

Counseling Across the Pond

Episode Two: COVID and the Return to Campus

Overview

We are all acclimating to this situation as this all unfolds. Using data from Active Minds and the U.K. Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI), the Daves talk about what students are feeling and how to assist them as they return to campus.

Key Points:

- About 20 percent of student who are surveyed are seeing an increase in stress and anxiety during COVID. This has significantly worsened – 80% say that COVID has negatively impacted their mental health. Loneliness and isolation are the largest concerns.
- This is not an issue that effects just the students, but also helpers. Between Zoom fatigue and other challenges, we are feeling more and more overwhelmed. What do the counselors and helpers do for self-care? Maintaining a routine can be helpful, for both students and helpers.
- When looking at return to campus, how to do we help students know where to go to find resources? How do we help students reintegrate when they come back to campus? Can we have students talk to other students about self-help materials, what counseling is really like and how they can be aware of what is available to them? Are there opportunities to replace the activities that have been canceled? This will need to be a planned gearing up and not a snap of the fingers.
- Time: 29:05

Quotes:

“For the vast majority of students, everyone has gone online. Screen fatigue is definitely an issue. It has not helped that some students have all the latest gizmos and technology and incredible broadband speeds and for some students digital poverty is a real thing.” ~ Dave Wilson.

“There is a perception that students are digital natives, but not every student is.” ~ Dave Wilson

“Staring at a screen from 9-5 and then binge-watching Netflix or Amazon Prime is not doing people any good.” ~ Dave Wilson

“We also have to think about those students that already had some issues dealing with regular life circumstances. This impacted them even more severely.” ~ David Denino

“Stress, depression and anxiety are always the top numbers, it’s just that they have gotten bigger for us [under COVID]. One thing is the disappointment and sadness over so many losses. For example, not graduating, not being with friends, not doing athletics, not being in Greek Life, not doing programing...they haven’t had much of that. So, there is a void.” ~ David Denino

“One of the things that has been highlighted in the UK has been isolation, and the impact of isolation on mental health.” ~ Dave Wilson

“More than half of undergraduate students said that their mental health has been significantly impacted by COVID. The number one cause for students was reported as isolation.” ~ Dave Wilson

“In the Active Minds survey, 45% of students said they experienced a financial setback.” ~ David Denino

“We’ve seen in the U.K. distance learning and distance students are traveling up to an hour a day saving huge amounts of money on bus fare, trains and petrol.” ~ David Wilson

“Maintaining a routine is difficult as heck. When you get up in the morning, do you sleep later? Go to bed later? Do you eat as much? Combined with physical activity and trying to stay connected with others.” David Denino

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“When we went into the first lockdown, I was very naïve at first. I thought this will be over in a few weeks. I think a lot of us did, to be fair. I got a little bit lazy in the morning. When the dawning realization happened that this is going to be for a while yet, I decided to do something about that commuting time. Like many, I started to do a couch to 5K. And I’ve kept it up. And I feel better than I ever had. So, there are some silver linings to this COVID crisis, but just not for everyone, I appreciate.” ~ Dave Wilson

“The major way students say their parents can help support them during the COVID pandemic is spending more time together. Students are looking to spend more time with their family. And many of you have families and are working from home as well. So, this connectivity issue is very important.” ~ David Denino

“What do we do when we get that 80-90% back on campus? What practices and protocols will we have; how will we pivot back? There is going to be a startup period that is going to need to be gradual.” ~ David Denino

“The return to campus in the U.K. is still quite varied from what I am hearing on the group. Obviously, everyone is keeping an eye on what the government is sharing, but some universities are going to continue to offer a blended approach; for example, two days on and two days off. Still others will attempt to get others back onto campus more quickly. The return will depend hugely on the size of the campus, how many teaching spaces they have, how many students they have. It will not be one size fits all.” ~ Dave Wilson

Resources:

Active Minds: Covid-19 Impact on College Student Mental Health

<https://www.activeminds.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Student-Survey-Infographic.pdf>

Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI)

https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/HEPI-Policy-Note-29-Students-views-on-the-impact-of-Coronavirus-on-their-higher-education-experience-in-2021-26_03_21.pdf

Association of University College and Counseling Center Directors

www.aucccd.org

Student Minds

<https://www.studentminds.org.uk/coronavirus.html>

American College Counseling Services

www.collegecounseling.org

British Association for Counseling and Psychotherapy: University and College Division (BACP-UCD)

<https://www.bacp.co.uk/bacp-divisions/bacpuc/>

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Dave Wilson is the mental health and wellbeing manager at a university in the United Kingdom, where he leads a multidisciplinary team of counsellors, psychotherapists, and mental health practitioners.