



Counseling Services  
*A Resource for Students*

Dear Student,

Before your counseling appointment, we want to offer you a few things which may be helpful to you while you are waiting to see a counselor. We know how difficult it can be to wait when you feel motivated to get help now and you have to wait.

- If you find that you just can't wait, and you are feeling like **you have to see someone right away or you might harm yourself or someone else, call us between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. at 635-2752 and say "This is a crisis."** We will arrange a crises appointment for you to help you to deal with today and make decisions about what to do about tomorrow. If a regular counselor is not available, a Public Safety officer will be called to help you. **After-hours crisis resources include Public Safety at 635-2100** (if needed, they will call a counselor for consultation in a crisis, your Area Coordinator if you live on campus, and Hiawatha Behavioral Health's 24-hour crisis line 800-839-9443).
- If you're having **academic problems** such as avoiding going to class, turning in assignments, test anxiety, difficulty concentrating, trouble approaching your instructor for help, or needing to decide whether to keep or drop a class, we suggest that you contact our friends in the Learning Center which is located in the library, room 112, 906-635-2849.

## **TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF**

If you are feeling low, anxious, stressed or simply not yourself, you may feel that these feelings are impossible to move out of and you just can't make yourself feel better. We have found that students who follow through on even one or two of the following suggestions do, in fact, feel better.

**Some self-care steps** that other students have found helpful to break cycle of distress are:

**Focus** – Focus on things you can take action on – shift focus away from the things you can't do anything about. Brewing and stewing deepens a rut, doing and moving can steer you out of it.

**Exercise** – Even moderate exercise like walking, jogging, swimming, or any sport or activity that you enjoy can be therapeutic. The PEIF Building and the Dome are great places to go to get out of the cold weather and do something healthy.

**Eat Healthy Foods** – If you're feeling jittery or anxious, try to avoid caffeine in pop, coffee and tea. Caffeine and sugar helps pick you up in the short run but can contribute to depressed feelings when the initial jolt wears off.

**Get a Reasonable Amount Of Rest** – Either too much or too little sleep can worsen your mood. You know how much sleep make sense for you better than anyone. Try to get enough sleep, but be careful of sleeping too much. Some people find that staying in bed is a great way to avoid things they don't want to do; the trouble with hiding in bed is that when they finally get up, they're even further behind.

**Write Down What You Are Feeling** - Pay attention to what gets you down by writing it down. Write a letter to the person that you're upset with in your journal – do not send it; this can give you the freedom to let out troubling feelings, the start of the process of letting go of them. When something good happens, don't forget to write that down, too. Many depressed students tend to screen from their awareness any good things that happen like a compliment, a smile, a hello, or a good grade.

**Check Out Whether Anyone Else Feels Like You** - We find that many students feel different and alienated from others. We hear students say repeatedly, "I didn't know anyone else felt this way", or "I thought I was the only person in the world who had this experience." Go to one of your friends, your R.A., your instructor, or your advisor and ask if they ever get down or depressed or ever felt like.... You may be surprised to find that you're in good company and that you are not as alone as you think.

**Remember A Success** - Take time to pat yourself on the back about a time that you succeeded or did the right thing for someone else. Explore what it is about you (what strength/ability) that enabled you to do that.

**Avoid Using Alcohol** - We find that students often resort to drugs or alcohol as a way to get through a tough time. Drinking can be used as a way to relieve tension, to escape, and to numb feelings. Unfortunately, alcohol is a depressant which leads to more trouble (sometimes serious legal trouble) and more depression. At times, when students feel down, they want to escape their pain so much that they drink and also take pills. Even when they have not meant to harm themselves, students who have mixed pills such as Tylenol, aspirin, or antihistamines with alcohol have caused very serious damage to themselves. If you are worried that you might be impulsive and harm yourself this way – call our office.

**Hold On** - Students often find that everything seems to go wrong at the same time, and the combination of so many blows can make the situations seem impossible to cope with. In some cases, what seemed to be impossible in the short run proves to be possible to endure, and the overwhelming and hopeless feelings decrease with time. While you are in college, you are learning to cope with independence, stress, relationships that come and go, and decisions which influence your future. No wonder students feel overwhelmed at times! The good thing is that the more you can learn about coping with tough times and the pain you may be feeling now, the more ready you will be for future hardships that come along.

**Give Yourself Credit** - **You have already made two very positive moves!** One is that you called for an appointment and requested help. The other is that you have taken the time and invested the energy to read this letter. Honor your courage and strength for this!

*There are also a number of resources available on our website that can provide useful information and tips on a variety of topics and coping strategies – from the Counseling Services homepage, choose "on-line resources and look at the "helpful websites" links at the top of the page.*

Thank you

The Staff of Counseling Services

*Adapted with permission from Northern Michigan University Counseling and Consultation Services*