Carolina Counselor

Winter 2019

Official Newsletter of the North Carolina Counseling Association
ANNOUNCEMENTS

· 2020 Annual NCCA Conference February 26-28, 2020 in Charlotte, NC

· Call for Submissions: Spring 2020 Carolina Counselor NCAMCD Multicultural and Social Justice Special Edition

· Call for Nominations: 2019 NCCA Awards

Have a Contribution for the Newsletter?
Email your submission to: nccounselingassociationweb@gmail.com

We’re on Social Media

Facebook: North Carolina Counseling Association

Instagram & Twitter @nc_counselors

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2019-2020 Executive Officers

President: Mark Schwarze
President-Elect: John Nance
President-Elect-Elect: Dominique Hammonds
Past President: Shenika Jones
Secretary: Cassandra Acheampong
Treasurer: Kerri Legette McCullough
Member-at-Large: Allison Crowe
Member-at-Large: Vickey Maclin
Season’s Greetings on behalf of the North Carolina Counseling Association (NCCA). We hope that all of you are winding down your important work and will have the opportunity for a well-deserved break this holiday.

As for us here at NCCA, our working is just starting to ramp up. December is a busy time for conference planning. Drs. John Nance and Dominique Hammonds, along with our new Conference Coordinator, Mecca Waller have been hard at work planning content and obtaining sponsors and exhibitors. There is still plenty of time to become a sponsor or exhibitor and have your agency, business, or practice in front of over 500 counselors in North Carolina. Contact Dr. Dominique Hammonds at hammondsds@appstate.edu.

We are also very excited about some new plans for the conference to include content tracks, two days of graduate student research posters, a career connect event, and our first ever comprehensive charitable gift to a local Charlotte organization. Our keynotes are being announced in the next week and our new NCCA logo will be debuted at the Thursday business luncheon. So much happening!
Additionally, I recently sent out a short survey for members regarding the work we are doing around the mission and focus of our association. I am working with the Executive Council (EC) to crystalize what NCCA represents and what we offer to our members. I have asked the EC to think beyond the usual perks of being a member of an organization and to think deeper about how we will create a community of support for those that are members of NCCA. More on that later.

Again, I hope you all have a great holiday season and I look forward to 2020 where we will continue to sharpen our vision on the future of our great association. See you at the conference and be on the lookout for all the exciting news coming your way.

Mark J. Schwarze, Ph.D., LPCS, NCC, LCAS, CCS
President of the North Carolina Counseling Association
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Carolina Counselor Sections

Branch News:
News about the North Carolina branch of the American Counseling Association

Campus Happenings:
News concerning student projects and student work in professional organizations such as local chapters of CSI and/or state, regional, and national counseling organizations

Diversity and Advocacy:
Discussion of issues related to diversity, multicultural competency, and advocacy; may address the helping professions directly or indirectly

Division News:
Any news related to NCCA division projects

Higher Education in NC:
Comments on the state of higher education in North Carolina and tips for effective teaching/learning.

Legislative News:
State and national news concerning enacted and proposed policy changes related to professional counselors in any setting

Member Spotlight:
NCCA members who deserve the spotlight! Please provide a photo of the nominee, a short summary of the member’s accomplishments, and contact information/photo of your nominee

Perspectives from the Field:
Professional and ethical issues in counseling, counseling theory/practice, and/or reflections on work as a student, professional counselor, counselor supervisor, and/or counselor educator
Nicole Stargell, Ph. D., LPCA, LSC, NCC, is the NCCA Director of Information and Technology and the 2019-2022 Carolina Counselor editor! Nicole is an Associate Professor in the Department of Counseling at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke (UNCP). She serves as the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Field Placement Coordinator, the Counseling Programs Testing Coordinator, and Chapter Faculty Advisor for the Phi Sigma Chapter of Chi Sigma Iota at UNCP. She is a member of the UNCP Institutional Review Board, the ACA Practice Brief Advisory group, and the editorial boards for Counseling Outcome Research & Evaluation and Teaching & Supervision in Counseling.

