

COUNSELING &  
STUDENT SUCCESS  
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# Counseling Corner

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## Suicide Prevention on Campus

### MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Mental Health First Aid is an 8-hour public education course that teaches you how to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. Like CPR, Mental Health First Aid prepares participants to interact with a person in crisis and connect the person with help. First Aiders do not take on the role of professionals – they do not diagnose or provide any counseling or therapy. Instead, the program offers concrete tools and answers key questions, like “what do I do?” and “where can someone find help?” All trainees receive a program manual to compliment the course material and become certified Mental Health First Aiders upon completion. The course uses role-playing and simulations to demonstrate how to offer initial help in a mental health crisis and connect persons to the appropriate professional, peer, social, and self-help care. The program also addresses common risk factors and warning signs of specific types of illnesses like anxiety, depression, substance use, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, and schizophrenia.

**Learn the skills to respond confidently to mental health crises: Interested? Please call (973) 328-5140.**

The “Madison Holleran Suicide Prevention Act”, signed by Gov. Chris Christie on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, was inspired by a New Jersey resident who took her own life on January 2014. The new law requires all New Jersey institutions of higher learning to have mental health professionals available to students 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Madison Holleran was a 19 year old student at the University of Pennsylvania who committed suicide by jumping off the ninth level of a parking garage in downtown Philadelphia. On the surface Madison seemed to be a talented, successful, and happy college freshman and star athlete. Behind the scenes, the track star was struggling with transitioning to college, perfectionism, anxiety, and depression. Madison started seeing a therapist during the Thanksgiving break and throughout the winter break but did not follow through with therapy once the spring semester started. In hindsight, family, friends, and others who knew Madison agreed that she was depressed but put a great effort into hiding her depression publicly.

According to the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, every year more than 40,000 Americans die by suicide. Among college students, suicide is the second leading cause of death. Certain factors put individuals more at risk for suicide including psychiatric illness, substance abuse, loneliness, perfectionist attitude, trauma, domestic abuse, with the biggest factor being depression. While depression doesn't necessarily determine a suicide attempt, it can be used to help identify someone who may be at-risk and vulnerable to suicide. It is especially important for faculty and staff to be aware of what to do if faced with a suicidal student. Here are some considerations taken from Suicide.org:

- **Always take suicidal comments very seriously.** Someone who says that he/she is thinking about suicide must always be taken seriously. Assuming that the person is only seeking attention is a potentially disastrous error. Do not minimize the person's distress.
- **Let the person know that you are deeply concerned.** Tell the person that you are concerned. A suicidal person is highly vulnerable and needs to feel that concern. Stay calm and do not act shocked.
- **Talk openly about suicide.** It's a myth that talking about suicide puts the idea in your head. Research shows that asking someone if they are thinking of suicide can save a life.
- **Do not leave a suicidal person alone.** Do not leave a suicidal person alone for even a second. Only after you get professional help for the person can you consider leaving. You cannot leave the person until they have been connected to a mental health professional.
- **Be careful of the statements that you make. Don't be judgmental.** Do not invalidate anything that the person says or feels or react with shock or disdain. Be supportive, caring, empathetic, and non-judgmental. Keep in check your own values, beliefs, and ideas about suicide.
- **Listen.** Allow the person to talk as much as he/she wants. Always listen very attentively, and encourage him or her to talk more. Be as gentle, kind, and understanding as possible.
- **Let the person express emotion in the way that she/he wants.** Allow the person to cry, yell, swear, and do what is necessary to release the emotion, but do not allow the person to become violent or harm himself/herself.
- **You cannot agree to keep a person's suicidal intentions a secret.** Under no circumstances can you keep a "secret" that could cause someone's death. Remind her/him that you care and therefore cannot keep a secret. It's the only ethical choice.
- **You need to call 911 or your local emergency number immediately for anyone who is at a high risk for suicide.** The more planning that someone has put into a suicide, the greater the risk. If the person has a method and a time in mind, the risk is extremely high and you must immediately call 911 and ensure that professional treatment is given.

