

# **SIUE Counseling Services Amplifies Teletherapy Options and Outreach**

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EDWARDSVILLE – “Life has changed in dramatic and unforeseen ways. As a result, perceptions, sensations, feelings, thoughts, behaviors and interactions outside of the norm are to be expected. High doses of grace are needed as we think about ourselves and those with whom we are in personal and professional contact.”

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Director of Counseling Services Dr. Courtney Boddie, a licensed and board-certified fellow in counseling, suggests we step back and think about the responses many are having as the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changes our daily lives, bringing about great challenges and uncertainties.

Counseling Services is maintaining its commitment to students as they manage those obstacles and experience anxiety and many other emotions. To maintain its availability, Counseling Services has shifted completely to teletherapy through its secure Therapist Assisted Online (TAO) program.

Boddie and his team are also sharing extensive resource information with students and the campus community on topics such as psychological crises, accessing counseling in the community and psychoeducation resources. Resources are listed at [siue.edu/counseling/in-an-emergency](http://siue.edu/counseling/in-an-emergency). Recommendations on how faculty and staff can direct students to support has been shared via campus wide email updates.

“The last few weeks have been challenging for us all,” Boddie said in an email to the SIUE campus community. “Despite the challenges, I find myself inspired and grateful for our talented community, who have demonstrated creativity in the face of unprecedented shifts on such a short timeline.”

According to Boddie, the current situation and Counseling Services’ shift to teletherapy has brought a number of revelations on well-being, the amalgamation of which have contributed to increases in utilization of TAO, the number of Care Reports per day, and in case management for social service needs.

When reviewing the revelations, Boddie notes that circumstances have brought to the forefront the role of trait factors like personality characteristics (i.e. openness to new experiences, extroversion, neuroticism).

“For example, while those of us with a preference toward introversion may be fairing reasonably well with the reduction in human contact, the same may not be true for our extroverted counterparts,” Boddie explained.

Also emerging, is the importance of situational, or state, factors in psychological health, such as shifts in access to live student activities, navigating relationships with roommates, learning digitally versus in-person and more. Boddie notes that “for some students, being at home is beneficial. For others, it may be central to the need for psychotherapy during their college experience.”

A crucial lesson about the relationship between social class status and access to resources is also unfolding.

“With the ubiquity of technology, it is easy to presume that everyone lives in a situation where WiFi, smart phones, smart. TVs, headphones and other related technology elements abound,” Boddie stated. “The present circumstance has taught us that this is simply not the case.”

Finally, the circumstances have demonstrated the significance of accessibility as a central topic in 21st century education.

“We certainly have a lot to think about as we plan for transitioning back to life on campus,” Boddie added. “A major question will be: How can what we learned about remote operations create opportunities for members of the campus community to thrive?”

Boddie advises students to pepper in emotion-rich experiences throughout the day.

“Feelings and thoughts are amazingly interconnected,” he said. “For many, motivation level seems to have plummeted. Emotional activation is often needed in order for something to be interesting and lead one to lean in versus away. I recommend adding moments for music, brief videos, poems, meditations, conversation and other readings that elicit joy and excitement. If one thing doesn’t work, try something else. You may find that this helps you to increase time on task, reduce procrastination and boost motivation during low moments.”

According to Boddie, accountability and support are needed now more than ever. He recommends students find a way to establish frequent, brief contact with peers and mentors.

“This will remind individuals that they are not alone in attempting to adjust to a novel situation,” he explained. “It may also help disrupt the feelings of isolation that are now prominent for all of us and restore our sense of belonging in communities of it.”

Anyone worried about a student or their mental health is encouraged to submit a Care Report for follow up by Counseling Services and the Office of Student Affairs. If a student is believed to be at risk for harming self or others, please contact SIUE Police at 618-650-3324 to request a welfare check.

Though a service designed for students, Counseling Services supports University personnel through psychoeducation (i.e. outreach and prevention education) and

consultation. Even remotely, outreach activity has occurred since Governor J. B. Pritzker's Stay-at-Home Order. These opportunities continue to be available upon request at [siue.edu/counseling/contact](https://siue.edu/counseling/contact).

*Southern Illinois University Edwardsville provides students with a high quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live.*