

## Module C

### Effectively managing critical situations related to loss and grief: Guidelines for appropriately and compassionately addressing situations of loss and grief among Ukrainian university students

#### Lesson 1: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LOSS AND GRIEF: KEY CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

**Description:** This lecture introduces the core psychological concepts of loss and grief, exploring how students experience emotional, symbolic, and war-related losses. It presents key theoretical models, including Kübler-Ross's stages and Worden's tasks of mourning, and highlights collective grief, trauma, and post-traumatic growth. The session helps educators understand grief as a universal yet personal process requiring compassionate support.

#### Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, tutors will be able to:

- Understand the core psychological concepts of loss and grief.
- Describe key theoretical frameworks, including Kübler-Ross's stages and Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning.
- Recognize how grief can manifest among university students in academic and social contexts.
- Identify the impact of war-related and symbolic losses on students' emotional well-being.
- Distinguish between individual and collective grief within the Ukrainian cultural context.
- Apply foundational knowledge to respond to grieving students with greater empathy and sensitivity.

#### Lesson structure:

##### 1. Understanding Loss and Grief

- Definitions of loss and grief.
- Distinguishing between physical, symbolic, and war-related losses.
- Examples relevant to Ukrainian students (loss of home, community, safety, identity).
- Emotional, cognitive, and behavioral manifestations of grief in university settings.

##### 2. Key Psychological Models of Grief

###### 2.1. Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief

- Brief explanation of each stage: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance.
- Emphasis on the modern view: grief is non-linear, individualized.

###### 2.2. Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning

- Accepting the reality of the loss
- Experiencing the pain of grief
- Adjusting to life without the lost person/object

- Finding an enduring connection while moving forward
- Application of the model for educators and student support.

### 3. Collective and Cultural Dimensions of Grief

- Introduction to collective grief in the Ukrainian context.
- Impact of war, displacement, and shared national trauma.
- Reference to Vamik Volkan's theories on collective trauma and identity.
- Importance of cultural sensitivity when supporting students.

### 4. Contemporary Approaches to Healing and Growth

- Post-traumatic growth (PTG): definition and key concepts.
- How grief can lead to strengthened resilience, empathy, and meaning-making.
- How educators can recognize and support growth without minimizing pain.

### 5. Practical Implications for Tutors

- Why understanding grief helps tutors provide compassionate support.
- How grief may influence concentration, behavior, and academic performance.
- The importance of patience, empathy, and trauma-informed responses.

### 6. Summary and Key Takeaways

- Grief is universal but deeply personal.
- Multiple frameworks help explain how students cope with loss.
- Ukrainian students may carry both personal and collective grief due to war.
- Understanding grief is the foundation for effective and sensitive student support.

#### **Practical exercise:**

##### **Scenario:**

You are a university tutor working with first-year students. One of your students, Olena, recently returned to class after her family home in eastern Ukraine was destroyed due to shelling. Although her family members survived, they had to relocate to another region, and she is currently living in temporary accommodation without stable conditions.

During the last two weeks, you noticed the following changes in Olena's behavior:

- She arrives late or misses classes entirely.
- Her assignments are either incomplete or not submitted.
- She appears withdrawn and avoids group work.
- When asked how she is doing, she smiles politely and says "I'm fine."
- Other students mentioned she cries in the restroom between classes.

Yesterday, she quietly approached you after class and said:

"I don't understand what's happening to me. I feel empty. I can't focus. I think something is wrong with me".

## **Task**

### Step 1. Identify the Type of Loss

Reflect on the types of symbolic, material, and emotional losses Olena has experienced.

- What aspects of her identity or stability have been disrupted?
- Which signs indicate she is grieving?

### Step 2. Apply a Theoretical Framework

Choose one of the models from today's lesson:

- Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief
- Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning
- Collective Trauma Perspective (Volkan)

Using the model, answer:

- Which stage or task might Olena be experiencing?
- How does the theory help explain her behavior?
- What misunderstandings should tutors avoid (e.g., expecting linear progress)?

### Step 3. Plan a Supportive Response

Describe two actions you could take to support Olena in a trauma-sensitive and culturally aware way, such as:

- How to respond in the moment when she says "Something is wrong with me."
- How to validate her feelings without pushing her to speak more than she wants.
- What academic adjustments (if any) could reduce her pressure.
- When and how to encourage her to seek professional psychological support.

### Step 4. Reflection Questions

- How does this scenario illustrate the difference between individual and collective grief?
- What challenges might tutors face when working with grieving students in a war context?
- Which aspects of this case resonated with your own teaching experience?

## **Script**

Welcome to this first lecture of our course on managing critical situations related to loss and grief among Ukrainian university students.

In today's session, we will explore what loss and grief really mean, and how psychology helps us understand these powerful human experiences.

Loss is not limited to death. For many Ukrainian students, it includes losing one's home, community, familiar environment, or a sense of security. These are symbolic losses - they challenge one's identity and emotional stability.

Grief is the emotional response to loss. It can manifest as sadness, anger, guilt, or even numbness. In the university context, grief may also appear as a drop in concentration, social withdrawal, or academic burnout.

Over the years, psychologists have developed several frameworks to help us understand grief.

One of the most well-known is Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's model, which describes five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

However, modern psychology views grief as a non-linear process. People move back and forth between stages; there is no single "correct" way to grieve.

Another influential theory is Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning. According to Worden, healing from loss involves:

1. Accepting the reality of the loss,
2. Experiencing the pain of grief,
3. Adjusting to an environment without the lost person or object, and
4. Finding an enduring connection while moving forward with life.

This model is particularly useful in educational settings—it encourages active adaptation and support rather than passive waiting for time to heal.

In the context of war and displacement, we must also consider collective grief - the shared mourning of an entire community. Ukrainian students often carry both personal and national grief, shaped by images, memories, and the ongoing uncertainty of conflict. Psychologists such as Vamik Volkan emphasize that collective trauma can shape identity, values, and interpersonal trust. Therefore, tutors and educators must approach students' emotional reactions with sensitivity, understanding that grief is not only individual - it is also cultural and communal.

Finally, contemporary approaches highlight post-traumatic growth - the possibility that, after deep loss, individuals can develop new strengths, greater empathy, and a renewed sense of purpose. Recognizing this potential does not minimize pain; instead, it helps educators see hope as a realistic and necessary part of recovery.

In summary, grief is a natural, adaptive response to loss. It is both universal and deeply personal. For university tutors, understanding its psychological foundations is the first step toward providing compassionate and effective support.

In the next lecture, we will explore the Ukrainian context of collective and individual grief - how culture, history, and community shape the way students experience and express loss.

## **Lesson 2: THE UKRAINIAN CONTEXT OF COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL GRIEF**

**Description:** This lesson explores how grief is shaped by Ukraine's historical, cultural, and wartime realities. Building on the psychological foundations introduced in Lesson 1, we examine how collective trauma, national memory, and traditional practices influence the ways Ukrainian students experience and express loss. The lesson highlights the unique challenges faced by young people who have lost loved ones, homes, communities, or a sense of safety due to the ongoing war. We address concepts such as collective grief, survivor's guilt, and ambiguous loss, showing how these emotional burdens may appear in students' behavior, concentration, and academic engagement. The lesson also discusses cultural norms of emotional restraint, the importance of communal rituals, and the need for safe, respectful

spaces where students can share or process grief at their own pace. By understanding these cultural and contextual dimensions, educators and tutors can respond to students with deeper empathy, sensitivity, and cultural awareness.

### **Objectives:**

By the end of this lesson, tutors will be able to:

- Understand how Ukraine's historical, cultural, and wartime experiences shape collective and individual grief.
- Identify forms of loss specific to Ukrainian students, including symbolic loss, ambiguous loss, and survivor's guilt.
- Recognize how collective trauma influences students' emotional expression, behavior, and academic performance.
- Explain the role of cultural rituals, traditions, and communal practices in supporting grief and resilience.
- Distinguish between cultural norms of emotional restraint and unprocessed grief in student interactions.
- Apply culturally sensitive approaches to create supportive, non-judgmental spaces for students experiencing loss.
- Respond to signs of grief with empathy and awareness of cultural boundaries, offering support without forcing disclosure.

### **Lesson structure:**

#### 1. Introduction

- Brief recap of Lesson 1 (general psychology of grief and models).
- Introduction to today's focus: the cultural, historical, and wartime context shaping Ukrainian grief.
- Explanation of why understanding cultural context is essential for tutors working with Ukrainian students.

#### 2. Historical Roots of Collective Grief

- Overview of major collective traumas in Ukrainian history:
  - displacement, famine, repression, past wars
  - current full-scale invasion
- Discussion of how repeated traumas form national emotional memory.
- Connection between past and present experiences of loss.

