

Welcome to the Edge of Counselling!

Transformative Inquiry (TI) can engage you in ways that you may not have experienced before in other classroom settings. The process offers time and space for you to explore personal worldviews, reflect on past touchstone experiences, and delve into affective aspects of your inquiry pursuits. The depths of these explorations are left up to each individual and sometimes your choice can lead to complex and even challenging emotional landscapes. We call this the *edge of counseling* because it is unfamiliar terrain for many educators.

As you are becoming a teacher within our program, you may find that your comfortable patterns of beliefs, values and attitudes are disrupted; your personal dispositions might be put into question, you may be asked to think outside your familiar box, you may begin to see the world from a new perspective that you hadn't imagined before. There is room within the TI course to hold some of this important process, but some students have found they need more support. **The process of TI can be therapeutic, but it does not replace formal counselling.** While we have had some exposure to the process¹, the instructors in this course are not certified counsellors. Hence, formal counselling can be very useful, supportive and congruous with the process of becoming a teacher.

This handout outlines information and services for students at UVic who would like to pursue counselling or further support. Understanding the resources that are available to you will engage you as a more mindful teacher.

UVic Counselling

UVic provides confidential free professional counselling to all enrolled degree program University of Victoria students. There are a number of individual counselling appointments including

- Regular appointments
- Urgent (30 minute sessions)
- Check-ins (15-20 minute quick sessions)
- Walk-in sessions
- Emergency appointments

Link to UVic's counselling: <http://www.coun.uvic.ca>
Phone number for booking appointments: 250-721-8341

Your Health Plan

As a UVic student, If you haven't opted out of the UVic Student Society's Health Coverage, you will be able to claim basic rates for registered psychologist sessions outside of the campus-based ones. Look at the website: www.ihaveaplan.ca for more information.

The Plan covers 80% of the cost of a psychologist, up to a maximum of \$500 per calendar year. Please note that you need a referral by a medical doctor to be covered for visits to a psychologist.

¹ This document was shaped in collaboration with Indrus Piché, registered clinical counsellor of transpersonal psychology

Vancouver Island Crisis Line

Crisis phone lines with trained counsellors are available 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Three phone options are available from the Mission of Vancouver Island Crisis Line.

The Vancouver Island Crisis Society is committed to providing an accessible, 24-hour, telephone crisis and suicide prevention, intervention service, including postvention programs. We endeavour to provide emotional support during times of crisis, information about community resources, education intended to promote community wellness, and reduce the incidence of suicide. We value the principles of confidentiality, non-judgemental acceptance, respect for diversity, personal empowerment, and cooperation.

Vancouver Island Crisis Line: 1-888-494-3888

Vancouver Island Suicide Line: 1-800-784-2433

Crisis Society: 250-310-6789

Vancouver, Sea to Sky, and Sunshine Coast

<http://www.crisiscentre.bc.ca/> • 604.872.3311

Interior and Kootenays British Columbia • 1-888-353-CARE (2273)

Northern BC Crisis line

<http://www.northernbccrisissuicide.ca> • 1-888-562-1214 (adult) • 1-888-564-8336 (youth)

Various other crisis lines in BC that are updated at the Crisis Line association of British Columbia:

<http://www.crisislines.bc.ca>

Common issues you can talk about include, but are not limited to:

- Anxiety and Stress
- Relationship difficulties
- Depression
- Health and Wellness
- Loss and Grief
- Family
- Self-esteem
- Loneliness
- Compulsive behavior
- Panic attacks
- Learning difficulties
- Drug or alcohol problems
- Suicidal thoughts
- Career direction
- Self-awareness and values
- Academic performance
- Procrastination
- Time management
- Transition and adjustment

Choosing a counsellor or therapist

Therapy has a social stigma that can cloud its value. Often people entering counseling or therapy for the first time can feel alienated or uncomfortable. Sometimes this can come down to tension

or lack of connection with a therapist. Some things to consider when choosing a counsellor or therapist:

1. Does the counsellor's general philosophy or approach to her/his work make sense or feel good to you?
2. Does the counsellor provide expectations of what he/she can and cannot accomplish or practice?
3. Does your counsellor ensure confidentiality excepting life-threatening or legal limitations?
4. How does it feel to work (or even sit) with the counsellor?

The answer to these questions should give you a sense of understanding about your connection to a particular counsellor. Understanding that relationships are co-built and that 'clicking immediately' might not be possible, know that the connection to a particular counsellor can be fruitful in the long term.

Guidelines for a safe-enough space

This course is designed to support students who choose to be vulnerable, explore complex and sometimes touchy subjects, and be open about their intentions, visions, and ideas as educators. With this in mind, the course also provides time and space for you to witness each other in an awakened state, which can sometimes trigger emotions. Our list below offers basic guidelines² for helping create classrooms that feels *safe-enough*. There is never truly a "safe" space, but there are places that can be safe enough to share the deep, honest and vulnerable thoughts that transform us into better educators.

- Be the change we want to see by acting towards each other in a manner that reflects our vision of a peaceful and just world
- Check our assumptions about who people are, how they identify and what their life experiences have been
- Engage in conversations by listening carefully, not interrupting, and making room for everyone to participate
- Use language that is positive in nature and respectful of everyone around us;
- Mind our impact by demonstrating respect for the people and property of UVic, the neighbourhood, and the greater Victoria community
- Respect ourselves and each other by making sure our interactions are consensual
- Challenge abuses of power with strategies based on accountability, healing and undoing oppression
- Respect your own personal boundaries and safety such that you practice sustainable self care

Combined with these guidelines comes a few classroom principles that we ask everyone to follow in order to strive for ongoing safety and wellbeing:

² Adapted from Lost Lyrics 5-year Anniversary Conference: Roots of the Rose, Ryerson College, Toronto, ON, June 2, 2012

- 1) If you feel the need to leave, skip, or not engage in class, please communicate this to your instructor by email or in person as soon as possible.
- 2) Expect follow up emails from your instructor if you are distressed, quiet, or un-engaged in class.
- 3) Before sharing personal stories, vulnerabilities, or deep thoughts please consider the following questions:
 - a) What is your intent in sharing this story?
 - b) What would telling this story mean to you?
 - c) How do you believe it is valuable for the group?
 - d) How can your story impact how the group learns to be better teachers?

Supporting you and each other beyond the course

When you leave the program, you will be teaching in situations that can be highly emotional. You need to think about what you can realistically offer and what your self-care should look like. Do not offer what you cannot deliver on. What systems are there to support you? What resources are available for your students? Is there a document like this in the school? What is the procedure for students feeling anxiety, depression or being “off”? What should be in place for students in need?

This is true of the TI course as well. It is your responsibility to set up a structure for staying in touch with your colleagues. Think about how you can build methods for communication such that it works for you. Some pieces that can be offered as support beyond this course are the following:

- Facebook/self created groups
- Keeping in touch with your instructor
- Continue to develop self care practices where compassion of self is central
- Return to this and the iBook to read sections about emotion and support