

PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH AMONG GRADUATE RESEARCHERS

Greetings

- Impressed at the choice of ERDTs topic for today's activity: Faculty Research Mentoring Workshop.
- Rare that we talk about faculty mentoring in the area of research, and we do know how important this is.
- All the more impressed with your inclusion of mental health awareness topic in your line up of activities in faculty mentoring.

In doing so, you are affirming several important facts here:

- research advising, even on topics related to hard core science, is an interpersonal process, and as such can be an avenue for facilitating the nurture or de-stabilization of an advisees mental health;
- that researchers in science and engineering are people too, who can be vulnerable to psychosocial issues that come with being invested on activities that are of central importance to one's work and life.

What I would be sharing with you in this session comes from my experience in

- graduate research advising as a faculty of the Department of Psychology of UP Diliman;
- conducting research with colleagues and research staff;
- work of providing therapy as Director of UPD PsycServ and as private practitioner in my clinics outside and within UP.

Some case briefs

What's wrong with me?

A student came to me and was asking for help since she found herself unable to graduate because she kept on writing and revising her thesis. She said she was not OC before. But when her adviser got her first draft and gave her the feedback ".... You know, if you do not change your way of thinking and writing, you won't be able to swing this project." She has long changed adviser but she is still stuck in her thesis writing project being so afraid of turning in parts of her work for her adviser to evaluate.

Wala na akong pag-asa....

A grad student came to see me asking me to be her adviser. She said that her former adviser told her that she can no longer work with her because she finds her unable to comply with what they agree upon in their discussions. She was surprised by such feedback and felt something was really dreadfully wrong with her. She also felt hopeless since the MRR will be catching up on her by the end of six months. She did not think she can beat the deadline. We talked about her concerns and explored her options. She ended up deciding to try and finish her thesis. She did so and got a best thesis award for it.

Kailangan ko yata ng terapi...

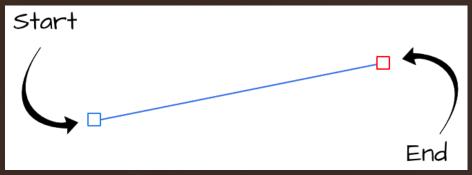
One grad student disclosed that she was finding it hard to finish her dissertation because she was suffering from anxiety and mild depression. She talked about her experiences and reached the conclusion that she needed to seek professional help for her condition. Weeks later I inquired how she was doing and she said she was still down. I asked if she has seen a doctor and she said she went to see her OB GYN specialist. I asked her why that doctor and she said she feels comfortable with her. I helped her to realize she needs to see a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist instead.

Ayaw ko na Ma'am.... Give up na ako!

A grad student who was a faculty in a university and was at the last leg of his dissertation writing project approached me and said that would be letting go of his bid for a PhD since he has only two more months left to submit his dissertation and he has the whole work of accreditation of his school's program resting on him. He said sorry for letting me down and was ready to throw in the towel. I asked him to study with me his remaining work for the dissertation and we eventually agreed that he can come up with something by the end of the two months. He finished his dissertation and it got the award for the Best Dissertation from PAP.



- (1) Faculty-graduate student/research advising is a relationship.
- has a start;
- a progression
- > an end.



The relationship can be facilitative of the advisee's growth both as a person and as a scientist-researcher, or it can be de-stabilizing. It is never neutral.

- (2) There are characteristics of a faculty-advisee/mentee that helps facilitate the development of the relationship that engenders growth. These are:
- Unconditional positive regard
- Acceptance and non judgmental attitude
- Immediacy
- Respect
- Genuineness
- Hope and Optimism
- Caring and compassion"Kalinga"



- (3) There is unbalanced power relationship in adviser/mentor and advisee/mentee relationship.
- ➤ The faculty adviser occupies a powerful role in the life of a graduate advisee;
- Power = Admiration, Respect, Awe
- Power = Position to evaluate and make decision

 That's why what we say and do matter a lot to our mentees. (4) Our mentees have different personalities and needs that they bring with them when they see us for advising.

There are different types of advisees.

Type A: Practical, no nonsense advisees.- Not looking for a magnum opus; they just want to finish with their Program's requirement; they want the monkey off their back so they can move on and do what they want to do.





