

THE INKBLOT

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HOMESICK? YOU CAN FEEL BETTER!

Homesickness is a normal part of the transition from home to college. First year students most often report feeling homesick, but even returning students can experience the pangs of missing home when they first return to school after summer break. What can you do to help yourself? Try these tips:

- Remind yourself that feeling homesick is absolutely normal - it would be more surprising if you *didn't* miss home!
- It helps to get mail from home! Stay in touch with happenings at home with a mail subscription to your local paper. Give your family and friends some stamped envelopes with your campus address.
- You may be tempted to call family and friends every day and go home every week but this will actually slow your adjustment and make things harder in the long run. Instead, try limiting your

calls to two or three times each week. Plan trips home, but only after you've had a chance to be on campus a while.

- Pay attention to your feelings and think about what they mean. What people, things, or activities are you missing most? Why do you miss them? You can use this information to guide your choices and use of time.
- Open yourself to new experiences and relationships. Try a new sport, start a conversation with someone you don't know, join a few campus organizations to see what they're about.
- Don't be afraid to share your feelings. More people feel like you do than you might think and would welcome the chance to talk about it!
- Develop good health and study habits.
- Develop a routine that supports success.

QUICK HINTS FOR WELL-BEING

- *Do something kind for someone you don't think deserves it.*
- *Write down five great things about yourself. Do it again tomorrow.*
- *Try one new thing every day, no matter how small.*
- *Leave 10 minutes earlier than you think you need to.*



LHU'S NEWEST MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE

Welcome to The Inkblot! The LHU Counseling Service has created The Inkblot in an effort to reach out to Lock Haven students, faculty, and staff and provide timely tips and helpful information on a variety of mental health topics relevant to the college community. We want to help make our campus a healthier, safer, and more productive environment for everyone!

The Inkblot is intended to cover topics of the greatest interest to the LHU community in the most useful format. In order to do this, we need to know what works and what doesn't. Your feedback is critical to our success and we welcome all comments, criticisms, and suggestions for making the Inkblot work for you! Please email your comments or ideas to Dr. Rob Franz at rfranz@lhup.edu.

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HOW TO HELP A FRIEND



“TENSION IS
WHO YOU THINK
YOU SHOULD BE.

RELAXATION IS
WHO YOU ARE.”

CHINESE
PROVERB

Friends commonly express difficult feelings to each other. When friends experience and share feelings such as frustration, confusion, sadness, anger, or anxiety, you might not know how to help them or how to react. Here are some guidelines for helping that will allow you handle these feelings in a way that will be supportive and beneficial:

- First and foremost, listen carefully and openly to what your friend is telling you. Friends often are helped more just by getting to talk about their feelings than by anything you may say. You shouldn't feel pressured to fix things for your friends— sometimes you just have to be there!
- Friends may be upset about having done something that they feel was wrong or stupid. Try not to be judgmental or disapproving at the moment when a friend is confiding in you. Let your friend know that even though you may not agree with a particular behavior, you do accept him or her as a person.
- Recognize the value of emotional release and encourage your friend to "talk it out."
- Try not to display strong reactions such as surprise, shock, or amusement that may reinforce your friend's troublesome emotions. Instead, do your best to be outwardly calm and focused on being present.
- Do not make decisions for your friend. What is best for you in a given situation may not be the best thing for your friend to do in that same situation. Instead, encourage your friend to think through and consider the potential benefits and consequences of their decisions.
- If you feel you cannot provide the help your friend needs, encourage your friend to seek others who can, such as a trusted faculty member or administrator or a staff member at the LHU Counseling Service. Free, confidential counseling is available at the Counseling Service for the whole range of personal and emotional problems students may face.
- If you are feeling overwhelmed or frightened by what you are hearing, consider contacting the LHU Counseling Service to consult with a counselor about other ways to help your friend and take care of yourself.

SHOULD I SEEK COUNSELING?

Students often experience confusion about whether or not to seek help through counseling. Their uncertainty results from a variety of misconceptions.

Some students believe that you have to be "crazy" to seek counseling and others see counseling as a sign of personal weakness. Neither of these things could be further from the truth. Most individuals who benefit from counseling are dealing with normal reactions to life changes or transitions and are experiencing problems and emotions that virtually everyone faces from time to time. Seeing a counselor to help deal with your difficulties is no more a sign of weakness than is meeting with a tutor to get help with a tough class or con-

sulting with your advisor to figure out a program of study.

Other students feel that their difficulties are not serious enough to justify seeing a counselor. Sure, counselors often do help people who have severe problems or mental health issues. However, you do not have to use others as a yardstick for deciding whether your own difficulties are important enough to seek counseling. The bottom line is that if something is big enough to trouble you, it is big enough to work on through counseling.

If you're not sure whether counseling is right for you, come in, talk it over, and decide for yourself!



MANAGING TEST ANXIETY

Almost every student can relate to feeling nervous before an exam. Test grades are usually the biggest part of your course grade, so it makes sense that you might feel some butterflies as you sit down for an exam. However, many students become so anxious during tests that they simply cannot show what they have learned. Their anxiety can become a barrier to their success and make them doubt themselves.

Test anxiety is usually experienced in three ways:

Physically: Nausea, trembling, sweaty hands, or muscular tension.

Emotionally: Feelings of fear or panic, having a sense of dread or doom.

Mentally: Negative thoughts (“I can’t do this,” “I’m so stupid”), poor concentration, inability to remember things you’ve learned.

