Running a Counselling Centre at an International University in Thailand

Dr. Amonneeta Beckstein
Counseling Center Director/
Psychology Faculty
Selamat Pagi

32 indigenous groups of Sabah
Dr. Dennis/PsycReg
UMS/organizers/staff/faculty/students
Presenters
Attendees

Terima kasih

To each and every one of you
Overview

▷ General state of university counseling in Southeast Asia/Thailand
▷ Intro to Webster University Thailand
  ○ Counseling Center
▷ Promotion & services provided
  ○ Barriers to services
▷ Building protocols
▷ Student-staff training
▷ Outreach & Prevention
▷ MH advocacy & collaboration
▷ Ethics
▷ Multicultural competencies
▷ Challenges/rewards
▷ Best practices
▷ Future directions
University Counseling In Southeast Asia
Culturally appropriate?

▷ “the cultural norms, values, and practices of Asians are generally unknown” [by counselors] “posing a significant challenge in diagnosis and treatment of mental health problems” (Haque, 2010)

▷ WEIRD research/practices
HUGE NEED

Violence, depression, anxiety, suicide, bullying, substance use/deaths on the rise among youth  
(Harris, 2014)
DIRE NEED for

- Awareness
- Trained professionals
- Empirical research and services
- Access to services
GENERAL LACK OF

- Resources
- # of practitioners
- Access
- Formalization
- Openness
- Consistency on training, education, licensure
- Info/research
LACK OF RESEARCH

- Almost nothing about college counseling in SE Asia
- Some about SE Asians in America
- School counseling provided from Primary to Secondary in 7/15 countries in SE Asia
  - Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, Japan, Macau, Taiwan, Malaysia
  - Equivalent or better than much the rest of the world so can be leaders (Harris, 2014)
Psychologists & Counselors

▷ Trained in Western models
  ○ Thailand: US Training models since 1964 (Page et al., 1994)

▷ Limited transferability to Asian context

▷ Need to “indigenize”/“internationalize”, share knowledge, make locally appropriate (Duan et al., 2011)

▷ Commitment/investment by govts to school-based counseling (Harris, 2014)

▷ Some research outlets:
  ○ PsycReg Journal of Psychology
  ○ The Southeast Asia Psychology Journal
  ○ Journal of Asia Pacific Counseling (Korean Counseling Association)
University Counseling
In Thailand
Relatively new field
Increasing # of major problems for Thai college students

- Abuse
- Health-related
- Weight or body image
- STD’s and sexual issues
- Addictions/Substance use
- Stress, anxiety, depression
- Suicidal ideation
- Family/academic pressures  (Ratanasiripong & Rodriguez, 2011; Sarma et al, 2012)
- All affects retention and academics
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

▷ Lack of research/best practices
▷ Stigma
▷ Shame
▷ Stifling emotions
▷ Family/Temple for support
▷ Displacement/urbanization
▷ Economic dev. (social comparison)
▷ Lack of awareness/utilization of services (Ratanasiripong & Rodriguez, 2011)
AVAILABLE RESOURCES

▷ Hotlines: 1323 & Samaritans
▷ General doctors
▷ Psychiatrists
▷ Community mental health centers
▷ Expensive private counselors
▷ Need licensure/promotion to public to gain acceptance (Sangganjanavanich & Nolrajsuwat, 2015)
▷ Most colleges provide academic advising
▷ Select few provide MH services (Ratanasiripong & Rodriguez, 2011)
School counseling in Thailand

- Not mandatory, but gov’t committed
- “…governmental support for school-based counseling is driven by concerns for young people’s career choices and employment prospects”
  
  (Harris, 2014, p. 11)

- Most students unaware
- “High” counselor/student ratios (1:500) despite no mandate

- BA degree required

  (Tangdhanakanond & Lee, 2013)
Thai students expect relatives and school personnel to provide support typical of counselors’ roles (Tangdhanakanond & Lee, 2013)

Expect counselor to be authoritarian & provide advice (Page et al., 1994)
Webster University Thailand (WUT)
WUT Students

- ~200 at each campus
- ~90% international
- About 50 different countries
  - Mostly SE Asia...
  - Africa, America, Europe
- BA & Masters
WUT Counseling Center

From completely empty offices to...
Promotion
Counseling Center

Webster University Thailand is committed to supporting the emotional and psychological well-being of all members of the Webster family to be successful in their personal, professional, and academic lives. Anyone who needs a free, private, and confidential space to talk through their concerns can do so in a safe and comfortable environment.

