Forum on Education Abroad – Boston conference (March 2018)

Session: Practical Risk Management: Dealing with Emotional & Mental Health Abroad
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www.isdsi.org/risk

EFA or Emotional First Aid

- **80-20 Rule**: Student does 80% of the talking, listener 20%
- **BIG CAT – a 5-step process of Active Listening**
  1. **Build rapport** (with student) Key phrase: “Tell me more.”
  2. **Identify problems**. Ask questions, rephrase, express empathy (not sympathy)
  3. **Generate alternatives**
  4. **Create an Action plan**
  5. **Transition & follow-up (may include referral)**

**DON’T** … make judgments or jump to conclusions; ask students to defend what they are feeling; argue; lecture; give advice.

**EFA Goals:**
- **E** = Equilibrium. Student begins to return to a more calm, relaxed state.
- **F** = Functioning. Day-to-day behavior and habits begin to become more healthy.
- **A** = Action. Student has a “game plan” to change behavior. Check-ins with staff, face-to-face.

**Mental Health Pyramid**

- **Level 1** = low risk of physical harm; rapid onset
  Ex: panic attack, homesickness, family or relationship issues, mood issues, grief reactions, bullying.
  Actions recommended: Use EFA (80-20 rule, BIG CAT, action plan); Report to supervisors.
  If unaddressed, can escalate to level 2.

- **Level 2** = moderate risk; chronic; negatively affects daily functioning
  Ex: disordered eating, abuse or trauma history, substance abuse, self-injury, chronic depression/anxiety
  Actions recommended: Use EFA (80-20 rule, BIG CAT, action plan); Report to supervisors ASAP.

- **Level 3** = high risk; rapid onset; seek professional help
  Ex: sexual assault, suicidal attempt or thoughts, eating disorders, irrational behavior, physical violence
  Actions: EFA; Report immediately to supervisors; Don’t leave the student alone!

Summary by Monique Fecteau