#### 3. Cultural Expressions of Collective Grief

- Exploration of symbolic and ritual expressions of mourning:
  - memorials, national days of remembrance

- traditional songs, poetry, storytelling
- funeral rituals such as “pomynky”
- Explanation of how communal practices transform pain into solidarity and hope.
- Importance of belonging and shared experience in Ukrainian culture.

#### 4. Individual Grief Among Ukrainian Students

- Losses commonly experienced by students during the war:
  - death of loved ones
  - destruction of home or community
  - forced relocation or exile
  - loss of routine, identity, safety
- Introduction to:
  - survivor’s guilt
  - ambiguous loss (missing loved ones, inaccessible home)
- How these invisible burdens may affect concentration, motivation, and participation.

#### 5. Cultural Norms of Emotional Expression

- “Strength in silence”: emotional restraint and perseverance as cultural values.
- Benefits of resilience and risks of emotional suppression.
- Why some students may avoid discussing grief openly.
- The importance of respecting boundaries and avoiding forced disclosure.

#### 6. Creating Supportive Academic Environments

- Practical strategies for tutors and educators:
  - providing safe, non-judgmental spaces
  - encouraging optional forms of expression (group dialogue, writing, art-based activities)
  - practicing attentive listening without pressure
  - validating emotions and experiences
- Emphasis on empathy rather than performance-based judgment.
- Recognizing cultural, personal, and trauma-related differences in how students cope.

#### 7. Summary and Key Insights

- Ukrainian grief is both individual and collective, shaped by culture, history, and war.
- Students may carry deep, unspoken emotional wounds.
- Understanding these dynamics enables more compassionate and effective tutoring.

- Transition to next lecture: how grief manifests in academic performance and daily student life.

## **Practical Exercise**

### **Scenario: Navigating Collective and Individual Grief in the Classroom**

#### **Context:**

You are a tutor working with a group of Ukrainian university students in an international program. The class includes students who relocated from different regions of Ukraine due to the war. Some have lost homes, some have family members serving at the front, and others are studying while their families remain in unsafe areas.

One student, Maksym, recently received news that his hometown was heavily shelled. He has not lost any close relatives, but many parts of his community have been destroyed. Since then, you have observed the following:

- He attends all classes but is unusually quiet.
- He shows visible tension and becomes emotional when Ukrainian history or current events are mentioned.
- During group work, he prefers to stay silent or withdraw completely.
- When other Ukrainian students talk about loss, Maksym avoids eye contact and abruptly changes the topic.
- In a previous reflection task, he wrote: *“I feel guilty because my family is fine, but others have lost so much more.”*

You approach Maksym after class, gently asking if he would like to talk. He hesitates and replies:

“I don’t know why I feel this way. I didn’t lose anything personally. I feel like I shouldn’t be sad.”

#### **Task**

##### **Step 1. Identify the Types of Grief Present**

Using concepts from the lesson, consider:

- How is collective grief influencing Maksym’s emotions?
- Which forms of symbolic loss might he be experiencing?
- How does the situation reflect survivor’s guilt?

Write down at least three observations supported by the lesson content.

##### **Step 2. Analyze Cultural Factors**

Reflect on how cultural norms may shape Maksym’s behavior:

- How might Ukrainian values such as perseverance, emotional restraint, or “strength in silence” affect his willingness to talk?
- How do historical patterns of collective trauma help explain his reaction?

List two cultural elements that may be influencing his emotional expression.

### Step 3. Using the Lesson's Concepts, Formulate a Supportive Response

Consider how you would respond to Maksym with sensitivity and cultural awareness:

- How can you validate his feelings without minimizing them?
- What could you say to help him understand that his grief is legitimate, even without direct personal loss?
- What kind of academic or emotional support might be appropriate?

Write 2–3 supportive statements or actions.

### Step 4. Tutor Reflection Questions

- Why is it important to recognize collective grief even when individual loss is not present?
- How might misunderstanding cultural grief patterns lead tutors to misinterpret student behavior?
- What did this scenario teach you about hidden or “silent” forms of grief?

## Script

In the previous lecture, we discussed the general psychology of grief and the main theoretical models.

Today, we will focus on the Ukrainian context - how history, culture, and the ongoing war shape experiences of loss and mourning among Ukrainian university students.

For Ukrainians, grief is not a private emotion alone. It is deeply collective - rooted in a shared history of struggle, resilience, and survival.

Throughout history, Ukrainian people have endured displacement, famine, repression, and now, war. These repeated collective traumas have shaped the nation's emotional memory and cultural identity.

This shared grief is often expressed through symbolic acts of remembrance - memorials, songs, poetry, and traditional rituals.

For example, the Ukrainian ritual of *pomynky* - a communal meal after a funeral - serves not only to honor the dead but also to reaffirm life, solidarity, and hope.

Such traditions help transform pain into connection, allowing individuals to feel that they are not grieving alone.

Among students, however, grief takes on new forms. Many young people have lost family members, friends, or homes, yet they continue studying, often in new environments or abroad.

These students may feel torn between gratitude for safety and guilt for survival - a feeling known as “survivor's guilt.”

Others experience ambiguous loss - when someone they love is missing, or when home itself becomes inaccessible. There is no closure, yet the pain persists.

Educators and tutors working with Ukrainian students need to recognize these invisible wounds.

A student who appears distracted or withdrawn might not lack motivation - he or she might simply be carrying unprocessed grief.

Understanding this helps us replace judgment with empathy.

Culturally, Ukrainians tend to value emotional restraint and perseverance - what we might call “strength in silence.”

While this resilience is admirable, it can also prevent open conversations about loss. That’s why creating safe spaces for emotional expression in academic settings is so important. Group discussions, creative writing, art therapy, or even informal conversations can help students express what words alone cannot.

At the same time, we must respect cultural boundaries. For some students, sharing emotions publicly may feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

The key is to offer choice, respect, and presence - to listen without forcing disclosure.

In summary, Ukrainian grief is both individual and collective - shaped by history, strengthened by community, and carried forward with quiet dignity.

As educators, our task is not to remove that grief, but to recognize it, honor it, and create conditions where healing can begin.

In the next lecture, we will discuss how grief manifests in academic life - how to identify signs of distress and respond to them appropriately.

### **Lesson 3: SIGNS AND MANIFESTATIONS OF GRIEF AMONG STUDENTS**

#### **Description:**

This lesson focuses on how grief appears in the daily lives of university students emotionally, cognitively, behaviorally, and physically. While grief is a natural reaction to loss, it expresses itself differently in each student, sometimes quietly and sometimes in ways that are easily misunderstood. Tutors will learn to recognize key indicators such as emotional fluctuations, changes in concentration, withdrawal from social interactions, irritability, fatigue, and other stress-related symptoms.

A core aim of this session is to help educators distinguish between academic disengagement and the hidden emotional burden of grief. Understanding these manifestations allows tutors to respond with greater sensitivity, avoid misinterpretation, and provide timely support. The lesson also highlights when a student’s distress requires referral to a mental health professional.

Recognizing the signs of grief is an important step toward creating trauma-informed, compassionate learning environments where students feel seen, understood, and supported.

#### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, tutors will be able to:

- Identify common emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physical signs of grief in students.
- Distinguish grief-related reactions from academic disengagement or disciplinary issues.
- Recognize how grief may appear differently for each student and fluctuate over time.

- Apply trauma-informed observation strategies to notice patterns of distress without intruding.
- Respond empathetically to grieving students and validate their emotional experiences.
- Identify situations when referral to mental health or crisis support services is necessary.

## **Lesson Structure**

### 1. Introduction

- Brief recap of Lesson 2 (cultural and collective context of Ukrainian grief).
- Overview of today's focus: how grief presents itself in student behavior and daily academic life.

### 2. Emotional Manifestations

- Common emotional signs: sadness, anger, guilt, irritability, anxiety, numbness.
- Discussion of why these reactions occur.
- Examples of how emotions may appear differently across individuals.

### 3. Cognitive Manifestations

- Difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, indecision, confusion about goals or identity.
- How grief impacts academic performance and thought processes.
- Misinterpretations tutors often make (“lazy,” “unfocused,” “unmotivated”).

### 4. Behavioral Manifestations

- Withdrawal from peers, skipping classes, loss of interest in activities.
- Overworking or excessive volunteering as coping strategies.
- Irritability or impatience in group work.
- Understanding behavior as communication.

### 5. Physical Manifestations

- Fatigue, headaches, insomnia, appetite changes, frequent illnesses.
- Explanation of the mind–body connection in grief.
- How chronic stress lowers immunity and concentration.

### 6. Trauma-Informed Observation

- Looking for patterns over time rather than isolated events.
- Questions tutors can ask themselves:
  - Has the student's behavior changed recently?
  - Are they withdrawing?
  - Do they seem more anxious or overwhelmed?
- How to open supportive, non-intrusive conversations.