Type B: anxious, worried type.Not sure of themselves and
their ability; they are afraid of
their adviser's evaluation. Their
adviser's pronouncements are
absolute, unquestionable; They
are emotionally reactive to what
is told them.

Type C: the "mayabang" advisees.- They believe so much in themselves in in their abilities that it is hard to get through them. They rend to be rigid in their thinking because what they think they believe is already OK.





Type D: There are the perfectionist, OC type.-They find it hard to finish their work because they are always re-writing and revising because they always see something lacking or missing in their work.

Type E: The Balanced

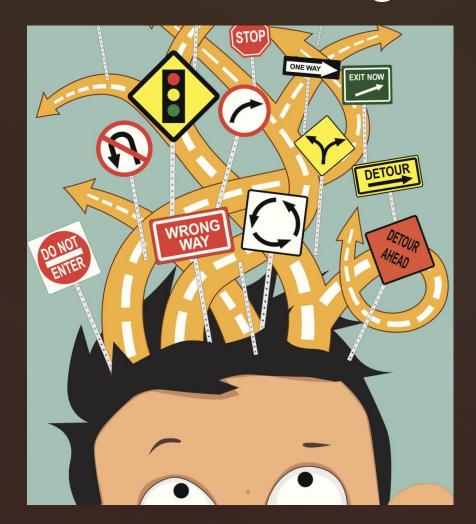
Advisees.- who want to do real good work, want to learn and move forward in the process in their career path, but are not blind to practical considerations.



Type F: Harassed with other concerns.- These are the advisees who have other concerns that occupy their time and suck their energy. They can easily give up their research work to attend to what they believe are more important issues.



Type G: with special needs.-These are the students who have psychosocial disabilities such ADHD, mild autism, depression, etc. They would sometimes need accommodation to get to finish what they need to finish.



(5) We get to know and understand our advisees/mentees and adjust within range our way of mentoring them.

Type of Students	Needs	Adviser's Resonse
1. Practical	Need to finish work fat; focus on efficiency	Problem solving, odes not respond much to challenge to aim high
2. Anxious	Need to be affirmed, supported, encouraged	Patient, caring, warm yet firm and directive
3. Mayabang	Need to be recognized as superior; admired	Patient and point out areas where there are gaps or contradictions; no put downs;
4. Perfectionist	Need to achieve perfection, see gaps and remedy them	affirmation, structure, see work as lifetime project
5. Balanced	Need to achieve and experience satisfaction	Encouragement to explore
6. Harassed	Need to finish without sacrificing his major concern	Support, strategizing to finish, firmness
7. Special	Need to work on their special needs so it does not hinder	openness, no judgement, help from professionals

(6) We be mindful of certain good practices that promote the growth of a facilitative relationship with them.

- Get to know some personal things about your advisees.
 - Where they live;
 - Who do they live with;
 - What are their dreams;
 - How has their summer break been;
 - What's new with them.

Some good practices:

- Inquire about aspects of conversation you earlier had with them. That tells them you were really interested and listening when they were telling you about those matters.
- Be person centered.
 - Ask them what they are interested to research about;
 - Let them tell you why;



Some good practices:

- Be simple, clear and direct in giving feedback.
 - These are very good insights BUT You need a language editor.
- Look for commendable aspects of the work turned in and not only aspects that need to be deleted or revised.
- Use the sandwich method when giving negative but constructive feedback.
- POSITIVE



NEGATIVE



POSITIVE

Some good practices:

- Avoid put down statements.
 - Be clear about your expectations for your meetings:
 - What you want to see accomplished;
 - When you want to meet;
 - What are musts and what are for consideration.
- Celebrate small and big accomplishments of your advisee.

(7) We remember that some individuals can be very emotionally vulnerable and we maintain some degree of sensitivity and alertness for those who may be hurting and in need of psychosocial support.

• Let us take note of the fact that mental health problems are now on the rise.

- WHO's latest global statistics indicate that more than 300 million people are battling depression, during the period 2005-2015.
- Depression the common cold in psychiatry.

On the local scene....

