University of Memphis
Department of Social Work

Students Helping Students:  
Mentoring from the Masters

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Presentation Overview

• Introduction to Students Helping Students
• Screening: Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-14)
• Student Writing Sample (participants score)
• Art-Therapy Intervention (River of Life)
• Mentoring Component Overview
• Conclusion and Sample Data
• Discussion
• Questions?
• The Students Helping Students Program was conceived to meet the academic needs of the undergraduate social work student population at the University of Memphis to help improve their writing, reading, and study skills and improve college retention, progression, and graduation rates.

• Population compromised of predominantly nontraditional students (mean age 29.5) minority (76%) women (90%).
Program

• Assessment
  – Students screen-in against four measures: a study skills assessment, timed writing prompt, self-care assessment *PSS-14, timed reading for fluency (total time and words per minute, WPM)

• Program Structure
  – 12 week group design that combines social-emotional and academic based interventions in 30-60 minute once a week sessions
Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-14)

Directions

• The questions in this scale ask about feelings and thoughts during THE LAST YEAR.

• In each case, you will be asked to indicate your response by placing an “X” over the circle representing HOW OFTEN you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer fairly quickly. That is, don’t try to count up the number of times you felt a particular way, but rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate.
1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?

2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?

3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and “stressed”?  

4. In the last month, how often have you dealt successfully with day-to-day problems and annoyances?

5. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were effectively coping with important changes that were occurring in your life?

6. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?

7. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?

8. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
9. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?

10. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?

11. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?

12. In the last month, how often have you found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish?

13. In the last month, how often have you been able to control the way you spend your time?

14. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?
Scoring the PSS-14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Fairly Often</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?</td>
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<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>4. In the last month, how often have you dealt successfully with day to day problems and annoyances?</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
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<td>5. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were effectively coping with important changes that were occurring in your life?</td>
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<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scoring the PSS-14

9. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?
   - Never (1)
   - Almost Never (5)
   - Sometimes (4)
   - Fairly Often (3)
   - Very Often (2)

10. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
    - Never (1)
    - Almost Never (5)
    - Sometimes (4)
    - Fairly Often (3)
    - Very Often (2)

11. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?
    - Never (1)
    - Almost Never (5)
    - Sometimes (4)
    - Fairly Often (3)
    - Very Often (2)

12. In the last month, how often have you found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish?
    - Never (1)
    - Almost Never (5)
    - Sometimes (4)
    - Fairly Often (3)
    - Very Often (2)

13. In the last month, how often have you been able to control the way you spend your time?
    - Never (1)
    - Almost Never (5)
    - Sometimes (4)
    - Fairly Often (3)
    - Very Often (2)

14. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?
    - Never (1)
    - Almost Never (5)
    - Sometimes (4)
    - Fairly Often (3)
    - Very Often (2)
Writing

• Sample Student Writing Handout

• Rubric for Writing Handout
Why MSW Candidates?
Conclusion

• Additional research is needed:
  – Retention
  – Response-to-intervention (RtI-Higher Ed)
  – Attrition rates among vulnerable college students
• The data collected indicates that the social-emotional curriculum was helpful
• Additional data is needed on the positive impacts of the educational curriculum and supports
• Further data is needed to indicate the longitudinal effectiveness of the program
• Larger sample sizes needed
Results from 2014-2015

• Students underestimate their stress levels
• Students are ill prepared in reading and writing
• SHS was helpful in building a support process
• Data indicated the Social Emotional Curriculum assisted in decreasing stress levels of participants (based on self report Feelings thermometers)
• Data did not support that the reading intervention improved fluency during the 12 week curriculum
Sample Student 1 Data

Student 1 In-Session Reading Prompt

Total Time

Student 1 In-Session Reading Prompt

WDM
Sample Student 1 Data

Student 1 Pre and Post Feelings

Thermometer Self-Report

[Bar chart showing pre and post feelings on the 12 Session Curriculum scale]
Sample Student 3 Data

Student 3 In-Session Reading Prompt

Total Time

12 Session Curriculum

Student 3 In-Session Reading Prompt

WDM

12 Session Curriculum
Sample Student 3 Data

Student 3 Pre and Post Feelings
Thermometer Self-Report

12 Session Curriculum
What We Learned...

• Recruitment/ commitment for supportive programs is difficult (even with incentives)
• University early alerts are only a starting point
• Screening Process is needed to identify social work students struggling academically, socially, emotionally, etc. prior to field programming (RtI process in Higher Education)
Sample Screening

• Based on Research in Student Universal Screening (Drummond, 1994)
• Screening was adapted to reflect needs in the field of social work practice
• Similar Domains used at other Universities to determine field readiness (Tarleton State University, California State University, University of Vermont, Florida Atlantic University, and Rampo College of New Jersey)
• We created a Social Work Professional Behavior Screening Tool (SWPBST, 2015)
  – Attendance
  – Communication
  – Self-Awareness
  – Diversity Awareness
  – Oral Expression
  – Written Expression
  – NASW Code of Ethics Compliance
### Social Work Professional Behaviors Screening Tool (SWPBST; Elswick, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Attendance (attends classes and meetings)</th>
<th>Communications (manages communication and contacts)</th>
<th>Self-Awareness (demonstrates respect, responsive to feedback, aware of biases, and supportive in collegial relationships)</th>
<th>Diversity Awareness</th>
<th>Oral Expression</th>
<th>Written Expression</th>
<th>Compliance with NASW Code of Ethics and professional requirements</th>
<th>Total (0-21)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: BA Student Names (Mr. Jones)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: BA John Smith</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rating Scale:**

- 0 Never/Poor
- 1 Occasionally/Fair
- 2 Sometimes/Good
- 3 Frequently/Excellent

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**SWPBST, 2015**
Changes We Made...

- Moved from separate probes to one specific Benchmark Probe (reading, writing, and social/emotional screening) used at 1st, 6th, and 12th sessions
- Changed the Wellness Assessment (previously used) to the PSS-14
- Offered morning, evening, and on-line sections of the support programming
- Combined Curriculum (initially the social emotional curriculum and educational curriculum were separated)
- Added perception based question on demographic form about graduation and moving into the MSW program
- Less stringent on the homework assignments
- More marketing (on-campus, in classes, website, and facebook)
- Looking at a Departmental Application Process/Screening Process
- Continued need to increase numbers in this programming.
Future Implications/ Research

- Continue research on RtI in Higher Education
- Look at attrition rates, graduation, GPA, and movement into the MSW program
- More marketing in the future for research/ program
- Screening Process (Intro courses-2010, 2911, 3902)
- Offer “field trips” on campus to the support programs (technology, financial aid, counseling center, library, writing center, etc.)
- Embed this curriculum into the BA SWRK curriculum (skills class- elective hours)-requirement for struggling BA SWRK students
References

References

References


QUESTIONS??
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