## 7. When to Refer for Professional Help

- Persistent depressive symptoms, panic attacks, self-harm thoughts, or severe withdrawal.
- Importance of university support pathways and crisis protocols.

## 8. Summary and Key Takeaways

- Grief is not a disorder but a natural response to loss.
- It manifests in many forms: emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physical.
- Tutors' role is recognition, validation, and support; not "fixing" the grief.
- Transition to Lesson 4: trauma-informed approaches in educational settings.

## Practical Exercise

### Scenario: Noticing Grief Behind Academic Changes

#### Context:

You teach an advanced seminar for third-year students. One of your top students, Danylo, is known for his discipline, strong academic performance, and leadership in group projects. He rarely shows emotion and is respected by his classmates.

Over the last month, you have noticed several surprising changes:

- Danylo begins volunteering for extra tasks, taking on far more work than required.
- He repeatedly stays after class asking detailed questions, even when he already understands the material.
- He submits assignments early but with signs of perfectionism, rewriting them multiple times.
- He appears tense and sleep-deprived, with dark circles under his eyes.
- He reacts irritably when peers offer help or try to engage him socially.
- He has stopped attending sports activities he previously loved.

One day you overhear two students whispering that Danylo recently lost a close friend who served in the military. He has not mentioned this to any of his tutors. Instead, he seems to be channeling all his energy into work.

After class, when you ask him if he is managing well, he says quietly: "I just need to keep going. If I stop, everything will fall apart."

#### Task

#### Step 1. Identify the Signs of Grief

Using the categories from the lesson, list at least one sign from each group:

- Emotional signs
- Cognitive signs

- Behavioral signs
- Physical signs

Explain briefly why each sign might indicate underlying grief rather than poor academic motivation.

### Step 2. Reflect on Possible Misinterpretations

Consider how a tutor might misread Iryna's behavior:

- What might an uninformed tutor assume?
- How could these assumptions harm the student–tutor relationship?
- How does understanding grief change the interpretation?

Write 2–3 sentences.

### Step 3. Plan a Supportive Tutor Response

Describe two supportive actions you could take:

- What could you say to open a gentle, empathetic conversation?
- How might you validate her feelings without pressuring her to disclose more?
- What small academic adjustments could be helpful (extensions, flexible deadlines, etc.)?

Write 2–3 examples of trauma-informed responses.

### Step 4. When Professional Help Is Needed

Identify one or two signs that would indicate the need for referral to a mental health professional or university support service. Explain why.

### Step 5. Reflection Question

- What did this scenario teach you about the difference between *academic disengagement* and *grief-related distress*?

### **Script**

In our previous lecture, we explored how Ukrainian grief is shaped by culture and community.

Today, we will focus on something very practical: how grief shows itself in everyday student life - sometimes quietly, sometimes dramatically.

Grief is a natural response to loss, but it rarely looks the same from one person to another.

Some students cry openly, others become silent. Some work harder than ever, while others disengage completely.

Recognizing these patterns helps tutors and educators offer timely and compassionate support.

Let's start with emotional signs.

Students may experience sudden sadness, anger, guilt, or irritability.

They may seem unusually anxious, hopeless, or emotionally numb - as if nothing truly matters anymore.

These reactions are not signs of weakness; they are the human mind's way of processing pain.

Next are cognitive signs - changes in how a person thinks or concentrates.

Grieving students may forget assignments, lose focus during classes, or find it hard to make decisions.

They might express confusion about their goals or identity.

Tutors often misinterpret this as a lack of discipline - when in fact, it may be an expression of deep internal chaos.

Behavioral signs can include withdrawal from friends, skipping classes, or losing interest in previously enjoyed activities.

Some students may overwork or immerse themselves in volunteering as a way to cope.

Others might become irritable or impatient with peers.

Remember: behavior always communicates something - even silence or avoidance.

There are also physical manifestations: fatigue, headaches, insomnia, appetite changes, or frequent illnesses.

Stress and grief affect the body directly, lowering immunity and concentration.

If a student repeatedly complains of being tired or sick, it may not just be physical - it might be emotional exhaustion.

For tutors, the challenge is to notice without intruding.

A trauma-informed approach means observing patterns over time rather than single events.

Ask yourself: Has this student's behavior changed recently? Are they isolating themselves?

Do they seem less engaged or more anxious than before?

These gentle observations open the door for supportive conversation.

When signs become intense or persistent - for example, prolonged depression, self-harm thoughts, or panic attacks - referral to a mental health professional is essential.

Universities should have clear pathways for such support, including crisis response protocols.

Remember, grief itself is not a disorder. It is a sign of love and connection. Your role as a tutor is not to fix the grief but to recognize, validate, and accompany the student through it.

In the next lecture, we will explore how trauma-informed approaches can guide your interactions and help you build safe, supportive learning environments.

## **Lesson 4: TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **Description**

This lesson introduces tutors to the core principles of trauma-informed education and how these principles can be applied when working with Ukrainian university students affected by war, displacement, and prolonged uncertainty. Trauma shapes how students perceive safety, respond to stress, interact with others, and engage in learning. A trauma-informed approach does not require tutors to act as therapists; rather, it is a way of teaching and communicating that prioritizes emotional safety, empowerment, empathy, and respectful relationships.

During the lesson, we explore the Six Rs of trauma-informed practice: Realization, Recognition, Response, Respect, Resilience, and Relationships, and translate these concepts

into practical actions that educators can use in classrooms and one-on-one interactions. We discuss the importance of predictability, choice, clear communication, flexible responses, and sensitivity to triggers. Attention is also given to educator well-being and the risks of compassion fatigue.

By adopting trauma-informed practices, tutors help create learning environments where all students, including those affected by war-related trauma, feel supported, grounded, and able to engage in meaningful learning.

## **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, tutors will be able to:

- Explain the principles of trauma-informed education and why they matter in higher education.
- Understand how trauma affects the nervous system, sense of safety, behavior, and learning capacity.
- Recognize potential signs of trauma and distress among students.
- Apply the Six Rs (Realization, Recognition, Response, Respect, Resilience, Relationships) in academic contexts.
- Communicate with students using safe, empowering, non-judgmental language.
- Create predictable, supportive learning environments that reduce stress triggers.
- Maintain healthy boundaries and recognize signs of compassion fatigue in themselves.
- Support students without overstepping professional roles or attempting to “treat” trauma.

## **Lesson Structure**

### 1. Introduction

- Recap of Lesson 3 (signs and manifestations of grief).
- Today’s focus: responding to these signs using trauma-informed practices.
- Emphasis: tutors are not therapists, but their approach can prevent harm and promote healing.

### 2. Understanding Trauma in the University Context

- How trauma affects the nervous system, attention, memory, and emotional regulation.
- Why Ukrainian students may be living in chronic stress: war, displacement, uncertainty.
- Clarifying that trauma-informed practice is about safety, not therapy.

### 3. The Six Rs of Trauma-Informed Education

#### Realization

- Understanding trauma’s impact on individuals and communities.

### Recognition

- Identifying behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and physical signs of trauma.

### Response

- Acting in ways that promote safety, choice, and empowerment.

### Respect

- Practicing empathy, cultural awareness, and dignity.

### Resilience

- Encouraging coping skills, self-efficacy, and student strengths.

### Relationships

- Building trusting, supportive connections with students.

## 4. Practical Applications in Higher Education

- Ensuring privacy during sensitive conversations.
- Offering students choices to restore control.
- Using calm, non-judgmental language.
- Importance of predictability: clear deadlines, expectations, and transitions.
- Avoiding triggers: loud noises, public criticism, sudden confrontations.
- Supporting overburdened or emotionally overwhelmed students.

## 5. Protecting Tutor Well-Being

- Understanding compassion fatigue and secondary trauma.
- Healthy boundaries: what tutors can and cannot do.
- Self-care strategies: breaks, supervision, peer support.
- Why caring for oneself is essential for caring for students.

## 6. Summary and Key Takeaways

- Trauma-informed practice is rooted in safety, empathy, and predictability.
- Small adjustments in communication and structure make a big impact.
- Trauma-informed environments help students feel safe enough to learn.

## **Practical Exercise**

### **Scenario:**

### **Context:**

You are teaching a seminar where students often discuss personal experiences connected to war, displacement, and resilience. During one session, a student named Sofiia suddenly becomes visibly distressed when another student mentions a recent attack in eastern Ukraine.

What you observe:

- Sofiia's breathing becomes rapid, and she grips her chair tightly.

- She avoids eye contact and begins shaking slightly.
- When you quietly ask if she needs a moment, she whispers, “*I’m fine,*” but her voice is trembling.
- After the class ends, she stays seated for several minutes, staring at the floor.

