

ANUx - SP | Introduction_to_the_ANU_Counseling_Centre

Hello, my name's Carolyn Farrar, and I have a wonderful job at ANU as the head of the Health and Counseling Center. I'd like to share with you some of the work my staff do with ANU students and the services that are offered at the ANU Counseling Center.

The staff at ANU Counseling Center are all qualified psychologists or mental health social workers. They all specialize in youth mental health in the tertiary education sector. They are very skilled at supporting students who are managing mental illness, or who are experiencing high distress, or any issues that are affecting their study or personal well-being.

The counselors also have additional individual specializations and areas of interest ranging from trauma, sexual assault, acute mental illness, refugees, LGBTIQ counseling, and domestic violence support-- just to mention a few areas. Have a look at the Counseling Center website for more information about the individual counselors.

The Counseling Center is a free and confidential service for all ANU students. You can talk to a counselor about any difficulty or concern that's affecting your studies or your personal well-being. You don't need to have a diagnosis to access the service. We do support students managing a diagnosed mental illness, and we do encourage them to make contact with the center so that we can support them while they achieve their academic and personal goals.

But also remember that this service is free to all currently enrolled students, and most students who attend our service do not meet a diagnostic criteria. By providing early intervention and support to students who are experiencing academic and personal difficulties, we help prevent the development of more serious mental health issues.

Remember, the counseling center is confidential. Australian laws about confidentiality means that the counselor cannot speak to anyone about your attendance at the center. The exception to this is if someone's safety is at risk. For more information about confidentiality, you can also visit our website.

I'm going to talk to you about some of the reasons students attend counseling. Many people come to the Counseling Center for assistance with managing their emotions. Students often attend when they're stressed and tense, worried or anxious. For others, they're homesick and they need strategies and skills to help them adjust to living away from home, or living in a foreign country, or adjusting to study at ANU. For others, the issues related to managing emotion include grief, and lack of confidence, and feeling anxious in social situations.

People also attend for issues related to academic work, including motivation-- or more likely, lack of motivation--

ability to concentrate, writing blocks, exam anxiety, speaking in tutorials, time management, and stress management. Others come to help sort through difficult decisions about their personal life or even about study. For others, it's support with communication-- so we work with them on social skills, and public speaking, and assertiveness skills, or dealing with conflict.

Another common issue is relationship concerns-- so couples, families, friends, relationships with supervisors, or a lack of relationships-- and very commonly, relationship breakups. We also work with students experiencing trauma from war, from experiencing a natural disaster, sexual assault, physical assault, domestic violence, or childhood abuse. And the other main area that people seek assistance for is sleep disturbance or health-related problems-- eating issues, substance abuse, and difficulties that arise from having a chronic disability.

The counselors also know the ACT mental health system very well and can support you to access specialist service if they are required. So what do the counselors actually do when you come to counseling? What are you going to get out of it?

So what you're going to get out of coming to counseling is get a better understanding of your concerns. You're going to be able to build skills in managing difficult emotions and experience. And this, in terms, builds your resilience so that next time you face a difficult situation, you're more likely to be able to cope with it. They help you find effective solutions to your problems.

We assist you to manage your mental health so that you can achieve educationally and get the most out of your time at ANU. Many people attend counseling at ANU for a single session-- however, we can offer up to six sessions per semester.

And in addition to individual counseling, we also offer a range of educational and therapy group programs. We also offer web resources and podcasts-- like this one-- that specifically address issues that can derail ANU student success. I'm just going to finish off by talking a little bit about some of the other programs we run. So we offer group programs in areas like motivation, exam anxiety-- we run an extensive Mindfulness at ANU program-- programs in managing mood.

A couple I'm going to talk to you about include the Get Up & Go program, which is a paired walking program. This is a program I highly recommend for your well-being because it gets you out exercising-- and I recommend if you're finding it difficult to meet people at ANU because we actually pair you up with someone.

Mindfulness at ANU-- there's a lot of research and evidence emerging how helpful mindfulness is, particularly in an academic environment. We run a weekly practice group for HDR students, and we run a four week introductory mindfulness program called Everyday Mindfulness.

Healthy Body, Healthy Mind is a five week program which I'd encourage you to attend for just general well-being. It introduces you to the Sports Center, so you get to try a range of different activities at the Sports Center for free, and we also run a session for you on nutrition and one on mindfulness. So it's an excellent five week program-- free for ANU students.

The other one that I would like to talk to you about is Social Success Group, which is a 10 week program that's focused on managing social anxiety-- and its running collaboration with the Research School of Psychology. Another collaboration we do with the Research School of Psychology is the Clinical Psychology Student Training Program. The ANU Counseling Center is also a training center, and it provides master's and PhD clinical students with a fully supervised counseling placement.

We offer a lot of programs and resources at the center, and we're always looking for suggestions. Please go and have a look at our website if you want any more information. You can also contact me by emailing the counseling [? dot ?] center or calling me on 6125-2442. That's 6125-2442. Thank you very much for listening, and I look forward to seeing you at the Counseling Center.