

Mental health resources, or:

**How dedicating your life to the hell-bent pursuit of a difficult career with an uncertain future while surrounded by people who seem perpetually smarter/harder working/more capable than you in a town far from home where you sometimes feel like you might be squandering your youth for some nebulous and vaguely noble goal like “science” can sometimes give you the blues.**

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Grad school tends to be one of the more trying times in many people’s lives. We are embarking on a difficult and sometimes nebulous task that often requires our total attention. Meanwhile, the rest of our lives (family, relationships, financial stress) still go on while we are trying to achieve this difficult goal. This can cause mental health struggles to arise. The number one thing to recognize as you embark on this journey is that **YOU ARE NOT ALONE**. You are never alone in these struggles, no matter how much it might feel like it is you against the world, or you against yourself. Every thought you’ve had, someone else has had.

Grad students (and post-docs and even faculty) often report experiencing the “imposter syndrome”, which is the unshakable sense that you are not really good enough to be here and are one hard look away from being discovered as a fraud....

Everyone has this feeling sometimes. Maybe even most of the time. Again, you are not alone and it is ok to talk about it. Often in academic environments, overworking, suffering and struggling are worn as a sort of legitimizing badge of honor. How often have you heard (or use) a bragging tone to describe how many hours you’ve worked, or how many all-nighters you’ve spent in the lab? While it may be true that you’ve sometimes spent 36 hours collecting data in some insane spree, promoting the idea (implicitly or explicitly) that this is a normal or desirable work condition contributes to the culture of the imposter syndrome. We all have to do extraordinary things sometimes. But these things are, and should remain, extraordinary. Grad school is a long game. Everyone has to find the pace and schedule that they can make progress at *sustainably*. When you look around and think you see everyone working harder than you, spending longer hours than you or achieving things that seem superhuman to you, stop to consider the fact that you are only privy to the part of their life that they show you. Some people may be better at looking superhuman than others, but everyone is ultimately human. Again, the more you talk about it, the easier it is to have a realistic sense of what other people are doing.

Below is a list of resources to draw from when you need them. These resources will assist you in building your mental health toolbox. You should know that many of us –if not most of us, have used these resources at one time or another to assist us with the myriad of struggles that come up in graduate school and life.

While utilizing any mental health resources, keep in mind that each of us have unique personal and academic backgrounds. This means our mental health journeys are going to be variable from one another; one resource that works perfect for some of us might not work for all of us. That’s okay, it might take some time, but you **WILL** find what works for you.

Please remember: **you are surrounded by people who are also likely to be experiencing these kinds of feelings**. It is ok to talk about these feelings. It is *good* to talk about them. When you

start talking about your own experiences, you will find LOTS of other people who have dealt with/ are dealing with similar issues and feelings.

A last, most important word:

Everyone in this department knows that your mental health and wellness is the most important thing, even if they sometimes do things that contribute to undermining it.

**Your mental health and wellness is the most important thing.** Above academic achievement. Above progressing in the program. Above your advisor's self interest. If you are not getting the support that you need from the people around you, FIND DIFFERENT PEOPLE. Have different friends for different needs (e.g. a friend to go to the movies and sit in silence with versus a friend to go on a hike with a discuss every feeling of imposter syndrome you had that day). Whether they be within the department or outside the department, there are people in our community who will support you. Talk to your fellow students. Talk to your advisor. Talk to your committee members. Talk to your therapist. Talk to your hiking buddy. Talk to me. Talk early and talk often. Be proactive. And don't forget to ask your friends how they are doing. We are all in this together.

FSU Resources:

The University Counseling Center (UCC) on campus <http://counseling.fsu.edu/>

250 Askew Student Life Building (same building as the movie theater)

942 Learning Way

Tallahassee, FL 32306-4175

**P: (850) 644-TALK (for appointment)**

**Walk in available M-F 8:00am -4pm**

- The University counseling center (UCC) offers:
  - Free Alcohol and Substance Abuse counseling
    - Individual Counseling
    - Group Counseling
    - Connection with external services
  - Free Eating Disorder Treatment services
  - Free Couples Counseling
  - Free individual and Group Therapy

They can help with anything, but here is a list of topics to inspire you:

- **Alcohol/Drugs**
- **Anger**
- **Anxiety**
- **Assertiveness**
- **Depression**
- **Discrimination**
- **Eating Disorders**
- **Family**
- **Grief**
- **Relationships**
- **Self-Esteem**
- **Sexual Abuse**
- **Sexual Assault/Date Rape**
- **Sexual Orientation**
- **Sexuality**
- **Social Isolation**
- **Stress**
- **Study Skills/Test Anxiety**
- **Suicidal Thoughts**
- **Time Management**

If you need something they don't offer specifically, they can help you find the right services in town and usually help you set up an appointment

BetterHelp through FSU Health Insurance: <https://www.betterhelp.com/united/>

As part of your 2019-2020 UnitedHealthcare Student Resources health plan you have FREE access to an amazing product that provides a convenient way for you to speak to a licensed counselor. You may access this product throughout your coverage period at: <http://www.counseling4students.com/>.

**Need a counselor? BetterHelp** connects you with online professional counselors with whom you can establish an ongoing relationship to assist you when facing life's challenges. Trusted advice, guidance, and counseling for depression, anxiety, relationships, self-esteem, stress, grief, eating disorders and more – all from a licensed therapist. Get help at your own time and at your own pace. Communicate with your therapist as often as you want and whenever you feel it's needed via text, talk, phone and video. This service is part of your student benefit package and costs you nothing out of pocket (usually valued at \$180/month).