Later, you learn from a colleague that Sofiia’s father is currently serving in a heavily affected region, and she recently received news that communication with his unit was temporarily lost.

## Task

### Step 1. Identify Trauma-Related Signs

List at least three signs indicating that Sofiia may be experiencing trauma-related stress (e.g., physiological responses, avoidance, shutdown).

Explain briefly how these align with what you learned about trauma and the nervous system.

### Step 2. Apply the Six Rs (Choose Three)

Select three of the Six Rs (Realization, Recognition, Response, Respect, Resilience, Relationships) and describe how each one applies to this scenario.

Example prompts:

- How does *Realization* help you understand what is happening?
- What does *Recognition* look like in this moment?
- How would a *Response* promote safety?
- How can *Respect* guide your language and approach?

### Step 3. Plan a Trauma-Informed Response

Describe two trauma-informed actions you could take in the moment or immediately after the class.

Consider:

- How to create safety and privacy.
- How to offer choice without pressure.
- What supportive language you might use.
- How to avoid re-traumatizing her.

Write short, clear examples (e.g., “Would you like to step outside for some air, or stay here for a moment? I’m here if you’d like support.”).

### Step 4. Establish Boundaries and Referral

Identify when and how you would refer Sofiia to additional support if needed:

- What signs would indicate she requires professional help?
- How can you refer her without creating shame or fear?

## Step 5. Reflection Question

- How did adopting a trauma-informed mindset change the way you interpreted and responded to this situation?

Write 2–3 thoughtful sentences.

### **Script**

In the previous lecture, we discussed how grief manifests in students' emotions and behaviors.

Today, we'll take one step further and learn how to respond to those experiences using a trauma-informed approach.

Many Ukrainian university students have lived through war, displacement, or prolonged uncertainty.

These experiences can deeply affect their nervous system, sense of safety, and ability to learn. A trauma-informed approach does not require you to be a psychologist - it simply means teaching and interacting in ways that avoid re-traumatization and promote trust.

Let's begin with the core principles of trauma-informed education, as defined by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and adapted for university contexts.

They can be summarized as the Six Rs:

1. Realization – understanding how trauma affects individuals and communities.
2. Recognition – identifying signs of trauma and distress.
3. Response – acting in ways that promote safety and empowerment.
4. Respect – maintaining dignity, empathy, and cultural sensitivity.
5. Resilience – helping students build coping skills and self-efficacy.
6. Relationships – creating authentic, supportive connections.

In practice, this means small but meaningful actions.

For example, always start a difficult conversation by ensuring privacy and choice.

Use calm, non-judgmental language such as: "I've noticed you seem tired lately - would you like to talk about how you're doing?"

Giving students the choice to share or not helps restore their sense of control - something trauma often takes away.

Another important element is predictability.

Trauma can make uncertainty unbearable, so try to communicate schedules, deadlines, and expectations clearly.

Even small gestures - like summarizing the next steps at the end of a meeting - help students feel grounded and secure.

Avoid sudden loud noises, harsh criticism, or public confrontations in class.

These can trigger physiological stress reactions - not because students are "too sensitive," but because their nervous systems are already on high alert.

A trauma-informed approach also means caring for yourself as an educator.

Compassion fatigue is real. When you listen to many stories of pain, you may start feeling overwhelmed.

Taking short breaks, talking with colleagues, and setting emotional boundaries allows you to stay effective and empathetic.

Ultimately, trauma-informed education is about creating an environment where every student - including those affected by war or loss - feels safe, seen, and supported.

When safety comes first, learning can follow.

In our next lecture, we'll explore a key component of this approach: Compassionate Communication in Times of Loss.

## **Lesson 5: COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION IN TIMES OF LOSS**

### **Description**

This lesson focuses on how tutors and educators can communicate with grieving students in ways that promote trust, emotional safety, and connection. Compassionate communication goes beyond kindness or politeness. It involves deep listening, validating emotions, respecting boundaries, and responding with authenticity and empathy.

The session introduces key principles that guide supportive communication, such as prioritizing presence over advice, avoiding minimization of grief, and using language that acknowledges students' experiences without judgment. Non-verbal communication: tone, posture, and presence, play a central role, helping students feel seen and understood even when words are few.

We also discuss common fears tutors may have about "saying the wrong thing," and why avoidance can hurt more than a gentle, honest acknowledgment of loss. Finally, the lesson emphasizes healthy limits: tutors are not therapists and must know when to encourage students to seek professional support. Compassionate communication strengthens relationships, reduces feelings of isolation, and provides essential support for students navigating grief.

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, tutors will be able to:

- Explain the core principles of compassionate communication in times of loss.
- Use supportive verbal and non-verbal communication techniques with grieving students.
- Validate emotions without minimizing or dismissing students' experiences.
- Respect student boundaries and offer support without pressure.
- Recognize the difference between listening to support and trying to "fix" grief.
- Respond to their own fears of "saying the wrong thing" with confidence and empathy.
- Identify situations in which referral to mental health services is appropriate.
- Integrate compassionate communication into everyday academic interactions.

### **Lesson Structure**

#### **1. Introduction**

- Brief recap of Lesson 4 (trauma-informed approaches).
- Introduction to compassionate communication as the next step in supportive engagement.

- Emphasizing the role of tutors as compassionate listeners, not therapists.

## 2. What Is Compassionate Communication?

- Definition and distinction from kindness or sympathy.
- The purpose: helping students feel heard, validated, and emotionally safe.
- The value of authenticity and presence.

## 3. Key Principles of Compassionate Communication

### Presence Before Advice

- Allowing silence.
- Listening deeply before responding.
- Supporting without immediately problem-solving.

### Validation Instead of Minimization

- Phrases that help (“This sounds really hard”).
- Phrases that harm (“It could be worse”).
- Why validation promotes healing.

### Respecting Boundaries

- Offering space for students to choose if and when to talk.
- Examples of supportive but non-intrusive statements.

## 4. The Power of Non-Verbal Communication

- Eye contact, facial expressions, body posture.
- Tone and pace of speech.
- Avoiding distractions or multitasking.
- How presence communicates compassion more effectively than words.

## 5. Common Fears: “What If I Say the Wrong Thing?”

- Normalizing tutor concerns.
- Why empathy matters more than perfect wording.
- The harm of avoidance and silence.
- Gentle acknowledgments that support grieving students.

## 6. Knowing Your Limits

- The boundary between supportive communication and therapy.
- Recognizing when distress exceeds your role.
- How to suggest professional support with sensitivity:
  - “Would you like help connecting with our counseling service?”

## 7. Summary and Key Takeaways

- Compassion builds trust and reduces student isolation.

- Effective communication validates grief while respecting boundaries.
- Compassionate communication is essential in creating supportive academic environments.
- Transition to the next lesson: building peer support and mentoring networks.

## **Practical Exercise**

### **Scenario: When a Student Opens Up Unexpectedly**

#### **Context:**

You are meeting with students individually to discuss their mid-semester progress. One student, Kateryna, arrives looking exhausted. She usually appears organized and cheerful, but today she avoids eye contact and sits quietly, holding her notebook tightly.

When you gently ask how she is doing academically, she pauses for a long moment and then bursts into tears. Through her tears, she says:

“My mother passed away three weeks ago. I didn’t tell anyone because I didn’t want to be a burden. I can’t focus on anything. I feel like I’m failing everything.”

You feel a sudden wave of worry. You hadn’t expected this level of vulnerability. You want to respond compassionately, but you’re unsure how to begin. You remember from the lesson that your role is not to fix her grief, but to listen with presence, validate her pain, and communicate with empathy and respect.

#### **Task**

##### **Step 1. Identify Compassionate Communication Opportunities**

Using the principles from the lesson, identify three moments in the scenario where compassionate communication is needed.

For each moment, briefly explain *why* it is important.

##### **Step 2. Write Three Supportive Responses**

Using the principles of compassionate communication: presence, validation, and respect for boundaries, write three short statements you could say to Kateryna.

Examples of what to avoid:

- “You’ll be okay.”
- “At least you still have other family.”
- “You need to focus on your studies.”

Your statements should:

- acknowledge her pain,
- avoid minimizing her grief,
- avoid giving advice too quickly,
- create safety and choice.

### Step 3. Identify Helpful Non-Verbal Communication

List three non-verbal behaviors you could use during this conversation that demonstrate compassion.

Consider facial expression, posture, tone, or pacing.

### Step 4. Respecting Boundaries and Offering Support

Describe two ways to offer help without pressuring her to talk or disclose more.

Examples might include offering time, space, or optional academic adjustments.

