

# Asking the Right Questions



June 11, 2015

Dr. Nancy Low, MD, MSc, FRCP(C)

Clinical Director of Mental Health Service

Services for Students

McGill University

# Overview

1. Detecting red flags
2. Tips for conversations
3. Creating a plan with the student
4. When to refer & what to do after-hours
5. Q&A

# Meet Your Neighbour

- Introduce yourself
- Which department/unit you are from?
- In what capacity do you support students?

# Detecting Red Flags

- What is their usual?
- Change from norm
- What are the red flags you have to identified so far?
- Signs of distress
- Expressions of concern from student or peers

# Detecting Red Flags

- Academic context
  - Increased absences, lateness
  - Poorer performance, preparation
  - Increased requests for special considerations, reassurance, contact
  - Others?

# Range of Red Flags

- Change in motivation, enthusiasm
- Disorganized, inconsistent, confused
- Sadness, irritability, angry outbursts
- Looks stressed, fearful, worried, anxious
- Social withdrawal
- Changes in appearance – disheveled, unkempt, messy, weight loss, tired
- Problems coping

# Range of Red Flags

- Denial of obvious problems
- Numerous unexplained physical ailments
- Substance misuse
- Suicidal ideation
- Paranoid
- Talking to self, hearing voices, seeing things
- Unexplained/unusual/bizarre behaviour/danger to others

# Number of Red Flags

- Observe the pattern
  - Frequency
  - Urgency
  - Combination of behavioural changes



# Overview

1. Detecting red flags
2. Tips for conversations
3. Creating a plan with the student
4. When to refer & what to do after-hours
5. Q&A

# Tips for Conversation

- Provide an empathic and safe space
- Active Listening
  - A style of listening in which you convey understanding and acceptance of what a person is feeling
  - Don't always rush into problem-solving
  - Often people in distress just want to feel supported

# Active Listening

- Four levels of active listening
  - Repeating – A literal restatement of what the person just said
    - Student: I had a really bad day at school today
    - You: You had a bad day?

# Active Listening

- Paraphrasing – rephrasing in your own words what the person just said
  - Student: My teacher has really been overloading me with work! I am feeling like I can't take it anymore
  - You: Sounds like your teacher is really putting a lot on your shoulders

# Active Listening

- Reflecting – Determining the underlying emotions of what the person just said and checking in with them
  - Student: Everyday I get assigned more and more work! How much more can I be expected to do
  - You: It is probably very stressful for you with all that work

# Active Listening

- Validation – An expression of acceptance for whatever emotional state the person is in
  - Student: If it keeps up like this, I am going to quit this program!
  - You: With this much work, it is understandable you would feel like quitting

# Active Listening

- Supporting skills
  - Open-ended questions encourage greater communication.
  - They often start with why, how, what:

*Why are you feeling down?*

*How can I help you?*

*What are some things that could help you feel better?*

# Active Listening

- Supporting skills
  - Closed-ended questions require only one word or a few words to answer:

*Are you feeling down?*

*Can we help you?*

*Do you think you are going to be ok?*



# Example Script

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>I'm having a rough time with my program.</p>   | <p>You're having a difficult time [repeating]? Tell me about it.</p>   |
| <p>My courses haven't been going well even though I've spent so much time studying.</p> | <p>Sounds like it's been an uphill challenge [paraphrasing]. That can be frustrating to put effort into something and not see the result [reflection].</p> |
| <p>Yes. I am finding it hard to stay motivated.</p>                                     | <p>Undergraduate studies can feel like a long hard process [validation]. What do you think will help you in this situation [open-ended questions]?</p>     |

# Go to Worksheet

- Paraphrasing and reflecting exercise

# Overview

1. Detecting red flags
2. Tips for conversations
3. Creating a plan with the student
4. When to refer & what to do after-hours
5. Q&A

# Creating a Plan

- Who else has eyes on this student?
  - Support system
  - Be specific
  - Can they be contacted if I don't hear from you?
- Next meeting
- List your and their 'To Do's'
- Negotiate and commit to concrete plan and contingency plan
- Tell them resources – you are a bridge for resources, not the expert
- Explain structure of student safety net

# Overview

1. Detecting red flags
2. Tips for conversations
3. Creating a plan with the student
4. When to refer & what to do after-hours
5. Q&A

# When to Refer

- Know your limits and your role
- Know your resources
  - Mental health care professionals on campus to support students' mental health
- Know about confidentiality