Vanessa Doran, LPCA, NCC currently works at Jodi Province Counseling Services, PLLC in Wilkesboro, NC serving a rural community with an array of mental health needs. As a Licensed Professional Counselor Associate and National Certified Counselor, she works with children as young as 2 years old to adults ages 40+, and everyone in between. Vanessa thoroughly enjoys working with middle and high school age kids, and utilizing CBT, Person Centered, and Existential Theory in her counseling office. She graduated with a MAEd in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke (UNC-Pembroke) in 2016, and her BA in Psychology with a minor in Sociology from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNC-Charlotte). Vanessa enjoys learning about Expressive Arts therapy, Animal Assisted Therapy, and Play Therapy.

Happy Holidays!
Dear NCCA Members,

The education committee of the North Carolina Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (NCAMCD) is offering an opportunity to NCCA members to participate in a publication experience. NCAMCD is calling for proposals for the NCCA Spring 2020 newsletter to sponsor a unique multicultural and social justice edition. Interested individuals would be required to submit a one-page outline related to the theme of this year’s NCCA conference, *Vision 20/20: Focusing our Vision on the Future of Counseling*.

The articles in this special edition will emphasize uniting with a multiculturalism mission. Counselors are invited to submit conceptual articles that focus on their individual roles and collaborative partnerships as leaders who utilize multicultural and social justice perspectives to examine, address, and eliminate cultural barriers impeding client, counselor, and community advancement. Please visit the following link to view the last NCAMCD-sponsored edition of the Carolina Counselor:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/frerftqhct00blq/Carolina%20Counselor%20Spring%202017%20Final.pdf?dl=0

Abstract submissions are Due January 3, 2020 to Dr. Natalie Spencer Gwyn at nfspenc2@gmail.com

Approved articles will have a 1,500-word limit and be written in APA style. Please include a succinct (1 or 2 sentences) biography, contact information, and photo for each author.

Timeline:
- December 20, 2019: Call for Proposals
- January 3, 2020: Deadline for Outline Submissions
- January 15, 2020: Written Notifications from Editors of Outline Approval
- February 17, 2020: First Draft of Article Due
- February 28, 2020: Final Article Submission Due

Abstract submissions are Due January 3, 2020 to Dr. Natalie Spencer Gwyn at nfspenc2@gmail.com

Approved articles will have a 1,500-word limit and be written in APA style. Please include a succinct (1 or 2 sentences) biography, contact information, and photo for each author.
2020 NCCA Annual Conference

Hilton Charlotte University Place
8629 J M Keynes Dr.
Charlotte, NC  28262

Lakeside location near UNC – Charlotte
Free Parking
Light rail direct access to uptown Charlotte

Register Here!
2020-2021 NCCA Officer Nominations

Are you or someone you know interested in a leadership role within NCCA?

The Governing Council of the North Carolina Counseling Association is seeking volunteers interested in assuming leadership roles for the 2020-2021 term (July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021). In order to run for an office, you must be a member in good standing of NCCA and ACA.

This year, NCCA is seeking candidates for the following offices:

- President-Elect-Elect
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Member-at-Large

If you would like to run for an office in NCCA, please download and complete the nomination form below. If you know someone interested in assuming a leadership role within NCCA, please contact that individual, secure her/his permission, and complete/return the nomination form.

Return nomination forms by January 3, 2020 to Dr. Mark Schwarze, via email (schwarzem@appstate.edu)
2019 NCCA Annual Awards

Each year, the North Carolina Counseling Association recognizes professional excellence and service with formal awards.

The nomination process begins in November, and awards are presented at the NCCA Annual Conference in February.

Nominations must be made by members of NCCA. Nominees must be members of NCCA with the exemption of the Administrator of the Year and Special Citizen’s Merit Award.

Click here for more information: NCCA Awards Information

Nominations Now Open for 2019!

Follow this link to make a nomination:

NCCA Awards Nomination Form

Deadline to nominate is January 17, 2020. Awards will be announced at the NCCA Annual Conference, February 27-28, 2020.
Counselors at UNCC learn about ICE and how to support undocumented community
Laura Markstein

