

Ramapo College
Mental Health Awareness
Training

Objectives

- Identify and describe mental health issues facing individuals on college and university campuses
- Identify risk factors and warning signs for harm to self and/or others
- Review the importance of information sharing

From Your Perspective...

- What are your most pressing questions about students in crisis?
- What are the biggest challenges you face in your department?
- What do you feel are the most important skills/information to have?

The Big Picture

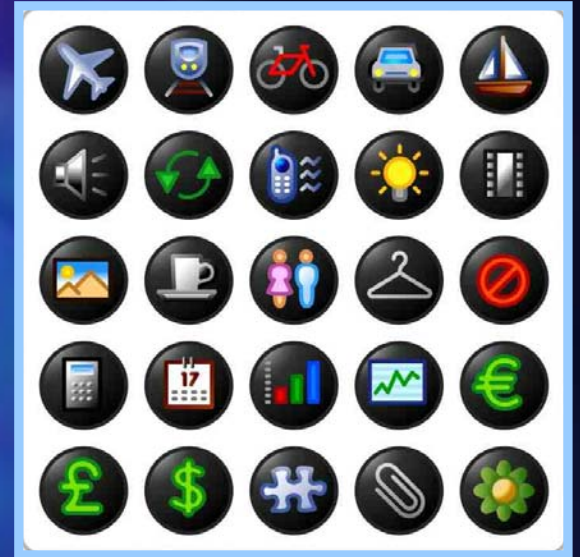
- There are more than 4,200 colleges and universities in the U.S., with more than 16 million students enrolled
- Depression, anxiety, substance abuse, eating disorders, and other serious mental health problems are prevalent on campuses across the nation
- A small subset of students struggling with emotional and behavioral problems are at risk of turning to violence to self and/or others as a means of dealing with their distress

Challenges Facing Students

- Stress is the most common problem among college students
- Students who are bright and may have done well in high school find they may not have the life skills to cope with the demands of college
- A large national survey of college students identified rates of depression (44%), episodic binge drinking (45%), and suicidal thoughts (10%) that highlight the need for adequate mental health care

Connecting the Dots

- Different people may have different pieces of the puzzle
- In isolation, the pieces may be meaningless or difficult to interpret
- Recognition of warning signs and risk factors highlight the importance of information sharing that may allow us to see meaningful patterns of behavior and communication
- A tragedy may be averted



