Maintaining Good Mental Health Post-CAPS

Several thousand students come to CAPS every academic year for help with mental health, academic, and personal concerns. The issues that bring them to CAPS are diverse and include problems like roommate conflict, academic struggles, and breakups, as well as psychological concerns like depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, and substance addiction.

For students with more complex concerns, CAPS may be providing referrals to off-campus services that can’t be offered on campus. For others, a round of brief individual therapy at CAPS or participation in a group may provide the support, guidance, and potential for change that is needed to cope without ongoing services. For still others, brief individual or group therapy through CAPS is just one step on the journey to managing good mental health.

So, what happens when a student leaves Santa Cruz for the summer, graduates, or simply finishes a round of services at CAPS? What comes next? There is no one answer, but often, continuing services off campus can be a good idea. Your CAPS counselor or one of our case managers can make suggestions about what to do after ending a round of counseling at CAPS or leaving UCSC. Ongoing care is especially important when you’re taking prescription medications for a mental health issue, as stopping some medications “cold turkey” can lead to withdrawal reactions.

Many students aren’t aware that if they have paid for UC SHIP insurance in the spring, it remains active over the summer, even after graduation. What’s more, SHIP can be used in communities all across California (and worldwide). Students can visit the SHIP website or call SHIP customer service to find a counselor and/or psychiatrist (a doctor specializing in mental health issues who can provide medication) near home. For students who have private insurance, your insurance provider can explain what mental care coverage might be available.

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I’m graduating, and I am freaking out about it. Is that normal?

— Future Shock

First of all, congratulations on finishing college. And yes, it’s totally normal to have fears about graduation. It’s a big transition, and most people feel a wide range of emotions about it, including fear and anxiety.

Many grads have fears about what they will do in the future. There are several things you can do about this fear. One is to get advice and help from advisors, career counselors, professors, mentors, and friends. It’s also important to take things one step at a time. If you feel frozen by the idea of “choosing my career” and “deciding what to do for the rest of my life,” take a deep breath and chill! Right now, you are taking one step toward your future career, whether that is finding your first job, applying to a graduate program, or taking some time to figure out what your next step will be. Most people change jobs—or even careers—several times in their lifetime. The first job you get doesn’t have to be “the one.” Each job is a chance to learn more about what you like and don’t like, what you are good at and what you need help working on. Some jobs are just ways to make money while you figure out where you’d like your career to go.

Other grads have anxiety about leaving the safe and secure environment of college. College life has more structure than “real life”—each quarter you have certain classes to take, syllabi to follow, exams. It’s natural to feel anxious about the uncertainty of creating your own structure and routine after graduation. There are also people there to support you in college, such as residential life staff, professors, TAs, tutors, advisors, and counselors. Some grads worry about getting support away from this more structured environment. Remember that even though you’re leaving UCSC, there are still people to support you. It may just take a little effort on your part to ask for that support from family, friends, and mentors.

Feeling anxious about graduating is to be expected, but don’t forget to focus on the positive. Celebrate your accomplishments. Congratulations, and good luck!
Wellness Tip: Yoga for Mental Health

Yoga has been popular in the United States for decades. In addition to yoga being good for balance, flexibility, and strength, it’s often said that it helps relieve stress and improve mood, and a number of studies suggest that this is true.

If you’re new to yoga, taking a class may be the best way to try it out so that you’ll have a teacher close by to help you use the proper form to prevent injury and maximize your experience. There are many yoga studios in Santa Cruz, some of which offer “community” classes that are low cost or donation based (“pay what you can”). Some studios give discounts when you buy bundles of classes, and others may offer a free introductory class. Sometimes you can also find deals on Groupon or Living Social for yoga classes. With a little Internet research, you can find a lot of good options locally or in your home town if you are leaving Santa Cruz for the summer.

If you’ve done yoga before and know the basics, you might consider using a DVD or on-line yoga video (you can find some on YouTube) so that you can practice on your own or with friends at home (or anywhere). You may even be able to remember poses that you like from yoga classes you’ve attended and just do them from memory.

Read this article in the Harvard Mental Health Letter for more info on the research proving yoga’s benefits. And, check out this short video on yoga for stress relief (which is also posted on the CAPS website self-help page).
**CAPS Summer Services**

Did you know that Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) is open all summer? CAPS offers most of its usual services mid-June through September: crisis services, individual counseling, couples counseling, and referrals. We don’t offer Let’s Talk or have any groups that meet over the summer, however: Let’s Talk and groups resume in the fall quarter.

If you are a registered student in Spring 2015 and are enrolled for either summer session or Fall 2015, you are eligible for services at CAPS during the summer. Call (831-459-2628) or stop by our central office, located on the second floor of the Student Health Center, above the pharmacy, during business hours (Mon–Fri, 8 am–5 pm). Our after-hours line is also available all year on evenings, weekends, and holidays. If you are having a mental health crisis after hours, call 831-459-2628, and choose the menu option to talk to a live counselor.

**Upcoming Events**

**DROP-IN GROUPS:** CAPS offers several drop-in groups students can check out any time with no appointment or commitment. Usually, the final meeting of the academic year is the week before finals, but this may vary from group to group. Current drop-in groups are the Queer Men’s Group (Mondays, 5:30–7:00 pm, Cantu Center), Women of Color Support Group (Wednesdays, 2:00–3:30 pm, CAPS central office), Queer and Questioning Women’s Group (Wednesdays, 5:00–6:30 pm, Cantu Center), and Men of Color Group (Thursdays, 3:30–5:00 pm, Bay Tree Building, 3rd Floor). Check out our groups web page or call us at 831-459-2628 during business hours for the latest group information.

**LET’S TALK:** Let’s Talk is a drop-in space where you can have a brief, confidential, one-time chat with a CAPS counselor. It’s free, and you don’t need an appointment—just walk in! The final times of the academic year for Let’s Talk are generally the week before exams. Let’s Talk is held on Mondays at the Cantu Center from 3 to 4:30 pm, Wednesdays at McHenry Library, Room 2285, from 1:30 to 3:30 pm, and Thursdays from 2:30 to 4:30 pm at Baskin Engineering, Room 153B. There is also a special Let’s Talk focused on substance abuse and addiction and recovery (but any student is welcome) on Thursdays from 2 to 4 pm at The Cove recovery space, Kresge Building 393, Suite 153. Read more about Let’s Talk on the CAPS website.