### Step 5. When to Encourage Additional Professional Support

Identify two signs in this scenario (or possible future signs) that would indicate the need for a referral to a counselor or mental health specialist.

Explain briefly why these signs matter.

### Step 6. Reflection Question

- How does compassionate communication differ from trying to “solve” a student’s grief?

Write 2–3 sentences reflecting on this distinction.

## Script

In the last lecture, we explored trauma-informed approaches and the importance of creating safe learning environments.

Today, we focus on how to communicate compassionately with students who are grieving - how to speak in ways that heal, not harm.

Compassionate communication is more than being kind.

It means listening deeply, acknowledging pain, and responding with respect and authenticity.

The goal is not to fix someone’s grief, but to make them feel understood and supported.

Let’s begin with a few principles.

1. Presence before advice. Often, students don’t need solutions - they need someone who truly listens.

Try to pause before responding, give space for silence, and allow emotions to unfold naturally.

2. Validation instead of minimization. Avoid saying “You’ll be fine” or “At least it’s not worse.”

Instead, use phrases like:

“This must be very hard for you.”

“I can hear how much this matters to you.”

Such responses validate the student’s feelings without judgment.

3. Respect boundaries. Not every student wants to talk about their pain.

Offering help can sound like: “I’m here if you ever need to talk or need support.”

This invites connection but gives them control.

Non-verbal communication is equally powerful.

Maintain gentle eye contact, keep an open posture, and speak slowly and calmly.

Avoid multitasking during a conversation - even small distractions can signal disinterest.

Compassion is often communicated more through tone, body language, and presence than through words.

Sometimes tutors fear “saying the wrong thing.”

The truth is: if you approach a conversation with genuine empathy, it’s hard to go wrong.

What hurts most is avoidance - pretending nothing happened.

Silence can feel like rejection. So even a short acknowledgment, like “I was sorry to hear about your loss,” can bring comfort.

Compassionate communication also means knowing your limits. You are not expected to act as a therapist. When you notice that a student’s distress goes beyond what you can support, gently suggest professional help:

“I think it might really help to talk with someone from our counseling service - would you like me to help you connect with them?”  
This combines empathy with responsible action.

In times of loss, your words - and the care behind them - can be a lifeline. Compassionate communication builds trust, reduces isolation, and reminds students that they are not alone in their pain.

In our next lecture, we will explore how to strengthen peer support networks and mentoring systems, so that compassion becomes a shared responsibility across the entire university community.

## **Lesson 6: PEER SUPPORT NETWORKS AND MENTORING SYSTEMS**

### **Description**

This lesson shifts the focus from individual communication to collective care by exploring how peer support networks and mentoring systems can strengthen the emotional well-being of students experiencing grief, displacement, or trauma. Peer support is grounded in empathy, shared experiences, and equality—students helping students in ways that feel authentic, accessible, and culturally meaningful. For Ukrainian students coping with war-related stress and loss, peer connections often provide a sense of belonging, normalize emotional responses, and reduce feelings of isolation.

The lesson introduces the core components of effective peer support systems: training, supervision, and accessibility. We examine models such as buddy systems, peer mentoring, and peer-led support circles, highlighting how these structures promote agency, resilience, and community. The session also discusses the university’s role in sustaining these networks through coordinated support, clear guidelines, and institutional recognition.

By understanding how peer systems function, tutors and educators can collaborate with them to build a holistic support environment where healing and growth are shared responsibilities.

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, tutors will be able to:

- Explain the importance of peer support for students experiencing grief, displacement, or trauma.
- Describe the key components of effective peer support programs (training, supervision, accessibility).

- Understand how peer mentoring and buddy systems function within a university setting.
- Identify the benefits of peer-led support circles for emotional processing and community building.
- Recognize the role of universities in facilitating, sustaining, and ethically supporting peer networks.
- Collaborate effectively with peer mentors and coordinators as part of an integrated student support system.
- Encourage peer connections that promote agency, belonging, and resilience.

## **Lesson Structure**

### 1. Introduction

- Recap of Lesson 5 (compassionate communication).
- Transition from individual care to collective care.
- Overview of today's focus: how students can support one another.

### 2. What Is Peer Support?

- Definition: students helping students through shared experience and empathy.
- Why peer support is uniquely powerful for grieving or displaced Ukrainian students.
- Psychological benefits: reduced loneliness, normalization of emotions, strengthened resilience.

### 3. Core Elements of Effective Peer Support Systems

#### 1) Training

- Basic guidance in active listening, confidentiality, boundaries, and recognizing distress.

#### 2) Supervision

- The role of a trained coordinator, tutor, or counselor in ensuring safety and ethical conduct.

#### 3) Accessibility

- Why peer support opportunities must be visible, welcoming, and easy to join.

### 4. Models of Peer Support

#### Buddy System / Peer Mentoring

- Pairing new or grieving students with trained peer mentors.
- Examples of supportive activities: check-ins, studying together, sharing meals, weekly "How are you coping?" conversations.
- Emphasis on small gestures that build trust.

## Peer-Led Support Circles

- Regular gatherings for sharing, reflection, journaling, art, or coping dialogues.
- Not therapy, focused on listening, validating, connecting.
- Optional integration of mindfulness or creative practices.

## 5. Institutional Role in Sustaining Peer Networks

- Providing a coordinator or facilitator.
- Offering physical or virtual meeting spaces.
- Recognizing student contributions (certificates, credits, volunteer hours).
- Ensuring ethical guidelines and clear communication channels.

## 6. How Tutors Collaborate with Peer Systems

- Knowing when and how to refer students to peer programs.
- Maintaining communication with coordinators while respecting student confidentiality.
- Supporting a culture of collective care in the classroom.

## 7. Summary and Key Takeaways

- Peer support creates belonging, agency, and shared resilience.
- Effective systems are student-driven but institutionally supported.
- When students support each other, healing becomes a collective process.
- Transition to the next lesson: the role of academic staff and university services in crisis response.

## Practical Exercise

### Scenario: When a Peer Mentor Feels Overwhelmed

#### Context:

Your university recently introduced a peer mentoring program to support students affected by displacement and loss. Each new student is paired with a trained peer mentor who checks in weekly, offers guidance, and provides emotional support when needed.

One of the mentors, Olha, approaches you after class looking anxious. She explains that the student she is supporting, Andrii, has recently become withdrawn and has shared several painful stories about losing his home and being separated from his family.

Olha says:

“I care about Andrii, but every time he talks, I feel heavy and exhausted afterward. I want to help, but I don’t know what to say anymore. I’m scared I might say something wrong. Am I failing as a mentor?”

She also mentions that she has been skipping her own social activities to “be available” for Andrii at any time.

You can tell she is trying her best, but she is overwhelmed and may be crossing into emotional burnout.

## **Task**

### **Step 1. Identify the Challenges in This Scenario**

List three challenges that Olha is facing as a peer mentor.

Consider: emotional overload, blurred boundaries, unrealistic expectations, guilt, or compassion fatigue.

### **Step 2. Apply Elements of Effective Peer Support Systems**

Using the three core elements discussed in the lesson (training, supervision, and accessibility), describe two ways the program can better support Olha.

Examples:

- supervision check-ins,
- guidance on boundaries,
- clearer support channels,
- shared responsibility instead of one mentor carrying all emotional weight.

### **Step 3. Formulate a Supportive Response for Olha**

Write two supportive statements you could say to Olha that:

- validate her feelings,
- reduce her sense of responsibility for “fixing” Andrii,
- remind her of her role’s boundaries,
- encourage self-care.

Avoid phrases that imply she is failing or not trying hard enough.

### **Step 4. Identify the Next Steps for Andrii**

Based on what Olha reports:

- What is the appropriate next step for Andrii?
- Should he be referred to a counselor or a trained staff member?
- How can this be done without breaking confidentiality or trust?

Write 1–2 sentences describing your approach.

### **Step 5. Reflection Question**

- Why is it important for peer mentors to be supported and supervised just as much as the students they help?

Write a short reflection (2–3 sentences).

## **Script**

In the previous lecture, we explored compassionate communication - how to listen and respond with empathy.

In this lecture, we will move from individual care to collective care - by understanding how peer support and mentoring systems can help students heal and grow together.

Peer support means students helping students.

It's based on shared experience, equality, and empathy rather than hierarchy.

For Ukrainian university students who have faced displacement or loss, peer connections can be one of the most powerful sources of strength and hope.

Why is this so important?

Research in psychology shows that feeling understood by peers reduces loneliness, shame, and emotional distress.

Talking to someone who "gets it" - who has faced similar fears or changes - can normalize emotions and make healing feel more possible.

Peer groups also help restore agency: the sense that, despite loss, one can still contribute and support others.