Under the current administration, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has widened its mission to deport any undocumented immigrants, regardless of criminal record or length of stay in the U.S. Since 2016, ICE encounters with both undocumented individuals and U.S. citizens have increased (Ryo, 2019). ICE’s expansion and arbitrary targeting has sparked widespread fear in the undocumented community in Charlotte and across the country. Given the impact on the clients and students we serve as counselors, I organized a panel as the school counseling track representative for the University of North Carolina at Charlotte’s (UNCC) local chapter of Chi Sigma Iota, Mu Tau Beta; this panel will focus on how counselors can respond to the increased presence of ICE and deportations. I invited Diana Torres, a licensed clinical social worker with Atrium Health and owner of ReNew Support Services PLLC, and Ruth Santana, a U.S. Department of Justice Fully Accredited Representative for the Immigrant Justice Program at Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy. The panel was scheduled as part of UNCC’s 12th Annual Dr. Bob Barret Lecture Series held on Friday, November 8, 2019 that focuses on current multicultural issues in the counseling field.

My name is Laura Markstein (she/her/hers), and I am a second year School Counseling Master's student in the UNCC Counseling program. In addition to serving as the School Counseling Track Representative for Mu Tau Beta, I am a graduate assistant in UNCC’s Office of Identity, Equity, and Engagement and a Graduate Fellow with UNCC’s Center for Graduate Life.

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School and mental health counselors as well as faculty and counseling students had the opportunity to learn from Torres and Santana about: the difference between ICE and the police, the rights of undocumented immigrants, and the legal jurisdiction of ICE. ICE often pretends to be police, using fear tactics to intimidate undocumented immigrants into complying with ICE; despite limited jurisdiction and often unofficial warrants. Due to ICE's use of such tactics, many undocumented individuals are scared to leave their homes, take their children to school, and even attend doctor and therapy appointments. Our panelists encouraged counselors to spend time in the community to build trust, correct misinformation about ICE, and provide services and resources as needed. They informed school counselors of the ways they can support undocumented students and families through facilitating small groups for students and changing policies, such as: alternatives to requiring government identification to enter the building, and educating staff/administrators about how to respond if ICE attempts to enter the school building.

Torres and Santana encouraged counselors to partner with local organizations to educate their agencies and/or schools to provide resources for their undocumented clients and students. These organizations in the Charlotte area include: the Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy, the Latin American Coalition, and the North Carolina ACLU. In particular, the Latin American Coalition conducts workshops where undocumented immigrants can obtain a community identification card. While this card is not government ID, this form of identification can help undocumented individuals access basic services and is supported by Faith Action NC.
Participants left the session with more knowledge about the policies regarding ICE, awareness of resources and support systems for the undocumented community; the skills to better assist undocumented clients and students; and act as social justice advocates in their communities. For those of us who have the privilege of being a U.S. citizen, Torres and Santana urged us to stay informed about local, state, and national policies impacting the immigrant community. We can use this knowledge to vote on behalf of undocumented immigrants, as well as call or write state and national legislators either in support or in opposition to specific policies that impact the immigrant community.

References
As a woman of color, social justice has been a part of my life through a combination of experiences within my personal life and within my hometown of Athens, Georgia. Though my earliest pursuits of social justice were initiated as a member of a marginalized group, when I entered advanced levels of education I realized I actually assumed a dual membership; I was both a member of the oppressed and of the privileged. This realization was both surprising and uplifting, and has enriched my development as a former school counselor, current counselor educator, and social justice advocate in profound ways.

Throughout my life I have heard “if you want to succeed in life you have to work hard”. My high school teachers would often reference that if I did not want to end up working at Burger King, then I should always aim to complete my best work. The implied statement behind those words were that if you did not succeed in life or did end up working at Burger King, then it was because you did not work hard, you failed; and therefore, deserved a life without satisfaction. In truth, I had accepted these statements as valid advice and carried this mentality throughout my P-16 academic career. Upon entering graduate school and beginning my career as school counselor, my life was about pursuing my interests, challenging racial and
sexist stereotypes, and basically living up to the embodiment of by working hard I could overcome systemic barriers and be successful. During my first year as a school counselor working with students living below the poverty line, I got a harsh view of reality about the educational opportunities truly available to these students. It became apparent to me that for many of these students, even those that worked hard, many may still end up at Burger King. What became even more apparent to me, during my first year as a school counselor, was recognizing my success in life was not only due to my ability to work hard in school, but also how my access to resources and support helped me reached my goals.