Obviously, none of these is going to boost your performance on a test! The good news is that you can do some things that will reduce the likelihood of experiencing test anxiety and that will help you manage test anxiety if you experience it during an exam:

- **Be prepared:** Often, test anxiety is related to poor preparation. Don’t put off studying until the last day. Review class material regularly and begin studying well in advance of the test date. If possible, take a practice test under test conditions. Get any materials you need together the night before and give yourself plenty of time to get to class (rushing = stress)
- **Rest and nutrition:** There is more and more evidence showing the importance of sleep to your well-being, including your ability to learn and remember! You will be better off on exam day if you’ve gotten a good night’s sleep than trying to cram in a few extra hours of study. Eat something before the exam, preferably not a sugary snack. Avoid caffeine, which can create body sensations that worsen anxiety.
- **Avoid negative people:** On the day of the exam, don’t walk to class or chat beforehand with people who don’t prepare or who complain about how tests are unfair or too hard.
- **Develop good test-taking skills:** Read directions slowly and carefully. Skim the test be-

fore you start to budget your time. Do easier questions first. Write down important formulas, facts or definitions in the margins at the beginning so they don’t escape you later.

- **Don’t concern yourself with other students:** Try not to pay attention to what other students are doing, as this is never helpful. Remember, the classmate who turns in a test quickly may have had an easy time or may have turned in a blank exam.

- **Practice and use relaxation strategies:** Relaxation strategies such as deep breathing, positive visualization, and muscle relaxation can be extremely useful in combating anxiety during a test. However, for relaxation to be useful you must practice it often! Check the library, look online, or consult with the Counseling Service if you’d like assistance in developing some good relaxation strategies.

- **Watch how you talk to yourself:** Watch out for negative thoughts such as “I can’t do this,” “I’m going to fail,” “Here we go again.” If you find yourself thinking in this way, STOP! Take a deep breath, close your eyes, and replace them with simple, positive thoughts such as: “I’m okay,” “Just relax,” “I know this stuff,” or “I can do this.”

- **Put things in perspective:** Test anxiety often results from an excessive emphasis on grades as a measure of self-worth. If every test turns into a way of measuring whether you are a “good” or “bad” person, the pressure to perform can become intense. This pressure can come from inside you or from the outside (especially parents), but the impact is the same: an unhealthy and counterproductive focus on test grades. Take some time to think about yourself as a whole person – your value as a human being is not measured by your grades.

- **Accept your anxiety:** The goal is not to eliminate anxiety, but to manage it. Interestingly, if you see test anxiety as something that you can manage effectively, you are actually less likely to experience it than if you see it as something you had to get rid of entirely.

If you’d like help in implementing some of the strategies that are mentioned above, or if you’d like some feedback on your experiences of anxiety, give the Counseling Service a call. We’ll be happy to consult with you!



IF YOU HAVE
FEAR OF SOME
PAIN OR
SUFFERING, YOU
SHOULD EXAMINE
WHETHER THERE
IS ANYTHING
YOU CAN DO
ABOUT IT. IF
YOU CAN, THERE
IS NO NEED TO
WORRY ABOUT
IT; IF YOU
CANNOT DO
ANYTHING, THEN
ALSO THERE IS
NO NEED TO
WORRY.

- DALAI LAMA

LOCK HAVEN UNIVERSITY COUNSELING SERVICES

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Lock Haven, PA 17745**

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Fax: 570-484-2977*

We're On the Web!

www.lhup.edu/ad_c/CounselingServices.htm

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Ms. Susan Birdsey
Counseling Services Secretary
115 Russell Hall
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About the Lock Haven University Counseling Service

The LHU Counseling Service is an integral part of the Department of Academic Development and Counseling. We provide consultation, psychological assistance (psychological testing, diagnostics and treatment) and counseling to students with personal, psychological, emotional or academic adjustment issues. Consultation and education regarding mental health topics and issues affecting LHU students is also available to faculty and staff.

The LHU Counseling Service is staffed by two licensed psychologists, a licensed professional counselor, and a licensed social worker. Psychiatric consultation is available via assessment and referral from the Director of the Counseling Service.

The Counseling Service faculty assists students with questions about achievement, educational problems, interpersonal relationships, coping problems, self-image, social skills or other potentially stressful or disturbing experiences. Services are free and confidential. The diversity of services (e.g., tutoring, advising) offered by the Department of Academic Development and Counseling provides additional anonymity to the student seeking personal counseling.

Counseling services are provided Monday through Friday during regular working hours or by special appointment. Students may be referred to off-campus agencies and private practitioners when desired or appropriate.

After 4 p.m., for emergencies, or if students are in crisis when Counseling Service faculty are not available, students should call MH/MR 24-hour Crisis Intervention Services at 570-748-2262. To access the Counseling Service students should call 484-2479 for information and/or an appointment.

MANAGE YOUR STRESS MORE EFFECTIVELY

Stress is an everyday part of the college experience, whether you are a student, staff, or faculty member. We all face demands on our time, challenges to our abilities, and changes beyond our control. Without the ability to manage stress effectively, life can feel overwhelming. Here are some ways to help prevent unnecessary stress and to cope effectively when you feel stressed:

- Eat well and get enough rest. The importance of taking care of yourself physically cannot be overemphasized. Poor nutrition and insufficient sleep dramatically interfere with your ability to cope with stress.
- Give yourself enough time. If you need to hurry to get to class or to meet friends, you set yourself up to be irritable and on edge.

- Be realistic in your expectations of yourself and others.
- Each morning, spend a few moments to look at what you have to do. Then, prioritize and take one thing at a time. You can't do everything at once and trying to do so will ensure that nothing gets done!
- Learn to practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, muscular relaxation, or calm imagery.
- Strive for balance in your life. Make sure that you set aside time for activities that you enjoy, exercise, and take breaks.
- Talk about your stress with someone you trust.
- Make decisions and accept that they might not work out perfectly. Indecision is a major stressor!

