



NOTRE DAME
OF MARYLAND
UNIVERSITY

Wellness & Mental Health

Supporting Your College Student

Marie Allee, Ph.D., Director of Counseling Center
Mallee@ndm.edu

Starting college is *amazing*, AND...

Can be *challenging*!

*Developmental level +
stresses (adjustment + university life + life!)*

Lot's going on!

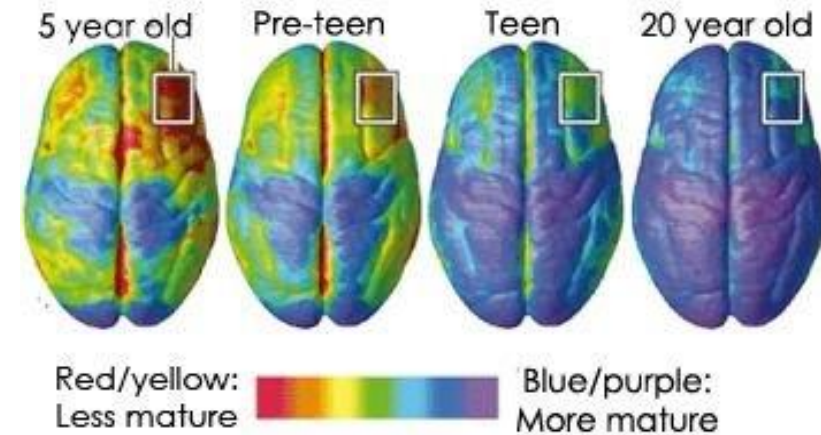
- Learning is inherently stressful!
 - Many endings and beginnings all at once
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- While you know your student best, remember you aren't their only support - **they need experience developing support systems**

Challenges of Being a College Student

- Less structure (much less highly scheduled) -- manage time, set priorities on own
 - Classes don't meet every day -- more independent work
- College level work
- Decisions
 - Courses, major
- How to fit into campus life
 - Clubs, organizations, athletics
- Residence Hall life
- Values differences
- Managing finances
- Maintaining health and wellness and managing self care
 - Sleep!
- Developing, managing and maintaining old and new relationships

Developmental Tasks of the College Student

- Building sense of competence and self-efficacy
- Getting better at emotional regulation
- Moving toward increased independence and autonomy
- Exploration of identities, beliefs, values
- Clarifying purpose
- Developing more mature relationships



Challenges supporting a new college student

- Feelings of separation and loss
- Change in the relationship/routine and patterns
- Financial concerns
- Anxiety about student's adjustment to college
- Letting the student take responsibility
- Dealing with possible changes in student's attitude
- Independence = anxiety, stress
- Creating new expectations at home i.e. - curfew and chores during breaks or for commuter student?

