



Helping the Helpers: Supporting Post-Secondary Counsellor Wellness CACUSS 2022

Erin Smith, RCC
Douglas College, BC

*From the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory
of the e K^wik^wəłəm (Kwkwetlem), x^wməθkwəyəm
(Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and
Səlílwataʔ/Selilwitulh (TsleilWaututh) Nations*





Let's take a
moment to land
here





Where we are going

- Themes in counsellor wellness
- Ideas on how to support counsellors at your institution



How we got here



BC PSCA

BC Post-Secondary
Counsellors' Association



Open Members Meetings

2022

All PSCA members are invited to join Open Members Meetings to connect and consult with their fellow Post-Secondary Counsellors. Typically run once per month via Zoom.

[READ MORE](#)



Counselling in Post-Secondary: the challenges

- Prevalence of mental health issues
- Changing role
- Workload



Counselling in Post-Secondary: the good

- Intrinsic positive aspects
- Extrinsic rewards

(Kadambi et. al, 2010)



Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

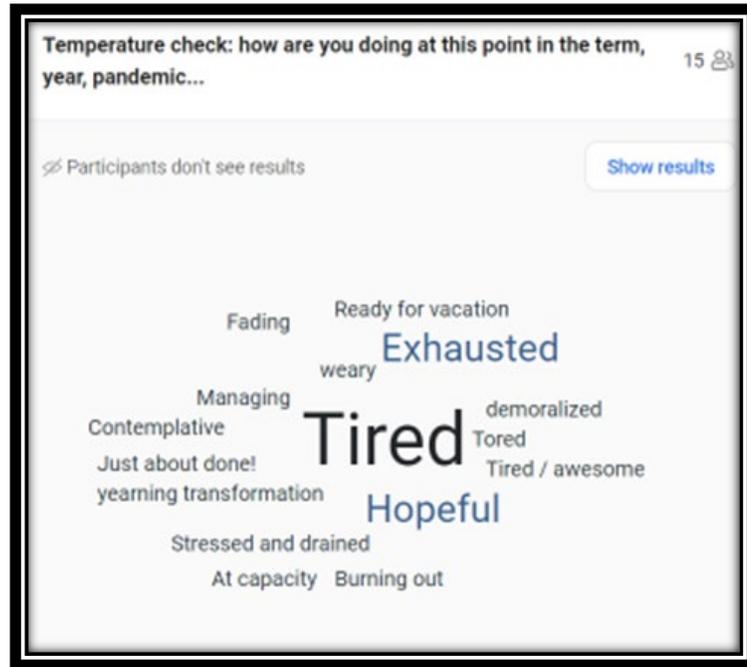
Counsellors are shouldering increasing need for mental health support while they too are managing the stressors of the pandemic.

Caring for others' crises while we endure a "shared trauma"

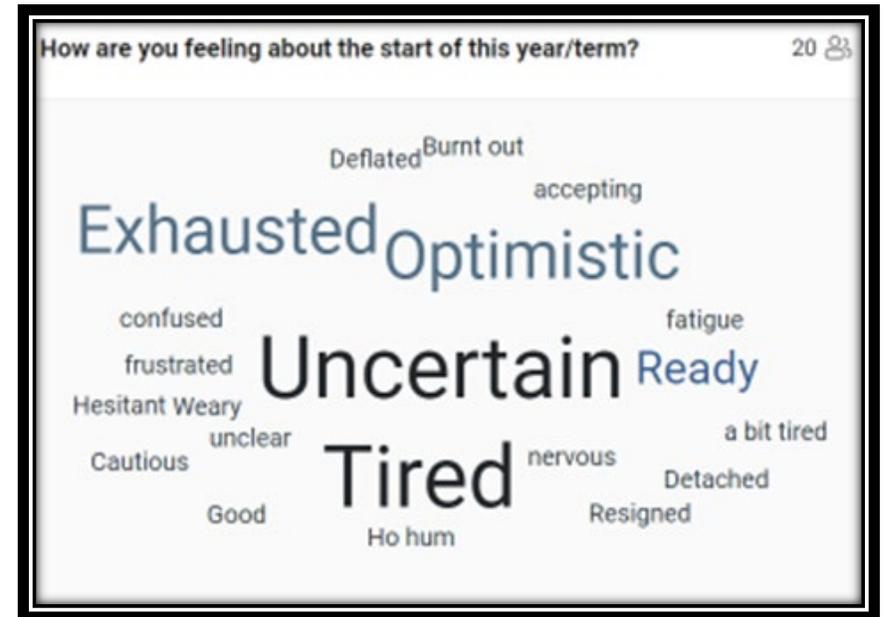
- Rapid Shift to Online
- Increased workload
- Increased self-care opportunities

Counsellor Burnout

" We care deeply for students' well-being and at the same we can only do so much"