A well-structured peer support system in a university typically includes three elements:

1. Training: Students receive basic guidance on listening, confidentiality, and recognizing warning signs of distress.
2. Supervision: A professional, such as a counselor or trained tutor, oversees the group to ensure safety and ethical conduct.
3. Accessibility: Meetings or informal gatherings are easy to join, whether online or in person, and promoted as safe, inclusive spaces.

One effective model is the "buddy system."

Each newly arrived or grieving student is paired with a peer mentor - someone trained to offer guidance, check-ins, and companionship.

These relationships often start with small, human gestures: studying together, sharing meals, or simply asking, "How are you coping this week?"

Small acts of care build big trust.

Another option is peer-led support circles, where students meet regularly to share experiences, use creative reflection (such as journaling or art), or discuss coping strategies. The goal is not to analyze or counsel, but to listen, validate, and connect.

Circles can also integrate light activities like mindfulness, music, or storytelling to foster resilience and calm.

Universities play a crucial role in sustaining these networks.

Providing a trained coordinator, offering meeting spaces, and recognizing peer mentors' contributions through certificates or volunteer credits all help maintain motivation and structure.

The best systems are student-driven but institutionally supported.

When students support each other, they don't just survive - they build community.

Peer support networks remind every participant that healing and hope are collective processes.

No one heals alone.

In our next lecture, we will focus on the role of academic staff and university services in crisis response - and how educators can coordinate with peer systems to ensure integrated care.

## **Lesson 7: THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC STAFF AND UNIVERSITY SERVICES IN CRISIS RESPONSE**

## **Description**

This lesson explores how academic staff and university services play a crucial role in responding to crises involving student grief, trauma, or acute distress. While universities are not clinical institutions, they serve as primary communities where students often seek support during difficult times. Tutors and professors are frequently the first to notice behavioral or emotional changes, making early recognition and calm, compassionate engagement essential.

The session introduces a three-level crisis response model:

1. Recognition and First Contact, where staff observe warning signs and offer gentle, supportive inquiry;
2. Containment and Referral, where staff provide emotional safety while guiding students toward appropriate professional services; and
3. Coordinated Response, involving collaboration with mental health teams, crisis coordinators, and emergency services when safety is at risk.

We also discuss the collaboration between academic departments and university support units, as well as the importance of caring for staff who manage emotionally demanding situations. Effective crisis response is rooted in clarity, coordination, and compassion, ensuring students feel supported while maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.

## **Objectives**

**By the end of this lesson, tutors will be able to:**

- Describe the three levels of crisis response within a university setting.
- Recognize early warning signs of student distress and initiate supportive first contact.
- Respond calmly and appropriately to grief- or trauma-related disclosures.
- Apply effective containment strategies that prioritize safety and dignity.
- Identify when and how to refer students to counseling or crisis support services.
- Understand the limits of confidentiality and when information must be shared for safety.
- Collaborate with university support offices to coordinate holistic care for students.
- Recognize the emotional impact of crisis response on staff and the need for supervision and self-care.

## **Lesson Structure**

### **1. Introduction**

- Recap of Lesson 6 (peer support and mentoring systems).
- Introduction to today's focus: the institutional role in responding to student crises.
- The university as a living community rather than a clinical facility.

### **2. Why Crisis Response Matters in Higher Education**

- Students often turn to university staff before seeking professional help.
- Academic environments can influence the recovery process.

- Staff responsibilities: observing distress, responding calmly, referring appropriately.

### 3. Level 1: Recognition and First Contact

- Early signs of distress: absenteeism, withdrawal, emotional outbursts, sudden behavior changes.
- Approaching a student with empathy:
  - “I’ve noticed you seem quieter lately—would you like to talk?”
- Importance of gentle observation without intrusion.
- Avoiding assumptions and maintaining non-judgmental communication.

### 4. Level 2: Containment and Referral

- What “containment” means: creating emotional safety without trying to solve the crisis.
- Supportive, validating language:
  - “You don’t have to face this alone—our counselor can help you.”
- Knowing the referral pathways: counseling services, crisis coordinators, student support offices.
- Upholding dignity while encouraging professional support.

### 5. Level 3: Coordinated Response for Severe Crises

- Scenarios requiring immediate escalation: panic attacks, suicidal thoughts, risk of harm, extreme disorientation.
- Crisis protocols may include:
  - Notifying student support units;
  - Contacting medical or emergency services;
  - Informing crisis response teams;
  - Documenting events responsibly.
- Clarifying confidentiality limits when safety is threatened.

### 6. Collaboration Across University Services

- Role of psychological counseling centers, disability services, and international student offices.
- Academic flexibility (extensions, reduced workload) coordinated with emotional support.
- Creating a unified safety net around the student.

### 7. Caring for Staff: Preventing Burnout

- Emotional toll of supporting distressed students.
- Importance of supervision, consultation, and debriefing opportunities.
- Self-care and maintaining boundaries.

## 8. Summary and Key Takeaways

- Crisis response is a shared responsibility.
- Effective support combines calm recognition, appropriate referral, and coordinated action.
- When academic and support staff work together, students are more likely to recover and thrive.
- Transition to Lesson 8: ethical practice and confidentiality in sensitive situations.

### Practical Exercise

#### Scenario: A Student in Academic Crisis After a Traumatic Event

##### Context:

You are a course instructor at a university. One of your students, Roman, has always been punctual, engaged, and academically strong. During the last two weeks, however, you have noticed several concerning changes:

- He has missed three classes without explanation.
- He submitted an assignment of unusually poor quality, full of errors, unlike his typical work.
- During a seminar, when asked a simple question, he froze, looked overwhelmed, and quietly said, *“I can’t think right now.”*
- Other students report he has stopped attending his dorm study group and seems withdrawn.

Today, Roman finally attends class but appears exhausted and anxious. After the session, he approaches you and says in a shaky voice:

“I’m sorry. I can’t keep up anymore. My brother was injured last week while serving, and everything feels out of control. I haven’t told anyone... I don’t know what to do.”

He starts to cry but tries to hide it, turning away quickly.

You know this situation requires a calm, structured response that aligns with university crisis protocols.

##### Task

###### Step 1. Level 1 – Recognition and First Contact

Identify three warning signs that indicated Roman was struggling before he disclosed anything.

Explain briefly how a trauma-informed academic staff member should approach him at this stage.

###### Step 2. Level 2 – Containment and Referral

Write two supportive statements you could say to Roman that:

- acknowledge his distress,
- avoid trying to “fix” the crisis,

- gently guide him toward appropriate university support services.

Examples to avoid:

- “You just need to focus.”
- “Don’t worry, everything will be fine.”

Your statements should reflect compassion, clarity, and calm.

Then, list two services or individuals you could refer Roman to (e.g., counselor, crisis coordinator, student support office).

### Step 3. Level 3 – Coordinated Response

Considering Roman’s situation, describe when a situation like this would require activation of a coordinated crisis response.

Write one or two indicators that would mean the situation is urgent (e.g., safety risk, suicidal thoughts, inability to function).

Explain what steps you would take according to crisis protocol.

### Step 4. Confidentiality and Documentation

Explain in 2–3 sentences how you would maintain Roman’s confidentiality while still ensuring his safety.

Describe what information should be documented and which staff members should receive it.

### Step 5. Staff Well-Being Reflection

Supporting students in distress can be emotionally demanding.

Write 2–3 sentences on what you, as an academic staff member, could do to maintain healthy emotional boundaries and prevent burnout in similar situations.

## Script

In the previous lecture, we discussed the power of peer support and mentoring.

Today, we will look at how academic staff and university services can respond effectively to critical situations involving loss, grief, or trauma.

Universities are not hospitals, but they are living communities.

When a student experiences crisis - for example, the death of a family member, severe anxiety, or the loss of housing - the academic environment often becomes their first point of contact.

That is why every member of staff should know how to recognize distress, react calmly, and refer appropriately.

Let’s begin with the three levels of response.

Level 1 - Recognition and First Contact.

Tutors or professors are usually the first to notice warning signs: sudden absenteeism, withdrawal, or emotional outbursts.

The first step is to observe and approach gently.

You might say:

“I’ve noticed you’ve seemed very quiet lately. Would you like to talk about how things are going?”

This simple act communicates care without intrusion.

Level 2 - Containment and Referral.

If a student shares that they are struggling, the goal is not to fix the situation but to contain it - to provide emotional safety and guide them to the right support.

A useful phrase might be:

“I’m really sorry you’re going through this. You don’t have to face it alone. We have a counselor who can help - would you like me to connect you?”

This preserves dignity while encouraging professional help.

Tutors should always know the names and contact information of the university’s mental health services or crisis coordinators.

Level 3 - Coordinated Response.

For severe crises - such as panic attacks, suicidal thoughts, or violent behavior - immediate coordination is vital.