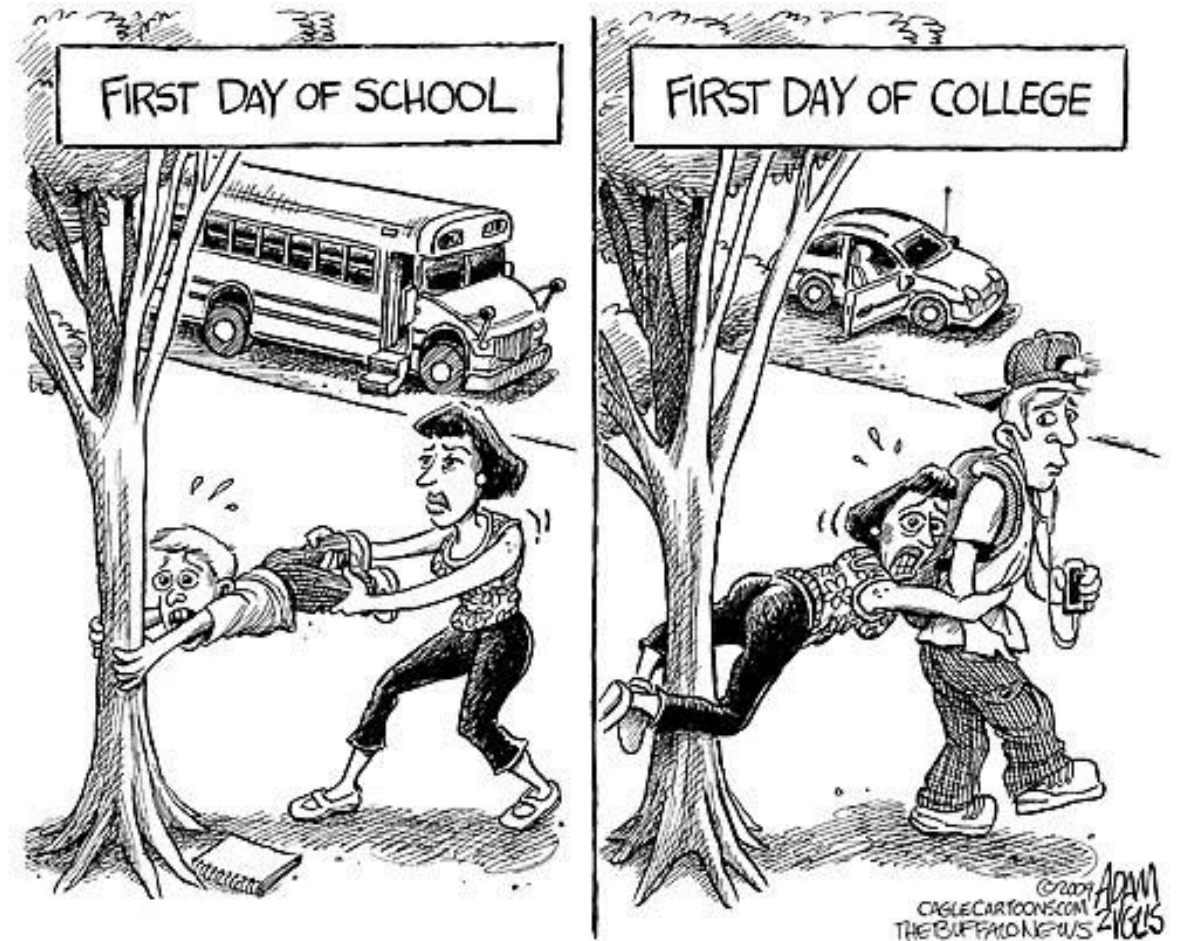
Tips for Managing the Transition

Departure is a joy and a loss!

- Fake it 'til you make it.
- Don't just pull away – hit that bucket list!

Pay attention to frequency of contact, looking for healthy separation --

- Tempting to keep in constant touch but read where your student is.
- Establish a frequency of contact while you convey trust and support independence.



More Tips for Managing the Transition

Listening and talking tips

- Build conversational scaffolding for them to walk across
 - In moments of concern try this framework
 - What you observe
 - What you made up about it
 - How you are reacting or how you feel
 - What you'd like to understand
 - Let go of controlling the outcome
- Talk about academic and financial expectations ahead of time
 - Be intentional, this isn't an area where anyone wants a surprise
- Let them know that you are there with small gestures
 - A text, a meme - don't have to have a convo but thinking of each other
- Know they are venting to you and not presenting that way with others!

More Tips for Managing the Transition

- Move from --
 - Problem solver to coach
 - Manager to anchor
- Be a responsive listener: Help them hold what's happening.
 - Say: I understand, Oh no!, And then what?, Why do you think?, That sounds hard
 - Don't say: You should, Just ..., At least ...
 - Don't judge.
 - Realize it's complicated and there won't be an easy answer.
- Intentionally try to be more hands off.
 - That's the path to growth!
- Encourage adulting!
 - For example; suggest your student to talk with a faculty advisor to resolve class-related issues or confide in their resident assistant or other campus support system.
 - Scaffold

More Tips for Managing the Transition

Set *supports* ahead of time

- If your student is in counseling now, or on medication, discuss continuing that in college and make a plan ahead of time. If coming from out of state, may need to find new provider for medication (before it runs out).
- If your student has benefited from any other support services in the past (i.e. tutoring or accommodations), encourage them to use those same services on campus.

