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Office of University Communications

September 27, 2012

Gardner-Webb University's Counseling Center Provides Help to Students, Faculty and Staff

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – A cause and effect relationship exists between many things.

For a cut, one applies a bandage. For a headache, one takes an aspirin. An upset stomach might warrant some antacid. Generally, people know what to do when something is not right physically. But what about mental maladies? When does something move from being a manageable problem into something much more intense? What should a person do when they can't get how they feel to line up with what they know?

The counselors at Gardner-Webb University Counseling Services are very concerned about these issues. Because of societal stigmas about mental health, many students, faculty and staff don't take advantage of resources at their fingertips. They miss out on valuable coping strategies that can teach them more about how to handle the pressures of life without developing unhealthy habits.

"Mental health is a very overlooked area in society," said Courtney Watford, a licensed professional counselor at GWU's counseling center. "So often, college students have a hard time adjusting and figuring out 'who do I talk to?' and 'who can I trust?' A lot of times, this is somebody's safe place where they can share what's going on in their life."

In an effort to help students and other members of the University family identify factors that could lead to depression, the counseling center will offer a Depression Screening on National Depression Awareness Day. Set for Oct. 11 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Tucker Student Center, the event is held each year to help people who may be suffering from depression.

"We see a wide array of things, a lot of students deal with anxiety, depression, or adjustment issues," said Watford. "We even see students who are struggling with an upcoming test and need help figuring out how to handle the pressure."

Watford said the screening process takes only about 10 minutes from start to finish. Participants fill out a brief questionnaire and their answers are reviewed by GWU counselors. If there are items of concern, the counselor reviews the information with the individual, maintaining complete confidentiality. People are given an opportunity to make an appointment if they want to further discuss the results or perhaps take advantage of coping techniques.

"A huge part of what we do here is provide students with healthier coping skills," Watford shared. "Sometimes that is what helps them get through their tough situation." Examples of positive strategies include deep breathing, moderate exercise, establishing healthy eating

habits, and learning what one can and cannot control.

The power of discussion can be another tool to help people sort through various emotions. In a situation where someone isn't necessarily feeling depressed, but they know something isn't quite right, Watford believes the best thing to do is just talk about it. "Talk to somebody," she said. "Even if it's a roommate, a residence advisor, a faculty member, a staff member, somebody. Talk to them. Say 'this is what's going on and I'm feeling this way.' Be intentional. Pay attention to the changes in your life and if it gets bad, then come to the counseling center."

For more information or to set up an appointment, call the center at 704-406-2177.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University is home to over 5,000 students. Founded in 1905, GWU provides exceptional educational opportunities within a Christian environment.