

When Stress Shows up at your desk: Navigating Student Mental Health Needs

Presented by Alexis Huisman,
LIMHP

Introductions



Alexis Huisman, LIMHP
Director of Student Care and Outreach

Stress & Mental Health

Common Mental Health Challenges for College Students

- Anxiety, depression, stress, suicidal ideation, substance misuse, disordered eating
- Trauma related stress- adjustment disorder



Signs of Distress

- **Physical**

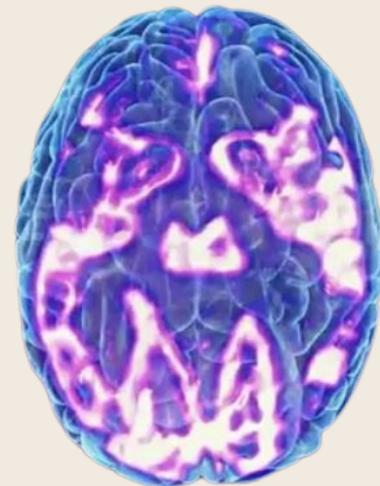
- Shaking, fidgeting, difficulty concentrating, speaking very quickly, disheveled appearance

- **Behavioral**

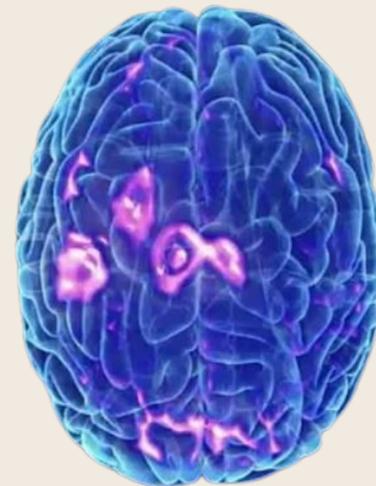
- Repeated visits, escalating frustration, inability to process information or complete forms

- **Emotional**

- Tearfulness, irritability or anger, “freezing” or appearing overwhelmed



Normal



Depressed

The Impact of Financial Stress on the Brain

- Financial uncertainty can trigger fight/flight in the brain
- Logical explanations don't "land" when a student is dysregulated
- Repeated questions aren't manipulation; they are cognitive overload



Generational Differences in Stress Responses

Today's students bring unique factors:

- Gen Z has heightened mental health awareness
- They have a higher prevalence of anxiety disorders
- Fear of disappointing family
- The fear of social media comparison
- Students that have grown up on crisis-based environments (pandemic, economic instability)
- Socio-political environment



**Thats Why Latinos
Dont Have Depressions**



DEPRESSION



TikTok
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Trauma-Informed Customer Service

When students come to see you, some of those conversations can trigger trauma (financial insecurity, family conflict, previous negative experiences with institutions).

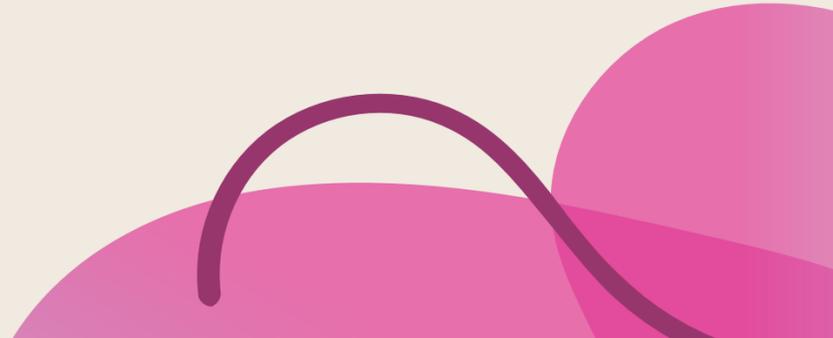
How to respond using trauma informed principles:

- Safety
 - Calm tone, predictable steps
- Choice
 - Offer options
- Collaboration
 - Working **with** the student
- Empowerment
 - Reinforcing their capability





De-Escalation Strategies for Frontline Staff

- Grounding language
 - “Let’s take this one step at a time”
 - Regulating your own tone, pace, and nonverbals
 - Tag in another staff member if you start to feel elevated
 - Phrases that calm vs. phrases that inflame
 - Try not to ask “why”, it can feel shameful
 - Validate their frustrations even if you don’t have an ideal solution for them
- 

