

Buffalo Hide Academy Board Report – 9/10/82

It's been a great start to the year at Buffalo Hide Academy. We currently have 88 students enrolled at BHA and attendance has been way better than last year so far. The vibes have been great in the building, and we've been working diligently to imbue our students with respect, empathy, and our unique value system. So far, they've been super receptive and seem to enjoy the new experience of being at BHA. I do want to mention that at this time we have 9 students that are OTA's (5th year +). Some of these students will even have trouble graduating this year based on their current credit totals. I know in our SLT meetings we've discussed this issue, and it will be a focus to encourage seniors to finish up in 4 years moving forward. But for right now, we've felt the right thing to do is to try to help our 5th year students ultimately wrap up too.

Suicide prevention month

September is suicide prevention month. In the spirit of this, we strive to offer relevant information to our students regarding suicidality, suicide risk, as well as new coping mechanisms to try out during stressful times. Discussing suicide with our students (in a safe, clinically informed way) is a regular part of our SEL platform, and providing opportunities to offset suicidality is really the primary goal of our entire wellness initiative.

One of the main tenets we help our students understand is that you don't have to be clinically depressed or have a mental illness to experience suicidal thoughts and feelings. Society has sort of tricked us into thinking the opposite, but the truth is that suicidality is extremely common.

This awareness helps normalize the issue for our students, which can also reduce the shame associated with somebody struggling this way. This process is basically the "depathologizing" experience we hope helps our students feel more comfortable approaching in distress.

Another extremely important aspect of our approach to dealing with suicidal students is to help them understand that our suicidal risk fluctuates, it is not concrete (meaning being of the same intensity for an extended period of time). This is a critical notion, because research shows that our suicidal impulses may appear somewhat quickly, and they also may disappear somewhat abruptly too. So we emphasize being prepared, and helping our students work on skills to utilize in those particularly dark moments (because they tend to not last long). So if our students are equipped with the coping skills to get through those moments (see the slide below) then we can offer more protection from suicidal distress.

Lethal Means Counseling

Risk Fluctuates.....Bryan and Rudd (2020) summarized the pertinent research:

The final decision regarding the suicide attempt method typically occurs approximately 2 hours prior to the attempt, the final decision regarding the location of the attempt typically occurs approximately 30 minutes prior to the attempt, and the final decision to act typically occurs approximately 5 minutes prior to the attempt.

Point being - weather the storm, keep the fire burning.

CBT Homework

Three “Pretty Alright” Things

This practice involves orienting *cognitions* toward positive attributes.

- For seven consecutive days, begin your practice of looking for and paying attention to positive life experiences, no matter how small.
- At the end of every day, document three cool things that happened to you. You can write in a journal, phone app, pen and paper, whatever.
- Tell me why you think these things happened.
- Do this for seven days, and at the end of the 7th day, please reflect and write a one-page summary on what it was like to try to focus on *positive* experiences each night.

Upcoming workshop for district counseling staff next week @ BHA

Some IHS personnel, in partnership with several professors in the clinical psych. department at UCLA will be visiting BHA next week to offer several workshops to district staff focused on psychological first aid and trauma focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT). The workshop will be offered in two sessions and will focus on the “PRAC” elements of TF-CBT (Psychoeducation, Relaxation Skills, Affective Regulation, and Cognitive Coping). These are skills that translate well to our student population and offer ways to cope with distress that are adaptive and sustainable.

Part of being a trauma informed institution carries with it the responsibility to offer tangible coping skills for our students to incorporate into their “toolkits” to use when distressed. This being based on the understanding that the trauma’s our students experience may not necessarily subside.