Universities should have crisis response protocols, which typically include:

1. Notifying the student support or counseling office.
2. Contacting medical or emergency services if safety is at risk.
3. Informing a designated crisis response team or supervisor.
4. Documenting the event respectfully and confidentially.

Remember: confidentiality has limits when safety is threatened.

It’s appropriate to share information with authorized professionals if a student is at risk of harming themselves or others.

University services - such as psychological counseling centers, disability offices, and international student units - form the second layer of protection.

Their collaboration with academic staff ensures that emotional support and academic flexibility go hand in hand.

For example, a grieving student may need adjusted deadlines or temporary suspension of attendance requirements.

It is also essential that universities care for their staff.

Supporting students in distress can be emotionally demanding.

Supervisory meetings, peer consultation, or staff debriefing sessions should be available to prevent burnout and compassion fatigue.

In short, effective crisis response is not about quick fixes - it is about coordination, clarity, and compassion.

When tutors, academic staff, and university services work together, they create a safety net that allows students not only to survive crises but to recover and thrive.

In our next lecture, we will address how to manage these sensitive situations ethically and confidentially, maintaining trust while respecting professional boundaries.

## **Lesson 8: ETHICAL AND CONFIDENTIAL HANDLING OF SENSITIVE SITUATIONS**

### **Description**

This lesson explores the ethical foundations that guide tutors and academic staff when supporting students through grief, trauma, or other sensitive situations. Ethical practice is critical for building trust. Without trust, even the most compassionate communication cannot lead to meaningful support.

The session introduces four core ethical principles essential in higher education support: respect for dignity, beneficence and non-maleficence, confidentiality, and professional boundaries. Tutors often become the first point of contact when students share deeply personal information. Knowing how to respond responsibly, what to keep private, and when information must be shared for safety reasons is vital.

We examine how to communicate transparently about confidentiality, how to document sensitive information appropriately, and how to avoid common ethical mistakes, such as gossip, overinvolvement, or promising absolute secrecy. The lesson also provides guidance for navigating situations where confidentiality must be ethically limited, such as imminent risk of harm.

Ultimately, ethical handling of sensitive situations is an act of respect: it protects the student's dignity, ensures safety, and strengthens trust between students and university staff.

## Objectives

By the end of this lesson, tutors will be able to:

- Explain the core ethical principles that guide student support in higher education.
- Communicate clearly and transparently about confidentiality and its limits.
- Handle sensitive disclosures in a respectful, non-judgmental, and ethical manner.
- Identify situations that require breaching confidentiality for safety reasons.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid emotional overinvolvement.
- Understand the importance of secure documentation and communication practices.
- Recognize common ethical pitfalls, such as gossip or making unrealistic promises.
- Uphold student dignity while coordinating with authorized university services.

## Lesson Structure

### 1. Introduction

- Recap of Lesson 7 (crisis response and coordination).
- Emphasize: compassion must be grounded in ethical practice.
- Why ethics and confidentiality are essential for student trust.

### 2. Core Ethical Principles in Higher Education Support

#### Respect for Dignity

- Students' right to privacy, autonomy, and choice.

#### Beneficence & Non-Maleficence

- Acting to help; avoiding harm, even unintentionally.

#### Confidentiality

- What should remain private; when disclosure is necessary.

#### Professional Boundaries

- Understanding one's role; avoiding overinvolvement or "rescuing."

### 3. Responding Ethically to Sensitive Disclosures

- Listening without making promises you cannot keep.
- Example of transparent communication:  
*"I'll keep this private unless I believe your safety is at risk. If so, I will tell you before taking any step."*

- Maintaining trust while clarifying responsibility.
4. When Confidentiality Must Be Limited
- Situations involving safety risks:
    - suicidal thoughts,
    - harm to others,
    - reports of abuse,
    - medical emergencies.
  - Ethical disclosures are acts of protection, not betrayal.
  - Coordinating with counselors, crisis teams, or emergency services.
5. Documentation and Communication Protocols
- Recording only factual, necessary information.
  - Sharing information strictly with authorized staff.
  - Ensuring compliance with privacy laws and university policies.
  - Secure storage and communication channels.
6. Ethical Risks to Avoid
- Gossiping about a student’s situation.
  - Discussing cases “off the record.”
  - Taking on a therapeutic role beyond competence.
  - Emotional overinvolvement and boundary erosion.
7. Supporting Staff and Promoting Ethical Culture
- The importance of training, supervision, and ethical guidelines.
  - Encouraging staff to seek support when overwhelmed.
  - Universities as ethical communities, not just academic institutions.
8. Summary and Key Takeaways
- Ethical practice protects dignity, safety, and trust.
  - Confidentiality is essential—but not absolute when safety is at stake.
  - Boundaries ensure both student well-being and staff sustainability.

## **Practical Exercise**

### **Scenario: When Confidentiality Has Limits**

#### **Context:**

You are a tutor supervising a small research group. One of your students, Nazar, has recently become quieter in class, but he continues submitting his assignments. After a group session, he asks if he can speak privately.

Once you sit down in your office, Nazar hesitates, then says:

“I don’t want anyone to know this... but I’ve been having a really hard time. My father was killed two months ago, and I haven’t told my family how much I’m struggling. I can’t sleep, and yesterday I had a thought that maybe it would be easier if I didn’t wake up... but please don’t tell anyone. Promise me.”

He is visibly shaking. He insists he does not want to speak with a psychologist and begs you to keep the conversation between the two of you.

You feel the weight of responsibility. He shared something extremely sensitive, and he explicitly asked for secrecy. At the same time, he may be at risk.

This moment requires careful ethical judgment: respecting his dignity while ensuring his safety.

### **Task**

#### Step 1. Identify the Ethical Principles Involved

List three ethical principles relevant to this scenario (e.g., dignity, non-maleficence, confidentiality, boundaries).

For each, write a brief explanation of how it applies to this situation.

#### Step 2. Clarify Confidentiality Limits

Write 2–3 sentences explaining *why* you cannot promise absolute confidentiality in this situation.

Include references to safety-based disclosure and professional responsibility.

#### Step 3. Formulate a Compassionate Ethical Response

Write two statements you could say to Nazar that:

- acknowledge his pain and courage in sharing,
- communicate the confidentiality boundaries clearly and respectfully,
- reassure him that he will not be left alone in this process.

Examples of phrasing to model (avoid copying directly):

- “Thank you for trusting me...”
- “Your safety is my priority...”
- “I will keep things private unless I believe you’re at risk...”

#### Step 4. Determine the Next Steps

Identify two appropriate actions you should take following the disclosure.

Consider:

- contacting the university counselor or crisis team,
- staying with Nazar until support arrives,
- documenting the situation according to university protocols.

Explain briefly why these steps are ethically necessary.

### Step 5. Protecting Yourself as a Tutor

Write 2–3 sentences about how you would manage your own emotional boundaries after this conversation.

Consider supervision, peer debriefing, and avoiding over-involvement.

### Step 6. Reflection Question

- Why is respecting confidentiality important, yet not absolute, in crisis situations? Write a thoughtful 2–3 sentence reflection.

### Script

In our previous lecture, we discussed the role of university staff in responding to crises with coordination and compassion.

Today, we'll focus on an equally important topic - ethics and confidentiality in managing sensitive student situations.

Ethics provide the foundation for trust.

Without trust, even the most compassionate help loses its meaning.

As tutors or academic mentors, you are often among the first people a student turns to in times of loss or emotional crisis.

What you do with the information they share can either strengthen or break that trust.

Let's start with the core ethical principles relevant to higher education support:

1. Respect for dignity - Treat every student as an autonomous individual with the right to privacy, choice, and respect.
2. Beneficence and non-maleficence - Aim to do good and avoid harm. Even well-intentioned actions, such as sharing a story "to help," can cause harm if done without consent.
3. Confidentiality - Information shared in trust must remain private unless there is a clear, legal, or safety-based reason to disclose it.
4. Boundaries - Know where your professional role ends and specialized care begins.

When a student confides something personal - for example, about the death of a loved one, mental health struggles, or trauma - the correct response is to listen without promise and act within limits.

You can say:

"Thank you for trusting me with this. I'll keep it private unless I believe your safety might be at risk. If that ever happens, I'll let you know before taking any step."

This statement sets transparent expectations and protects both you and the student.

Sometimes, confidentiality has to be ethically limited.

For example, if a student expresses suicidal thoughts, reports abuse, or poses danger to others, you must involve appropriate professionals - counselors, medical staff, or crisis teams. These actions are not breaches of trust; they are acts of protection.

Always document such incidents factually and share information only with authorized individuals.

Ethical communication also includes avoiding gossip or emotional overinvolvement.