Encourage *involvement**

- College is more than classes and homework. Experience with extracurricular activities as well as developing and maintaining relationships is extremely important during this time. Encourage your student get involved and check out what's going on around campus.

Don't make surprise *visits* to school

- When loved ones show up and the student has no idea they're coming, things get stressful. The idea seems fun! But it's like unexpected guests showing up at your house when you are really busy.



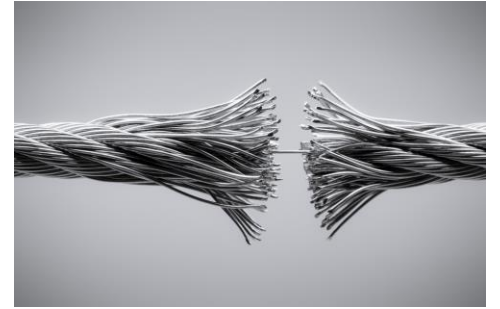
Student Involvement



Letting Go

You get:

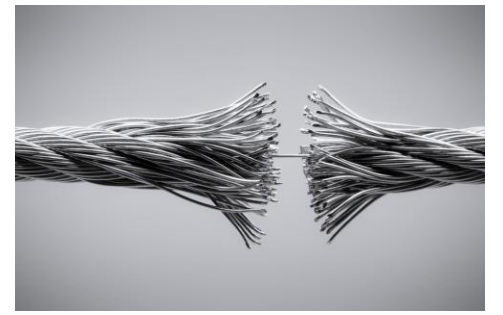
- Freedom and new opportunities?
- A new more adult relationship with your student
- Space and quiet (maybe!)
- New and necessary conversations and growth.
- See all your support of your student come to fruition!



Your new role

- Ask about things other than academics
- Do provide support. This transition is hard. They may need help writing an email or knowing whom to seek out. Taper those kinds of supports.
- Anchor -- Share – provide updates on life outside of school – tell them about home and work and the fam. You are predictable and stable amid all the change.
- Accept that change happens. Trust the values you've instilled.
- Ground -- Sometimes it helps to ask yourself, "Will this matter in five years?"

Stress – the Hidden Risk Factor



Sacrificing *self-care* negatively impacts academic performance and overall wellbeing.

- Often the basics of self-care are forgotten as students are navigating their schoolwork and college life
- Unfortunately, the college environment doesn't always encourage self-care ("all nighters," midnight deadlines)

Many tend to *minimize* the impact of stress until it reaches crisis levels due to fear of being judged.

- If you're concerned, you can share gentle reminders about basics like the importance of sleep, eating, connection with others (not being isolated in room)
- Importance of focusing on overall experience (what student is learning, how they feel about classes, etc.) versus solely focusing on grades

Mental Health Concerns

It is common for symptoms of depression or anxiety to first present in early adulthood years - right when many students enter college.

Signs to look for -

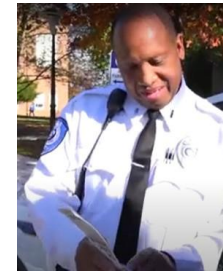
- Social withdrawal or isolation
- Listlessness, lack of energy, or falling asleep in class
- Marked change in mood, personality, or personal hygiene; high level of irritability
- Hard to understand speech or garbled, disjointed thoughts
- Suicidal thoughts, referring to suicide as an option, hopelessness
- Inability to make decisions despite your repeated attempts to clarify and encourage

Recommend your Student Reach out for Support When:

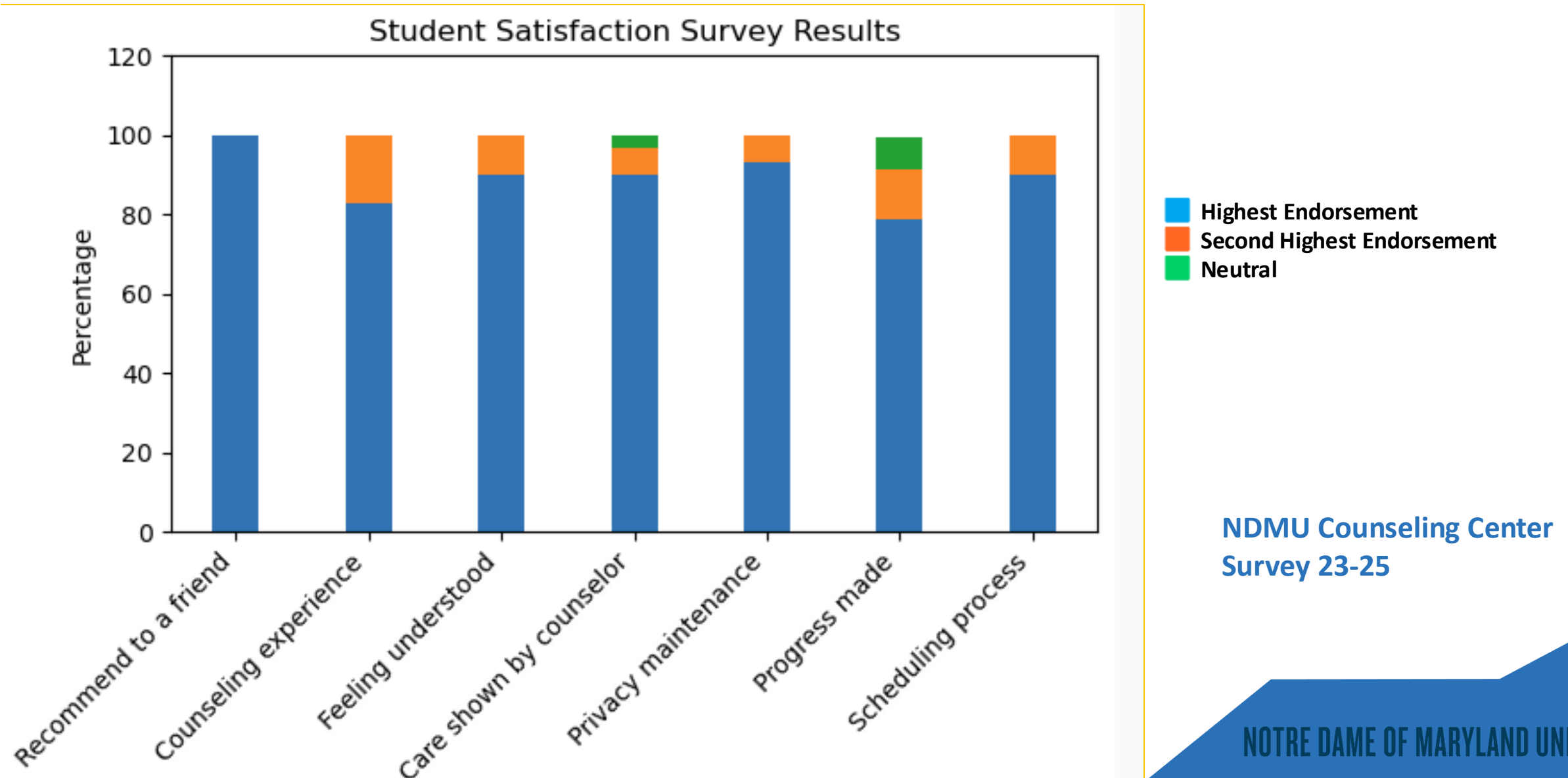
- There is significant academic or personal distress.
- You feel their distress is beyond the scope of your abilities to help.
- You notice behavior of concern or any behavior on the previous slide.
 - Pay attention to how you feel around the student; are you frightened by their behavior, drained after talking to them?
- The Counseling Center can also assist with off-campus referrals and resources if the need arises.
- A reminder there are numerous staff and offices at NDMU here to support your student, including the Counseling Center.
 - If your student is reluctant to reach out for counseling but has a staff or faculty member they seem to like, encourage them to start there.
 - It's better to reach out to someone than no one, and NDMU staff/faculty will assist them from there.
 - Students must sign themselves up for counseling

