

Session 2



California Community Colleges

Making Help Feel Safe – Reducing Stigma & Reaching Students

**Mental Health Action Week Webinar
Series**



Presenter: **Gabrielle Ridley, M.S.**

May 7th, 2025



A11Y 5/16/25

Meet Our Presenter



Gabrielle Ridley, M.S.

Gabrielle Ridley is a nationwide consultant with nearly 20 years of experience in trauma-informed education. She was the first coordinator for Orange Coast College's Guardian Scholars and NextUp Programs, served as Clinical Director for a foster youth shelter, and now consults with John Burton Advocates for Youth and through her company, SHIFT Strategies. Gabrielle holds a Master's in Counseling with a specialization in Marriage and Family Therapy from CSU Fullerton and is a proud foster and adoptive parent.



Session Goals:

- Understand barriers to help-seeking behavior
- Learn strategies to build trust and safety
- Explore culturally sensitive approaches to outreach and mental health services



Why This Matters

- Mental health needs are rising, but help-seeking isn't keeping pace
- Stigma and distrust remain major barriers
- Campus faculty, staff, and classified professionals are often the first line of support
- Small actions can make a big difference

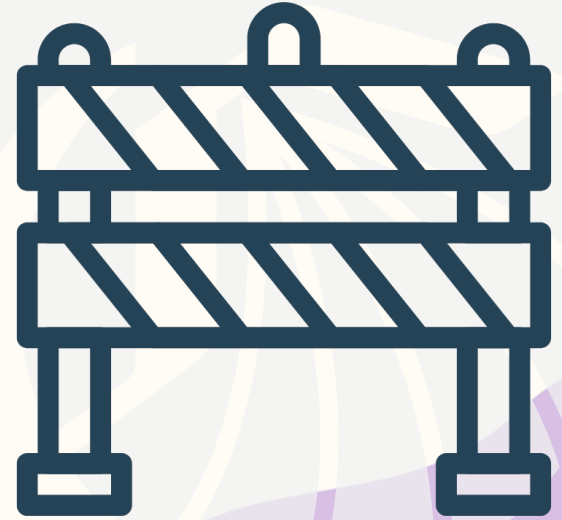


Understanding the Barriers

Cultural & Systemic Distrust

Ineffective Outreach

Unintentional campus signals



“

Good therapy is life-changing. But bad therapy is life-changing, too.



Special Focus: Recognizing Real Risk vs. Reacting from Fear

Disclosures ≠ Emergencies

When students share heavy emotions:

- Pause. Don't panic.
- Assess risk before acting
- **Ask yourself:**
 - Is the student in immediate danger?
 - Who can help me assess this calmly and appropriately?
- Avoid responses that cause more harm.



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Respond with *care* — not just compliance.



Mental Health
**ACTION
WEEK**

May 5 - 9, 2025



Core Strategies to Make Help Feel Safe

What Encourages Help-Seeking Behavior?

- ✓ Trauma-Informed Care
- ✓ Credible Messengers
- ✓ Strategic Sharing
- ✓ Persistent Follow-up
- ✓ Culturally Sensitive Normalization
- ✓ Accessible Outreach



Trauma-Informed Care

- Recognize trauma and understand its impact
- Create safe environments (and relationships!) to support learning
- Practice self-care



A trauma sensitive [campus] is one in which all students feel safe, welcomed, and supported and where addressing trauma's impact on learning on a [campus-wide] basis is at the center of its educational mission. *-Cole, Eisner, Gregory & Ristuccia (2013)*



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5 Principles for a Trauma-Informed Environment



Safety

- Calm, comfortable spaces
- Being safe people

Choice

- Giving options
- Letting the student decide

Empowerment

- Noticing capabilities
- Supporting individual agency

Collaboration

- Making decisions together
- Doing with, not for

Trustworthiness

- Clear & consistent information
- Being dependable



Credible Messengers

- Peers, interns, alumni
- Representation matters
- Trust is built through shared identity and experience



Strategic Sharing

- Model vulnerability appropriately
- Normalize help-seeking
- Set realistic therapy expectations



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Persistent Follow-up

Persistence is key — and it's important not to take it personally if a student doesn't respond in the way you hoped.

