



# STUDENT COUNSELING SERVICES

*SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN ACHIEVING PERSONAL,  
ACADEMIC, AND LIFELONG GOALS*

## New Client Guide

**205-934-5816**

[Counseling@uab.edu](mailto:Counseling@uab.edu)

[www.uab.edu/counseling](http://www.uab.edu/counseling)

Student Health and Wellness Center

**UAB** STUDENT COUNSELING  
SERVICES

# Welcome to UAB Student Counseling Services

## ***Information about the Counseling Process***

We appreciate your decision to seek counseling. Although no one can solve your problems for you, it is our goal to assist you in resolving problems and coping with life stressors. During the course of counseling, distressing memories, feelings, and thoughts may arise, and insights gained may produce changes that affect various aspects of life, including personal relationships. You have the right to refuse to participate in any area of therapy and to limit your level of personal exploration. We encourage you to promptly communicate any questions, concerns, or plans for therapy to your counselor so we can assist in making counseling as helpful as possible.

## ***Email and Text Message Appointment Reminders***

Reminders are sent via email 24 hours prior to your appointment. To receive text message reminders, log-in to the patient portal then select "Profile." Click "edit" and verify mobile phone carrier (sent two hours prior to your appointment). You can also contact the counseling office to request to opt-in.

## ***Parking***

Limited parking is available for you at the Student Health and Wellness Center, 1714 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue entrance of the Learning Resource Center, when you have health or counseling appointments. If you prefer printing your parking pass from home, follow these instructions.

1. Go to [www.uab.edu/studenthealth](http://www.uab.edu/studenthealth). Log-in to the "Patient Portal Online Scheduling" section with your Blazer ID and password.
3. Select your counseling appointment and choose to print a parking pass.
4. Place this on the inside dashboard of your vehicle when you arrive for your appointment.

## ***Missed Appointments and Late Cancellations***

We expect that you will make every effort to keep your scheduled counseling appointments. If you are unable to keep your appointment, it is important that you notify us at least two hours in advance. Appointments may be cancelled on the [patient portal](#), via phone, or in person. If you fail to cancel within two hours, or are more than 15 minutes late, or fail to come to the appointment at all, you will be considered a "no show" and will incur a \$25 charge per "no-show." If you have two "no-shows" in a semester, you will be required to wait until the following semester to schedule another appointment.

## ***Communicating with your Counselor by Secure Messaging***

In order to ensure the highest level of security and confidentiality, Student Health & Wellness providers communicate with you through the Secure Patient Portal, which is part of your electronic health record. You can log in to the patient portal (using your Blazer ID and password) at our website [https://studentwellness.uab.edu/login\\_directory.aspx](https://studentwellness.uab.edu/login_directory.aspx). Here, you can send and check your messages.

## ***Inclement Weather Closings and Appointments***

In the event of inclement weather, our office will follow the general University closing directives (if classes are cancelled, our department will close and your appointment will be cancelled). Student Counseling Services is NOT considered "a clinic" or "medical services." When University operations re-open, you may contact the office during regular business hours - (205) 934-5816 - to reschedule your appointment.

## ***Mental Health Emergencies***

If you experience a mental health emergency and need immediate assistance, please go to the nearest emergency department or contact 911 or the UAB Police Department (205) 934-3535. 24-hour crisis talk lines are available by calling the Birmingham Crisis Line (205) 323-7777 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800) 273-8255. During regular business hours, you may also contact Student Counseling Services (205-934-5816) for assistance in accessing emergency support.

## What to Expect from Counseling

Congratulations on your decision to pursue counseling; while no one can solve your problems for you, counselors help you learn to cope with life stressors effectively. In order to build a relationship and for treatment planning purposes, counselors spend the first several counseling sessions gathering biological, psychological, social, and spiritual information about you. So that your counselor knows how to help, it is necessary for you to identify your problems and/or needs.

If, at any time, you are having trouble identifying your problems or needs, it may be helpful to use/answer the following prompts.

I am seeking counseling because I want to learn how to \_\_\_\_\_.

I am seeking counseling because I don't know what to do about \_\_\_\_\_.

I am seeking counseling because I want a safe place to talk about \_\_\_\_\_.

I am seeking counseling because I want to change the way I \_\_\_\_\_.

