Changing the Way We Serve Students on College Campuses: A Mental Health Resiliency Program Transitioning College Students on a Leave of Absence Back to Campus

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Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation
Agenda

- medical leave of absence
- NITEO: a wellness and resilience program
- college mental health coaching
- program outcomes
- discussion
### Felt so depressed that it was difficult to function

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<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tr>
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<td>9.1</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>10.9</td>
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<tr>
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### Felt overwhelming anger

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<td>21.9</td>
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<td>21.6</td>
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<td>Yes, last 2 weeks</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>12.6</td>
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<td>Yes, last 30 days</td>
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### Seriously considered suicide

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### Attempted suicide

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<td>99.2</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>99.8</td>
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### Within the last 12 months, how would you rate the overall level of stress experienced:

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<td>0.6</td>
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<td>Less than average stress</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>7.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average stress</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>36.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than average stress</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>43.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tremendous stress</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>12.0</td>
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ACHA National College Health Assessment II, 2014
College students speak, and 73% of those with a mental health condition report experiencing a mental health crisis while in college triggered by anxiety, depression, difficulty adjusting, stress...

College Students Speak: A Survey Report on Mental Health (NAMI, 2012)
Stigma and Help Seeking for Mental Health Among College Students

Daniel Eisenberg
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Marilyn P. Downs
Tufts University Medford, Massachusetts

Ezra Golberstein
Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts

Kara Zivin
Department of Veterans Affairs and University of Michigan

Stigma and help seeking for mental health among college students. Medical Care Research and Review, 66, 522-541.

“...It’s only in the last month or two that I actually started keeping my parents in the loop about how my mood is. Before that...never my parents, never my sister, always secret. The whole process of telling [my mom] is going to be more distressing than the thing actually was...And then all these questions. I mean, I love [my parents] to bits, but it’s like...[their support] is not the most helpful thing.”
college students speak, and 64% of those with a mental health condition attribute their leave of absence to mental health

College Students Speak: A Survey Report on Mental Health (NAMI, 2012)
NITEO: “thrive, bloom”

- prepare transition-aged youth (18-25) on MLOA for return to college
  - increase hope, resilience, and self-determination
  - change typical trajectory of underachievement
- one semester (~14 weeks) of academic and wellness courses
  - classes meet 3 times per week (~14 hours)
  - wellness
  - mindfulness
  - writing seminar
  - academic seminar
  - photo voice
  - career seminar
- two semesters (~28 weeks) of college coaching, continued as needed
Wellness Seminar

- content areas include:
  - domains of wellness
  - conflict resolution
  - choices and consequences
  - limited thinking patterns
  - self care
  - sexual hygiene
  - drugs and alcohol use
  - interpersonal relationships, active listening, and empathy
Wellness Seminar

- Practicing empathy
  - listening to and understanding others’ perspectives and emotions
  - strengthening interpersonal relationships
  - role-playing using the script “You feel ____ because ____.”

**STUDENT A:**
“If I tell someone I’m actually going through a problem right now, it feels like I failed, really. It feels like I’ve lost control.”

**STUDENT B:**
“You feel afraid to share your experiences with others because you don’t want to be judged.”
A FEW weeks ago, I told my freshman composition class that we needed to have a talk. Those were the words I used — “We need to have a talk” — as though we were in a relationship, and we’d been failing each other in obscure ways that needed to be articulated. The class groaned.

They had a point. A mandatory writing class at a small state college generally isn’t the

“...I had all this support, and I still was struggling so much. It wasn’t a matter of having the right supports in place. I just wasn’t ready.”

“My dad kind of forced me to apply. But basically, I didn’t feel like I was ready to go to college. I felt like I didn’t really want to go to college.”
Mindfulness

- topic areas include
  - gratitude practice
  - loving kindness practice
  - meditation
  - relaxation techniques
  - physiological stress responses
  - cognitive restructuring
  - hope, optimism, happiness
  - mindfulness through martial arts
Writing Seminar

- topic areas include
  - reading fluency
  - critical thinking
  - writing fluency
  - assistive technology
  - thesis statement development
  - editing/peer editing
  - research: finding and using sources
starts off with a text...
  sustain attention
  take notes
  connect with the text

Lee Mokobe: A powerful poem about what it feels like to be transgender

tightropeing between awkward boy and apologetic girl,

then the writing assignment...
  manage time
  organize ideas
  follow instructions
then papers are graded... assess performance cope with grade inquire about feedback advocate for direction on next paper rewrite and resubmit

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<td>A-</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>90 - 93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>87 - 89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>83 - 86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>67 - 79%</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>0 - 59%</td>
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“...the anxiety surrounding will I get a good grade...I would worry before I handed in a paper, and after I handed in a paper, and after I got it back. Every aspect of a grade was stressful.”

