



**Counselling  
promotes  
academic  
success**

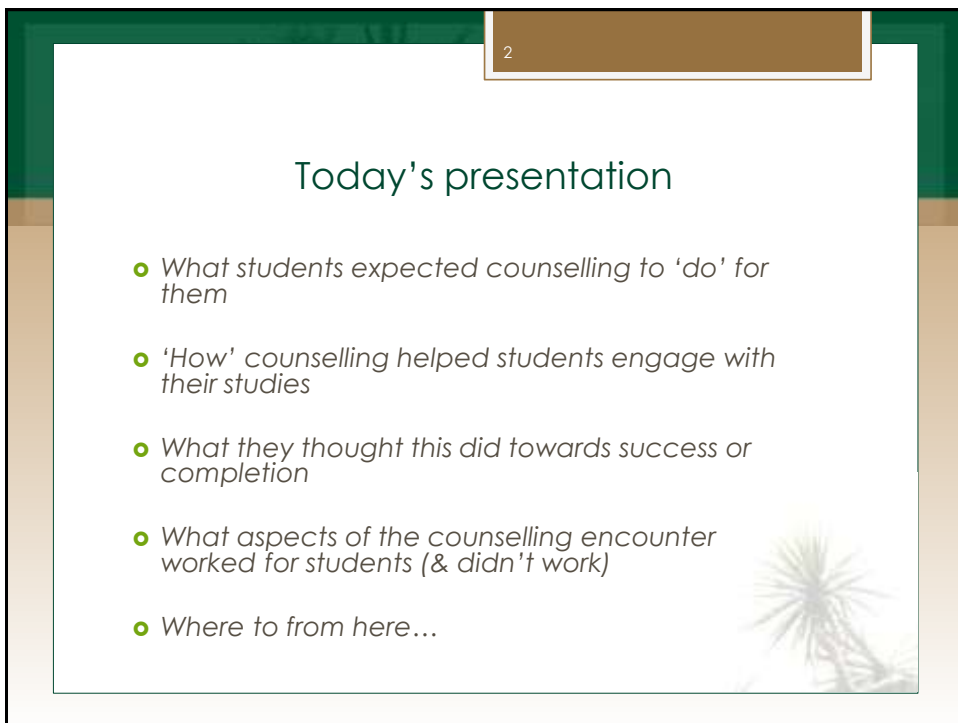
Presentation of research undertaken at the  
Student Counselling Service, Victoria  
University of Wellington

Presented by Kent Smith and Kelly Atherton  
December 2011

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TE WHARE WĀHANGAI O TE ĀHURU O TE IKA A MĀEĀ  

**VICTORIA**  
 UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON



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**Today's presentation**

- *What students expected counselling to 'do' for them*
- *'How' counselling helped students engage with their studies*
- *What they thought this did towards success or completion*
- *What aspects of the counselling encounter worked for students (& didn't work)*
- *Where to from here...*

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## Victoria Student Experience Strategy 2010 – 2014 Research in context

- *"The Strategy is predicated on a view of the student experience that extends from first contact through preparing students for university study, to study programme completion, to alumni status. It puts students at the centre." p3*
- *"Evidence-based: service development is informed by student feedback, regular reviews, student focus groups and workshops,..." p3*
- *"A focus on the quality of the student experience should guide the design and delivery of services." p6*
- *"The Strategy recognises there is no generic student experience but rather individual experiences reflecting different backgrounds..." p2*

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## University v. Counselling demographic 2011

	University	Counselling
Total numbers	22073	1783
Male	46%	33%
Female	54%	67%
Domestic students	86%	91%
International Students	14%	9%
Ethnicity – NZ	74%	63%
Maori	10%	9%
Pasifika	5%	2%
Undergraduate	84%	70%

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## Themes of interest to research - student perception

- *Perception of new premises – access, privacy, aesthetics.*
- *Understanding and usefulness of appointment types – questioning around brief/quick question appointments.*
- **Access, expectations and actual performance of counselling/counsellors/group programme.**
- **Whether contact with the Counselling Service had an impact on academic success – group and individual.**

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## Our research

- *Ethical approval granted*
- *Qualtrics online survey*
- *Qualitative/quantitative data*
- *Any student who presented for a counselling appointment in 2011 (up to September 1st) = 1405 students*
- *Entry into prize draw*
- *21% response*

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## What students wanted from their counselling experience...

- *To help build strong relationships*
- *Learn how to handle the stressful world of university*
- *Help me support myself and be an independent person*
- *Learn how to deal with depression and anxiety*
- *Get me back on track emotionally*
- *Help me feel better about grief*
- *Confidentiality and privacy, compassion & thoughtfulness*
- *Someone to talk with, without judgement and to be listened to*
- ***Interestingly, nothing said specifically about assisting in academic success! YET...***

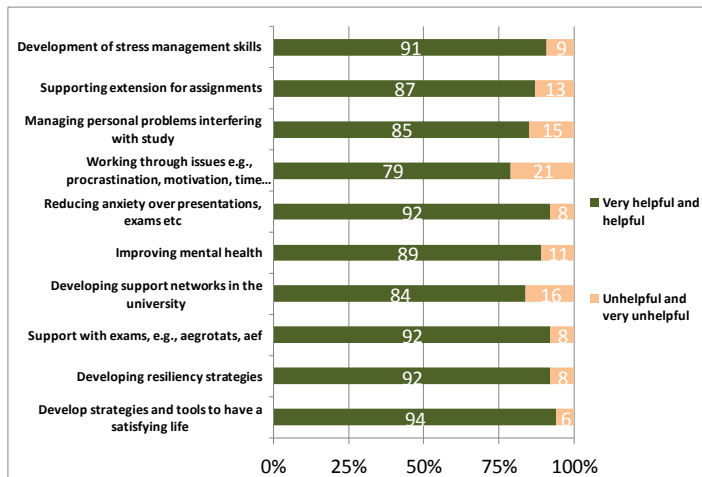
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## Counsellors assessment of presentations

