

Interpersonal Counseling (IPC) for International University Students: Using the Brief IPT Form as a Primary Intervention

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“facing past experiences with different perspective”

“escaping something, but what and why?”

“mixed relationship with the country”

“trying to get myself back”

“out of my comfort zone”

“in a quarter- life crisis”

“never felt more alone”

“between two states”

“an empty feeling”

“out of the loop”

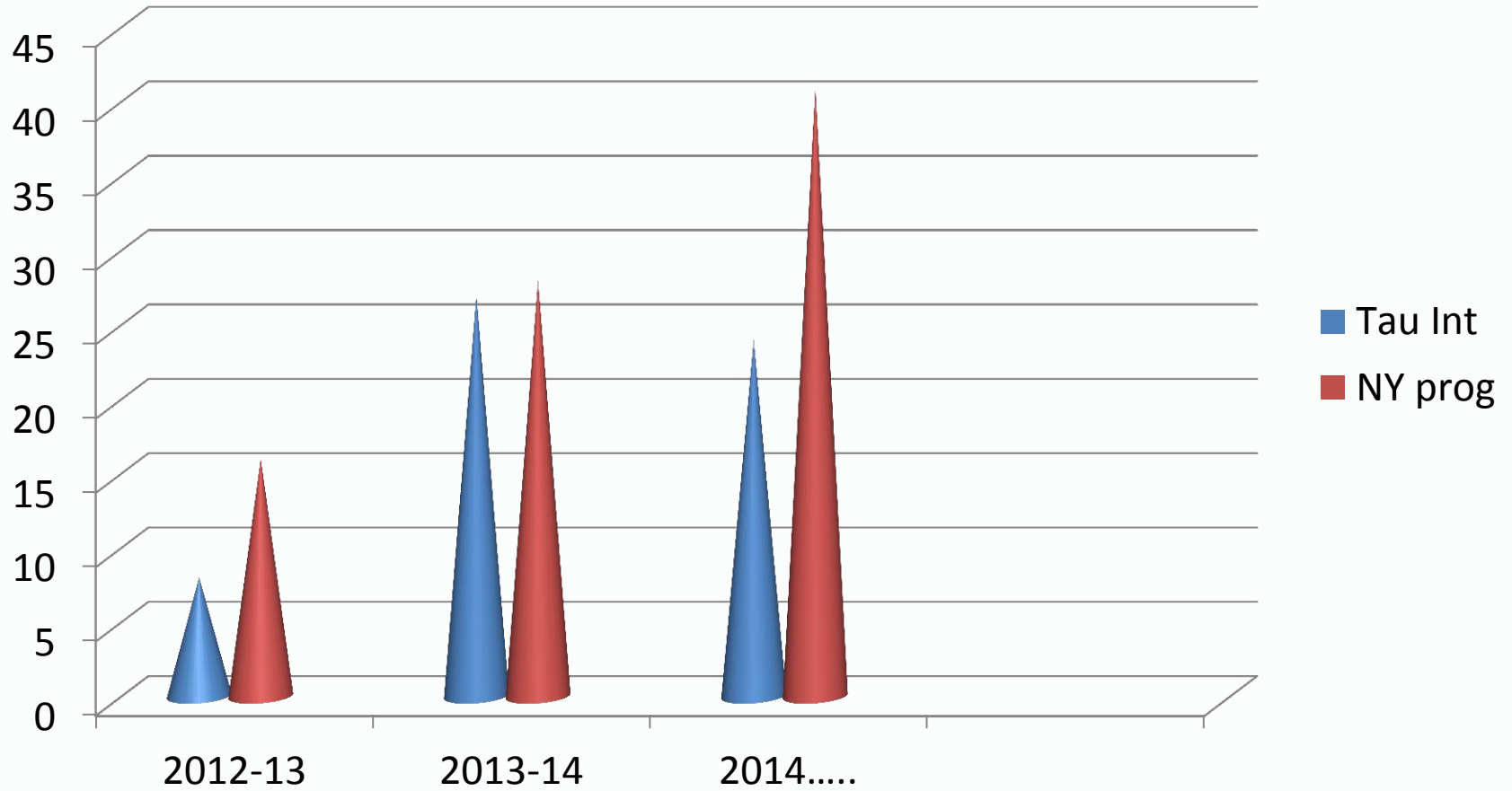
“in a dream”

“cut off”

Tel Aviv University (TAU) International Programs

- Sackler School of Medicine
 - New York Program, 4 years, includes rotations to the US
- Overseas Programs (OSP)
 - Semester, academic year, “gap year”, voyage to medicine
 - BA- Liberal Arts, BS- Electrical Engineering
- TAU International Masters programs
 - Archeology, Environmental Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Conflict Resolution, Migration, TESOL, Social Work and Trauma studies, MBA, LLM, Security and Diplomacy, Political Science, Emergency and Disaster Management (Public Health)
- TAU International Masters+
 - Post-Docs, Fellowships, visiting researchers ...

Increase in Intakes at TAU Psychological Services



Internationally mobile students

From brief periods of study (summer/semester) to longer degree programs (bachelors, masters, medical, law, business), with a range in English language fluency...

face unique challenges

Can be at more risk for psychopathology: some are as young as 18-20, at the age when a first episode may surface, far away from social and family network, negotiating independence for first time, tend to seek psychological support under higher levels of distress, resources can range considerably from one program to another...