# When to Refer

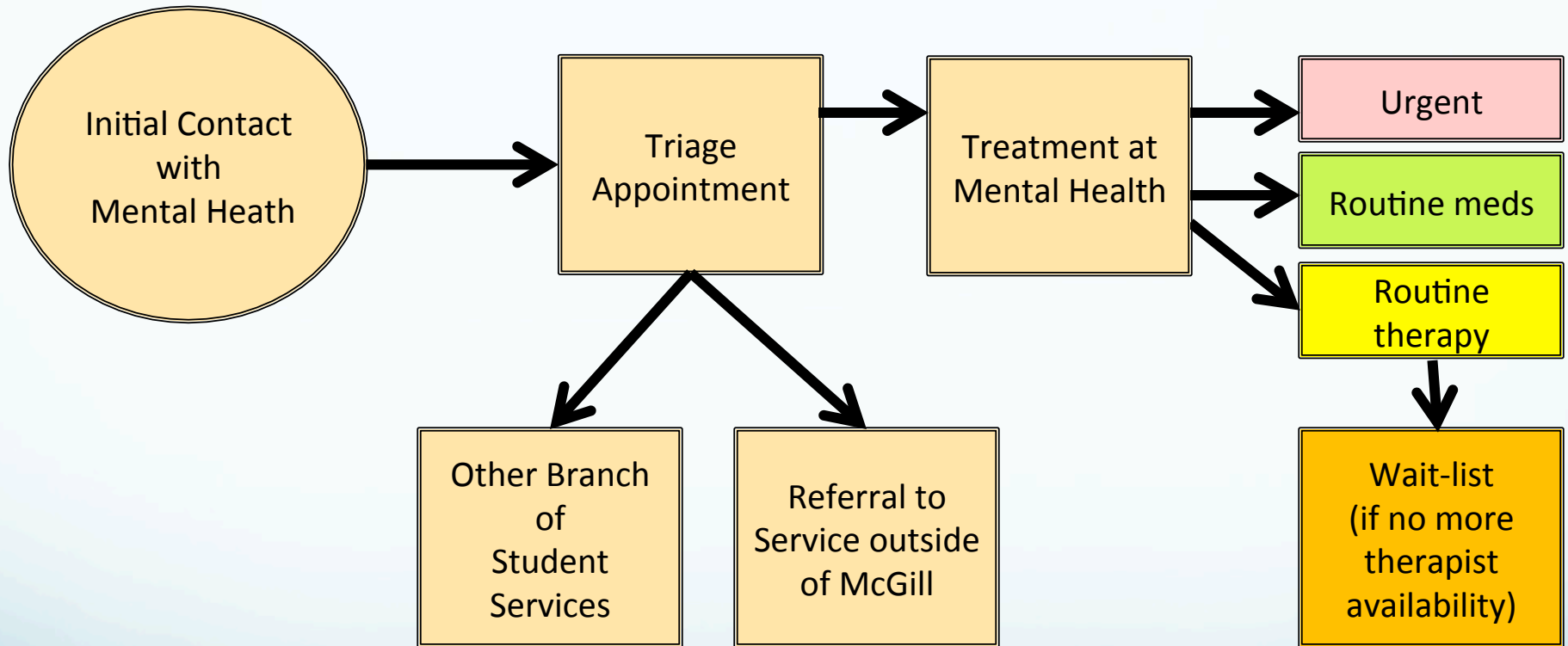
- Counselling Service
  - Adaptation, transition, break up, academic stress, difficulty adjusting
- Mental Health Service
  - Impaired daily functioning, very worrisome behaviours

# Who We Are: Mental Health Service

- Mission:  
Dedicated to our students' mental health and well-being, with specialized treatment for mental health disorders in students
- Interdisciplinary team of mental health professionals:  
11 psychiatrists (6 full-time), 11 psychotherapists (4 clinical psychologists, 7 psychotherapists), 2 nurses, 1 dietician, and trainees in clinical psychology and psychiatry  
2 patient coordinators, 1 clinic manager, 1 client services administrator, 1 accounting coordinator, 1 mental health education coordinator



# Treatment at Mental Health



# Who we serve




- In 2009, we had 1300 new students
- In 2014, we had 1800 new students
  - Increase by 35%
- Currently, ~3500 unique students seen per year (around 1 in 10 students come to Mental Health Service)
- Close to 23 000 hours of therapy given in a year
- The most common psychiatric disorders we treat are mood disorders (depression, bipolar), anxiety, and substance use disorders

# Emergency Walk-In Service



- Students in urgent need of care may be briefly seen for help
- Monday to Friday
- Meetings may be relatively brief as these emergency sessions are often squeezed in between existing appointments
- Efforts are made to assess and manage risk as well as to refer the student appropriately



## Mental Health Service

A proud member of [McGill Student Services](#)



Make an Appointment

Urgent Care

Outreach

Eating Disorder Program

Learn More

FAQs

Contact Us

[McGill.CA](#) / [MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE](#)

# Urgent Care

Students experiencing a crisis situation requiring immediate assistance can be seen during our daily drop-in hours. You will be seen briefly and given a referral as appropriate.

