Managing your Mental Health Abroad

Thursday, April 21 at 7pm-8pm
Introductions

– Andrea Drake, Director of International Health, Safety, and Security, IPO
– SuEllen Hamkins, Assistant Director, Psychiatric Services, CCPH
– Nicholas Oo, UMass Senior majoring in History, studied in the Dominican Republic
– Ido Diamant, UMass Senior majoring in Biomedical Engineering, studied in Scotland
– Gabrielle (Brie) Little, UMass Alum in Mechanical Engineering, studied in Hong Kong
What we hear from students...

– Study abroad is a big transition, not dissimilar to first year on campus
– Change, unpredictability (especially in the COVID times)
  – New surroundings, new classes, new people, maybe a new language
– Top concerns are academics, fear of missing out (both on things abroad and at home)
– Social media can present specific challenges

– So, our question is, how can you be resilient in the face of change and transition?
Who is traveling abroad?

- 1 in 10 of our students self-report a mental health condition they are currently managing
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
  - ADD or ADHD
  - Eating Disorder
  - OCD
- It is more common than you think!
- And, these students are able to have incredibly successful experiences abroad!
How will you **manage** your mental health abroad?

Responses from students…what works for you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staying in touch with my <em>therapist</em></th>
<th>Remembering to <strong>breathe</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuing my medication</td>
<td>Practicing mindfulness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening to <em>music</em></td>
<td>Eating <em>healthy</em> foods</td>
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<td>Talking with friends or family</td>
<td>Praying</td>
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<td>Journaling</td>
<td>Managing my time wisely</td>
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<td><strong>Exercising</strong></td>
<td>Staying on track with school work</td>
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<td>Meditating</td>
<td>Talking to an advisor</td>
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<td>Taking long <em>walks</em></td>
<td><strong>Contacting</strong> a counselor</td>
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<td>Socializing</td>
<td>Staying in routine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Spending time <em>outside</em></td>
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</table>
Remember that sleep, hydration, good nutrition and exercise are especially helpful in managing travel and transitions.
We are here to support you!

• UMass Travels with you!
  • Contact UMass IPO anytime
  • Your **host program or university** can also connect you to resources

• We can help connect you to a **local English speaking therapist**

• **24/7 Remote Mental Health Counseling** Services (information to be shared soon)

• Before you go, check in with yourself: what do you need to feel well?
  • What helps you succeed at UMass, and how can you use those strategies abroad?
Resilience:

Persevering through adversity in the direction of your hopes and dreams

Making meaning and taking action
Family
Culture
Community
You already know a lot about resilience
Think of a time that you overcame a challenge
(for example, starting college or figuring out study abroad during a pandemic…)

- What was your goal at that time?
- What did you do that was helpful to you?
- Which connections and whose support was helpful?
Enter in the Chat:

What is your vision for your study abroad?
Study Abroad

– At least 20 ways it will be even better than you thought it would be
– At least 20 ways it will be even harder than you thought it would be
Study Abroad

– At least 20 ways it will be even better than you thought it would be
– At least 20 ways it will be even harder than you thought it would be

OBSTACLES and CHALLENGES
Supercharge Your Resiliency

1. Clarify your vision and intentions for your study abroad.
2. When a problem occurs, name it and face it.
   – Define the problem as an obstacle you are facing.
Supercharge Your Resiliency

3. Focus on what you can control: your intentions and actions. Don’t let what you can’t control distract you from taking care of yourself and taking effective action.
Supercharge Your Resiliency

- What is bringing you comfort or inspiration?
- What are your current hopes and intentions?
- What are you already doing that is helping you?
- Are these things linked to values you hold or commitments you have for your life?

Staying connected to MEANING AND PURPOSE is the secret to resilience.
Supercharge Your Resiliency

4. Determine your next steps.
   Just the very next steps!
   Connect with others and
   get the help you need to succeed.
Calming practices

Box breathing

Inhale 1-2-3-4

Hold 1-2

Exhale 1-2-3-4

Hold 1-2
Calming and energizing practices

Breath of Fire

Calming and energizing
Additional Mental Health Resources

– Before you go:
  – CCPH Workshops
    – Stress GPS Wednesday through Friday at 3 pm on zoom
  – Set up teletherapy with a community therapist
    – For before you go and while you are away
    – Check with your therapist about working with you while you are abroad
Stories from Returned Study Abroad Students

Nick’s Story...

- Growing through adversity and unfamiliar environments/situations
- Do what you would normally do....
  How to do you cope with stress and mental health at home? Netflix? Music?
  → DO THAT ABROAD TOO. Treat it no different.
- Do what feels right for you. Don’t feel like doing something? Then don’t.
- “There is no right or wrong way to do college.” → “There is no right or wrong way to do study abroad.” YOUR LIFE AND YOUR EXPERIENCE
Stories from Returned Study Abroad Students

Ido’s Story

Pre-Departure Preparation
- Talking with a therapist before going abroad
- Preparing medication

While Abroad
- establishing a support system/routine while abroad
Stories from Returned Study Abroad Students

Brie’s Story

Struggles with mental health won’t always appear where you expect them to and coping mechanisms will be varied.
Questions?

Contact me anytime: Andrea Drake andreadrake@umass.edu

Thank you for attending!