- **41%**      **Academic and Education**  
*(including aegrotat)*
- 33%      Depressive symptoms
- 27%      Anxiety
- 25%      Relationships
- 18%      Stress
- 17%      Family
- 11%      Grief
- 11%      Adjustment

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Please rate if counselling contributed to your academic success at university in the following areas:



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## Counselling and academic performance

- 'I have noticed a marked improvement in final grades, and have been able to successfully take steps to fulfill life and academic goals.'
- 'It has helped me deal with my personal life, which is always going to make for better academic success.'
- 'Because counselling helped to improve my emotional state, my academic abilities were improved as it was easier to concentrate and work.'
- 'Counselling enabled me to find a way through my academic studies in an emergency situation, when I had been otherwise well. I believe that quick access to quality counselling meant I could successfully manage my studies after an unforeseen and sudden stressful life event'.
- '...without this help academic my academic results wouldn't be nearly as positive'
- 'Got my head straight enough to finally get straight A's'

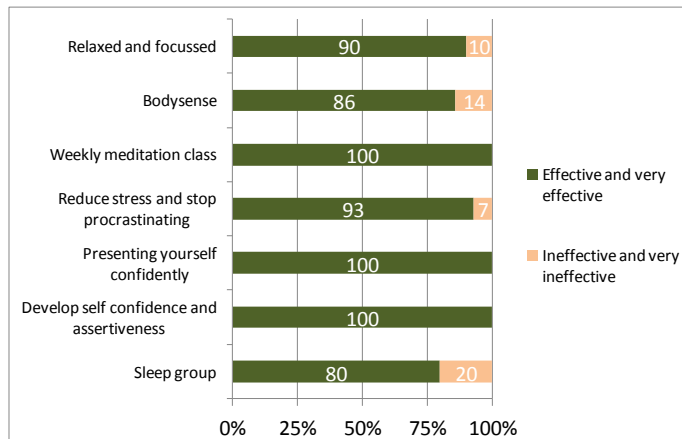
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## Counselling and academic performance

- *'It (counselling) helped me get back into studying . Committing myself to study became a therapeutic way to set my life back on track. Now I'm doing well again and I'm much happier.'*
- *'Helped me to recognize this is what I want (being at uni), and to push through, have raised overall grade, and not withdrawn from any papers this trimester, in spite of close bereavement'*
- *'Definitely relieved and appreciative for the extensions on assignments and also the communication between counsellor and lecturers, I think my lecturers are more understanding because of the direct contact they have with the counsellor.'*
- *'The long wait between appointments meant that many of these goals could not be worked on in a full way.'*

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## Effectiveness of group sessions



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## Effectiveness of group sessions

- *'I found the course very calming and an excellent way to ease into my first year of study, it helped me to manage a stressful time.'*
- *'Helped me to keep focus the my tasks and reduce the stress caused by anxious situations. Also helped me to sleep better and be positive in academic situations or meetings'.*
- *'Definitely had a positive impact'.*
- *'It helped me in my tutoring classes and presentations as I learnt a bit about body language and what message it could convey to others'.*
- *'Tools for overcoming procrastination which I put in place'.*
- *'It has helped my studies as I feel much healthier, more energetic and balanced'.*

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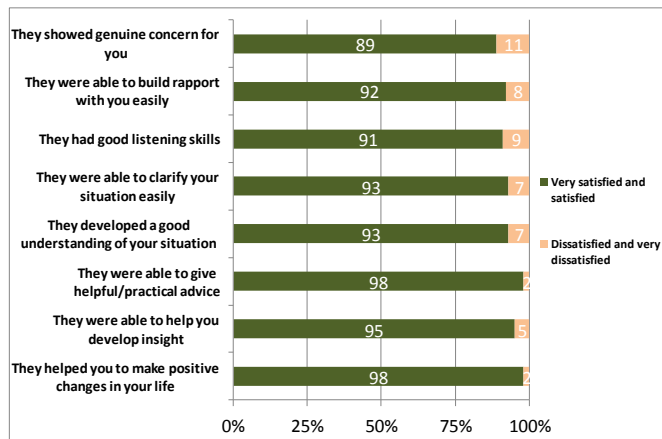
## Counselling assisting academic performance

Students often didn't always correlate the relationship with *'sorting out personal issues'* or *'dealing with life'* in counselling as being beneficial to academic success

- *'My counselling has not been focussed on academics...'*
- *'Counselling was less about academia and more to do with personal development.'*
- *'Pretty much helped me to deal with difficult things outside university'*
- *'Mostly it has just helped me to stay sane with a lot of chaos occurring in my outside life interfering with my university time.'*
- *'My issues were more related to personal life which was impacting my ability to stay focussed on uni work. My sessions were really helpful in my personal life which meant my study life improved too.'*

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Please rate your experience with your counsellor on the following scale:



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## Summary

- *Students state counselling can and does promote academic success and development*
- *Could we do more to help students link academic success with positive wellbeing or healthiness? Is this important for the student or for us?*
- *Service development*
- *What next...*





# Counselling promotes academic success

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