The Counseling Center is headed by Dr. Amoneeta Beckstein, a Licensed Professional Counselor from the U.S.A. who specializes in college student well-being and adjustment. Amoneeta is experienced in providing college students, faculty, and staff culturally sensitive services. For any number of common challenges (e.g., life adjustment, time management, stress, self-esteem, identity development, interpersonal relationship concerns, discrimination, career decision, academic distress, anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and sexual assault), he recognizes that everyone may face some barriers to optimal functioning at any point in their lives.

If you feel that you are struggling in some way, even if you are not sure why, consider making an appointment:

- Visit the Counseling Center, Room 231 at Cha-am Campus or Room 4024 (4th Floor) at Bangkok Center.
ABOUT THE COUNSELOR

Dr. Amoneeta Beckstein
Office: Room 231,
Cha-am Campus OR
4th Floor, Bangkok Center

To schedule appointments, please visit the Counseling Center,
email: counselor@webster.ac.th,
or call +66 (0) 32-899-100 (Ext. 9707)

Amoneeta’s edoda (father) is Aniyunwiya (Cherokee) and his ima (mother) is Israeli. He received his BA in Psychology with minors in East Asian Civilization and Creative Writing from Southern Illinois University. He went on to complete a PhD degree in Counseling Psychology at Arizona State University. He has over 10 years of experience in various facets of psychology including mental health and crisis counseling, teaching, and research.

Amoneeta draws mostly from multicultural and positive psychology theories to provide emotion-focused, narrative therapy. His therapy is strength-based and holistic and takes into account multiple intersecting identities to try to increase subjective happiness.

Visit our Website
For updated hours & more information, visit the Counseling Center webpage on our website
www.webster.ac.th

Walk-ins are welcome (when available)
Scheduling prior appointments is highly encouraged
ABOUT THE COUNSELING CENTER

The Webster University Thailand Counseling Center helps individuals enhance their strengths and develop abilities to successfully live, grow, learn, and flourish in their personal and academic lives. We offer many free services to all members of the Webster family; these include brief individual, couples, and group counseling, consultation, assistance with referrals, and more. The Counseling Center also provides outreach education programs to student groups, faculty, and staff; particularly programs that promote positive personal development and support an inclusive and safe Webster community.

Students, faculty, administrators, staff, and parents are all encouraged to contact the Counseling Center to discuss individuals in need of assistance or to address other matters relating to mental health. The Counseling Center is headed by a Licensed Professional Counselor experienced in providing college students, faculty, and staff culturally sensitive services. For any number of common challenges (e.g., life adjustment, identity development, interpersonal relationship concerns, discrimination, career decision, academic distress, anxiety, depression, anger, suicidal ideation, and sexual assault, etc.), the Counselor recognizes that everyone may face some barriers to optimal functioning at any point in their lives.

ABOUT THE COUNSELING CENTER

The Counseling Center is designed as a short-term care and crisis response center and, therefore, is unable to provide care for individuals needing long-term or more open-ended services. In addition, certain specialized services are not available. We recognize that, on occasion, an individual may require longer term or a more specialized type of care. The Counselor can assist in identifying providers for these specialized requirements.

EMAIL POLICY

We want you to understand that we welcome your contact; however, e-mail is not the best way to provide services. Most importantly, we cannot guarantee confidentiality with e-mail. Since we are not always in our offices during vacation time or after-hours, we cannot guarantee a timely response.

If you have an urgent concern or question, you can contact the Student Affairs Office on weekdays or Resident Assistants after-hours and on weekends at:

061 632-5143 or 061 632-5173 (CHA-AM)
099 890-6077 (BKK)

ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

Webster University Thailand takes student privacy very seriously and is committed to ensuring the confidentiality of the client-counselor relationship. Professional ethics also require that information revealed in counseling, even the fact that you have made an appointment, is not disclosed to others without your written authorization to release that information. The exceptions to this practice are:

1. When a counselor believes the client presents an imminent danger to themselves or others.
2. When a counselor believes the life or safety of a readily identifiable third person is endangered.
3. When a counselor believes that a child or vulnerable adult is being subjected to abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
4. When disclosure is made necessary by legal proceedings.

