Mental Health and Your College Experience

Studies have shown that graduate and professional students are the most vulnerable to anxiety and depression. That’s why GPSA and ASU are dedicated to ensuring you have the tools and resources you need to feel better. Don’t wait. Find help today at https://eoss.asu.edu/counseling.

An Interview with Erin Trujillo, Director for ASU Counseling Services

Q. Briefly tell us about yourself and your role at ASU Counseling Services.

I serve as Director for ASU Counseling Services (CS), overseeing our offices across all locations that provide mental health services to ASU students. I’ve worked at ASU since 2010, in various roles within Counseling Services and I love what I do!

I’m from Arizona, and I’ve spent the past 20 years in various settings within mental health. I have two Masters Degrees from ASU - a Masters in Counseling and Masters in Business.

Q. What is the most important thing graduate students should know about ASU Counseling Services?
Q. What resources/services are available at ASU Counseling Services for graduate students?

We believe students need access to us the day they decide to get help, so we arrange ourselves to be available for same day walk in services at all CS locations, or phone call availability through our main number (480-965-6146). From there, we work with graduate students to identify what would be the most helpful pathway to meet their identified need(s), and we help connect them to that path. Services could be within our center, within our individual or group options, including therapy and support groups specifically for graduate students. Services could be in the community, connecting students to services that may provide a speciality, geographic location or scheduling availability that matches a student’s need. About 10% of students who call or walk into Counseling Services just need to talk that day. We’re here to help each student in any number of pathways to meeting their need(s).

Q. Where can students go (or who can they call) for help when ASU Counseling Services is not open?

We always have a counselor available. Outside of our business hours we have an ASU dedicated crisis line through EMPACT - 480-921-1006. This may be helpful for students themselves, or for students who teach classes at night. That number is the place to start, and any number of interventions can occur to support a student until the next business day.

Q. When should a student go to ASU Counseling Services?

Students seek our support for so many different reasons. There is no wrong answer here - if a student starts to think, “maybe I should get some professional support” than they should listen to that inner voice. Students who have been working on their own to change and find themself stuck find our
services helpful. If emotional needs are getting in the way of academic progress, I’d encourage a student to come and see how we can help. We may connect a student to other resources within ASU that can enhance their speed of desired change.

Q. What are some commonly asked questions you hear from students about ASU Counseling Services?

Students wonder if we are going to “get them”. Graduate students are very diverse - from all over the world, all age ranges, and have lived through so many life experiences. We work hard at ASU CS to build a clinically, professionally, and intersectionally diverse team, so we have the collective experience to best support a population of 70,000+ high achieving students. We have clinicians who speak Bulgarian, Burmese, Farsi, Japanese, Mandarin and Spanish. We have clinicians who have worked across the sector of mental health services, with all clinical presentations. All of our clinicians have been graduate students, so they understand the demand of this particular arena of higher education.

Graduate students wonder if any other graduate students seek help. There is some feeling that they are the only one struggling. I can confirm that we see new graduate students every week. Graduate students are stretching themselves in every way to reach their goals, and that stretch necessarily involves some degree of uncertainty, overwhelmed feelings at times, even anxiety in moments. When those feelings don’t go away, graduate students seek our support. Graduate students also have more life experience which translates into a different set of needs that may coexist with their graduate school responsibilities.

Some graduate students are concerned they will see their undergraduate students when they come to Counseling Services. If this is a barrier to seeking care, there are a couple pathways a student can take. We have 4 locations, and a student can certainly choose to go to an alternative campus to seek services, lessening the risk via proximity. A student can call in for their first appointment, and name their concern while defining a plan for next steps. We have graduate student support groups that would automatically create a differentiated counseling space. While there is no guarantee that students will avoid one another in the waiting room, we take fundamental
responsibility in building confidential services that provide an optimal environment for each student to feel safe and ready to grow.

Most students think the only services offered are in person. We do have a platform called **TAO Connect** which serves as a self help platform grounded in foundation mental health education and skill training. This is a great option for a self directed graduate student who wants some structure but doesn’t feel like they need in person help. Additionally, we’ve curated a database called **ASU Community Link** filled with mental health providers across the valley who we believe are professionally skilled in working with college students, and who take the most common forms of insurance or low cost pay for services.

**Q. How much does it cost to use ASU Counseling Services?**

Our walk in services, crisis services, assessment services, and consultation is always free. We have a $15 charge for individual or group counseling services. We won’t let finances get in the way of a student’s need for care; we review resource needs with students during our first appointments.

**Q. What does a typical counseling session look like?**

Our first appointment is a little different - we spend time ensuring students are safe, and we focus on what brought a student in today. For some, that leads to a next step appointment. We may recommend additional resources or self care practices that we believe help the presenting concern. We have an entire team of clinicians focused on just that appointment, all who are experts in mental health, student development and resources in ASU/across the valley. Those appointments can happen in person or on the phone. If a student continues at Counseling Services, it’s highly likely they will be connected to a different clinician for group or individual work.

Our typical counseling sessions (whether individual or group) are spent revisiting students experiences since their last appointment, setting goals, and using any number of pathways to meet those goals. Students are in charge of the pace and depth - they set the tone for what they are ready to explore, and how that matches with events in the rest of their life. Example- a student may be separating from their partner unexpectedly, in April. Even though there is a lot of emotional need at that moment, graduate students may also have a lot of
academic, research and teaching responsibilities. So, we may jointly choose to
work on ensuring they are routined enough to get sleep and steady enough to
get to the end of their semester before we focus on anything else. All this to
say, we work closely with each student to determine the best pathway to meet
their desired change goal.

Q. Please provide links to relevant resources for graduate students

ASU Counseling Services Website. All numbers, locations, and community link
resources are on the first page of the website.

The Live Well @ ASU website has all sorts of content to explore.

Here’s an informational video about TAO Connect. Students who sign up for
TAO Connect should use their asu@edu email for free access.

No one is too old to review how mindset impacts our success. Here’s a short
read on a growth mindset, which I believe is so central to the task of growing