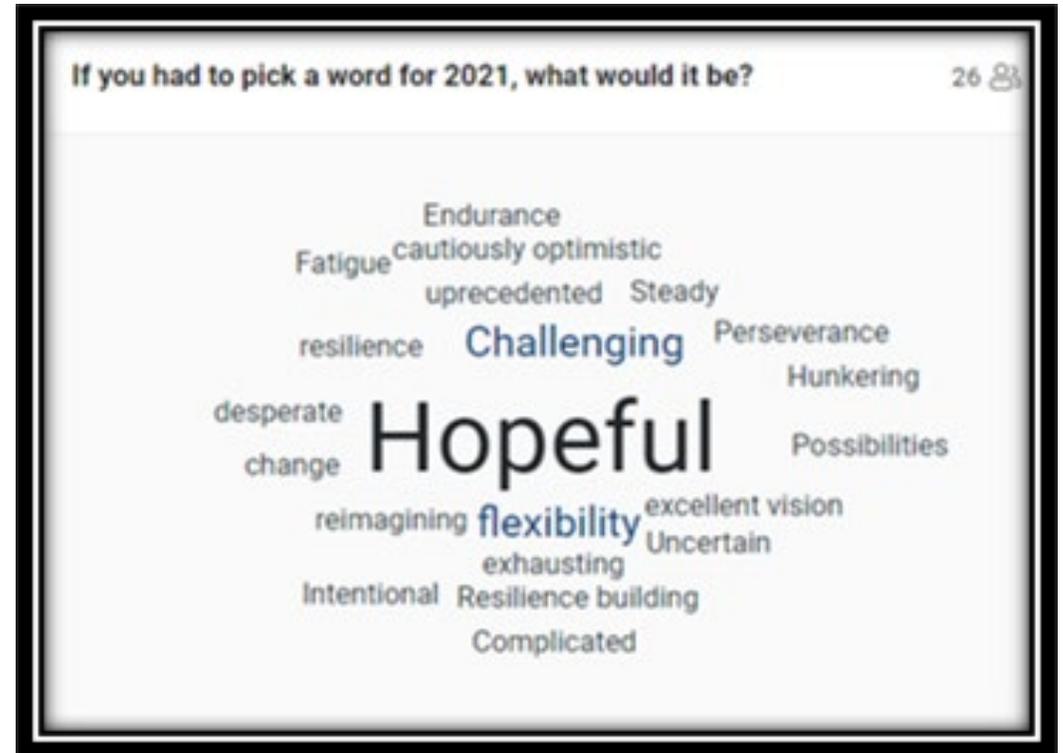
April 2021



January 2022

Counsellor Resilience

- Many still believe they can make a difference and are happy chose to do this work. Rates of job satisfaction are high (Hill, 2022).
- Therapists were more likely than the general population to report very good/excellent mental health (Battams & Hilbrecht, 2021)



January 2021



Take Aways for Institutions and Administrators

- Understand and appreciate our role and expertise.

"Doing a lot of work that is not recognized feels draining"

"Feeling unseen with the heaviness of the work we are doing with students"

- Create a culture of self-care in the workplace and provide "open door" policies for guidance.

- Adequate staffing, and diversified caseloads

"Help communicate and manage expectations. We aren't crisis centers"

- Counsellors can't fix structural problems in individual sessions



Take Aways for Institutions and Administrators

Best practices to avoid burnout

- Paid professional supervision where counsellors can freely consult on their clinical experiences and the feelings brought up by them.
- Time for regular case conferencing and counsellors to meet as a group.
- Counsellors themselves are the "tool" of therapy so their well-being MUST be a focus
- Importance of time away – flexible schedules, work from home, adequate time for vacation and professional development

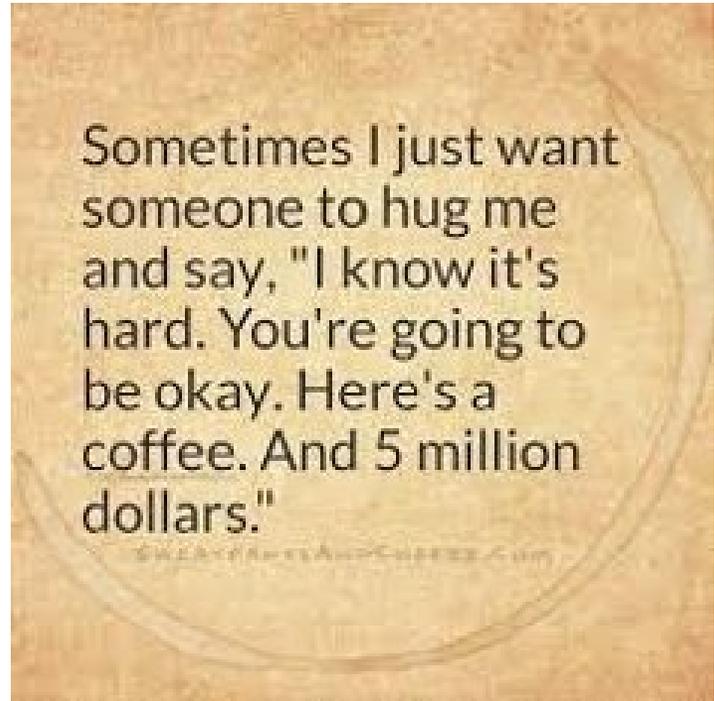


"They felt supported when given autonomy, by being part of a cohesive counselling team, having strong networking relationships with other student services, being valued by clients and being involved in activities to improve the wider system."
(Harrison,2021)



