

## TRANSCRIPT

### Myths and Misconceptions About Counseling

Hi, I'm Chuck Zanone, a Licensed Psychologist and psychotherapist at Counseling and Psychiatric Services at the University Health Center.

There are many myths and misconceptions about counseling which may impact the likelihood of a student seeking services at CAPS. Some of the myths we encounter include:

**MYTH 1:** Counseling is only for people who have serious emotional problems

**FACT:** Most people seek counseling to address everyday concerns that we all face. Stress from school demands, relationships, finances, or life changes may accumulate and impact how a student feels about themselves, their relationships, and their ability to function effectively. Common reasons people see a counselor are to get help with stress, anxiety, depression, or relationship concerns. Our goal at CAPS is to support and enhance the academic, personal, social and psychological growth of students and to assist students in addressing concerns that may affect them while they are student at UGA.

**MYTH 2:** Seeking counseling is a sign of weakness and should be a “last resort.”

**FACT:** There is nothing weak about a person who seeks counseling. In fact, it takes considerable courage to explore and discuss personal concerns and to seek solutions in order to feel happier and more fulfilled. Individuals who enter counseling are taking an important first step in this process and should feel good about utilizing resources that are available to them here at UGA. Delaying seeking treatment only compounds the problem and may lead to more significant emotional difficulties later on.

**MYTH 3:** The counselor will tell you what to do or expect you to solve your own problems.

**FACT:** CAPS counselors are trained to assist students with a wide range of life challenges. Counselors are not responsible for solving your problems. Counseling is a collaborative relationship and it is important for you to be an active participant in the process. Your counselor will help you explore your concerns and assist you in exploring solutions, but it is your responsibility to identify your goals for counseling and to implement any changes that need to be made. Counseling is not a “quick fix” or “cure” for your concerns. It is also important to realize that counseling can take time, so patience is important.

Many myths and misperceptions about counseling are perpetuated by TV and movies. Frequently, counseling is portrayed as a passive process—where you free associate and are “analyzed” by passive therapist. Others portray counselors overly confrontational or as forcing you to discuss personal issues you are not ready to discuss. In fact, most counselors are quite active and relational and work collaboratively with you to find solutions to your concerns. Your counselor will not force you to discuss issues you are not ready to discuss but will work with you to address concerns you are ready to address.

**MYTH 4:** Counseling is not confidential; everyone will know I am seeing a counselor and counseling will become part of my academic record

**FACT:** Under Georgia law, mental health records are privileged and confidential. No one outside the University Health Center (UHC) professional staff may have access to your records and no one outside the UHC (e.g., parents, instructors, university officials) may be given information without your written consent. Exceptions to confidentiality can occur only under certain circumstances. These exceptions include serious immediate threat to your life or welfare or to the life or welfare of another person or the university community.

Your CAPS records are not part of your educational record. Your records at CAPS are kept separate from your medical records at UHC. If you are seen in another clinic at UHC, the specific content of sessions at CAPS is not be available to staff in other UHC clinics. CAPS may communicate with staff in other UHC clinics but only if there is specific need to speak with these individuals to coordinate aspects of your medical and mental health care.

It is really is up to you what you choose to share about any emotional concerns or treatment you have sought at CAPS.

**MYTH 5:** The counselor cannot understand you unless he/she has had similar experiences or is of the same background.

**FACT:** Counselors are trained to be sensitive to and respectful of individual differences, including the specific concerns of students with regard to gender, racial/ethnic, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender, and class. The counseling process depends on the counselor being impartial and unbiased so they can assist you in finding solutions to your concerns.

It is not necessary for a counselor to have similar experiences or be from the same background to be helpful to you. If, however, you have strong feelings about working with a particular type of counselor, you should state these preferences up-front and CAPS will make every effort to accommodate your request. Please be aware, however, that requesting to work with a specific type of counselor may impact how quickly you are assigned for ongoing services.

**MYTH 6:** Counseling takes forever

**FACT:** The length of counseling depends on the client's unique goals and the severity of the challenges the student is facing. CAPS offers brief (6-10 session) counseling. Most students benefit from this type of counseling, which is goal-directed and focuses on specific issues and problems. If a student is in need of longer-term counseling or specialty services not offered at CAPS, CAPS clinicians will discuss other treatment options, including referral to another campus or community agency or mental health provider.

**MYTH 7:** Counseling does not work! I (or someone I know) had a bad experience with counseling in the past!

**FACT:** According the American Psychological Association, research shows that psychotherapy is effective in addressing a variety of concerns, including: depression and anxiety, pain, and fatigue. It has been found to increase survival time for heart surgery and cancer patients and to have a positive effect on the body's immune system. Research increasingly supports the idea that

emotional and physical health is very closely linked and that therapy can improve a person's overall health status.

People who have several sessions of psychotherapy are far better off than untreated individuals with emotional difficulties. One major study showed that 50 percent of patients noticeably improved after eight sessions while 75 percent of individuals in therapy improved by the end of six months.

If you (or someone you know) had a bad experience with counseling it's important to remember that the counseling process is different with each counselor, for each problem, and at different stages or your development, so do not hesitate to try again! Counseling is most effective when you have established a strong working relationship a counselor is knowledgeable and competent to treat your concerns. If you have concerns about your counselor's qualifications or ability to help you, don't give up—continue to look for someone who can assist you!

**MYTH 8:** Counseling is not affordable

**FACT:** CAPS' services are offered at a reduced cost for students who have paid the student health fee. There is no additional charge for the telephone screening, initial consultation, or a walk-in appointment. There are nominal costs associated with additional individual counseling (beyond the initial consultation or walk-in appointment), psychiatric services, and for other services such as group counseling and psychological testing.

A limited amount of grant money is available to help cover costs of CAPS services through a fund established by the Parents & Families Association. Verification of need is required to obtain financial assistance. Students are encouraged to discuss any financial concerns with a CAPS clinician.

Many students do not realize that their health insurance will cover a certain number of sessions. Students have the option of requesting insurance reimbursement for services within CAPS, but should first discuss this issue with a CAPS clinician. CAPS clinicians may make referrals to campus or community mental health providers or agencies that accept insurance or can work out a payment plan if one is needed. For additional information about costs please speak with a counselor or call us at 706-542-2273.

**MYTH 9:** I will not be able to get help when I need it?

**FACT:** CAPS does not turn away students in crisis. CAPS provides brief interventions for emergencies or debilitating psychological conditions. Immediate interventions will focus on increasing understanding of the situation, normalizing feelings, managing severe stress, making decisions, and planning for the future. If additional psychological and psychiatric care is needed, either at CAPS or another agency, a CAPS clinician will assist you in obtaining this care.

During regular hours, a walk-in clinician is available to assist students in crisis. After hours, the emergency on-call clinician may be reached by calling 706-542-2200. Students will initially be connected to the UGA Police Department, who will contact the on-call clinician.

During periods of peak demand students may experience a delay in accessing ongoing counseling services after the initial consultation or walk-in appointment. If a student is waiting to be assigned to a counselor, he/she may notify CAPS if there is any change in her condition or may walk-in if she/he is in crisis and needs to speak with a counselor immediately.

For additional information about our services please visit our website or call us at 706-542-2273.