- **Reframe:** It's not rejection; it's uncertainty, anxiety, or overwhelm
- Gentle, ongoing check-ins matter
- Close the loop after referrals

Support isn't a single moment — it's showing up, again and again, even when the reply is silence.



Culturally Sensitive Normalization

- Offer multiple “ways in” to healing
- Avoid pathologizing normal reactions
- Reinforce help-seeking as strength



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Accessible Outreach

- Text, DM, embedded spaces > email blasts
- Speak student language
- Bring services to them



Outreach Flyer Example 1

Mental Health Services Now Available

The Counseling & Psychological Services Office (CAPS) is open to assist students experiencing mental illness.

Services Include:

Individual psychotherapy
Diagnostic evaluations
Referrals to psychiatric professionals
Substance use and trauma screening

Please Note:

Must complete intake form
Appointments required
No walk-ins
Due to demand, students may be waitlisted

Contact Information:

Phone: (555) 555-5555
Office Hours: 11am–2pm M,W, F only
Location: Administration Annex 17
Email: counseling-intake@campus.edu

Mental illness is treatable with the right clinical support.
We are committed to helping students manage psychological disorders. Schedule an intake appointment today.



Outreach Flyer Example 2





Student Support Is Here For You

 *Feeling overwhelmed? Anxious? Burned out? You're not alone.*

At [Your College Name], we believe mental health is just as important as physical health. We all have hard days. You deserve support that feels safe and actually helps.

Our services are free and confidential. No diagnosis required. No judgment, no pressure. Just help when you need it, on *your* terms. Whether you're struggling, surviving, or just need someone to talk to — we're here.

What We Offer:





-  1:1 Conversations with a Counselor who cares
-  Drop-in Wellness Chats with Peer Mentors
-  Creative Groups, Community Connections, & Stress Relief Activities
-  Workshops for Sleep, Anxiety, and Burnout



What to Expect:

You decide what you want to talk about
We'll listen, not lecture
No problem is “too small”
Not a good fit? We'll help you find someone who is!

How to Reach Us:

-  Call, text, or drop by.
 -  Text “SUPPORT” to [XXXX]
 -  Visit the Wellness Space (next to the Library)
 -  Or schedule online: [wellness.yourcampus.edu]
- Drop in M–F, 10–4 or message us anytime (after-hours support available!)

**Languages spoken: English, Spanish, Farsi, Korean, ASL
LGBTQ+ affirming • Disability inclusive • All faiths &
backgrounds supported**

 ***All identities. All experiences. Always welcome.
Your mental health matters — and so do you.***



Key Takeaways

- Small actions matter
- Building trust is a process
- Culturally sensitive outreach saves lives
- You are part of the safety net



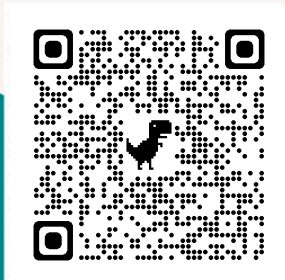


Gabrielle Ridley, M.S.

Professional Speaker, Trainer, and Consultant

E gabrielle@shiftstrategies.net

P (714) 595 - 0964



Professional Development Opportunities

Empowering Educators: Nurturing Student Success through Trauma-Informed Practice	When Helping Hurts: Understanding and Managing Vicarious Trauma
Foster Friendly: An Introduction to Trauma- Informed Education	Post Traumatic Growth: Shifting the Paradigm of Trauma
From Awareness to Action: Applying Trauma-Informed Education to Student Success	Empowered Advocacy: Strategies to Speak Up and Be Heard
Connection Through Communication: Skills & Strategies for Transformative Relationships*	Stress Management: Wellness Tools in the Palm of Your Hand*

*Student friendly