Counsellor Appreciation

- Action item – contact a counsellor or counselling department at your institution and express appreciation for their work and ask how THEY are doing



- Békés, V., & Aafjes-van Doorn, K. (2020). Psychotherapists' attitudes toward online therapy during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration, 30*(2), 238–247. <https://doi.org/10.1037/int0000214>
- Battams, N., and Hilbrecht, M. (2021). COVID-19 IMPACTS: Family Therapists Survey – Final Report. Ottawa, ON: The Vanier Institute of the Family
- Bell, C. A., Crabtree, S. A., Hall, E. L., & Sandage, S. J. (2021). Research in counselling and psychotherapy Post-COVID-19. *Counselling & Psychotherapy Research, 21*(1), 3–7. <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12334>
- Canadian Association of University Teachers. (2021). *2021 CAUT Post-Secondary Counselling Survey Report*. https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/caut-report-2021-caut-post-secondary-counselling_survey_2021-11.pdf
- Cieslak, D. (2016). Recognizing the propensity for burnout during formative counsellor development. *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy, 50*(Supp 3), S193–S213.
- Davies, S. M., Sriskandarajah, S., Staneva, A. S., Boulton, H. C., Roberts, C., Shaw, S. H., & Silverio, S. A. (2022). Factors influencing 'burn-out' in newly qualified counsellors and psychotherapists: A cross-cultural, critical review of the literature. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 22*(1), 64-73.
- Harrison, G., & Gordon, E. (2021). Counsellors' experiences of providing counselling to students in university-level institutions in Ireland: An evolving phenomenon. *Counselling & Psychotherapy Research, 21*(4), 805–815. <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12441>

Hill, S. (2022). *The Listeners' Voices: An Exploration of the Experiences of Canadian Post-Secondary Counsellors*. [Webinar]. CCPA Post-Secondary Counsellors' Chapter.

Kadambi, M., Audet, C., & Knish, S. (2010). Counseling Higher Education Students: Counselors' Positive Experiences. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, 24(3), 213-232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/87568225.2010.486296>

Kafka, A.C. (2021, November 15). Campus Counselors Are Burned Out and Short Staffed. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
<https://www.chronicle.com/article/campus-counselors-are-burned-out-and-short-staffed>

Kafka, A. C. (2019, September 27). Overburdened Mental-Health Counselors Look After Students. But Who Looks After the Counselors? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 66(4), A22.

Kim, N., & Lambie, G. W. (2018). Burnout and Implications for Professional School Counselors. *Professional Counselor*, 8(3), 277–294.

Lees, J., & Dietsche, P. (2012). An analysis of counselling services in Ontario Colleges Initial report. *Ontario College Counsellors*.

- Linden, B., & Stuart, H. (2020). Post-secondary stress and mental well-being: A scoping review of the academic literature. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, 39(1), 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.7870/cjcmh-2020-002>
- Morse, G., Salyers, M.P., Rollins, A.L. *et al.* Burnout in Mental Health Services: A Review of the Problem and Its Remediation. *Adm Policy Ment Health* 39, 341–352 (2012). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-011-0352-1>
- Nath, I. (2021, April 20) How mental health services for students pivoted during COVID-19. University Affairs. <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/how-mental-health-services-for-students-pivoted-during-covid-19/>
- Raquepaw, J. M., & Miller, R. S. (1989). Psychotherapist burnout: A componential analysis. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 20(1), 32.
- Rosen, C. S., Glassman, L. H., & Morland, L. A. (2020). Telepsychotherapy during a pandemic: A traumatic stress perspective. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 30(2), 174–187. <https://doi.org/10.1037/int0000221>
- Rupert, P. A., & Morgan, D. J. (2005). Work setting and burnout among professional psychologists. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 36(5), 544.
- Saidipour, P. (2021). The Precedent of Good Enough Therapy During Unprecedented Times. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 49(4), 429–436. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-020-00776-7>
- Szilagyi, A. (2021). Stress and burnout for helping professionals. Counselors navigating the COVID pandemic. *Journal of Educational Sciences & Psychology*, 11(2), 128–134. <https://doi.org/10.51865/JESP.2021.2.14>
- Vostanis, P., & Bell, C. A. (2020). Counselling and psychotherapy post-COVID-19. *Counselling & Psychotherapy Research*, 20(3), 389–393. <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12325>