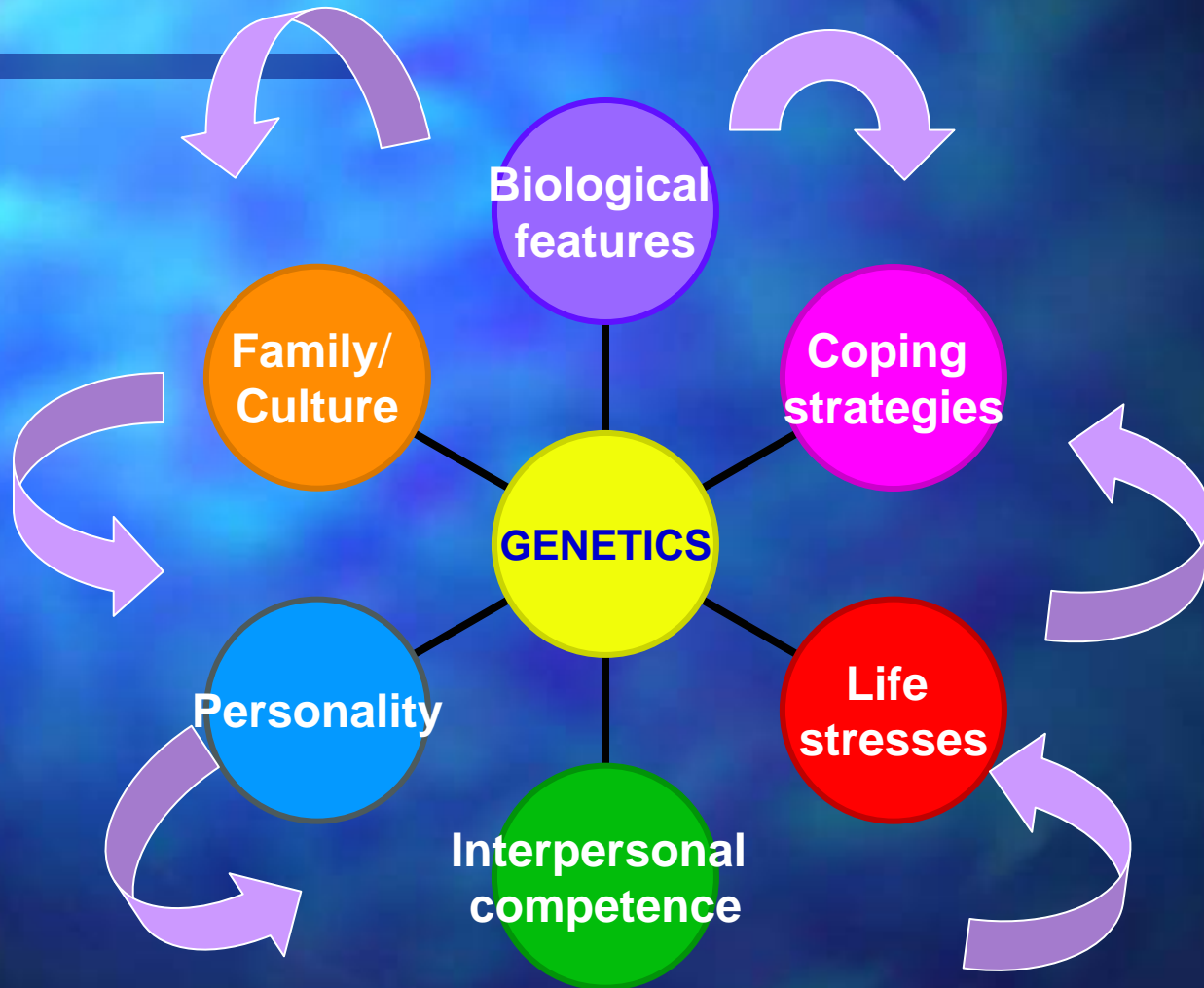
A Look at High-Risk Behaviors

All behavior is meaningful

You don't have to be a mental health professional to be concerned about troubled behaviors you see in students

If you see something of concern,
say something

How Psychological Disorders Develop



Warning Signs

- Hopelessness
- Rage, anger, seeking revenge
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking
- Feeling trapped
- Increased alcohol and/or drug use
- Withdrawing from family, friends
- Anxiety, agitation, unable to sleep, or sleeping all the time
- Dramatic changes in mood
- No reason for living; no sense of purpose in life



Warning Signs

- Serious concern about a student on the part of other students
- Changes in appetite, weight or sleep
- Unusual problems with concentration
- Unexpected change of academic performance
- Unexpected bouts of crying
- Giving away cherished possessions
- Talk of wanting to hurt oneself or others
- Talk of wanting to “get even” or “get revenge”
- Change in behavior - e.g. normally shy, quiet student becomes overly gregarious or aggressive, or normally outgoing, friendly student becomes sullen and withdrawn

Troubled students may also communicate by the use of:

- Journals
- Class activities/papers
- Web Sites
- My Space or Facebook

Subjects they may focus on are:

- Suicidal thinking
- Morbid thinking
- Self-image issues
- Suicidal acts
- Other self-destructive acts
- Threats towards others
- Psychological problems

Suicide Among College Students

- Suicide is currently the second-leading cause of death among college students, resulting in approximately 1100 deaths per year
- 90% of college students who commit suicide have a diagnosable psychological disorder, usually depression
- Depression is a highly treatable disorder, particularly if diagnosed early, emphasizing the need for systematic screening programs that “de-stigmatize” psychological problems

Statistics of college student suicide

- 9.3% of college students reported seriously considering suicide (at Ramapo, that would translate into 511 students)
- 1.3% of college students reported suicide attempts (at Ramapo, that would translate into 71 students)
- 50% of suicide completers have alcohol or other drugs in their systems