Other supports for NDMU Students

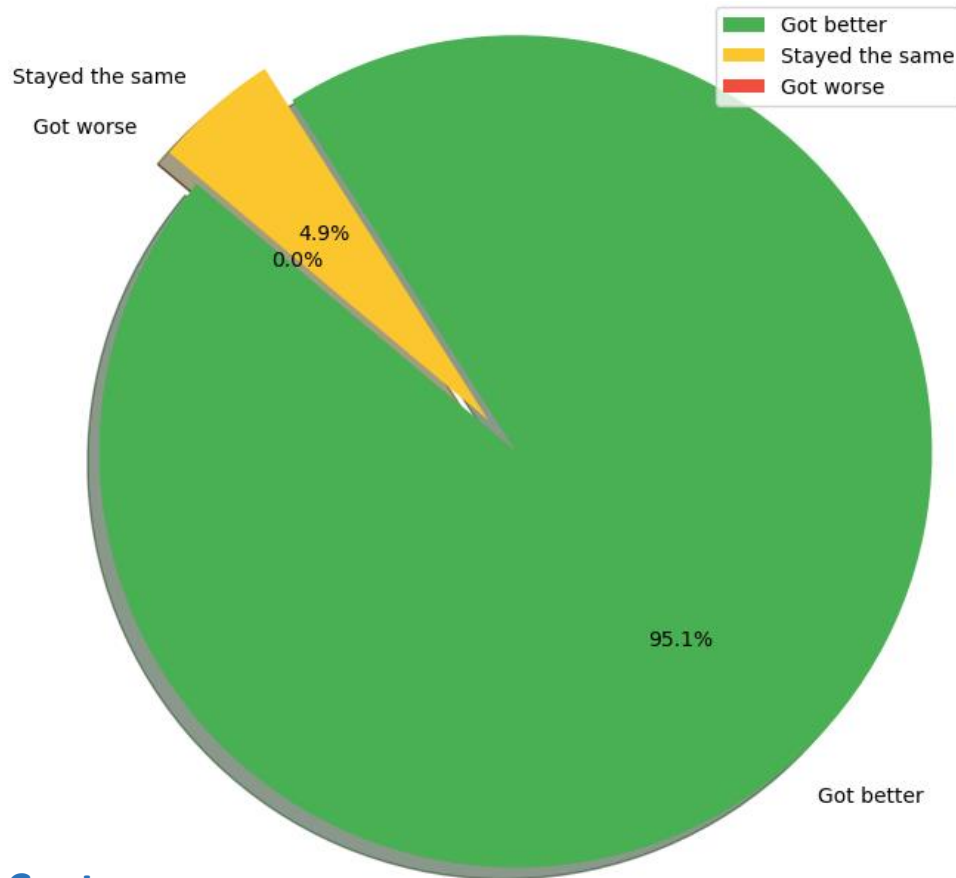
- Accessibility and Student Inclusion
- Dean of Students/Ass. Dean of Students
- Mission and Ministry
- Director of Student Success
- Public Safety
- Trailblazers
- Peer Support Programs
- Workshops and Events
- Campus Departments – Res Life, Academic Advising, Student Life
- Career Center
- Online Resources
- Coaches/Athletics Dept.



Students appreciate the support!