To provide effective services, sometimes the University Counselor might consult with faculty, staff, or other health care professionals in order to provide the best possible support. At all times, however, the Counselor maintains a commitment to privacy and confidentiality.
FREE Culturally Sensitive Services provided

- Individual counseling for students, faculty, & staff
- Psychoeducation workshops
- Consultation for faculty, staff, departments
- Group counseling for students
- Outreach to university and community
- MH Emergency Response/follow up
Barriers to services

▷ Stigma
▷ Fear someone from own culture will see
▷ Very small community effect
▷ Experience with unprofessional previous counselors
▷ Limited availability
▷ Only 1 counselor option
Individual therapy:
Typical presenting concerns

- life adjustment/culture shock
- time management
- stress
- self-esteem
- identity development
- interpersonal relationship concerns
- discrimination
- career decision
- academic distress
- anxiety, depression
- suicidal ideation
- sexual assault
- existential issues
- *positive personal development/optimal functioning*
My therapy approach

▷ multicultural/positive psychology theories
▷ provide emotion-focused, narrative therapy
▷ strength-based and holistic
▷ take into account multiple intersecting identities to try to increase subjective happiness
Webster University Thailand Counseling Center Intake Form

(Please fill out as much as you feel comfortable completing. Put N/A if question does not apply)

Name: ____________________________ Age: __________ Today’s Date: _______________

Providing contact info means you agree to be contacted (mostly used for scheduling purposes)

Phone number: __________________________ Email: __________________________

Emergency contact: __________________________

Year at Webster: __________ Major(s)/Subject(s) taught: __________________________

Partnership status: __________ Disability status: __________________________

Religious/Spirituality status: __________________________

$ Current Socio-Economic Status (SES): __________________________ SES growing up: __________________________

Sexual Orientation: __________________________ Gender Identity: __________________________

Ethnicity(ies): __________________________ Country(ies) of Origin: __________________________

Where do you live? __________________________ With whom? __________________________

How often do you drink alcohol? __________________________ How many drinks? __________

How often do you take drugs? __________________________ How much? __________________________

Current Medications: __________________________

Current medical concerns: __________________________

Are you currently thinking about hurting yourself? __________________________ Another person? __________________________

Abuse/Harassment/Assault/Trauma Experiences: __________________________

Reason(s) for seeking help: __________________________

How is it affecting your academics/work? __________________________

Previous experiences with counseling: __________________________

I give consent to the Counseling Center to provide counseling services and acknowledge that the information on this form is accurate.

Signature: __________________________ Student ID# __________________________
Psychosocial Assessment

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Presentation/About/Reason:

Current living/financial situations:

Academics/functioning/concentration

Treatment/Psychological History:

Screening of current and lifetime diagnosis of the following:

- Anxiety
- Eating/exercise/self-care habits/sleep/hobbies:

- OCD:
- Dysthymic Disorder/ MDD/Mania

Gambling/Sexual addictions/concerns/alcohol/drugs:

Delusions/Hallucinations: Medications:

At Risk/HI/SI/SIB/Anger/Violence:
Abuse/neglect/trauma history:

Legal history:
Living in the family growing up/Family History MI/SU:/current relationships

Personal/Development History:

Relationships/social support/detractors:

Education and work:

Religious/cultural beliefs and background:

Strengths:
Like:
Weaknesses:
Dislike:
3 goals to work on:

Anything else?
Psychoeducation workshops

Now part of Webster 101 course
Gorlok Culture Shock!

- Embrace your multicultural, global identities
- Learn critical skills for coping with the stress of college culture shock/reverse culture shock
- Explore healthy adjustment

All students, faculty, and staff welcome

*New students required to attend*
Gorloks STEP UP & SPEAK OUT!

- Gorloks have each others’ backs
- Gain global leadership skills
- Explore how to make a difference by speaking up and taking action in critical moments

All students, faculty, and staff welcome

* New students required to attend *
Is anything stopping you from being happy?

Happiness Group

ALL STUDENTS WELCOME

A positive, **safe & confidential** meeting

Every Wednesday
2:30 – 3:40 pm
Come once or weekly

@ the Counseling Center, Room 231

WALK-IN’s WELCOME
MH advocacy & collaboration

- Advocating MH needs to admin and different departments
  - Attending events/meetings
  - Requesting meetings

- Psychoeducation about MH, counseling, referral process

- Empowering professors & staff to support & know when to refer (& receive their own counseling)

- Building allies in departments

- Promoting inclusive/safe community
On Campus Outreach

Orientation/normalization of counseling

▷ New Student Orientations
▷ University events
▷ Volunteering
▷ Staff/Faculty meetings
▷ Collaboration with Student Government, Student Affairs, Admin
Community service outreach

- Stress management workshop
- General therapy group for ex-pats
- Training Counseling PSYC grad students @ Assumption University
  - Competent Multicultural Counseling Assessment
Mental health emergencies

No system in place when I arrived
What to DO in a Mental Health Crisis

Are you or someone you know

PLANNING TO

KILL YOURSELF

or someone else?