Once you and your counselor identify presenting problems, you will discuss a plan of care. This may include prioritizing your needs, identifying external resources you may need, discussing specific models for treatment (and related risks and benefits), and/or establishing goals for treatment.

In follow up sessions, counselors are responsible for the *structure* of sessions; you are responsible for the *content* of sessions.

In session, and with respect to your needs and goals, it is your responsibility to:

1. Discuss behaviors, feelings, and thoughts
2. Discuss successes, challenges, and barriers
3. Discuss continued or changing needs or problems
4. Ask questions
5. Process assigned tasks or homework

In session, and with respect to your needs and goals, it is the counselor's responsibility to:

1. Teach skills
2. Design/assign therapeutic homework/tasks
3. Provide psychoeducation/answer relevant questions\*
4. Guide you through specific therapeutic processes
5. Provide constructive and/or supportive feedback
6. Listen and ask follow-up questions
7. Challenge thought distortions that may be contributing to problems

\*Note: While counselors may present options or assign tasks designed to facilitate therapeutic progress, counselors do not "give advice" or make decisions for you. They cannot answer the question, "What should I do?" for you.

## Online and Distance Support

Our website offers a variety of self-help and online support for students who may prefer to seek mental health support on your own or who are distance-learners. For additional information about any of these services, please contact our office at 205-934-5816.

You can access these resources on our website at <http://www.uab.edu/students/counseling/students/online-distance-support>



### Therapist Assisted Online (TAO)

TAO therapy is an online platform of tools and educational materials to help you learn about and change how you think and feel. TAO is evidence-based and has been found effective in the treatment of depression, anxiety, and other mental health concerns.

[TAO LOGIN](#)

[LEARN MORE](#)



### eCheckUp to Go - Alcohol Check

The Alcohol eCheckUp To Go is a brief self-assessment that will provide you with accurate and detailed information about:

- Your personal risk patterns
- Your individual level of alcohol tolerance
- Your unique family risk factors
- Harm reduction strategies
- Helpful resources

[ALCOHOL E-CHECKUP TO GO](#)



### eCheckUp to Go - Marijuana Check

The Alcohol and Marijuana eCheckUp To Go is a brief self-assessment that will provide you with accurate and detailed information about:

- Your personal risk patterns
- Your individual level of alcohol tolerance
- Your unique family risk factors
- Harm reduction strategies
- Helpful resources

[MARIJUANA E-CHECKUP TO GO](#)



### ULifeline

Follow the link to ULifeline which contains many mental health resources for UAB students. Students may access these free and anonymous resources to learn more about mental health in general and also answer questions they may have about themselves or their friends.

[ULIFELINE](#)



### Free Online Mental Health Screenings

ULifeline is a confidential, online resource center for mental health concerns particularly related to the college experience.

[ULIFELINE ONLINE MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING](#)



### Mental Health Apps

Numerous mental health apps exist to support and encourage positive mental health practices. Many of these are free and available for download on your device.

[MENTAL HEALTH APPS](#)

## Peer Coaching

For more information or to schedule an appointment: [www.uab.edu/POW](http://www.uab.edu/POW)

# Peer Coaching Now Available!! Schedule online at [uab.edu/POW](http://uab.edu/POW)

*"One person who is truly understanding, who takes the trouble to listen to us as we consider our problems, can change our whole outlook on the world."*



### What is Peer Coaching?

Peer coaching is a peer-driven support service where specially-trained coaches provide confidential, non-judgmental sessions to students seeking assistance with concerns that affect mental health such as stress, being overwhelmed, life-balance, test anxiety, sadness, loneliness, relational issues, homesickness and adjustment concerns.

### Who are Peer Coaches?

Peer coaches are UAB students who have undergone extensive training through completing a semester-long peer education course (CHHS 426) and have passed through a rigorous selection process. Each peer coach has also passed a national exam to become a Nationally Certified Peer Educator. Peer coaches meet weekly with the coaching advisors and participate in regular professional development.