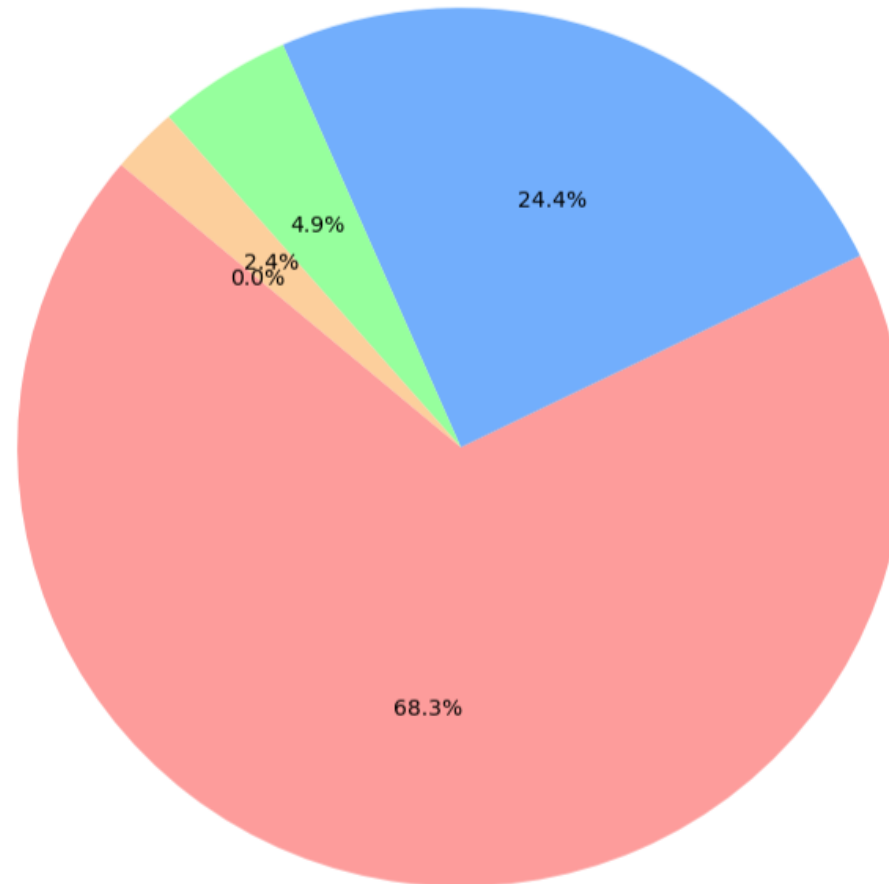
Think back to how you were feeling before you came in for counseling. How did you change overall?



Response Breakdown:

- Got better: (95.1%)
- Stayed the same: (4.9%)
- Got worse: (0%)

How much did having emotional support help you to become a better student?



- Very helpful: 68.3%
- Helpful: 24.4%
- A little helpful: 4.9%
- Neutral: 2.4%
- Not at all helpful: 0.0%

Mental Health Resources

- Counseling Center: to request an appointment, the student fill out the online request form at <https://www.ndm.edu/content/counseling-center-appointment-request>
- If you're concerned about your student, you can reach out to NDMU's Case Manager who can reach out to students who are struggling, <https://www.ndm.edu/student-life/case-management/when-refer-student-concern>; online referral form that supporters can complete is included on the page
- NDMU Public Safety: ext. 6666 or 410-435-0100
- In an off-campus emergency, call 911
- National Suicide Hotline: 988
- Crisis Text Line: 741741
- 1-844-BTR-MYND (1-844-287-6963)



Additional resources

- Letting Go: A Parent's Guide to Understand the College Years (2016), Coburn & Treeger
- College is not the 13th Grade: (2017), Drummer and Frisina
- Electronic Resources
 - www.settogo.org
 - www.collegeparentcentral.com
 - www.grownandflown.com

Questions?