My research interests, working with elementary students in rural settings and graduate students of color, stem from my personal and professional experiences as a professional school counselor working in a rural school district comprised of students living below the poverty line; as well as my graduate school experiences, which impacted my ability to serve an elementary student population. On my many home visits as a school counselor, I discovered many of my students resided in deplorable housing conditions that lacked clean water, secure housing foundations, and sometimes even a front door. These students varied in racial/ethnic groups, and lived in these conditions for a majority of their lives. Many of their parents worked multiple jobs, some jobs were at night, and had very little income to support their families.

Given my position as a school counselor, I was one of the few people in my school who saw the homes of these students, and talked with their families about financial difficulties. As a result, I found myself constantly advocating on behalf of my students when I heard teachers or administrators blaming parents for their continued absence within the school building, or equating student’s academic
difficulty to laziness or lack of motivation. From helping students of various cultural groups to advocating for students living in rural areas, I have channeled these experiences into my current role as a counselor educator in preparing future school counselors about the diverse needs of children and adolescents across a P-16 setting.

When I taught Elementary Internship (COU 783) as a counselor educator in Missouri, I encountered school counselors in the rural Midwest who disagreed with my perception of social justice advocacy outside the counseling office; it was suggested that they have limited time to focus on social change, and would rather focus on the day to day crisis situations of students within their building. It is true that even some scholars believe social justice advocacy, outside the counseling office, can be perceived as controversial; potentially leading to a loss of clients and ostracism, particularly for counselors who practice in rural areas where professional visibility is high (Bradley, Werth, Hastings, & Pierce, 2012). In fact, one study reported how school counselors are often hesitant to engage in advocacy in their school settings because of concerns with being disliked or professionally ostracized (McMahan, Singh, Urbano, & Haston, 2010), and, as a result, supported the fears of the school counselors I interacted with across Missouri school districts. While understandable people in the mental health profession would rather leave the active role of social justice advocacy to social psychologists and policy-makers, because that is what they have been trained to do; it is my belief that as individuals in the helping profession it is our social responsibility, our moral responsibility, to ensure children are able to live in a socially just society that encourages positive relationships and self-actualization. Ignoring the bigger picture affects children’s day to day lives is to maintain the status quo, and stand aside silently while oppression occurs (Rupani, 2013).
Therefore, I passionately encourage school counseling interns to become active members of social justice advocacy. Becoming social justice change agents compels mental health professionals, across all specializations, to understand how members of the dominant group are also negatively impacted by systemic oppression; though, not in the same manner as members of marginalized groups (Edwards, 2006). I believe through collaboration with members of privileged and marginalized groups a mutual partnership can develop in their overall efforts to end systemic oppression. Only through one’s involvement in social action can we, as a helping profession, move away from our sedentary therapist’s role into a more authentic self; becoming actively engaged in social justice as an extension of our ethical duty to our students (Rupani, 2013).

References

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CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2019 NCCDA AWARD WINNERS

Roy N. Anderson Award (“The Roy”)  
Christy Walker, Durham Technical  
Community College

New Professional Award  
Stacey Huffman, UNC-Wilmington

Outstanding Program Award: Purpose at Peace,  
William Peace University,  
Julie Cline, Chelsea Hayes, Kasha Klineges
The North Carolina Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling, through its Exemplary Practices Award, will recognize a person who best exemplifies the mission of the NCAARC. The mission of NCAARC can be found at https://nccounselingassociation.org/ncca-divisions/ncaarc/

By annually giving this award, NCAARC seeks to acknowledge the rendering of important work in assessment/research; examples include outstanding use of assessment/research in counseling practice, publication of research that holds significance for the counseling profession, or creation of an exemplary counseling assessment.

Nominees are required to be members of NCAARC. Members of the NCAARC Executive Council and Co-Chairs of the Award Committee are not eligible to be nominated during their terms of service.

If you would like to nominate yourself or a deserving colleague for the NCAARC Exemplary Practices Award, please send your nomination to nastargell@gmail.com by January 17, 2020.

Please submit the following materials:
All documents should be amalgamated into one .pdf file and submitted to the Award Committee.
- A vita or resume for the individual being nominated.
- A nomination letter outlining how the nominee exemplifies the mission of the NCAARC and the important work they have done in assessment/research.
- Any supporting documents to provide evidence for the contribution of the individual.