Peer Coaches DO	Peer Coaches do NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• provide active listening and understanding</li><li>• offer problem-solving assistance</li><li>• share information, education, and/or resources</li><li>• offer decision-making assistance</li><li>• provide non-judgmental support</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• give advice - however, they may suggest options or alternatives, identify consequences, and/or share experiences</li><li>• make decisions for others</li><li>• provide formal therapy or clinical treatment</li><li>• replace professional health service providers</li></ul>

### Peer Coaching Appointments

Schedule a 30 minute appointment online at [uab.edu/POW](http://uab.edu/POW)

All appointments are held in the **POW Office Suite**

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor LRC, Student Health and Wellness Center

1714 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue South

For more information, contact Peer Coaching Advisors

Natalie Hottel ([nbeck@uab.edu](mailto:nbeck@uab.edu)) or Herbert Wilkerson ([herbertw@uab.edu](mailto:herbertw@uab.edu)) |



## What is Mindfulness?

- Mindfulness is: careful attention to moment by moment flow of internal/external experience, being fully present without judging internal/external experiences as good/bad or preferred/preferred.
- Mindfulness is not: a relaxation technique, thought stopping, going into a trance, developing spiritual powers, running away from problems, only for monks, changing/controlling others.
- Mindfulness encourages a shift in focus from the fusing with content to observation of its process. In other words, I am not an angry person; I just experience anger.
- It creates a pause; it cultivates an inner witness so that we experience life in a reflective, thoughtful way vs. in a knee-jerk, reactive way.

## Why Mindfulness?

- It's effective in treatment of physical disorders: chronic pain, fibromyalgia, psoriasis, and cancer. When practicing mindfulness, we become a keen observer of our physical pain and that second level, physiological/psychological panic/stress related to the pain (and that contributes to symptoms of pain) does not set in.
- It's effective in treatment of psychological disorders: depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, eating disorders, substance abuse (helps manage cravings), and ADHD. When practicing mindfulness, we learn to observe our mental processes and catch ourselves getting depressed/anxious (etc.) faster. We are able to watch our thoughts and take corrective action more quickly.
- Also improves immune system, interpersonal relationships, compassion for others and self-compassion (which is a high predictor of happiness).
- Brains are plastic, meaning, with practice and intention, neurons can move around and be "rewired." The goal of mindfulness is to rewire neurons so that the "fire together" in adaptive ways.
- Mindfulness acts on the left pre-frontal cortex (part of the brain associated with positive mood states and positive disposition) and the amygdala. The amygdala is the portion of the limbic system that constantly scans the environment for danger and sends off chain reactions throughout the body. Sometimes, it is so fast that the body reacts before mind is consciously aware. The pre-frontal cortex can "override" the amygdala. So, we are aiming to strengthen the pre-frontal cortex so that our stress responses go down.
- Mindfulness will not stop us from being upset. It will reduce the time we spend being upset. Also, the less emotionally reactive we are, the fewer problems we will create.

## Basic Instructions

- Pick a focus – breathing is a good place to start.
- Begin by observing in/out flow of breath.
- Quiet your thoughts; when you catch your mind wandering, bring focus back to your breath
- Don't "scratch the itch," meaning, don't follow the thought, try to solve a problem, etc.; simply notice the thought and return to breathing.
- Be kind to yourself if your mind wanders; acknowledge that it's wandering. Don't judge the thought as good or bad, just label it. An example: "My mind wandered to anger. OK. Now, back to breathing".... "Ah, it went back to anger, oh and resentment too. OK. Now, back to breathing."
- This is not a competition and you can't do this wrong; expect your mind to drift.
- Begin by practicing this 5 minutes a day, 5 days a week. If 5 minutes is too hard, start with 1-2 minutes.
- It might help to tie meditation practice to something you do regularly (like brushing teeth).