Why IPC?

Move towards triage model on college campuses

fewer than 40% of adults entering psychotherapy receive more than 5 sessions (Olfson et al, 2002, Center for collegiate mental health, 2013)

Prompt identification of symptoms , mobilization of social support reduces severity of symptoms

*many depressions are transient in reaction to life stressors
matching client/therapist does not improve outcome*

Increase in problem severity among students on campus

*psychosocial influences, pressure on excellence
increased availability of psychiatric medication
decreased stigma for seeking treatment
Less incentive to develop “life skills”*

Intake as intervention

Standard Intake: appointment made within a week, 2-3 session assessment by clinical intern, background, history of presenting symptoms, mental status, ICD diagnoses, formulation, present to supervisors, follow-up with feedback session

IPC approach, to address rapid increase in international students, arrange for immediate screening or follow-up, focus on identifying problem areas in social/interpersonal functioning associated with onset of current symptoms, changes in current support network, relationships, current coping mechanisms, resources, mobilize social support: facilitate stronger communication with supporters

Interpersonal Inventory

Who are the important people in your life?

Problem Area	Life Situation
Grief	Complicated bereavement following the death of close relative, partner
Role dispute	Struggle, disagreement with partner, family members, friends, peers
Role transition	Life change: graduation, new job, leaving one's family, divorce, going away to school, a move, a new home, retirement, medical illness, immigration
Loneliness and Isolation	No acute life events: none of the above. Paucity of attachments, lack of companionship, social isolation

Vignettes

- 1) IPC as crisis intervention
- 2) IPC en route to psychotherapy

Asim

- 22 year old religious male student
- never been in treatment, new to Israel
- “froze” during an exam
- appears sad, reports crying non-stop for two days
- poor concentration, can’t express cause for current mood

Recent stressors: visit from his parents, move to a new apartment, mid-terms, recent romantic break-up

Problem area: role transition (independence, choosing “Haredi” (orthodox) Judaism, needing v. giving help, change from yeshiva to university (connected to attention problems)

Recommendations: re-connect with friends from Yeshiva, search for balance between both worlds, consult with Rabbi

Jenny

- 28 year old student from the US
- joined Israeli performance group
- chose to stay and study, fell in love...
- ongoing disputes with partner
 - (differences in communication styles)
 - (fears topic of marriage and children)
- irritability, sadness, mild sleep disturbance

Recent stressors: visit from close friend, husband's exam period

Problem area: role disputes (ruled out role transition) at renegotiation phase, direct or indirect communication, what's more effective?

Recommendations: Extension of therapy until graduation, referral for couples therapy consultation

השרות הפסיכולוגי טלפון: 6408505

Intakes with International Students

When working with international students, the following questions and practical considerations can be added to the standard intake. Below are common problem areas found in this population, plus some guided questions which assess for current levels of social and emotional support.

Interpersonal problem areas most commonly found with International Students:

Problem Areas	Life Situations
Grief	<u>Complicated bereavement:</u> Feelings around the death of a significant other or a close relative (whether recent or past history) may surface more strongly when away from home and family
Role transitions	<u>Life changes:</u> Moving to a new country, immigration (Aliyah), living away from one's family, increased academic demands, new peer interactions, maladaptive functioning to new environment (increased or new substance use, other at risk behaviors), changes in romantic relationships (negotiating long distance, recent break ups), creating new friendships, new romantic relationships, decisions about future study, career, home
Role disputes	<u>Struggles:</u> disagreements with friends, romantic partners, or other family members, conflicts in communication, either with family and friends far away, or new relationships formed here
Loneliness and Isolation	<u>No acute life events:</u> Paucity of attachments, loneliness, social isolation, social anxiety, boredom, general stress & adjustment to new environment.

Questions to add to the standard intake:

Identify any social and interpersonal context problem areas (listed above) associated with the onset of ICD diagnoses /current symptoms:

- What major life changes have you experienced recently? (Losses, relationships, transitions)
- Who are the important people in your life currently?
- Are these people here in Israel or back home?
- Do you feel you are currently receiving support/help from them?
- Is there any possible link between current life changes and your current symptoms?
- Who do you turn to for support on campus?

Explore current coping mechanisms:

- How are you currently coping with stressors?
- What is your experience with past therapies? Psychiatry?
- Are there coping strategies you have learned or used in the past that might help you now?
- Have you talked with friends, family about how you're feeling lately?

Practical considerations during the intake process:

Your patient is not obligated, but it is recommended that you ask in the first session if they would provide consent to speak with a family member, academic coordinator, or madrich. At conclusion of the intake, include in your regular feedback session a discussion about how to strengthen/mobilize social support while abroad. You are also encouraged to consult with the following supervisors if you have specific questions about the international programs:

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שרות פסיכולוגי טל' 6409694; רווחת הסטודנט טל' 6409691; מעורבות חברתית טל' 6408848; הכוון תעסוקתי טל' 6409695

Future Directions

- Pilot study
- Increase and enhance training
- Modify for groups or workshop format
- Expand to other universities