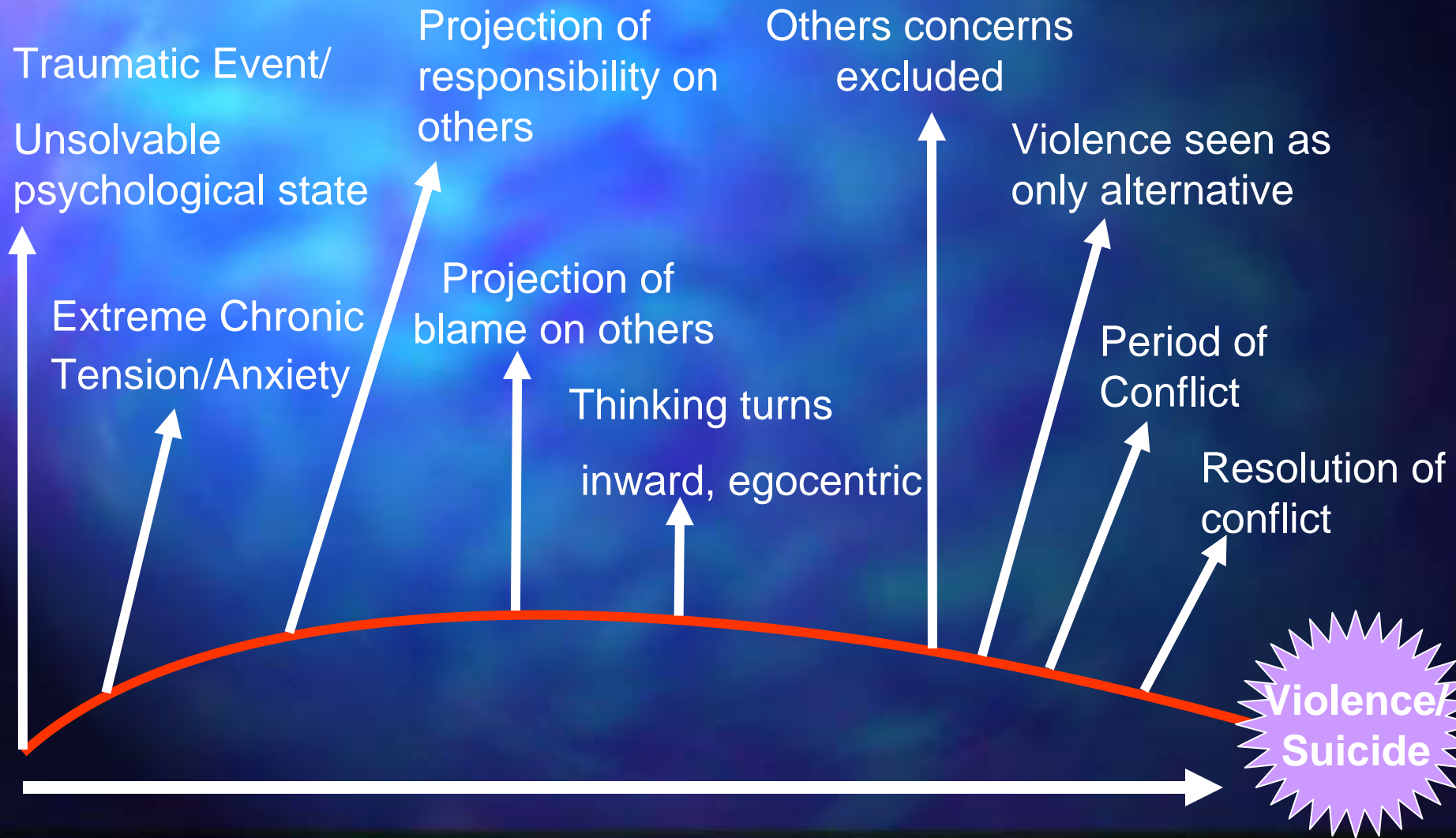
The Link Between Mental Illness, Distress, and Violence

- “Mental health” occurs along a continuum, from healthy functioning, to increased levels of distress and dysfunction, to mental illness
- Particularly for individuals who are vulnerable to mental illness, increased stress can lead to additional distress and dysfunction
- This distress and dysfunction, in vulnerable individuals, *can* lead to increased risk for harm to self and others, particularly if substance abuse is involved

Particular Risk Factors for Violence Toward Others

- Aggressive behavior demonstrated relatively early in childhood
- Acculturation difficulties
- Isolation in general, but particularly disconnection from or inability to get along with family members
- Limited frustration tolerance

The Arc of Violence



What to do if a Student is in Immediate Crisis

When it is safe to intervene:

- Consider your own personal safety
- Respect the individual's dignity
- Communicate concern & empathy
- Help student to explore options

Know Where to Get Assistance

- During normal business hours call (X7522) or walk student to Counseling Services (D-216)
- After business hours contact EOCC (Emergency On-Call Counselor) thru calling Public Safety (X6666)
- If the student is exhibiting violence or there is a risk of immediate danger to self or others call Public Safety (X6666)

Possible Concerns/Obstacles for Getting Help for Students

- Confidentiality – “I don’t want to break the student’s trust in me”
- “I don’t want to jeopardize my relationship with the student”
- Counseling is for “crazy people only”
- Cost
- “It’s not my responsibility” or “I don’t have the time”
- “I don’t want the student to be kicked out of school”
- Problem isn't serious enough
- “I don’t personally believe in therapy”
- “I can handle the problem myself”
- “Student doesn’t want to go and I want to respect his/her right to refuse treatment”

