"When Students Fail to Flourish: Assessments and Intervention"

WGEA/WGSA/WOSR

Salt Lake City, UT

February 2017

Note: For permission to use “Common Contributors to Academic Difficulty,” please contact the Office of Student Affairs, Loma Linda University School of Medicine, 909-558-4630; or, email Henry H. Lamberton, Psy.D., the Associate Dean for Student Affairs: hlamberton@llu.edu; or Karen S. Schiller, Director of Student Affairs: kschiller@llu.edu. We would like it to know if and where it is being used.

Thank you,

Henry H. Lamberton, Psy.D and

Loretta B. Johns, Ph.D.
COMMON CONTRIBUTORS TO ACADEMIC DIFFICULTY

Instructions: Place a check mark by each circle that describes factor(s) you believe are impacting your academic success or well-being at this time.

- Ineffective Study Strategies, such as organization, efficiency, location
- Time Management
- Perfectionism, Obsessive Style, Try to Learn Everything
- Anxiety, Burnout, Depression, Grief or Loss
- Social and/or Academic Support
- Other:
- ADHD or Learning Disabilities such as Dyslexia
- Addictions, Habits, Avoidance
- Insufficient Knowledge Base
- Outside Stressors, Relationships, Family, Finances
- Life Balance: sleep, exercise, nutrition
- Reading Speed, Vocabulary

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Notes</th>
<th>Circle Showing Degree of Concern</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number the circles you put a check mark by on the previous page. Then, make a pie chart in the circle below which indicates the relative degree of significance of each of the factors you identified. Note that the various factors may overlap or be difficult to separate but give your most immediate approximation in the pie chart below.</td>
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The “Ask for Help” Seminar
Henry H. Lamberton, Psy.D.
Associate Dean for Student Affairs
Loma Linda University School of Medicine

Students at Loma Linda are informed about academic and psychological support services during the freshman orientation to medical school. They meet the director/s of the counseling center so that they have a friendly human face to associate with these services. I’m sure all schools do this in one way or another. But orientations are busy times when students are bombarded with information, much of which they don’t expect to need.

For this reason I decided about over 15 years ago to delay most of my own comments about the value of counseling and academic support services until five or six weeks into the first quarter, just after the first set of examinations. I meet with the class and give them my annual talk which is designed to reduce the stigma of getting help and remind them of resources for help that are available. Within a day after this meeting I am typically contacted by at least 5 or 6 students who ask for specific referrals for help with personal or relational issues.

Introduction (an example):

“Most of you came to medical school because you want to help people. You are naturally inclined to be help givers. For many of you it is a lot easier to be help givers than to be help receivers. One of the things that got you here is your ability to work independently when you need to, to suck it up when you feel like giving up, and to do the lonely work of studying when you would rather be hanging out with friends. You may inwardly feel it is a sign of weakness to ask for help, especially when it involves seeking help for “personal issues” such as time management or procrastination, anxiety or depression, family or relationship problems, learning to manage anger or become more assertive, or getting help with self-sabotaging habits or addictions.

But I don’t believe we can be really effective help givers if we are unable or unwilling to be help receivers. I’m thankful now that my own doctoral education program in psychology emphasized that personal growth was fundamental to becoming a helping professional. As part of the process of personal growth students were encouraged (although not required) to spend time with a therapist themselves. As I look back, I believe that the time I spent with a wise and experienced counselor (I actually worked with two during different parts of my training) has been at least as valuable in helping me help others as many of the formal courses and seminars I have taken.

You have all come here knowing that you need, and expecting to receive one kind of help, namely help in learning the profession of medicine. We want and expect you to get that help and to become good doctors. You’ll be tested, and evaluated and tested again to make sure you are taking advantage of that help. But I want to talk to you today about taking advantage of other kinds of help during the years you are in medical school. This
is not the kind of help you are likely to be tested over, at least not directly. It is not the kind you will be required to get, at least in most cases. It is the kind of help you have to ask for. I want to list some of the more common difficulties students experience and for which help is available."

- Time management/overcoming procrastination
- Learning resources, learning specialists, course directors, tutors
- Counseling resources (e.g., anxiety, depression, burnout, relationships, loss, street and/or anger management, habits and addictions)
- Assessment and services for disabilities

The seminar ends with students or recent graduates who have benefited from treatment for depression, anxiety and/or addiction sharing their experiences.