**Drop Ins are available Monday - Friday from 9:00 am - 4:00 pm.**

## Please bring the following when you come for urgent care:

- Your **McGill ID card**
- A **valid Medical Insurance card** (provincial or McGill Blue Cross)
- **Payment** can be made by either debit, VISA or Mastercard

[www.mcgill.ca/mentalhealth](http://www.mcgill.ca/mentalhealth)

# What to Do After-Hours

- Create safety plan if necessary
- Immediate harm/danger:
  - Call Security if on campus ext. 3000
  - Call 911
- Montreal General Hospital (Psychiatry ER)
  - Provides service for students living in the McGill area
  - 514-934-1934 ext 42216 or ext 42213

# Learn More

- Mental Health First Aid Training
  - Just as physical first aid is administered to an injured person before medical treatment can be obtained, MHFA is given until appropriate treatment is found or until the crisis is resolved.
  - 2-day training (total 12 hours)
  - Recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health problems
  - Provide initial help
  - Guide a person towards appropriate professional help
- July 6 and 7 – register online
- Also available through Counselling Service



## Mental Health First Aid Training

**Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is the help provided to a person developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. Just as physical first aid is administered to an injured person before medical treatment can be obtained, MHFA is given until appropriate treatment is found or until the crisis is resolved.**

This course is also offered through [McGill's Counselling Service](#)

The MHFA Canada program aims to improve mental health literacy, and provide the skills and knowledge to help people better manage potential or developing mental health problems in themselves, a family member, a friend or a colleague.

The program does not teach people how to be therapists. It does teach people how to:

- Recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health problems.
- Provide initial help.
- Guide a person towards appropriate professional help.

### Cost:

The cost to participate in this 2-day (9:00-5:00) course is \$38.00 (includes the cost of the workbook). The payment must be made by debit, credit or FOAPAL at the Mental Health reception desk.

For more information, please email Emily Yung, Mental Health Education Coordinator, at [emily.yung@mcgill.ca](mailto:emily.yung@mcgill.ca)

**To register, please provide the following information:**

# Needs Assessment Focus Group

- Join the conversation on how Mental Health Service can better support you with your role in supporting students
- Thursday June 18, 11am-12pm
- Brown Building Room 5001
- RSVP to [emily.yung@mcgill.ca](mailto:emily.yung@mcgill.ca)



# Helpful Resource List

- <http://www.mcgill.ca/healthymcgill/get-support>

# Find Support

Feeling like you need someone to talk to? Support is offered for a wide range of needs, from your mental health and well-being, to academics, to peer support. Figure out which service best fits your needs - you have options!

If you are in immediate danger (you are either about to seriously hurt yourself or someone else), please call 911. If you are on campus, you can call Campus Security at 514-398-3000, or 514-398-7777 for Macdonald Campus.

On this page: [Professional Mental Health Support](#) | [Academic Support](#) | [Peer Support](#) | [Additional Support](#)

## Professional Mental Health Support

There are options at McGill to speak to counsellors, psychiatrists, psychologists, doctors, nurses, or crisis centres.

| Name   | Services Offered   | Location   | Hours                       | Contact                               |
|--|--|--|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <a href="#">McGill Counselling Service</a>   | <p>The <a href="#">McGill Counselling Service</a> provides both one-on-one and couples counselling in a non-judgemental and confidential manner to individuals dealing with a wide range of:</p> <p><a href="#">Psychological and emotional issues</a>, and <a href="#">Academic and vocational challenges</a></p> <p>All of their staff are trained and experienced in dealing with the unique difficulties encountered by university students.</p> <p><a href="#">Their team</a> consists of psychologists, counsellors, and a social worker. They work to help alleviate student distress, promote student self-understanding, and to develop effective solutions to the obstacles impeding growth and success for students.</p> <p>McGill Counselling Service offers the <a href="#">ability to book appointments</a>, <a href="#">crisis drop-in times</a>, <a href="#">workshops/group therapy</a>, and <a href="#">self-help resources</a>.</p> | Brown Building,<br>3600 Rue<br>McTavish, suite<br>4200             | M - F: 9 am - 5<br>pm       | 514-398-3601<br><a href="#">Email</a> |
| <a href="#">McGill Mental Health Service</a> | <p>The focus of <a href="#">Mental Health Service</a> is to enable students to achieve psychological well-being and academic success. Their services provide:</p> <p>A secure, non-judgmental, and confidential space to pursue your <a href="#">mental health treatment</a>. They treat a variety of mental health difficulties, and for more information on these please visit their <a href="#">website</a>.</p>  | Brown Building,<br>3600 Rue<br>McTavish, suite<br>5500 (West Wing) | M - F: 8:30 am -<br>5:30 pm | 514-398-6019<br><a href="#">Email</a> |

# Overview

1. Detecting red flags
2. Tips for conversations
3. Creating a plan with the student
4. When to refer & what to do after-hours
5. Q&A

# Thank you!

[www.mcgill.ca/mentalhealth](http://www.mcgill.ca/mentalhealth)  
514-398-6019

# Questions?