

Adolescents in education

Education



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Studying in college means new life. It allows new experiences and challenges. This can be exciting but it can also be stressful and make someone feel sad as well. The role of guide counselor is of great importance regarding the student's adaptation in academic environment. The realization of student's professional and personal skills depends a lot on the degree of the success of counselor's activities.

The main aim of this research is to show that today the counselors' practices still are not perfect. They are some narrow-directed and are composed mostly as the instructions for dealing with a student who is already in stress. Also, the scheme of organization of counselor's activities which is suggested to make their work more efficient will be proposed.

As Kenneth W. Merrel says in his "Helping students overcome depression and anxiety: a practical guide" (2001): "Depression, anxiety, and related "internalizing" problems of children and adolescents have been the focus of increased professional concern during the past two or three decades. During the majority of the 20th century, relatively little attention was given to these problems".

Meanwhile, recently depression and stress have become rather a common phenomenon of students' life. For many young adults, the transition from high school to college is one of the most exciting periods of their lives. Normative developmental tasks, such as moving away from home, learning new academic material, forming adult relationships, and managing time and money, can create feelings of independence and generate a sense of mastery and competence unparalleled in earlier adolescence.

As educators are well aware, however, these critical tasks can become a source of chronic stress, especially during the freshman year. If left unchecked, such stress can uncover or lead to more serious psychological disorders, which can, in turn, cause social isolation, school failure, and self-destructive behaviors.

The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness (2005) affirms that: " Most illnesses develop between the ages of 17 to 25, but that's not to say it can't start sooner or later than that." Speaking about American students, NYU Child Study Center (2004) shows also that:

- depression affects over 19 million American adults annually, including college students. At colleges nationwide, large percentages of students are feeling overwhelmed, sad, hopeless and so depressed that they are unable to function...
- eating disorders affect 5-10 million women and one million men nationwide, with the highest rates occurring among college-aged women.
- suicide was the eighth leading cause of death for all Americans, the third leading cause of death for those aged 15-24 years, and the second leading killer in the college population in 1998.
- nearly 50% of American teenagers of high-school age are currently, or have been, sexually active. Everyday, 8, 000 teenagers in the United States become infected by a sexually transmitted disease (STD)... "

The transition to student life has always been unsettling but being a student is quite different now from 20 years ago. Today we have a mass

higher education system, so universities tend to be much larger and less personal.

It's very rare for students to go through a degree program with the same 20 or 30 people - instead they take different modules with large numbers of different people so it's hard for them to build up support networks. And one don't just have finals now, one have exams twice a year, every year, so the pressure is on from the moment one start until the moment he finishes.

The causes of depression are complex. Very often a combination of genetic, psychological and environmental factors is involved in the onset of clinical depression.

Common stressors in college life include: greater academic demands, being on your own in a new environment, changes in family relations, financial responsibilities, changes in your social life, exposure to new people, ideas, and temptations, awareness of your sexual identity and orientation, preparing for life after graduation. At times, however, depression occurs for no apparent reason.

Whatever the cause is, depression is almost always treatable. But the problem is not only to get rid of the stress but to learn how to manage with it or (what would be the best solution) how to prevent it.

The problem is also not only in a great threat for student's health which is issued by stress but in making a student unable to develop his skills. Hundreds of students, sometimes very gifted ones, suffer because of depression which is a great obstacle on the way of their development as personalities.

It must be said that nowadays the net of guide counselors is developed quite well and practically all educational establishments of famous have among their personnel professional psychologists who make a great deal of work. But it also must be noted that in recent years the intensity of so-called “students’ stress” hasn’t decreased but quite the contrary, it has increased a lot.

Therefore, the main task of guide counselors is to learn to reveal the symptoms of depression at its early stage, identify the students who are especially vulnerable to stress form the very beginning of their education and direct their behavior to the safe path.

So, as it was already said, the first step in defeating depression is recognizing it. It's normal to have some signs of depression some of the time. But five or more symptoms for two weeks or longer, or noticeable changes in usual functioning, are all factors that should be evaluated by a health or mental health professional.

Depressive illnesses come in different forms. The following are descriptions of the three most prevalent, though for an individual, the number, severity, and duration of symptoms will vary:

Major depression is manifested by a combination of symptoms that interfere with one’s ability to work, sleep, eat, and enjoy once pleasurable activities. These episodes can occur once, twice, or several times in a lifetime.

Symptoms include: sadness, anxiety, or " empty" feeling, decreased energy, fatigue, being " slowed down", loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities, appetite and weight changes (either loss or gain) , sleep disturbances

(insomnia, oversleeping, waking much earlier than usual), feelings of hopelessness, guilt, and worthlessness, thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts difficulty concentrating, making decisions, remembering, irritability or excessive crying, chronic aches or pain not explained by other physical condition.

A less intense type of depression- dysthymia, involves long-term, chronic symptoms that are less severe, but keep you from functioning at your full ability and from feeling well. In bipolar illness (also known as manic-depressive illness), cycles of depression alternate with cycles of elation and increased activity, known as mania.

Bipolar disorder is a type of depressive illness that involves mood swings that go from periods of depression to periods of being overly " up" and irritable. Sometimes the mood swings are dramatic or rapid, but most often they occur gradually, over several weeks.