Awards will be announced at the annual NCCA conference in February 2020.
North Carolina Association of Child and Adolescent Counseling (ACAC-NC) Update
Amy Grybush

The North Carolina Association of Child and Adolescent Counseling (ACAC-NC) has recently elected its 2019 Board. Our board consists of counselor educators, professionals in the field, and graduate students - both at the doctoral and master’s level.

Dr. Courtney Evans - President
Dr. Andrea Barbian-Shimberg – President-Elect
Dr. Theresa Kascak – Past President
Camila Pulgar - Secretary
Amy Grybush - Trustee-Communications
Jenna Taylor - Trustee-Membership
Dr. Jonathan Ricks - Trustee-Special Projects

The mission of ACAC-NC is to:

a. promote greater awareness, understanding, and advocacy for professional counseling services that aim to improve the educational, emotional, and social functioning of children and adolescents. Such services include, but are not limited to, individual and group counseling, consultation and collaboration, diagnostic

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assessment, program development, and referral services. This advocacy is founded on the premise that children and adolescents who receive appropriate assistance to handle personal, social, career, and educational issues and challenges will more likely meet with success in their overall development and in making important life decisions.

b. Support the development of research-based, best practice models for delivering child and adolescent counseling in both community and school settings. The ACAC-NC provides and fosters professional development for counselors who serve children and adolescents, families, and related practitioners in the community. At the same time, ACAC-NC endorses preparation standards and certification and licensure processes sanctioned by the counseling profession (such as, the Council for Accreditation and Related Educational Programs, the National Board of Certified Counselors, State Licensing Boards, and the American Counseling Association.

c. Publicize research-based, best practice models to verify effective models, programs, interventions, and strategies used in the ethical practice of counseling and related services when working with children and adolescents in a variety of professional services. Its purpose in these endeavors is to raise the standards of practice with children and adolescents in counseling, psychotherapy, and mental health.
One of our goals for the coming year is to grow our membership, and in order to do so, we need your help! We would love the opportunity to meet and talk with you at this year’s NCCA conference in Charlotte, NC. Stop by our booth, introduce yourselves, and give us your thoughts! We will have information on getting involved with the branch, some fabulous giveaways, and will be conducting a raffle for several gift baskets. We look forward to seeing you in February at the NCCA conference!

Sincerely,

Amy Grybush, MA, LPCA, NCC
Doctoral Candidate | Counselor Education and Supervision
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
ACAC-NC Trustee-Communications
Big things are happening in the world of substance use and criminal justice-related counseling. Nationwide, conversations are underway transforming how addiction and offender counselors serve their communities. Closer to home, the North Carolina Addiction and Offender Counselor Association (NCAOCA) is preparing for the 2020 North Carolina Counseling Association (NCCA) conference.

NCAOCA is the division of the NCCA focused on advancing the counseling practice of those who work to reduce the impact of addiction or involvement with the criminal justice system. NCAOCA members train and supervise NC's addiction and offender workforce as well as provide direct services to affected individuals and families. As President of the NCAOCA, I am excited to walk with you into a future where we collectively share the innovations used to solve the challenges our communities face.

The NCCA annual conference, scheduled for 26-28 February 2020 in Charlotte, is coming together. Although I will miss visiting Durham, where we met for several years, I am excited to convene in Charlotte and share the city with visiting colleagues. The Light Rail connects the university to funky midtown hangouts.
and uptown dining; the conference itself promises learning and joining opportunities. In previous conference sessions, I learned about counseling theories and techniques, as well as about private practice and the protection of intellectual property. I expect the 2020 events to be just as enlightening.

As a professional organization, there is so much to discuss. Recent journalism (Kane, 2019) highlights a rise in inmate suicide rates in North Carolina without accompanying policy changes necessary to prevent loss of life. NC Attorney General Josh Stein is in negotiations for a significant pool of money to support treatment for substance use disorders (Worf, 23 October 2019). Adolescents and emerging adults are increasing their use of nicotine and cannabis with traditional and vaping devices (NCDHHS, 2018; USDHHS, 2019). These are just a few of the issues leading the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics to predict a 22% rise in demand for counselors over the coming decade.