“I’m never satisfied with how I do things, unless I actually do well, which is getting As.”

“I have overly high expectations of myself, so then I feel really bad when I mess up a little bit, and then it makes me not want to deal with it. And it makes me blow it out of proportion, kind of. And then it’s overwhelming for me when it shouldn’t be.”
Academic Seminar

- topic areas include
  - learning styles and strategies
  - executive functioning
  - test-preparation
  - test-taking
  - self-advocacy
  - disability disclosure
  - group presentations
  - SMART goal setting

“I put food [in the refrigerator] and then I’d forget about it. Keeping myself organized is hard.”

“I maybe told one professor that I had a diagnosis. I didn’t really tell people because I started noticing that I felt like I was being treated differently…”
topic areas include
- social justice
- stigma
- marginalization
- career identity
- empowerment
- power
- discrimination
- prejudice

“The doctors wrote a note that said he needs to have less homework and he may need to take breaks, and he may want to have students in the class give him their notes because he may have trouble focusing because he’s on a cocktail of meds. I was on Risperdal, and I was absolutely conked out. But the school did none of that.”

“The media makes me...it makes me feel...not just different, but dangerous.”
We see an old **forgotten** home, a place we are warned from and predisposed to avoid. Few see that **it was once beautiful and full of life**, a place where families lived and amazing individual histories were created. **Few see the true potential of what it once was or might be again.**
“What a lazy Larry,” one might state.

What if you felt trapped in a vast impenetrable box, filled with brackish water, with seemingly no way to escape? All you could do is keep your head above the surface. Outside observers may just see the tip of the iceberg, a head lazily bobbing in a shimmering pool. Their perception skewed by the reflections in the water:

Ignorance...Incompetence...Selfishness...
“Your gotta do something with your life!”

But they can’t see the massive bottom and the dark abyss of despair beneath this obscuring mirror. Nor do they know of your sensitive eyes blinded by the saltiness. How much time has passed, you wonder? How far have you drifted? Now you are expected to reach the islands that once encompassed you:

Achievement...Success...Independence...
“Snap out of it!”

Alone, would you be able to pierce the prison that holds you? Forsaken, would you be able to tread water indefinitely? Blinded, would you be able to seek out the islands that may be anywhere? Only an escape artist can live up to those standards. No progress will occur until your eyes are rinsed clean by the gentle raindrops:

Guidance...Compassion...Time...

Are you really a lazy Larry?

Michael Groark
Career Seminar

- Vocational skills building
  - interviewing
  - resume and cover letter writing
- Guests share career paths, triumphs, and failures
  - college athletic coach
  - grammy-winning musician
  - veterinarian
  - civil rights lawyer
  - mental health clinician
  - psychiatric rehabilitation pioneer
NITEO Coaching

- Coaching Process Overview
- Spotlight on Coaching Tool: Mapping
Three-Phase Coaching Process

Phase I: Intensive
- Semester 1 (w/ Niteo group intervention)
- Weekly face-to-face meetings
- Orient, engage, plan, build supports & skills

Phase II: Transition
- Semester 2
- Weekly contact
- Facilitate successful transition to role/environment

Phase III: As Needed
- Semester 3 & beyond
- Contact/support as needed
Coaching Objectives

- **Increase student readiness to re-engage in postsecondary education**
  - Promote student sense of hope, self-efficacy, resiliency
  - Help student build personal support network
  - Develop and practice goal-oriented skills: academic, self-advocacy, wellness, self-determination, disability disclosure

- **Increase educational and vocational attainment**
  - Set and monitor progress toward academic and career goals
  - Facilitate transition back to college
  - Support use of campus and clinical resources
Coaching Practice Principles

- student-centered
- forward progress is the goal
- promotes hope and growth
- integrated with treatment
- strengths-based
- time-unlimited
- meaningful role-oriented
- flexible supports to accommodate students
- team-oriented
  - weekly team meeting
- high expectations
Coaching Practice

