it/exposure:

- remembers success that comes with habituation or tolerance
- learns anxiety passes on its own
- willing to approach increasingly challenging situations
- feeling of mastery
- reinforcement for hanging in

From Chansky (2004)

What to do?

- Reach out and ask to meet student outside of class time: Prof/TA office; Quiet place.
- Take some deep breaths....you have to remain calm no matter what you hear.
- *“Tell me how are things going for you.”*
- Give a succinct summary of what you’ve observed and express your concerns.
- Allow the student to express their feelings and thoughts.
- Listen carefully to what the student reports. Say “How’s that?” or “Can you tell me more?” to get clarification, and give permission to talk.

- Refrain from judging or giving your opinion....listen.
- Keep things clear and simple.
- Ask if the student has sought help. Be ready with options.
 - Tutoring Centers; Counseling and Psychological Services Center; CUMC
- Be supportive, honest and clear that you can walk them over or help to call for an appointment.
- Know your limits!

Basic Strategies to Practice: Reflective Listening

Eye contact

Leaning in/gestures

Interested silence

Acknowledgments:

Go on. Yes. Uh huh. Sounds difficult.

Reflective statements:

You said that you're very behind in work.

You feel... You sound... You look... worried, scared, sad.

Summarizing

Basic Strategies to Practice: Deep breathing/Calming

Sit comfortably, begin to focus attention.

Rate how stressed/anxious you are on a 0 (none) to 10 (extreme) scale.

One hand over the stomach, one on your chest.

Taking in a slow, deep breath to the count of 1, 2, 3....then release to the count of 3, 2, 1. Pause, and repeat.

Do this 5 to 10 times.

Rate again how stressed you are on a 0 to 10 scale.

Over time, increase the inhale and exhale to a count of 5.

Basic Steps to Practice: Problem solving



When to seek help?

- Immediately, when safety is an issue.
- The anxiety does not go away....
- The student is increasingly unhappy....
- Class routines and day-to-day functioning are affected....
- Increasing isolation from peers, professors, supports....
- Reported that no matter what they tried, nothing works....



Questions & Answers



Thank you for attending, and
please complete the Evaluation
Forms before you leave!