Some good news is that the addiction and offender counseling field is flexible and able to adapt to change; and NCAOCA members are there in the garden. Peer support specialists are gaining recognition and employment in the field through certification and changes in funding. The Mecklenburg County jail recently opened a voluntary psychiatric unit—a North Carolina first. Across the state, local associations work to reduce the impact of substance use on individuals, families, and communities. One such local association is the Mecklenburg County SUD Task Force.

At the height of the opioid epidemic, community members and treatment providers in Charlotte came together to figure out some best next steps. The Mecklenburg County SUD Task Force has four workgroups to educate the community, support harm reduction efforts, address prescription medication supply and disposal, and

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create pathways for transition from active use to treatment and recovery.

The transitional care workgroup gives local hospital systems, treatment providers, and funders a collaborative think tank to test innovative models of care. Workgroup members use data to support pilot projects across the community. One project has several interlocking parts. Local emergency departments are training prescribers to initiate Medication-Assisted Treatment with overdose survivors. The hospitals are hiring peer support specialists to increase treatment engagement, and the provider network is streamlining assessment and intake procedures to quicken access to services.

The harm reduction workgroup supports the expansion of harm reduction efforts and works directly with opioid consumers. Syringe exchanges, post-overdose support programs, medication drop-off locations, and safe injection sites are gaining popularity across the state. These efforts, while controversial, save lives and provide a pathway to treatment.

The strength of NCAOCA is our members. Membership offers opportunities to develop leadership skills, present your research, and join a professional network of counselor educators, practitioners, and graduate students. Members want to hear about your innovative ideas, and we want to share them for our collective strength. Conference presentations are an excellent, fun way to share your stories and collect more thoughts for your research.

Division leadership is another way to network and drive systemic change. Officer elections are held during the annual conference, consider sharing your energy for the field by joining the leadership team. NCAOCA officer plan conference activities and promote members' accomplishments. Even if you are hesitant about...
leadership opportunities today, you can help plan for the networking and social events; after all, all work and no play ... is not refreshing. Join or renew your membership to share your talents and help support the division and the field. Look for exciting NCAOCA events throughout the year. We hope to see you in Charlotte to hear about the exciting work you are engaged with in your home community.
Less Jargon, More Clarity: The Benefits of Participating in a 3MT Competition
Whitney McLaughlin

Every profession has a specialized language that scholars, researchers, and practitioners use to communicate information. However, it takes a certain level of mental dexterity to ethically translate and disseminate research to the general public. Fortunately, there are events like the Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition giving graduate students the opportunity to share their research with an audience without the use of jargon from their discipline.

Recently, I participated in the 5th annual 3MT competition at NC State University. This event is an internationally recognized competition developed by the University of Queensland (UQ) in Brisbane, Australia in 2008. At the inaugural competition, 160 graduate students participated; and, since then, the event has grown substantially. To date, more than 600 universities across more than 65 countries hold a 3MT competition each year. According to UQ’s website, 3MT is described as “…a competition [that] cultivates students’ academic, presentation, and research communication skills. Presenting in a 3MT competition increases their capacity to effectively explain their research in three minutes, in a language appropriate to a non-specialist audience.” (University of Queensland, 2019). Using one static PowerPoint slide, 3MT finalists convey the essence and significance of their master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation research in an engaging and

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informative way to a general audience in under three minutes. The 3MT competition is not a platform for contestants to trivialize or “dumb down” research. It requires students to consolidate their ideas, crystallize their research outcomes, and capture the attention of the audience.

Although I did not place in the top three at NC State’s event, I found several benefits from participating in the 3MT competition. First, I gained confidence in my ability to communicate my research. My dissertation involves developing and implementing a customized brain-based education and wellness intervention with an underserved population to enhance participants’ coping flexibility. The research methodology I used for my study was a rigorous N=1/ABA single subject experimental design. While preparing for the competition, I learned how to eliminate jargon related to my methodology and instead, focus on summarizing key points and the practical applications of my research. Additional feedback from 3MT coaches helped me create a framework for my presentation and organize my material in a logical sequence.

Another benefit from my participation in the 3MT competition was having the opportunity to hone my public speaking skills. Communicating my research to a live audience, in under three minutes, forced me to be concise and articulate under pressure. Public speaking is truly an art taking laser-like focus to capture attention and convey a meaningful message. In the 3MT competition, finalists have to engage the judges and audience in order to place in the top two or be voted as the People’s Choice winner. 3MT participants are assessed on two main areas: comprehension and content, and engagement and communication. The hours of coaching and practice for the competition helped me refine my presentation content to provide adequate background information and identify research significance. The preparation process also helped improve my stage
presence including my vocal range, intonation, and stance.