- **Support Coordination**
  - contact disability and counseling services
  - find clinicians
  - schedule appointments with clinicians
  - promote optimum utilization of clinical supports
  - collaborate with team members/providers
  - develop natural supports

- **Preparing for Return**
  - time management/planning
  - write letters of recommendation
  - campus tours
  - gather supporting documentation
  - write personal statement
Coaching Practice

- **Skills Practice**
  - time management
  - goal setting
  - problem solving
  - resiliency building

- **Readiness Activities**
  - research and evaluate job/volunteer/school opportunities
  - complete applications
  - interview preparation

- **Homework**
  - coach will:
  - student will:
Three-Phase Coaching Process

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Mapping

- Create series of thematic maps over period of four sessions (two maps/session)
- After mapping is complete, create action plan
- Set, review, and adjust goals week to week (mastery experiences)
What is Mapping?

- Mapping is a **personal futures planning** tool. (PFP is a guided process that assists an individual to formulate a vision for his/her future.)
- Maps are visual representations of a person’s strengths, needs, preferences, and goals
- The planning process is student-driven. Coaches facilitates by asking **open ended questions** and drawing **visual representations**.
Inspiration: RENEW

- Structured school-to-career transition planning process
- Youth (15-21) with emotional and behavioral challenges
- Benefits:
  - Increased self-determination and self-efficacy skills
  - Improved functioning in school and community
  - Improved outcomes in education/employment

For more info: http://renew.unh.edu
Self-Determination

**Definition**
- A person’s right and ability to control the direction of his/her life

**Skills**
- Self-Awareness
- Decision-Making
- Planning
- Problem-Solving
- Self-Advocacy
- Self-Confidence
Mapping as a Coaching Tool

- An engagement tool
- A facilitation tool - focal point for conversation
- A way for students to process experience
- A recovery-oriented record
- A process for teaching self-determination skills: self-awareness, goal-setting, problem solving
Time Out!

You want me to draw?!?!
Doodling: Anti-Intellectual?

http://www.ted.com/talks/sunni_brown
Graphic Facilitation

- Use of large scale images to lead people towards a goal

- Used in executive world & counseling world
Learning Graphic Facilitation
Basics

1. People
2. Place
3. Process
4. Speech
5. Text (less is more)
6. Color
7. Effects
The 8th Element: Visual Language for Your Field
For me, having anxiety and depression is like being trapped inside a perspex box.

The nature of the box varies, day by day, hour by hour.

On a good day, there might be room for untainted thoughts, happy memories and pleasant experiences.

On a bad day, there is room for nothing but the cacophony of negative thoughts and feelings within me.

On the worst days, I barely fit.

But, no matter what, the box is always there.

The sides fog up and I get only brief glimpses of the outside world.

There is nothing but darkness.

Invisible to the rest of the world.
Very real to me.

http://the-doodle-chronicles.tumblr.com/
Sometimes, mental illness makes me feel like such a wobbly mess that I start to fray at the edges.

I worry that one day I will unravel completely.

http://the-doodle-chronicles.tumblr.com/
Never underestimate what a huge challenge it can be for some people to just make it to the end of each day.

You’ve conquered this mountain before.

and you can do it again now. Stay strong.

http://the-doodle-chronicles.tumblr.com/
NITEO Portfolio

- Who I Am Today
- My Story
- My Strengths & Accomplishments
- My Relationships
- My Fears, Concerns, & Barriers
- My Dreams
- Goals
- Resources for Success
Who I Am Today

- **Purpose:** Get to know student – who he/she is, what life is like for him/her today
- **Possible Open-Ended Questions:**
  - What are some of your roles in life? (e.g. sibling, student, worker, excellent video gamer)
  - How do you feel most of the time? What does a good day look like? How about a bad day?
  - What do you wish was different?


http://www.iod.unh.edu/pdf/RENEW/RENEW_YouthPortfolio_101012.pdf
Strengths & Accomplishments

- **Purpose:** To help student inventory their strengths, which will be critical to achieving their goals.

- **Questions:**
  - Think about times in your life when you were proud of yourself, and what strengths, skills, and talents you possess.
  - What would your family say? What would your friends say?