When to Refer a Student to Counseling Services

- Academic Problems
- Adjustment Issues
- Relationship Break-up
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Eating Issues
- Substance Abuse
- Sexual Assault

Referral Process

- The method of referral is dependent upon many factors including your comfort level, the student's comfort level, the status of the student, and the immediacy of the concern.
- Referral options include:
 - Giving the student contact information (i.e. telephone number, office location) for Counseling Services
 - Having the student call Counseling Services from your office to set up an initial appointment
 - Calling Counseling Services yourself to express your concern about a student and request advice on how to proceed
 - Accompanying a student to Counseling Services and advising a counselor about your concerns

Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT)

Mission Statement

The mission of the Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) is to coordinate the support services of Ramapo College of New Jersey (RCNJ) to assist students in achieving their academic pursuits and in promoting their health and well-being.

Purpose

The purpose of the Team is to serve as a central network focused on prevention and early intervention in college situations involving students experiencing serious distress or engaging in harmful or disruptive behaviors. The Team will develop strategies for and provide consultations to the college community when concerns arise about students' well-being or when there is behavior that is potentially harmful to self and/or others or is disruptive/ threatening. The team will take actions to prevent violence on campus and to mobilize resources to protect the community. This Team will regularly assess these situations in the college community and will recommend actions in accordance with existing college policies.

BIT Members

- Director, Judicial Affairs (Chair)
- Director, Residence Life
- Director, Office of Specialized Services
- Director, Center for Health and Counseling Services
- Director, Public Safety
- Dean, Social Sciences and Human Services

Some Reasons to Refer a Student to BIT:

- Disruptive in Class
- Exhibiting strange or unusual behaviors that induce fear
- Shows verbal or physical aggression
- Violent ideation (direct or indirect)
- Bizarre or alarming sentiments in student's writing or class work
- Inappropriate interests

How to Refer a Student to BIT

- Call or email the Chair of BIT and provide a report
- Complete a Student of Concern Report located on BIT Website:
<http://www.ramapo.edu/studentlife/bit/index.html>
- **If you feel the student or other students are in immediate danger, please contact the Department of Public Safety at X6666.**

Process & Potential Dispositions/Outcomes

BIT will review the information provided, may interview person expressing concern to gather information, and will connect the dots among the team members. The Team will consider specific issues including the assessment of potential violence, evidence of mental illness as the possible cause of the harmful behavior, containment of disruption, examination of environmental causes, and appropriate referral resources.

Outcomes:

- No action recommended at this time, pending further observation
- Assist faculty or staff in developing a plan of action
- Referral to existing on-campus support resources (e.g., Center for Health and Counseling Services, Public Safety, Judicial Affairs, Office of Specialized Services)

Dispositions/Outcomes cont'd

- Referral to appropriate community resources
- Recommendation of parental notification
- Recommendation of a voluntary Medical Leave of Absence (MLOA)
- Recommendation of an Involuntary Leave of Absence
- Recommendation of an Interim Suspension
- Chair may discuss situations with faculty members

Resources at Ramapo



- **Counseling Services: Director, Dr. Judy Green**
 - * Located in Room D-216
 - * Main Number 201-684-7522
 - * Hours: M – F 8:30am – 4:30pm
 - After hours: Contact Public Safety at 201-684-6666
 - and ask for EOCC (24/7, 365 days)

- **Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT)**

Resources continued

Office of Specialized Services (OSS): Director, Nancy Carr

* Located in Room C-205

*Main Number 201-684-7513

Offers academic support for students with documented physical, sensory, learning, or psychological disabilities.

Services include:

- Academic advisement & counseling
- Peer tutoring
- Professional tutoring - writing and mathematics
- Computer instruction
- Independent living counseling
- Career development counseling
- Graduate school counseling
- Financial aid counseling

- Active Minds is a student organization at Ramapo College which focuses on raising awareness about mental health among college students through peer-to-peer contact.

Summary: Key Points

- Prevention is a community effort. Remember, we cannot “Connect the dots” without your participation.
- Approaches to dealing with such complex situations requires knowledge, skill, resources and relationships
- Addressing the risk of dangerousness related to mental health problems requires balancing the privacy and dignity of the student with the safety and security of others in the campus environment
- We cannot prevent all acts of violence. However, through our combined efforts, we can avoid *some* potential tragedies.