

NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO?

What is counseling? Counseling, though not a common practice in many countries and cultures, is often used in the United States to help individuals manage stress and enhance personal growth. At **West Virginia University's Carruth Center for Counseling and Psychological Services**, you can meet with safe, supportive counselors to discuss any concerns you might have. Our Center extends a warm welcome to men and women of all ages, races, ethnicities, nationalities, faiths, and sexual orientations.

Why would I meet with a counselor? Many students experience concerns during their academic career. As an international student, you may experience some concerns that are unique to your adjustment to this new country, new language, and new expectations. The following are some examples of concerns you might talk to a counselor about:

- Adjusting to and understanding the new culture
- Being unsure how to make friends with people from different cultures
- Questioning your career decisions
- Feeling lonely
- Not being understood when you express yourself in a new language
- Feeling unsure of yourself and your abilities
- Wondering if you should stay or return to your home country
- Experiencing relationship issues
- Struggling to find time to meet family obligations and commitments
- Feeling fearful of the unknown
- Having financial concerns
- Dating people from different cultures
- Feeling confused about which values to live by
- Missing family and friends
- Managing academic pressures
- Feeling confused

Counseling services are private, confidential, and generally free to fee-paying WVU students. The Carruth Center will not report your concerns to any office, individual or group (including your family and friends) without your approval and consent to do so. Confidentiality is broken only under specific reasons (i.e. threats to your safety or the safety of others), which your counselor will discuss with you.

The Carruth Center is located on the 3rd floor of the Student Services Center on College Avenue on the downtown campus. We offer to all fee-paying WVU students same day help or consultation through our Walk-in Counseling Clinic. It operates Monday through Friday, 9 AM – 4 PM on a first-come, first-serve basis. Students who are unable to come during those hours may call 293-4431.

Some Cultural Adjustment Tips

Don't forget home! Keep in touch with your family and friends back in your hometown and country. Send e-mail, write letters or postcards, call when possible, and remember birthdays and holidays. They'll look forward to hearing from you and you'll have lots of news to share!

Missing home cooked food? Buy groceries from one of the local stores and prepare foods that remind you of home. If you want to be brave, share what you have cooked with new friends.

Spending a lot of time alone? Try to avoid staying alone in your room every night. Go out with a new friend and check out local attractions. Some ideas include seeing a movie, visiting a place of worship, working out in the WVU's Recreation Center, bowling in the Mountain lair, visiting Cooper's Rock, and heading north to Pittsburgh.

Wondering who else is here from your home country? Make friends with people who know your country or hometown. Ask the Office of International Students and Scholars to help you get in touch with people who have lived in your country.

Get involved! Join one or more of the over 300 student clubs and organizations on WVU's campus, which are listed on WVU's website. It's a great way to meet people with similar interests and help you feel more at home.

Too shy to speak? Don't be afraid to try new words or practice English. It takes a lot of effort to learn a new language and most people will be patient as you learn.

Wondering about what's happening back home? Have your family or friends send local newspapers from time to time and/or check out the news on the Internet.

Still not liking your new home away from home? Try thinking of one thing each day you do like about this new place and its people.

Need help making sense of it all? Keep a journal of your experiences. One way to do it is to adopt this simple three step process:

1st step - Describe what you are seeing, feeling, tasting, smelling, and hearing

2nd step – Interpret what you are describing, being sure to use only your experience as a guide

3rd step – Evaluate what you are interpreting

Remember cultural adjustment takes time. It is not uncommon for individuals to experience cultural adjustment in three stages: the honeymoon stage, which is often filled with excitement and anticipation; the uncomfortable stage, which can be filled with frustration, anger, depression, academic problems, homesickness, loss of humor, boredom, and sleep/eating difficulties; and the adjustment stage, which is often characterized by relaxed mood and increased confidence and competence. Some individuals experience these stages more than once, while others don't experience these stages at all. So don't be discouraged if your adjustment takes time.

Go easy on yourself. Many people struggle with the tasks of cultural adjustment: leaving behind family, friends, hometown, and home language to undertake academic study in a new country with different customs, values, language, food, weather, and people. Sometimes it may feel like this was a bad idea! But don't give up; instead, pat yourself on the back! What you are doing is pretty amazing! Not everyone can do what you're doing right now! So give yourself some time to adjust.