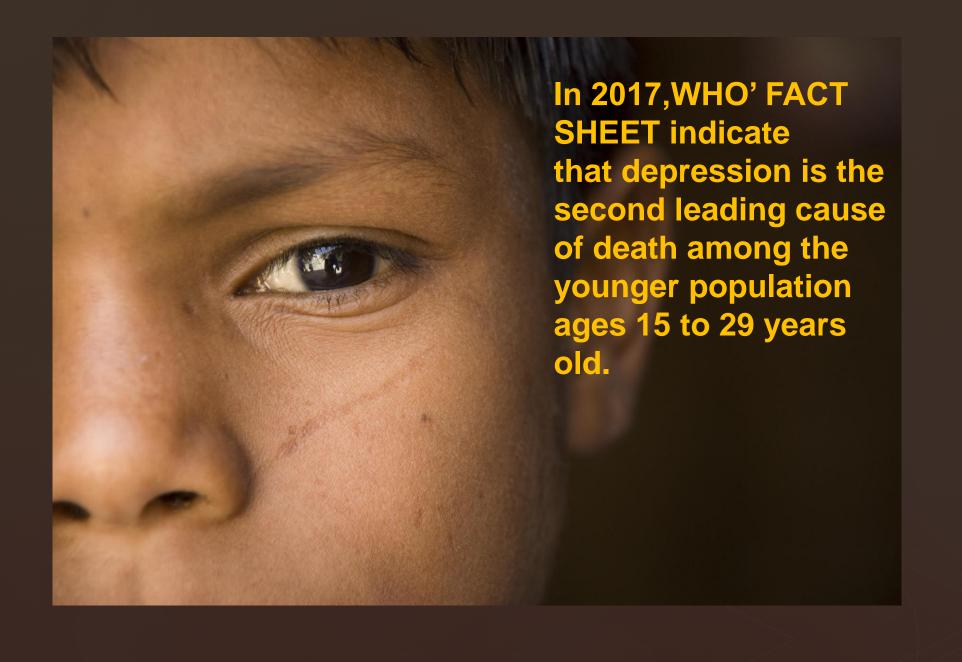
Philippines has the highest incidence of depression in Southeast Asia.



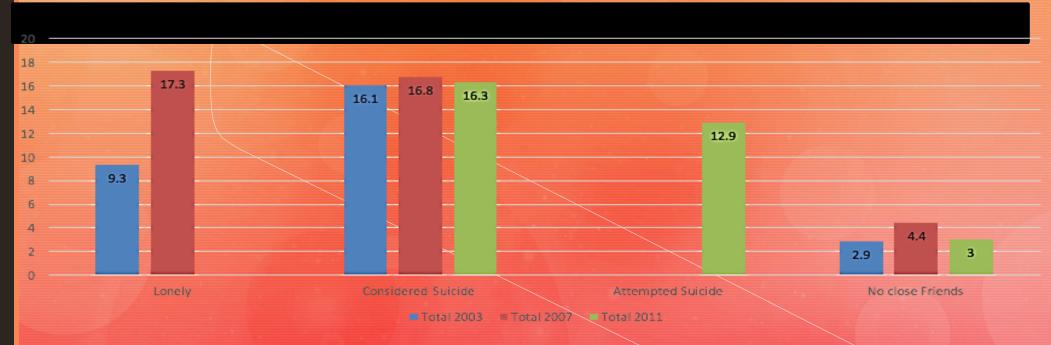
In 2004:

- over 4.5 million reported cases of depression
- only one-third will seek help





2011 WHO Global school-based health survey, Philippines (mental health component)



...16% of students between 13-15 years old have seriously considered attempting suicide during the past year while 13% have actually attempted suicide one or more times during the past year.

 According to WHO's 10 Facts on Mental Health updated 2016, around 20% of the world's children and adolescents have mental disorders or problems (WHO, 2016), and about half of mental disorders begin before the age of 14.

Mental health problems:

 According to data provided by the Department of Health and the World Health Organization, 7 Filipinos commit suicide every day and 1 in 5 Filipino adults suffer from a certain mental health concern, the most common of which is depression and schizophrenia. The problem has become of real concern that Dr. Weier the WHO representative in the Philippines issued a call to action on the matter. He said: "Now is the time to initiate a serious national chat in our own small circles of friends and colleagues to better grasp what is depression. Talking about depression is the first single biggest step toward its treatment, management, recovery..."