Yes

Please seek help
IMMEDIATELY

If available, visit the Counseling Center, Rm. 231 (Cha-am), Rm. 4024 (BKK)

Webster RAs’ #s (Available 24/7):
+66 (0) 61-632-5173 or +66 (0) 61-632-5143 (Cha-am)
+66 (0) 99-890-6077 (Bangkok)

Mental Health Crisis #s:
English (24/7) +66 (0) 2-713-6791 or +1-800-273 TALK (8255)
Thai (24/7) 1323 or (12.00 – 22.00) +66 (0) 2-713-6793

Emergency #s:
191: General Emergency / 1669: Medical Emergency
1155: Tourist Police

Not yet

Consider making an appointment with the Counselor ASAP

Call +66 (0) 32-899-100, ext. 9707
Email: counselor@webster.ac.th

Webster University Thailand
Complete Safety Plan with client

- Warning signs
- What in life is worth living for?
- Personal coping skills
- Places & people to distract
- People can contact for help
- RAs, hospitals, 191
- Taking care of lethal items
- Commitment to plan and staying safe
Resident assistant (RA) training

▷ Basic counseling skills
▷ Role playing scenarios
▷ MH emergencies
  ○ Recognizing
  ○ Protocols
  ○ Provided with phones to answer 24/7
▷ Ongoing support/check-ins
  ○ Vicarious trauma
WUT Emergency Protocol for Cha-Am RAs (Confidential)

1st: Ensure your own safety! Do NOT put yourself at risk.

Assess the situation

Is it a real emergency (Life in Danger)?

Yes  No

Call Emergency Numbers  Medical/Other: Call* Student Affairs
191 General Emergency  Suhasha, Abhilasha, or Naamtan
1669 Medical Emergency  Mental Health: Call Counselor & then Student Affairs
1155 Tourist Police  Amoneeta

Then, inform Student Affairs Staff and Counselor as appropriate

Feel free to call Student Affairs Staff or Counselor (as appropriate) if you are not sure what to do or if you need to debrief after a crisis.

* Please note that all phone numbers are programed into your university issued RA phone

If no one available, call Phil
Internship

- Need @ BKK Campus
- Document need
- Advocate for need with Admin
- Hire intern (Grad @ Assumption)
  - Provides more walk-in times
  - Conducts intake assessments
  - Sees less severe cases
  - Help with workshops
ETHICS: General

▷ Dual roles
  ○ Various expectations
  ○ Small community

▷ Self-care/Turning “off” after work

▷ Practicing within competencies / referring vs. providing minimal care

▷ Psychologists consult (APA code of ethics)
  ○ Lack of colleagues
ETHICS: Multicultural Competencies

- Super critical
- “Psychologists strive to apply culturally-appropriate skills” (APA 2002).
- Every client comes from vastly different contexts
- Multicultural assessment
- Continuous awareness of self and client as cultural beings
- Power/privilege/imposing Western psychology values
Challenges

▷ Lack of understanding about therapy
  ○ Glass office
  ○ Need for self-care for competence

▷ Confidentiality

▷ Licensure/CEU

▷ Boundaries/personal-work life balance

▷ Recognition
  ○ Psychologist vs. Counselor
Rewards

▷ Having big impact
▷ Respect
▷ Involved in many things (never boring)
▷ Client growth over long-term
▷ Graduation
Best practices

▷ Relationship over protocol
▷ Being open-minded & flexible
  ○ Except with ethics & professionalism
▷ Infusing multicultural competencies
▷ Every action/word can be an intervention
▷ Allow mistakes/humaness
Future directions

▷ Western counseling can be integrated/adapted to local practices
  ○ (i.e., Buddhist counseling in Thailand; counseling & traditional Native healing) (Sharp, et al, 2015; Tuicomepee et al., 2012).

▷ Longitudinal/qualitative studies examining indigenous psychologies/counseling

▷ Advocating evidence of what works to those who have power to increase services

▷ Research/Raising awareness to decrease stigma

▷ Counselor support groups
Terima Kasih!
Any questions?
You can find me at:
counselor@webster.ac.th
References


Amber Haque (2010) Mental health concepts in Southeast Asia: Diagnostic considerations and treatment implications, Psychology, Health & Medicine, 15:2, 127-134, DOI: 10.1080/13548501003615266


http://www.webster.ac.th/currentstudents/counselingforstudents.html