Lastly, being a 3MT finalist enhanced my overall self-efficacy. Preparing for the competition was a very time-consuming task while writing my dissertation. I was the first student from a Counselor Education program to participate in the competition at NC State, which has been dominated by graduate students from STEM-focused programs. The competition gave me the opportunity to represent the counseling profession and share innovative research being conducted in our field.

Overall, I highly recommend masters and doctoral counseling students participate in the 3MT competition at their respective institutions. The event provides ample networking opportunities, and gives participants the chance to learn about research being conducted by other graduate students in other areas of study. The experience was well worth the time, energy, and effort it took to condense an 88,000-word dissertation into a three-minute presentation.
The Myth of “I Got Nothing”

Randi Konikoff

Ever find yourself staring back at a client who has just poured their heart out to you, anguish and pain dripping from every word and you think, “I got nothing!” Scanning your brain files, searching for a tool, an exercise, a Facebook quote, anything to offer at that moment. It can feel like Psychotherapist Impotence (PI). It happens to us all, it is no big deal and it does not mean we will never have another therapeutic thought.

The transformational powers of therapy come from more than just what we say. If we are attending to our client, showing genuine concern, the client is the recipient of healing neurological benefits without a single utterance on our part. Now, I am not saying we can take a vow of silence or communicate through Vulcan Mind Meld, but simply to consider the effectiveness of empathic attending. This is a form of listening which naturally encourages others to speak.

Many therapists discount their listening skills. With so many exciting therapies and interventions available, we sometimes fall into the trap of believing we must be EMDRing and DBTing in order to be effective. As trained practitioners we have finely tuned listening skills with which to detect behavioral patterns. All the while scanning for non-verbals, body signals, and facial expressions.

Randi Konikoff, Ph.D., LPCS, LCAS, CEAP is a neuropsychotherapist with a specialty in addictions. She owns a private practice in Charlotte, North Carolina and is the author of two books, My Reality Check Bounced and The Little Egg; When Walking on Egg Shells Ain’t All It’s Cracked Up to Be.

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Finally putting all that together and spoon feeding our responses to the client in a therapeutic and palpable concoction.

Sometimes “I got nothing” means I am allowing my client to listen to their own words; words, sometimes, they have never spoken out loud. Sometimes feelings they have never risked feeling. Sometimes that is what is necessary for growth. Sometimes it is therapeutic to just shut up; and that is an art in itself.
Suicide rates have been increasing over the years and are now impacting communities at a higher rate than ever before (World Health Organization [WHO], 2014). In recent years, suicide has taken more lives than war, murder, and natural disasters combined. Suicide is a major public health concern and the 10th leading cause of death in the United States, with over 41,149 deaths by suicide occurring annually (Murphy, Xu, & Kochanek, 2013). Suicide has also become a public health concern due to the financial and human cost it has on communities, individuals, and families. Suicide occupational loss and direct healthcare costs have been estimated to be $34 billion annually (WHO, 2014). Suicide not only affects those who attempt or are successful at ending their life, but many others. When someone ends their life, first responders, clinicians, employers, colleagues, and many other people are affected directly and indirectly.

It is important to know that certain populations are affected by suicide at rates higher than others. People between the ages of 10-14 year olds, 15-24 year olds and 25-34 year olds are particularly at risk for dying from suicide. The subgroup that will be highlighted in this article are young collegiate adults from ages 18-29 years old. Suicide is listed as the 2nd leading cause of death for individuals 18-29 years old (WHO, 2014). Over 1,100 students die by suicide each year, and it is

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estimated that for individuals Ages 18 to 29 years old, 2.9 million people have suicidal thoughts (Murphy et al., 2013).

