The University Counselling Service: An Introduction

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UCS Student Counsellors
UCS: Focus on mental health

• Good mental health is more than just the absence of a mental disorder: Mental health needs attention and sometimes work to maintain.

• Our mental health is affected by how we feel about ourselves and the people around us (our sense of identity, security and self-worth).

• Our ability to make and keep healthy relationships affect our mental health.

• Mental health is affected by our ability to cope with stress and when things go wrong.

• Good mental health helps us stay productive (work, study), enjoy new relationships and experiences, navigate choices and cope with stress.
Change can be disorientating

• There are fantastic opportunities in Cambridge

• But big changes can be unsettling:
  • Trouble sleeping
  • Eating less…or more
  • Being forgetful
  • Struggling to concentrate

  …this is normal

• Give yourself time, it usually does not last long.
Typical adjustment phases

• Initial shock & disorientation – “What the…?”
• Honeymoon period – “Wow, this is amazing!”
• Distress – “I want to book a flight, please.”
• Adjustment – “So maybe I can do it like this…”
• Independence – “This place is OK, I’m OK.”

*We all experience this differently*
Moving on to university can be an emotional roller coaster at times....

Model adapted from The Process of Transition by John Fisher
Care for and coach yourself through this period

• Eat, sleep, rest, play, work: balance is the key.
• Establish your normal routine: structure can be very helpful.
• Set achievable daily and weekly goals.
• Try to be gentle and encouraging to yourself.
• Expect and learn to cope with disappointments.
• Notice what soothes and calms you – make use of it.
What do I want? Why am I here? For whom?

• Getting the most out of Cambridge is personal

• Acknowledge, but try not to focus on what other people want for you or let it interfere with your own needs and goals

• Focus on what YOU want from your time in Cambridge

• You are likely to learn unexpected, non-academic things – about yourself and about the world – on the way…

• Look after yourself and try to embrace the experience!
Sources of support

- Tutor
- Family
- Supervisor
- You
- Friends
- Helplines
- College nurse
- DRC
- Director of Studies
- Chaplain
- Peer2Peer
- Student Advice Service
- Doctor
- Counselling
- Student Advice Service
• Confidential
• Trained and accredited staff
• There to listen & understand with you…
• …to respect & not judge
• Counselling is for support – but maybe feel challenging sometimes.
## Common problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Problems</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Settling in, adjustment</td>
<td>• Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stress &amp; anxiety</td>
<td>• Identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Low mood/depression</td>
<td>• Sexuality</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Bereavement &amp; loss</td>
<td>• Difficult decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Self-esteem</td>
<td>• Sign-posting, referring</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Time management</td>
<td>…and more</td>
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<td>• Perfectionism</td>
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How to Access Counselling

• You need to submit a pre-counselling form – found on the UCS website: www.counselling.cam.ac.uk

• You can request a male or female counsellor, as well as a BME counsellor.

• UCS website shows current length of wait: Those with limited availability sometimes have to wait longer.

• The UCS College-Based Counselling (CBC) scheme allows students the choice of seeing a counsellor in their College if they prefer. Self-refer via your college website or the UCS website.

• CBC is currently available in Downing, Girton, Lucy Cavendish, Magdalene, Peterhouse and Wolfson.
Groups and Workshops

- **Workshops** – One-off
  - Settling into Cambridge, Managing Anxiety, Time Management, Procrastination, Stress Management, Self-Compassion, Becoming Your Own Coach, Understanding and Managing Panic Attacks, Managing the Relationship with your Supervisor.

- **Focused Groups** – 3-5 weeks
  - Managing Low Mood, Perfectionism vs Healthy Striving, Healthy Self-Esteem, Learning to be Assertive, Self Compassion, Bereavement.

- **Counselling Groups** – Support over several weeks

To book onto a group or workshop: phone 01223 332865 or email reception on counsellingreception@admin.cam.ac.uk
Mental Health Advisors (MHA)

• Support students with serious or enduring mental health difficulties.

• Students cannot self-refer to Mental Health Advisors. Referral via College Nurse, Tutor, College Chaplain, Disability Resources Advisor.

• Crisis Intervention.

• On-going support if needed.

• Liaison with Counsellors, Academic staff, College Nurses, Disability Resource Centre, GPs, Mental Health Services.

• MHA can refer students to counselling if appropriate.

• Do Mental Health Assessments.
Emotional support:
• Supporting students to understand and manage the impact of sexual violence.
• Enabling students to develop positive coping strategies.
• Helping students to re-build self-esteem and trust in themselves and others.

Practical support:
• Providing students with impartial information and support around their options for reporting both within the University and externally.
• Supporting students through any reporting process they choose to engage with.
• Signposting and referring students to appropriate support services both within the University and externally.
Mindfulness classes run by qualified practitioners

- Free for any student affiliated with a Cambridge University College.
- Advertised to all students by Senior Tutors in the week before full-term.
- Seven courses in different locations offered in Michaelmas and Lent.
- Booking on first-come, first-served basis.
- Very popular and book up fast – put name on waiting list if keen: https://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/welfare-and-wellbeing/mindfulness-cam
- Need to commit to whole course.
- Some Colleges organise independent mindfulness sessions.
UCS contact information and location

• See our website for more information on self-help and workshops: www.counselling.cam.ac.uk

• 2-3 Bene’t Place, Lensfield Road, CB2 1EL

• counsellingreception@admin.cam.ac.uk

• 01223 332 865

• Opening times

• Mondays: 9.00 - 5.30
  Tuesdays: 9.00 - 7.30
  Wednesdays: 9.00 - 5.30
  Thursdays: 9.00 - 7.30
  Fridays: 9.00 - 5.00
In an emergency/urgent situation

- The Counselling Service is **not an emergency service**.
- Many Colleges have **Porters' Lodges** that are staffed 24 hours a day.
- Many Colleges have a Tutorial system with a **tutor on call**.
- You might contact a **friend, neighbour or family member**.
- Contact your **GP**. Outside normal surgery hours, the **Urgent Care Cambridgeshire** service is available – call 111 (option 2 to speak to a mental health professional 24/7)
- If you want to contact the Counselling Service quickly during opening hours, email is **not** an appropriate way of getting in touch, as it may be some time before it is read. At times when the UCS are open, it is much better to phone: **01223 332 865**