

# Adjustment Disorders

## Depression and Anxiety

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# What is an adjustment disorder

- A reaction to a temporary, identifiable stressor
- Although temporary, the reaction often takes the form of a depressive or anxiety disorder.

# Depression

- Sleep disorder: waking at 3 or 4
- Eating disorder: no appetite
- Anhedonia
- Sadness, helplessness, guilt
- Social withdrawal
- Blocked future
- Something terrible out there and it's my fault and I can't deal with it

# Anxiety

- Sleep disorder: trouble falling asleep
- Hyper arousal: tension, dizziness, aches and pains
- Worry: school, the future, Will I be able to..., What if...
- Avoidance: school, social gatherings
- Something bad is going to happen and I have to be ready

# Triggers and Shock Absorbers

- Stress: change, loss, challenges, drugs and alcohol
- The group, support from family and institution, commitment to the program, to learning, sports, making new friends

# Risk Factors

- Previous episodes
- Drug abuse
- Trauma
- Cognitive Style: pessimism, unattainable goals, overblown expectations
- Lifestyle : alcohol, drugs, lack of sleep
- Lack of coping skills: no previous stress inoculation

# What to do

- Promote healthy life style:
- diet
- sports
- sleep
- getting out: interacting with family and students in and outside the program
- help students talk about problems

- Identify healthy and not so healthy students early on:
- Medical questionnaires
- In group behavior
- Feedback from students
- Feedback from families



- Be proactive:
- Once identified:
  - -Have students come by regularly
  - - Don't wait for the student to seek help
  - - Get info from other students
  - - Promote health lifestyles

# Interview techniques

- Normalize and validate feelings
- Focus on coping: emotional coping and problem solving
- Socratic dialogue: How does that make you feel, What might you do to...
- Don't reinforce helplessness
- Ask about feelings including suicidal ideation

# When to refer and how

- Student requests
- You or others think it is time
- Suicide risk
  
- Be forthright:
- You are concerned
- You have a legal and moral obligation

# To Whom

- Be sure to have a list of therapists and their specialties
- Have directions to their offices ready
- Have a network of psychiatrists as well, including psychiatric emergency centers.

# Food for thought

- How much information should directors have about students' psychological history before coming abroad?
- How can directors interface with therapists?
- How can we be sure that students are getting the help they need?
- How are our attitudes and behaviors blocking students from seeking help?