Personal & Social Skills Development of Deaf and Hard of Hearing College Students

NTID Psychological Services
RIT Counseling Center

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My Personal Background

- I was born Deaf and my parents, sister and cousins are Deaf
- Mainstreamed until the age of 9, then transferred to a Deaf residential school where I graduated
- Attended RIT/NTID as an undergraduate student
- Attended Gallaudet University as a graduate student
Topics

- Social and Developmental Concerns

- Situational/Environmental Concerns

- Mental Health Issues

- NTID Psychological Services/RIT Counseling Center

- Services/Referrals Available on Campus
Social & Developmental Concerns

- **Family Issues**
  - Separation from family; homesick
  - Excessive dependence on parents, spouse, siblings or children
  - Disturbed by problems at home
    - Example: ACOA pathological role in family
  - “Dinner-table Syndrome” and being left out of communication/interactions (“tell you later,” “not important”)
    - Family communication choices
  - Parental Expectations
Social & Developmental Concerns

**Self Concept and Identity Development**

- Lack of self-confidence
- Lack of self-worth
- Indecisiveness
- Dependent on others
- Trouble with assertion
- Emotional Intelligence
- Self-advocacy skills
- Identity as a deaf/hoh person (social/cultural)
- Racial/Cultural identity
- Deaf and hoh role models
Social & Developmental Concerns

- Interpersonal, Intimate Relationships and Sexuality
  - Unhealthy relationships
  - Communication deficit(s)
  - Fear of intimacy
  - Female sexuality and body image, Male body image
  - Difficulties in trust, social fears
  - Relationship/domestic violence, assault, sexual assault
  - Manipulation/game playing
  - Passive-aggressiveness
  - Difficulties in breaking up
  - Loneliness over loss/break up
  - Marriage problems
Social & Developmental Concerns

- Sexual Identity and Problems
  - Sexual identity concerns
  - Confusion with sexual orientation
  - Concern with sex life
  - Needing information
  - Excessive guilt
  - Fetish/perversion
Social & Developmental Concerns

- Social Relationship Skills
  - Interactions with peers (past and present)
  - Type of School experience
    - Deaf residential school, mainstreamed, deaf program
  - Shyness
  - Poor communication skills
  - Self-centered
  - Lack of empathy
  - Feelings of isolation or loneliness
  - Sensitive to rejection
  - Dorm life/roommate concerns
Social & Developmental Concerns

- Ethical or Moral Development
  - Defining values and goals
  - Values conflict
Social & Developmental Concerns

Career or Academic Direction

- Defining direction
  - Graduate school, employment
- Separating own interests and goals from parents’
- Academic Pressures
- Graduation anxiety
- Lack of information or how to get it
- Accessibility to employment and opportunities
- Financial worries
Situational/Environmental Concerns

- **Health Problems** (chronic or acute illness or medical condition, accident, surgery, abortion, disability, non-stress related sleep disorders, PMS, pregnancy)

- **Assault/Rape/Harassment** (assault or relationship violence, threats, sexual assault victim, victim or crime/theft, harassment – including homophobic, racial, sexual, other)

- **Transition** (school to work, adjustment to college, cultural adjustment – including deaf/hearing, international student, rural/urban, racial/ethnic, age)
Financial Problems (inadequate resources, indebtedness, financial dependence, loss of job/income)

Family Problems (illness of family member, mental illness in family, conflict with family, divorce of parent, separation of family members, substance abuse of parent, custody fights in family)

Legal Problems (misdemeanors, felonies, sexual violations, campus violations, other violations, immigration)
Situational/Environmental Concerns

- **Academic/Career** (difficulties with a professor or instructor, choosing a career, poor performance, test anxiety, not working to ability, concentration, study-stills deficit, motivation, time management, procrastination)

- **Relationship Problems** (roommate problems, isolation, issues of concern in significant relationship, dating issues)

- **Major Loss** (death of parent, sibling, close friend, family move from familiar community, break-up of significant relationship, loss of pet)
Mental Health Issues

- Psychotic
- Anxiety or Neurotic Pattern
- Depression
- Personality Disorders
- Anti-Social Behavior
- Impulsive Behaviors
- Sleep Disorders
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Substance Abuse
- Eating Disorder
- Learning Disability
- Suicide
The Counseling Center currently has three counselors who are fluent in American Sign Language and with other modes of communication used by deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Individual counseling is available for deaf and hoh students from those counselors.

Group therapy is offered when there are sufficient numbers of deaf/hoh students available to meet at a common time each week.

Emergency services are available on a walk-in basis during Institute business hours (8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday) and by calling Campus Safety after hours.
Career assessment and counseling for deaf and hoh students is offered through the NTID Department of Counseling Services.

All services offered through the Counseling Center are confidential.

Counseling Center staff members do have collaborative relationships with the staffs at the NTID Department of Counseling Services and on the Student Life Team. With students’ written permission, the professionals involved in providing services in these areas may discuss their plans in order to provide students with more coordinated and effective care.
The Wellness Model

- Depathologizes and normalizes deafness

- Focuses on a process of growth that proceeds according to the client’s capabilities and potential

- Measures a deaf/hoh person for psychological health, personal effectiveness and adjustment – all within the context of the deaf/hoh person’s life, culture, group membership, socioeconomic status, communication persuasion and social opportunities and constraints (Sussman and Brauer)
Important Considerations

- **Student Personal Identity**: Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, hearing impaired, deaf-blind, cochlear implant

- **Student Communication Preference**: ASL, Signed English, PSE, Oral, Voice w/o sign, Cued Speech

- **Special Confidentiality Needs of the Deaf Community**: “Small Deaf World, ” “Grapevine type of communication”

- **Culturally Affirmative Clinical Work**: cultural sensitivity related to Deaf culture as well as respect for diversity in all areas
NTID Psychological Services
RIT Counseling Center Services

- Individual Therapy
- Group Therapy and Process Groups
- Psycho-education and Skills Training Groups
- Couples Therapy
- Mental Health Screening Days
- Suicide Response Team (SRT)
- Stress Reduction Clinic
- Mindfulness Meditation
- Integrative Yoga
- Crisis Intervention and Emergency Services
- Consultation for Faculty, Staff, Parents
Services/Referrals on Campus

- NTID Psychological Services at the RIT Counseling Center
- Student Health Center and Psychiatric Services
- NTID Counseling Services & Academic Advising
- Student Life Team
- Substance and Alcohol Intervention Services for Deaf (SAISD)

- NTID Center on Employment
- Women’s Center
- Ombudsperson
- Office of Judicial Affairs and Mediation Services
- Academic Student Center (screenings, mentors, tutors)
NTID Psychological Services
RIT Counseling Center

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