- Use real-time info to fill in the gaps

STRENGTHS

- Optimistic
- Ambitious
- Courageous
- Imaginative

IMAGINARY GAMES
- Life, ten Magic Kingdoms, Anna
- Hyannis Rock, Gods & Goddesses

PATIENT

HUMOROUS

I AM ALIVE! I AM PROUD!

MAFREEDOM
04.26.1996

SUCCESSES

TV SERIES

FARM HOUSE STORE
OWNER

REGGIES
My Relationships

• Purpose: Inventory of the people in your life who are important to you and people who you rely on for help. This is a way to brainstorm people who might support you in working toward your goals.
My Goals

• What is the long-term vision?
• What steps can you take to reach your goal?
• What strengths can you rely on to help you reach your goals?
• What supports can you utilize to help you?
• What might get in the way?
Good Practices...

• Always begin by orienting student
• Use student’s words whenever possible
• Use your active listening skills to facilitate the dialogue
• Reach for balance: represent positive and negative
• End on a positive note
• Summarize your observations, but refrain from making interpretations
Sensitive Topics

• Use caution/care when depicting sensitive topics.
• “How can we represent that?”
• Remember, not relive.
• If mapping elicits difficult emotions, help student make a plan to follow up with a support (e.g. clinician, friend, etc.)
Program Evaluation

- nineteen young adults (n=19)
  - Mean age of 21 years
  - 12 male (63%), 6 female (32%), 1 transgender female (5%)
- all students disclosed at least one diagnosis:
  - anxiety disorder (53%)
  - mood disorder (53%)
  - schizophrenia or other psychotic disorder (26%)
  - ADHD (5%)
  - personality disorder (5%)
  - substance-abuse disorder (11%)
  - eating disorder (5%)
- 100% had some college experience
- 85% previously matriculated at a private, 4-year institution
Program Evaluation

* statistically significant increases in positive affect (p=0.011), emotional ties (p=0.018), and psychological well being (p=0.010);

* statistically significant decreases in depression subscale (p=0.008) and psychological distress (p=0.023)
Program Evaluation

* statistically significant increases in hope (p=0.001), goal-directed energy (p=0.025), planning toward goals (p=0.000), and academic self-efficacy (p=0.026)
Program Evaluation

- one month post phase-1 of the program:
  - increase in rate of college course enrollment (42% to 58%)
  - increase in employment rate (37% to 74%)

- continue to track students’ progress 1 and 2 years post-program
  - college enrollment, graduation, employment rates
  - qualitative experience of school, work, life
  - psychosocial and academic functioning
  - use of clinical and non-clinical resources

- future testing and tracking: neuropsychological functioning and academic fluency
“Everyone needs an 'angel' in his or her life: Someone who gives you hope; who believes in you no matter what you've done or how bad things have gotten; who can gently guide you back on track. As much as we may love our 'adult' children and want to help them, parents cannot fill that role at a time when our children feel they have 'disappointed' us and when they, naturally, want to establish their independence and pull away. Sobriety programs and mental health professionals got my son (and me) through the crisis – but without Niteo my wonderful, funny, caring boy would never have had the skills or self-confidence to re-enter the world as a responsible adult with a mission. The people at Niteo were truly my son’s angels – and mine!”
Parent Reports

