



## Counseling & Psychological Services (CaPS)

### Common Myths about Counseling

**MYTH:** If a student cries, they should be seen by a counselor immediately.

**FACT:** While referring a student who is crying to CaPS may be appropriate, an immediate appointment with a counselor is only necessary under certain circumstances (thoughts of hurting themselves or someone else, and in instances of sexual assault). Remember, students cry for a variety of reasons and often just want to be heard by someone. Crying is okay!

**MYTH:** If a student is anxious, I should refer them to CaPS.

**FACT:** It depends! Anxiety is a natural part of life and most students experience anxiety at some point throughout their college career. Some anxiety can be good (i.e. anxiety about a test will motivate students to study) while at other times, it may impact a student's emotional well-being and daily life.

**Myth:** If I stop listening to the student's personal emotional issues, they will get worse and possibly kill themselves.

**Fact:** The foundation of creating healthy boundaries between yourself and students is how you understand what you are -- and are not -- responsible for as a professor. We encourage you to spend some time asking yourself: 1) What precisely are my responsibilities as a professor? 2) What are my students' responsibilities? and 3) Where exactly does my responsibility end and my students' responsibility begin?

**MYTH:** Counseling is only for people with serious mental illnesses, and if I refer a student to CaPS, they may think their problem is too difficult for me to handle.

**FACT:** Students attend counseling for a variety of reasons, ranging from adjusting to college life, developing ways to manage stress, to improving relationships with others. The severity of their problems can range from mild to severe. It is okay to share with a student that you feel CaPS would be more appropriate in helping them to manage their problem more effectively, and refer them to our office. It shows that you care about them and their emotional wellbeing and it's a good way to keep healthy boundaries with students.

**MYTH:** The Counselor cannot understand you unless she has had similar experiences or is of the same background.

**FACT:** Counselors are trained to be sensitive to and respectful of individual differences, including the specific concerns /needs with regard to gender, race/ethnicity, culture, religion, age, and socio-economic status. Counselors are professionally and extensively trained to treat a variety of life crisis and issues.

**Myth:** For counseling to be effective, the counselor must learn all they can about my culture and values.

**Fact:** While it is good practice to ask about a students' culture and values, we don't need to know every detail of their ethnicity to provide good counseling. In fact, it is just as important to know about our own culture -- including assumptions, biases, values and the tendency toward ethnocentricity (the belief that our race/ethnic group is the most significant). In other words, effective counselors understand their own cultural conditioning. Becoming a diversity-competent counselor involves at times challenging the values we hold and how such values are likely to influence our multicultural practice. It can help to remember that, although we may differ from one another in a lot of different ways, all of us have in common our humanity and needs for validation and security.

**\*Staff are available to consult with faculty, staff, and students by calling 610-902-8561**