Vulnerability in Collegiate Adults

So why are young collegiate adults being affected by suicide at such a large rate? College students are extremely vulnerable to stressors; for instance, 43.7% of college students report experiencing above-average stress, 11% report tremendous stress. Out of those totals it was reported that 30.3% of students have experienced a negative impact on their academic performance due to stress. Female students consistently reported higher levels of stress versus their male counterparts (American College Health Association, 2014). The Collegiate-related stressors that were included, were academic difficulties, vocational concerns, financial strain, and interpersonal problems, and many more (Aselton, 2012). Often times college students are experiencing many transitions at once in a short period of time, without having their natural supports present, while also being in an unfamiliar environment. College is more expensive than ever before, and the amount of money students borrow for school is also on the rise; which is causing strain for many.

College students experiencing high stress, whether social, financial, or academic, may feel overwhelmed and unable to resolve their stressors and, as a result, may develop low mood or become hopeless about their future. Such feelings of distress and helplessness may contribute to the prevalence and intensity of additional symptoms of depression and ultimately to suicidal behavior. During such difficult times when conceivably a college student may be in the most need of assistance, barriers to accessing treatment, including stigma against mental illness and its treatment, could have lethal consequences.
The typical stressors of most college students have been taken into consideration and studied however, the direct cause of the increasing number of suicides among college students is still unclear. Research has shown some association between perceived stress and suicidal behaviors, and how the influence of perceived stress can lower mental health functioning. One mental health concern that showed up often in college student’s was depression (Gonda, Fountoulakis, Kaprinis, & Rihmer, 2007); 12% of college students reported being diagnosed or treated for depression, and 12.8% reported that depression hindered their academic success, with more females than males reporting being diagnosed with and experiencing impairment from depression. Depressive symptoms were found to be an independent contributor to suicidal behavior; for example, approximately 90% of people who attempt suicide each year suffer from depression (Gonda et al., 2007).

This is not to say that depression alone is the only mental health diagnosis that may increase suicide attempts or ideations. Diagnoses such as bipolar, substance misuse disorder, borderline personality disorder, in addition to personality features such as impulsivity and aggressiveness can increase someone’s risk factors for suicide.

**Taking Action**

College counseling centers are resources for students experiencing mental and emotional distress, however college counseling center staff and the number of students needing services are imbalanced. 88% of college counseling center directors have reported students may not receive treatment in a timely manner as well as they do not always receive the treatment that they need (Crosby, Ortega, & Melanson, 2011); due to the demand for services being greater than the supply of service providers on campus. College counseling centers were not designed to deliver mental health services for chronic concerns but for problems able to be treated short term. Therefore, often time’s, a student may be referred out for long term care and psychiatric care for medication.
Education and prevention outreach is very important. There are findings that suggest stigma reduction should be a point of emphasis in any outreach or training programs; subsequently, because it has been shown that many students will not seek help due to stigma. On college campuses, student-driven campaigns to educate, promote awareness, and reduce stigma, appear to be effective. There are interventions that already exist to address depression and suicide directly; including peer and gatekeeper training programs developed specifically for college campuses. These programs are helpful with providing peer support on campus.

**In Summary**

Suicide is unpredictable and sometimes there are no signs; however, sometimes there are signs that we can watch for, especially in vulnerable populations. Some warning signs a person is contemplating suicide may be someone mentioning wanting to die, feeling like a burden to others, feeling hopeless, or not having a reason to live. Some warning behaviors a person is contemplating suicide are extreme mood swings, using more drugs, taking excessive dangerous risks, withdrawing from others, and isolating themselves. If you think someone is contemplating suicide, ask them. If they say they are contemplating suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK.
Overwhelmed: Suicide Rates Increasing Among Young Adults

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References

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Do you have a contribution for the Carolina Counselor?

Would you like to discuss a potential idea for this newsletter?

email Nicole Stargell at nccounselingassociationweb@gmail.com
The fundamental purposes of the North Carolina Counseling Association shall be:

- To provide a united organization through which all persons engaged or interested in any phase of the counseling profession can exchange ideas, seek solutions to common problems, and stimulate their professional growth.
- To promote professional standards and advocacy for the counseling profession.
- To promote high standards of professional conduct among counselors.
- To promote the acceptance and value of individual differences and the well-being of all individuals.
- To conduct professional, educational, and scientific meetings and conferences for counselors.
- To encourage scientific research and creative activity in the field of counseling.
- To become an effective voice for professional counseling by disseminating information on, and promoting, legislation affecting counseling.
- To encourage and support the divisions and chapters.

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