Communicating Clearly with Students In Crisis

- Chunking information
- Using checklists or Step-By-Step instructions for them
- Repeating information or details without judgement
- Avoiding words or jargon students can't understand under stress
 - AKA get to the point



Setting Boundaries with compassion

- What is your role vs. a mental health providers role
- How to set limits kindly
 - Listen with empathy, know when to refer
- Maintain consistency across difficult interactions
 - “Frequent Flyers”





Brené Brown on Empathy



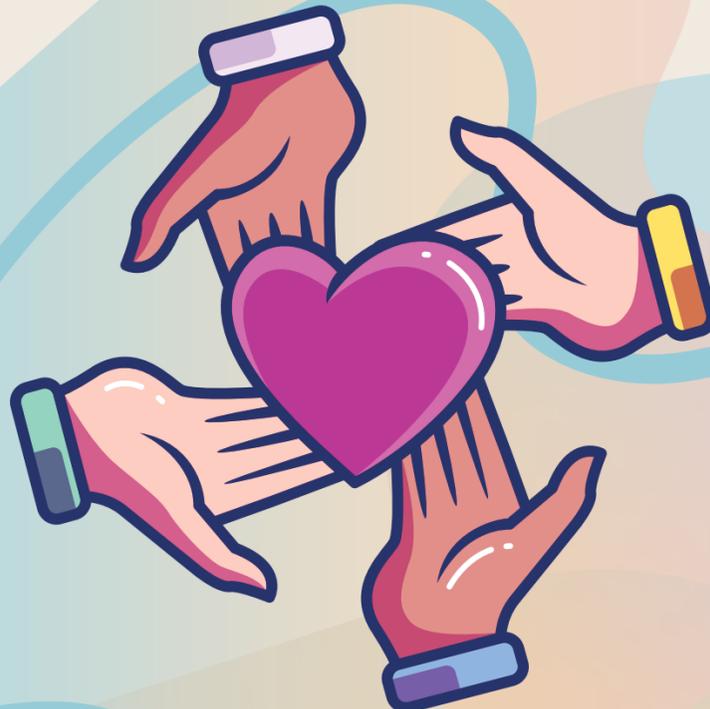
Shorts

Watch on  YouTube

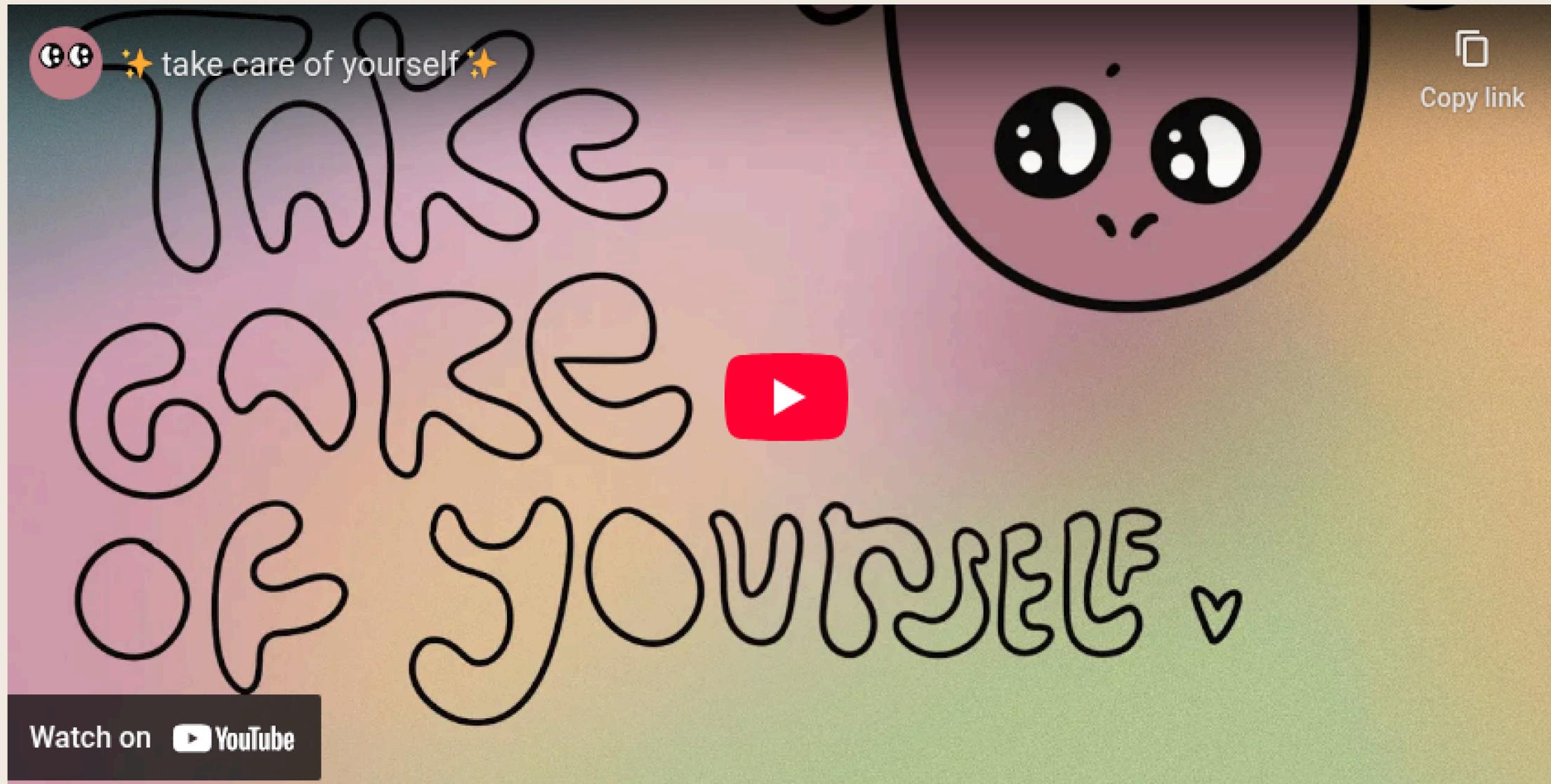


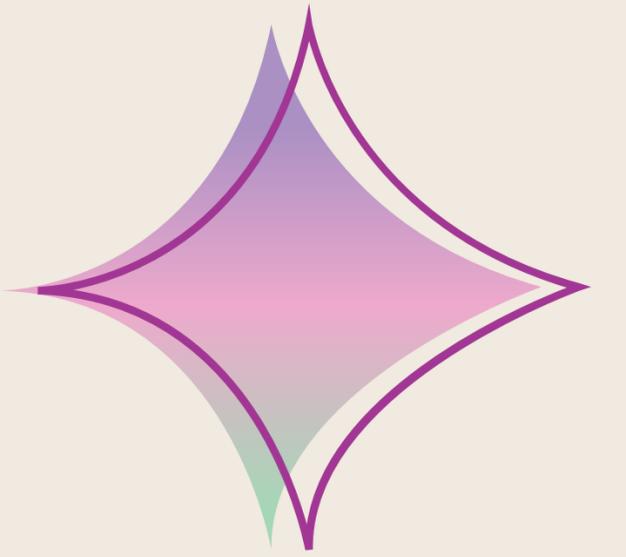
Collaboration with Mental Health Services

Know where to refer your students when they are experiencing mental health related issues. Create a relationship with your Counselors on campus and help students receive the support they need to be successful



Take Care of yourself!

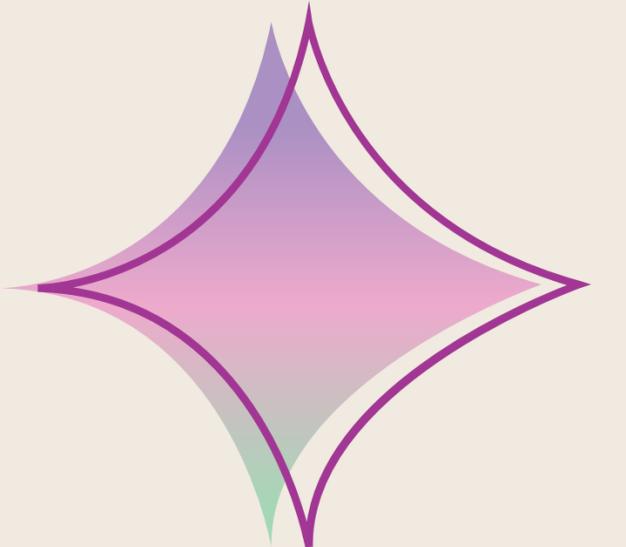




How to reach us:

402-844-7277

counseling@northeast.edu



Thank you!