## Grounding, Centering, and Mindfulness Techniques

<b>Feet on floor</b>	Focus all of your attention on your feet. Feel the floor under them
<b>Texture of a pebble</b>	Focus all of your attention on the feel of a pebble or coin in your hand
<b>Reorienting</b>	Remind yourself where you are, what today's date is, when you were born, and what you did yesterday.
<b>Colors</b>	Look around & focus your attention on the colors around you, noticing as many colors as you can
<b>Eating</b>	While you are eating, focus all of your attention on the sensations of the food in your mouth while you chew very slowly.
<b>Focusing on touch</b>	Rub your hands together, clap your hands, Focus all of your attention on the feelings and sounds that you experience
<b>Smells</b>	Focus all of your attention on the smells in your environment
<b>Sounds</b>	Focus on and listen carefully to the many sounds in your environment
<b>Temperature</b>	Focus all of your attention on the temperature of the air on your skin
<b>Brushing teeth</b>	Brush your teeth and focus your attention on all of the sensations, tastes, and smells of this activity.
<b>Object</b>	Pick up any small object and focus all of your attention on the texture of the object and the feel of it in your hand.
<b>Walking</b>	Walk slowly, focusing your attention on what it feels like to take each step.
<b>Attach to the earth</b>	With your feet shoulder width apart, close your eyes and imagine that you are growing roots into the earth, making you strong and stable.
<b>Naming what you see</b>	Look around you and name what you see. Start with the large objects, then move to smaller and smaller objects
<b>Ice cube</b>	Grab an ice cube and focus all of your attention on the sensations
<b>Calling a friend</b>	Call a friend and discuss some activity you did together recently.
<b>Past success</b>	Remember what you did to successfully get past a previous painful experience.
<b>Peppermint</b>	Slowly suck on a mint and describe the taste and your reaction in detail to yourself.
<b>Stomping your feet</b>	Stomp your feet on the ground. Feel the force. Hear the sounds. Notice.
<b>Feeling your clothes</b>	Pay attention to the sensation of your clothes touching your skin.
<b>Feeling your hands</b>	Put your hands together and notice the sensations of the skin-on-skin contact.
<b>Hearing others</b>	Tune into the voices of others around you. Only pay attention to the sounds of others' voices
<b>Breathing</b>	Sit quietly and focus all of your attention on your in-breath and then your out-breath
<b>Pet an animal</b>	Pet an animal that is quiet and calm. Focus all of your attention on the sensations on your hand.

## UAB Campus and Community Resources

### **Student Counseling Services**

**<http://www.uab.edu/students/counseling>**

Student Counseling Services supports students' achievement of personal, academic, and lifelong goals by providing individual and group mental health services, prevention and outreach programming, crisis and emergency support, and consultation services. Student Counseling Services advocates for safe and inclusive learning environments in the University community.

### **Wellness Promotion**

**<http://www.uab.edu/students/wellness>**

Wellness Promotion focuses on the primary prevention of interpersonal violence through education and awareness events and the Collegiate Recovery Community for students in active recovery from alcohol and substance abuse and misuse. Additionally, Promoters of Wellness (POW) Peer Education program trains students to provide peer education through outreach and coaching services.

### **Student Health Services**

**<http://www.uab.edu/students/health>**

UAB Student Health Services delivers comprehensive, high quality, confidential, evidence based primary healthcare in an efficient, friendly, and caring manner to students so that they may succeed in their studies and professional lives at UAB and beyond. By promoting health education, prevention and wellness, Student Health Service contributes to student development and success.

### **Disability Support Services**

**<http://www.uab.edu/students/disability>**

Disability Support Services promotes self-awareness, self-determination and self-advocacy by providing education to students with disabilities about their rights and responsibilities so they can make informed choices.

### **Student Outreach**

**<http://www.uab.edu/students/outreach>**

Student Outreach provides individualized assistance to promote student safety and well-being, collaboration and resilience, personal accountability, and self-advocacy. Student Outreach support students through life challenges and connects them with University and community supports to best address their diverse needs.

### **Title IX**

**<http://www.uab.edu/titleix>**

UAB Division of Student Affairs oversees the University's compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The Title IX Office works with students, University administration, departments, faculty, staff, campus police, and other support services to ensure that University policies and programs foster a campus community free of sex discrimination including gender-based assault, harassment, exploitation, dating and domestic violence, stalking as well as discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identify and gender expression, and related retaliation.

### **International Student and Scholar Services**

**<http://www.uab.edu/global/international-students-and-scholars>**

International Scholar and Student Services serves UAB's community of international students, scholars, faculty, staff and physicians in every aspect of immigration services as well as providing orientation and advising in matters ranging from obtaining a Social Security card, applying for post-degree work authorization, filing an H-1B petition to obtaining a green card. ISSS hosts weekly Coffee Hours in the international center lobby every Friday.

### **Crisis Center Birmingham**

**<http://www.crisiscenterbham.org/>**

The Crisis Center's mission is to serve the unmet needs of people experiencing personal crisis or mental health issues and respond with services that promote coping, emotional health and well-being.