WHAT IS A MENTAL ILLNESS?

According to World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. Students suffering from mental illness may find a diminishing capacity to cope with normal daily functioning including interpersonal, emotional, academic and physical aspects.

The illnesses may be caused by various biological, psychological and social factors with different manifestations. Common mental illnesses are listed below. It is important to note the signs and symptoms for different disorders in order to have proper treatment and intervention.

- Anxiety Disorders
- Bipolar Disorder (Manic-Depressive Illness)
- Borderline Personality Disorder
- Depression
- Eating Disorders
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Panic Disorder
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Schizophrenia
- Social Phobia (Social Anxiety Disorder)

SOME SIGNS/SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL ILLNESSES:

- feeling sad, depressed or lowish
- loss of interest or enjoyment
- excessive worries or self-blame
- difficult to concentrate and/or make decisions
- suicidal thinking
- sleep disturbance
- decrease or increase in appetite
- unusual weight loss or weight gain
- frequent absence
- social withdrawal
- the decline in academic performance
- unusual sensory experience, such as auditory hallucinations

DIVERSABILITY

The SEN & Diversability Team (DA) of the Counseling and Wellness Center is the primary contact with students who declare their SEN with the University. DA supports students from the very first step of the SEN declaration through completion of study at HKUST. DA officers meet with each declared student individually to map out a reasonable academic accommodation plan (aka IEP / Individualized Educational Plan) and to assess the needs for available resources and suitable support services.

Personalized and reasonable accommodations are arranged to each declared student based on the individual needs. Confidential data obtained from a student with SEN is used to enhance the coordination work with different parties for providing personal and support services. The data collected will be handled with strict security and confidentiality and in compliance with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance of Hong Kong. The below lists out some of the possible accommodations to address the special needs of students with a mental illness:

- early access to syllabus and course materials
- frequent breaks in classes and/or exams
- Assistance with lecture notes, such as Remote Video Capture and note-taker
- preferential seating
- private feedback on academic performance
- extended time in testing and/or assignments
- testing in a semi-private, quiet or separate place

SUPPORT SERVICES AT HKUST
THINK POSITIVE

Ten things you can do for your mental health:

- Treat yourself with kindness and respect, and avoid self-criticism.
- Take care of your body: regular meals, drink plenty of water, get enough sleep and exercise.
- Build a support network with family members and friends, and seek out activities to meet new people.
- Learn how to deal with stress.
- Set realistic goals: aim high, but be realistic and don't over-schedule.
- Volunteer your time and energy to help someone else when you can.
- Set time to quite your mind through meditating, mindfulness, relaxation exercises and/or prayer.
- Avoid alcohol, cigarettes and other drugs; such self-medication may aggravate problems.
- Small changes can make a giant difference, start from little things like your daily routines.
- Get help when you need it: SEEKING HELP IS A SIGN OF STRENGTH, never a weakness.

DIVERSEABILITY, ADVOCACY, RESOURCES & EQUITY

DARE is a group of enthusiastic students who want to empower the HKUST campus community to positively impact the support to students with SEN. The role of the ambassadors is to cultivate a campus where everyone's diverse abilities are appreciated and where everyone feels accepted and nourished.

No matter how much you know about SEN, where you are from, and who you are, you can be a part of DARE if you want to contribute to campus inclusion!

(Special thanks to DARE for the great contribution to the production of this leaflet series!)

CONTACT US

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