- If you have concerns about a student, or would like more information on suicide prevention, Please contact the Office of Counseling & Student Success.

## Do You Know FOCUS 2?



### What's on Your Playlist?

Music has the ability to quickly shift our mood by affecting us on a subconscious level. Have you ever heard a song and were immediately transported back in time and space? Here are ways you can use music in your daily routine to help manage stress and create more joy in your life:

#### Rise with Music

Instead of turning on the morning news consider adding music to your morning routine. A positive morning music ritual is a sure way to start your day off in a better mood.

#### Commute with Music

Getting stressed over traffic doesn't make the traffic move faster. Instead of using the commute time to catch up on the news or phone calls, practice shifting your mood through listening to music.

#### Work with Music

Work environments are often quite stressful. The right background music can help you work through routine tasks in a better mood, and listening to inspiring music on breaks can help us recharge our own systems.

#### Sing with Music

Singing is one of the best ways to shift the vibrations and cells in our body, helping slow and regulate breathing and promote relaxation. pick songs you know will put you in a better mood, inspire you, or help you relax.

#### Here's what's on our playlist!

John: Music by *Django Rheinhardt & Duke Ellington*

Lisa: *Erykah Badu-Didn't Cha Know*

Kaitlin: *Whitney Houston - I Wanna Dance With Somebody*

Ariella: *Sublime-Santeria*

Choosing a major field of study can be a difficult decision to make, and today's college students have much to consider before committing to an area of focus. Students are encouraged to find a major and corresponding career that reflects their personality, interests, skills, and values while also considering such things as the overall cost of college, salary expectations, employment rates for employees in the field, and advanced degree opportunities. Taking into account all of these factors can be confusing, often leaving students to hastily pick a major that they don't necessarily feel that they're in love with. Furthermore, not all students possess the knowledge, experience, or maturity to easily relate self-knowledge to major and career options. This is why it is important for students to receive outside support and professional guidance at the very beginning of their college experience. The Counseling & Student Success office offers support and resources to guide students toward a major and career that best fits their financial, professional, and personal goals. One of these resources in particular, **FOCUS 2**, is a comprehensive, self-paced online career and educational planning tool that guides students towards appropriate academic majors and careers.

#### What can FOCUS 2 do?

FOCUS 2 assists students with self-exploration through a series of self-assessments that ask questions about what they like, what they are good at, and what they value. Assessment results are used to link the user to appropriate majors at CCM and corresponding career fields. FOCUS 2 is self-paced, so users can re-take assessments and spend as much time as they want using the program. Students can access the program online on any PC, smartphone, or tablet anywhere, 24/7.

FOCUS 2 Users can read about and watch videos on over 1,000 occupations. Occupational information provided includes educational requirements, salary expectations, future outlook and growth opportunities, related job families and similar occupations, and provides links to professional associations related to the career field. Users can save majors and careers that are of interest to them for later review. A good strategy after using FOCUS 2 is for students to think about their results and discuss their ideas with a counselor. Students are encouraged to meet with a counselor individually as well as attend the various major/career related workshops that are offered each semester. All services (including individual career counseling, workshops, and access to the FOCUS 2 are free and open to all current CCM students. If you would like to learn more about the FOCUS 2 system and get ideas about how to incorporate it into advisement sessions or the classroom, or would like a demonstration, please contact the Counseling & Student Success office.

## Counselor Panel



On September 28th the Counseling and Student Success office hosted a *Counselor Panel* where the CCM counseling staff was available to answer questions from students about a range of topics including academics, study habits, career development, and personal issues. Some of the most popular questions that came up among the students were related to studying techniques, test anxiety, time management, dealing with stress and anxiety, and choosing a major and career. The counselors also spoke about why and how they came to the counseling profession and discussed some of the most frequent student issues that are seen in the counseling office. The *Counselor Panel* is just one of the many events in a series of outreach efforts from the Counseling office geared toward providing support to the student body as a whole by reaching students where they're at. It can be challenging to get help out to all the students who need it, so engaging students through outreach events allows for the opportunity to gain relationships and build trust within the student body while reducing the stigma of asking for help.