Local celebriities are coming out to be part of this national chat about depression.

 Maricel Soriano, has admitted how she silently fought depression when her mother passed away. She sought professional help when her problem became unbearable.



Gab Valenciano



"I was secretly hiding under an umbrella of depression for a good 4 years...I was suicidal for the first few months...

Vice Ganda

Suffered depression back in 2013. He was also suicidal when he was just 19 years old

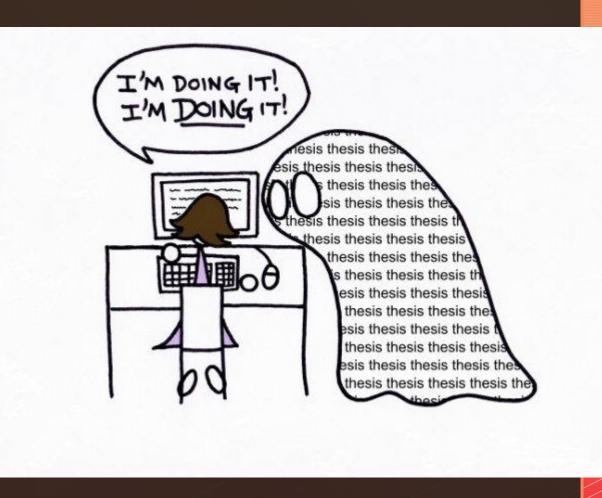
"Nilamon ako ng depression na hindi ko ho maintindihan. So natulog ako. Paggising ko malungkot pa rin ako kaya hindi ako nakapasok sa 'It's Showtime.' Inisip ko, bakit ba ako nalulungkot? Iyak lang ako ng iyak.





Some Basic Reminders in Mental Health Sensitive Research Advising

Here are some common signs that someone may be struggling with their mental health:



EMOTIONAL

YES OR NO:

Advisees who are struggling with their mental health may seem irritable, sensitive to criticism, demonstrate an uncharacteristic loss of confidence or seem to lose their sense of humour.

COGNITIVE

YES OR NO:

An advisee may make more mistakes than usual, not seem to be able to follow discussion/analysis unlike before, have problems making decisions, or not be able to concentrate. Look out for any sudden and unexplained drop in performance.

BEHAVIORAL

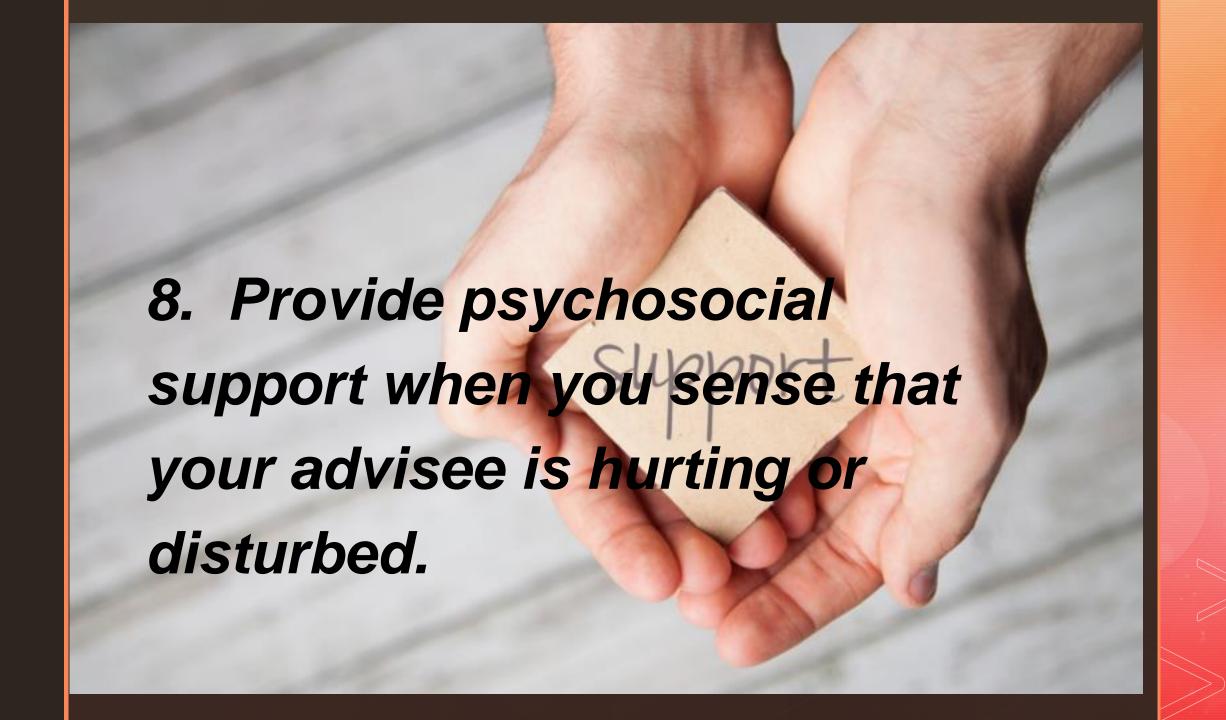
YES OR NO:

This could include things like arriving for consultation meetings late, missing meals, not being available for meetings, not joining in group banter, or not hitting deadlines, becoming more introvert or extroverted, generally acting out of character.

PHYSICAL

YES OR NO:

Advisees who are stressed sometimes exhibit physical symptoms such as a constant cold, being tired at work, sleeping/eating problems, looking like they haven't made an effort with their appearance, or rapid weight loss or gain.



What if my Advisee seems to be disturbed or hurting?

- Get your advisee to talk to you.
- Express concern... " I noticed the past few days that_____"
- Listen to your advisee as he/she shares her concern.
- Know that your advisee does not expect you to have the answers;
- Encourage your advisee to seek help.
- Ask your advisee if you can mobilize other friends to be supportive.
- Follow up if your advisee has done something about his/her concern.

(9) Refer your advisee when needed.

How do I know when I need to refer my advisee?

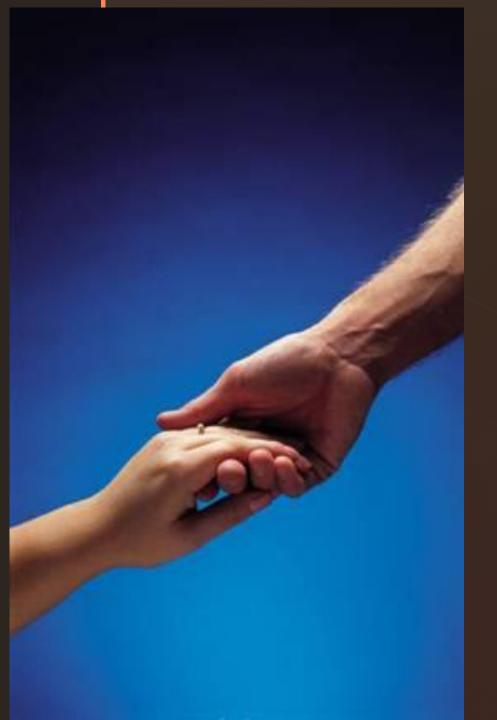
When to refer:

There is a need for outside/professional help if you observe the following:

- there is deterioration in basic functioning of your advisee despite your help;
- Your advisee is persistently manifesting maladaptive and inappropriate behaviour, such as inability to do work on the project, sleeplessness, negative thinking, etc.

When to refer

- There is threat to life (suicidal or homicidal) or safety (such as plan to run away);
- ▶ the problem is complicated, is beyond your competencies and is causing anguish to your advisee;
- the problem does not get solved despite constant help from you and continues to bring suffering to your advisee;



REMEMBER: Early Intervention prevents the condition from worsening.

There are strategies that are available to manage mental health problems that can end suffering and even help save lives.

(10) Let us also take care of ourselves.

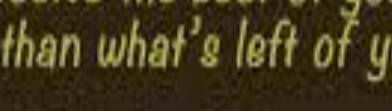
- We all get stressed with pile up of activities and concerns;
- "nagagasgas rin ang instrument" no matter how superior its quality is;
- Let us not forget to observe work-life-balance and create joys and happiness in life that protect us from the negative effects of overwhelming stressors that we sometimes encounter in life.







Taking good care of YOU, means the people in your life will receive the best of you, rather than what's left of you.



- Carl Bryan, Tennis Coach



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