“Our son was diagnosed with bipolar disorder 4 years ago and had to drop out of [college] after his Freshmen year. He was enthusiastic about attending [college] and had received an academic scholarship, but the disorder was unmanageable at the time, and he needed help. My husband and I joined NAMI Family to Family and gained support and insight into the mental health world. We found a new doctor for him which has been quite successful and we learned about the Niteo Program at BU. My husband and I met with Larry and Courtney to make sure it would be a good fit for our son. We left that office with tears in our eyes because we knew this program was too good to be true. We watched him regain his confidence and balance within himself over the semester. He gained friendships and the students gathered outside of the classroom for social events that they planned themselves. When I asked him about the benefit to participating in the Niteo Program, he told me that it gave him the confidence to get back to college. Our son informed us that he signed up for a college class this summer and is paying for it on his own. He has held a job for 4 months now and is doing well. This program has given our son hope and that hope transcends throughout this entire family. We have always had faith in our son and his potential but without the Niteo Program, he would not have the confidence and self-esteem to make his dreams a reality.”
“I came to Niteo as an alcoholic in early recovery convinced things were about to go bad, like they always did, as soon as I got ready to go back to school. I was very much certain that nothing could convince me otherwise. Through Niteo classes and coaching, I came to believe that my low self-worth and unfortunate perspective on life were able to change. CBT, meditation, and writing played a role in that. The way it provided structure, the instructors, the friendly staff, and the resources at the center itself made a large impact on me. After Niteo, I attended [college] in the spring of 2015, taking just one class but working two jobs, and got a extremely high mark. Now I am taking two intensive summer courses at [college] and working two part time jobs. I have been sober 16 months and am ready to go back to school full time in the fall. Niteo was the bridge to that gap between lost and confused and hopeful and in tune, I would highly recommend it to anyone that began struggling after or shortly before they went to college. The program has the potential to save lives, I have seen it first-hand.”
“I had recently taken a medical leave of absence from [college] and became hospitalized after leaving. When I was released from the hospital, I felt unprepared to return to school after being out and away from school for such an extended period of time, leading me to find the NITEO program. This program suited me perfectly, as all of the young adults there were in similar situations as I was. This program has enabled me to realize that I am not alone in my struggles and that with the help of such dedicated staff and peers, I can return to school feeling confident and determined.

Now that NITEO has ended I am working closely with my one-on-one coach to help find me job opportunities and also to research colleges that might be suitable for me in the near future. I have applied to many work places and am in the process of finding work until I feel ready to return to school. If NITEO had not been there for me I would not have had the opportunity to meet the incredible staff and fellow students that helped me get back up on my feet.

NITEO and everybody who works there have been so incredibly kind and willing to go above and beyond to ensure I received the services I needed to succeed. This place is the only one of its kind and for anybody willing to put the time and work into getting help, it is for them.”
“I was brought to NITEO by my need for something to prepare me to get back into college, as well as structure for my days in the meantime. Through the classes and coaching I learned a variety of things from how to structure an essay to memory skills, but I feel the most important lessons I learned were not explicitly part of the curriculum. For example, I learned that I could still socialize with peers, something I had not done in a while, and that I am capable of sitting through hours of classes while paying attention and participating. These two revelations have been huge confidence boosters. Currently, I am searching for a volunteer position for the summer and I plan to attend [college] in the fall where I will study in the veterinary technician program. In my personal life, I am still in touch with peers I met at NITEO. There is definitely a correlation between my participation in NITEO classes and the coaching and where I am now. What I learned gave me the confidence to apply to [college], and now I have a college education ahead of me. I would certainly recommend NITEO to another young adult struggling with what to do during their leave of absence. I feel that the overall experience was beneficial to not only me, but to many of my peers in the program as well and so it would likely be helpful to numerous other people.”
FIGHTING FOR A FUTURE

NITEO PROGRAM GETS COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS BACK IN CLASS

BY JOEL BROWN

Since Dori Hutchinson established NITEO in 2014, the majority of participants have completed the program, enrolled in college courses, and secured at least part-time jobs. Since Dori Hutchinson established NITEO in 2014, the majority of participants have completed the program, enrolled in college courses, and secured at least part-time jobs.

A new role for college students with mental health challenges is the topic of a new program called NITEO. Many students with mental health challenges experience difficulty transitioning to college, and the program aims to help them succeed.

"Education gives people a valued role. They're not patients, consumers, or clients—they're students. And there's a foundation of optimism and hopefulness to that."

—Dori Hutchinson

Education gives people a valued role. They're not patients, consumers, or clients—they're students. And there's a foundation of optimism and hopefulness to that.

—Dori Hutchinson

Since Dori Hutchinson established NITEO in 2014, the majority of participants have completed the program, enrolled in college courses, and secured at least part-time jobs.

The NITEO program is designed to help college students with mental health challenges transition to college and succeed. The program provides support and resources to help students navigate the challenges of college life.

Students who participate in the NITEO program have reported significant improvements in their mental health and academic performance.

Dori Hutchinson, the founder of NITEO, has dedicated her career to helping students with mental health challenges succeed in college. She believes that education is key to improving the lives of students with mental health challenges.

"I've seen firsthand how education can change a life," said Hutchinson. "We need to do more to support these students and help them reach their full potential.

The NITEO program is just one example of the ways in which we can support students with mental health challenges. With continued support and resources, we can help more students succeed in college.

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Now accepting applications for spring 2016!