DukeLine: A Peer to Peer Support Program

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Background

25% of American adults are living with a diagnosable mental illness

75% of adult-onset mental illnesses are present by age 25

Yet, 40% of individuals who may benefit from mental health services do not seek treatment

There are many barriers to seeking mental health support including feelings of personal shame and skepticism about treatment effectiveness. Traditional therapeutic models assume that talking to someone in an office on a weekly basis will lead to generalization of new skills; however, people often need coaching and support in the precise moment that something challenging is unfolding to augment the success of therapeutic interventions.

There are also significant barriers to implementation of in-the-moment support: cost, therapist availability, ethical and legal issues, and potential for therapist burnout. Our team of trained peer coaches will experience the following changes from the training semester to the practicum semester: less stress, less burnout, and an increased sense of meaning and purpose.

Aims and Hypotheses

This Bass Connections project will develop and pilot an innovative way to improve the mental health of college students. We aim to test whether mental health support delivered through an online platform via peer health coaches is a viable supplement to traditional services. We will test this claim by understanding how users and peer health coaches’ mental states are affected throughout the course of their engagement with the service. For peer coaches, specifically, we also aim to understand how undergoing training affects peer coaches’ levels of stress, burnout, and sense of meaning and purpose:

H1: There were no significant differences on any of the measures between the Training and Practicum semesters.

H2: Perceived Stress and Sense of Meaning and Purpose were significantly negatively correlated (r = -0.554, p < 0.05), highlighting the potential protective role of elevated meaning. Burnout was not significantly correlated with either Perceived Stress or Sense of Meaning and Purpose.

Due to unforeseen delays in launching the coaching service, this cohort of coaches did not have an opportunity to provide coaching to students during the Practicum (Spring 2020) semester. In preparation for the launch of this service, our team put together a resource library for our coaches to use to support students in need.

Fall 2020

Veteran coaches will pilot the coaching service in one dorm; 15 new coaches will be trained in PSY 329; active coaches, coaches in training, and users will be surveyed every 4 weeks to track mental health

Spring 2021

We will expand the coaching service to a second dorm. Mental health of both coaches and users will be assessed every 4 weeks.

Curriculum

2 Courses

PSY 319 Peer Mental Health Coaching (1 Credit)
PSY 203 Practicum (5 Credit)
Student Helping Students: A Guide for Peer Educators on College Campuses (Fred Neinstein & Steven Ender 2010)

48+ Hours

Student presentations, discussions, and interviews from community resource collection in small practice, students spent over 40 hours training in and out of class.

7 Guests

4 Duke Leaders
3 Community Leaders
Guest speakers presented on a range of topics to cover additional information on specific skills, resources, and disorders.

From community resource collection

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Preliminary Results

Purpose, Short Form

Purpose, Short Form

Summary & Future Directions

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Data Collection and Methods

Participants (N = 14) completed Qualtrics surveys every 4 weeks during the Training Semester (PSY 319; Fall 2020) and during the Practicum Semester (PSY 203; Spring 2020). Surveys included measures assessing coaches’ perceived stress level, experience of burnout, and sense of meaning and purpose:

Perceived Stress

NIH PROMIS Perceived Stress Scale

Burnout

Maslach Burnout Inventory, Section A

Sense of Meaning and Purpose

NIH PROMIS Meaning and Purpose, Short Form

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