The " up" or manic phase can include increased energy and activity, insomnia, grandiose notions and impulsive or reckless behavior, including sexual promiscuity. Medication usually is effective in controlling manic symptoms and preventing the recurrence of both manic and depressive episodes.

When the depression lasts for two weeks and more or interferes with academic or social functioning it may be clinical depression. Clinical depression is a common, frequently unrecognized illness that can be effectively treated. Clinical depression can affect your body, mood, thoughts, and behavior.

It can change your eating habits, how you feel and think, your ability to work and study, and how you interact with people. Clinical depression is not a passing mood, a sign of personal weakness, or a condition that can be willed away.

Clinically depressed people cannot "pull themselves together" and get better. Depression can be successfully treated. With the right treatment, 80 percent of those who seek help get better. And many people begin to feel better in just a few weeks.

The notion of stress or depression is connected tightly with alcohol and drugs and suicide intentions. A lot of depressed people, especially teenagers, also have problems with alcohol or other drugs. Sometimes depression comes first and people try drugs as a way to escape it.

Other times, the alcohol or other drug use comes first, and depression is caused by the drug itself, or withdrawal from it, or the problems that substance use causes. And sometimes one can't tell which came first. The important point is that when one has both of these problems, the sooner he gets treatment, the better.

Thoughts of death or suicide are usually signs of severe depression. Talking to a professional in this case can get student past those intense feelings and save his life. Suicidal thoughts, impulses, or behaviors always should be taken seriously. It is necessary to contact someone he or she trusts: a good friend, academic or resident advisor.

All the above mentioned problems referred to students' stresses and depressions are suggested to be treated by counselors. The counselor is

ateacherand psychologist at the same time. The relationship between teacher and learner essentially poses problems of human relations. Teachers bring more than knowledge to the relationship: they are motivators, experts, judges.

Teachers and learners shareresponsibilityfor learning, and some question whether " teaching" has occurred if no " learning" occurred.

Studies of teaching that produces the most learning suggest that " effective" teachers use an analytical and synthetic approach to the subject matter, organize the material well to make it clear, and establish rapport with their students.

Most studies identify enthusiasm as important in promoting students' learning. The key seems to be to make college courses challenging but not threatening.

Many stress models emphasize a " mismatch" between the individual and his or her environment. Both too little and too much stress inhibits learning. Stress is difficult to define because individuals react to it very differently, and a situation that is stressful for one person may not be for another. Further, stressed individuals vary widely in the effectiveness of their coping.

The professional or academic adaptation is a kind of social adaptation. Academic adaptation consists of professional and psychological components. The psychological aspect has the leading role as it is the base for all the other stages of human's socialization.

The academic adaptation is an intensive, dynamic and complex process in the course of which the individual elaborates constant skills of adaptation

within the demands of his new environment. At the very beginning there is an adaptation to the social environment of high school, and on the senior rates - to the elected trade and profession.

Thus, professional adaptation of the student at each subsequent stage includes adaptable abilities and the skills received at the previous stage as a basis. Each subsequent stage is the result of the development of the previous one with qualitatively new formations.

It is necessary to point out a number of the initial subjective factors which negatively influence on the process of adaptation and underlying typical difficulties:

1. An insufficient level of actual readiness for the high school program, neglect of many knowledge from rates of school disciplines what leads to backwardness of diligence and inquisitiveness, deficiency of the personal responsibility and educational activity, a low level of spiritual and intellectual potentials.
2. Feebly marked studies skills, insufficiently advanced verbal (abstract) thinking, backwardness of concentration and distribution of attention, ignorance of effective mnemonic receptions, weakness of strong-willed regulation.
3. A low level of culture and moral shown on a background limited life experience and a social maturity; world outlook and social infantilism.
4. Uncertainty in one's own forces, doubt in an opportunity of successful training in high school

Considering professional adaptation of the person as process, using concept " professional adaptation ", we designate result of this process. Thus, professional adaptation is a result of personal changes during the coordination of professional intentions, qualities of the person and requirements of concrete professional work at adequate reaction to own changes, changes of professional work and the professional environment under influence of the factors generated at inclusion of the person in system of continuous education.

Hence, professional adaptation of the person of the student forms a psychological basis of his vocational training.

The challenges while getting education are especially important for gifted students. Many gifted youngsters have a heightened sensitivity to their surroundings, to events, to ideas, and to expectations. Some experience their own high expectations for achievement as a relentless pressure to excel. Constant striving to live up to self-expectations-or those of others-to be first, best, or both can be very stressful. With every new course, new teacher, or new school questions arise about achievement and performance, since every new situation carries with it the frightening risk of being mediocre.

Striving becomes even more stressful when unrealistic or unclear expectations are imposed by adults or peers. The pressure to excel, accompanied by other concerns such as feeling different, self-doubt (the " imposter" syndrome), and the need to prove their giftedness can drain the energy of gifted students and result in additional stress.

Stress occurs even when everything is going well. Youngsters get tired from their constant efforts and may secretly fear that next time they will not be as successful.

Many gifted students accept responsibility for a variety of activities such as a demanding course load; leadership in school activities, clubs, or sports and part-time jobs. Even if it were humanly possible, doing everything well would be physically and emotionally stressful.