Discussing a student's situation with colleagues "off the record" - even with good intentions - violates trust and may retraumatize the student if they find out.

Similarly, avoid becoming a "rescuer." Your task is to support, not to absorb the student's emotional pain.

Universities should provide ethical guidelines and training for all tutors and mentors. These may include protocols for data protection (such as GDPR compliance), secure communication channels, and guidance on note-taking or documentation.

Remember, ethical handling of sensitive information is not just a rule - it's an act of respect.

Every time you protect a student's story, you reinforce their dignity and safety.

In crisis work, trust is the bridge between vulnerability and recovery.

In the next lecture, we will shift focus toward promoting emotional resilience and post-traumatic growth - exploring how students can find strength and meaning even after loss.

## **Lesson 9: PROMOTING EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE AND POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH**

### **Description**

This lesson explores how educators can support students in developing emotional resilience and experiencing post-traumatic growth (PTG) after loss, displacement, or traumatic events. Resilience is not the absence of suffering but the ability to adapt, recover, and continue finding meaning despite challenges. For Ukrainian students who have endured war, separation, and uncertainty, resilience often emerges through everyday determination, supportive relationships, and the strength to rebuild their future.

We examine psychological perspectives on resilience—such as George Bonanno's concept of “ordinary magic”—and the theory of post-traumatic growth by Tedeschi and Calhoun, which highlights positive changes that can arise alongside grief, including renewed priorities, deeper empathy, and a stronger sense of purpose.

This lesson provides practical ways tutors can foster resilience and growth: normalizing struggle, encouraging reflection, promoting self-efficacy, modeling realistic hope, and integrating micro-resilience practices into academic settings. By cultivating environments that support meaning-making and emotional connection, educators help students not only survive adversity but also discover new strengths.

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, tutors will be able to:

- Define emotional resilience and explain its role in student recovery.
- Describe the concept of post-traumatic growth and how it coexists with grief.
- Recognize protective factors that support resilience in students affected by trauma.
- Encourage reflective practices that promote meaning-making and emotional processing.
- Support students in strengthening self-efficacy by acknowledging small and large achievements.
- Model realistic hope and calm, supportive presence in academic interactions.
- Integrate simple micro-resilience practices into daily learning routines.

- Understand their role in helping students transform experiences of loss into pathways for growth.

## **Lesson Structure**

### 1. Introduction

- Recap of Lesson 8 (ethics and confidentiality as foundations of trust).
- Today's focus: resilience and growth as hopeful components of the healing process.
- Emphasize that resilience is not about suppressing pain.

### 2. Understanding Emotional Resilience

- Definition: the capacity to adapt and recover after adversity.
- Resilience as an ongoing process, not a personality trait.
- George Bonanno's "ordinary magic": everyday protective factors (relationships, flexibility, purpose).
- Examples among Ukrainian students (determination, persistence, willingness to learn despite hardship).

### 3. Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG)

- Introduce Tedeschi & Calhoun's model.
- Five domains of PTG:
  1. Improved relationships and empathy
  2. New life priorities
  3. Personal strength
  4. Spiritual or existential growth
  5. Appreciation for life
- Emphasize that PTG coexists with pain. Growth does not erase grief.

### 4. Supporting Resilience Through Educational Practices

#### Normalize Struggle

- Let students know emotional fluctuation is normal.

#### Encourage Reflection

- Journaling, storytelling, guided discussions, meaning-making activities.

#### Promote Self-Efficacy

- Celebrate small achievements; remind students of their competencies.

#### Model Hope

- Realistic optimism: acknowledging challenges while believing in growth.

#### Micro-Resilience Practices

- Short breathing exercises, grounding techniques, gratitude reflections, weekly "small victories" check-ins.

## 5. The Role of the Tutor in Fostering Growth

- Tutors as facilitators of strength, not fixers of grief.
- Creating supportive spaces where students feel safe to reflect.
- Encouraging balanced routines and self-care.

## 6. Cautions and Boundaries

- Avoid imposing narratives of “growth” or pressuring positivity.
- Respect individual timelines and differences.
- Know when professional mental health support is needed.

## 7. Summary and Key Takeaways

- Resilience grows through connection, empathy, and meaning-making.
- Post-traumatic growth is possible and can be supported thoughtfully.
- Tutors play a central role in nurturing hope and confidence after loss.

## Practical Exercise

### Scenario: When a Student Struggles but Shows Signs of Resilience

#### Context:

You are teaching a project-based course. One of your students, Lina, relocated from a heavily affected region of Ukraine. Over the past month, she has been quietly struggling—her assignments are sometimes late, she appears tired, and she rarely speaks in class.

However, she always attends, participates in group work when asked, and recently submitted a reflective piece about how she is trying to rebuild her routine after displacement.

After class one day, Lina approaches you and says:

“I’m still overwhelmed most days... but I’m trying. Yesterday I studied for one hour without panicking. It’s small, but it felt like a win.”

She then adds: “But sometimes I feel weak for not coping better. Other students seem fine. I don’t know if I will ever feel normal again.”

You hear both pain and resilience in her words.

Your role is to validate her struggle, reinforce her strengths, and gently guide her toward growth without minimizing her emotions.

#### Task

##### Step 1. Identify Resilience Factors

List three signs of resilience visible in Lina’s behavior or words.

(Think: persistence, attendance, small victories, meaning-making, reaching out for support.)

##### Step 2. Identify Opportunities for Post-Traumatic Growth

Using Tedeschi & Calhoun’s PTG domains, identify two potential areas where Lina may experience growth in the future (e.g., new priorities, emotional strength, deeper empathy).

Write 1–2 sentences for each.

### Step 3. Provide Compassionate, Growth-Oriented Responses

Write three supportive statements you could say to Lina that:

- normalize her struggle,
- acknowledge her effort,
- reinforce her self-efficacy,
- avoid toxic positivity (“Everything happens for a reason”),
- offer realistic hope.

Your statements should reflect the tone of resilience-building, not pressure.

### Step 4. Suggest Micro-Resilience Practices

Identify two simple practices you could encourage Lina to use in daily life (e.g., grounding exercises, small goal setting, gratitude reflection, journaling).

Explain briefly why each one might help her.

### Step 5. Boundary Reflection

Write 2–3 sentences describing how you would maintain healthy boundaries while still supporting her growth.

(Consider: you are not a therapist; you guide, but do not “fix.”)

### Step 6. Reflection Question

- How can tutors support resilience and growth without minimizing the student’s ongoing grief?  
Write a brief reflection (2–3 sentences).

## Script

In our previous lecture, we talked about ethical care and confidentiality - the foundations of trust.

Today, we’ll explore something deeply hopeful: how loss can also become a space for growth and how tutors can help students strengthen their emotional resilience.

Resilience doesn’t mean avoiding pain or “staying strong at all costs.”

It means the ability to adapt, to recover, and to continue finding meaning even when life feels broken.

For Ukrainian students who have lived through war, separation, or displacement, resilience often appears as quiet determination - the will to keep learning, connecting, and rebuilding their future.

Psychologist George Bonanno describes resilience as the ordinary magic of human recovery.

It is built from everyday factors: social support, flexible thinking, self-compassion, and a sense of purpose.

As tutors, you can strengthen these protective factors by modeling calm, offering encouragement, and helping students reconnect with their values and strengths.

Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) is a related concept developed by Tedeschi and Calhoun. It refers to the positive psychological changes that can occur after a major life crisis - such as discovering new priorities, deeper empathy, or a stronger appreciation for life.

Importantly, PTG does not replace grief - it coexists with it.

Growth and pain can live side by side.

What can educators do to support this process?

1. Normalize struggle. Let students know that it's okay to not feel okay - healing is not linear.
2. Encourage reflection. Activities such as journaling, storytelling, or guided discussion can help students find meaning in their experiences.
3. Promote self-efficacy. Remind students of their successes and competencies. Even small achievements rebuild confidence.
4. Model hope. Hope is contagious. When educators express realistic optimism - acknowledging hardship while believing in growth - it gives students permission to do the same.

You can also integrate micro-resilience practices into daily routines: short breathing breaks, gratitude reflections, or asking students to share one small victory of the week.

These simple rituals remind them that progress and positivity still exist, even in difficult times.

[Gentle and reflective tone]

Remember: resilience is not an inborn trait - it's a skill that grows through connection, empathy, and meaning-making.

When we help students rebuild hope, we don't erase their loss - we help them transform it into strength.

In our next lecture, we'll explore how creative and reflective practices - such as art, writing, and movement - can become pathways to healing and post-traumatic growth.

## **Lesson 10: CREATIVE AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICES FOR HEALING**

### **Description**

This lesson explores how creative and reflective practices can support emotional healing, resilience, and meaning-making for students who have experienced grief, trauma, or displacement. Many forms of emotional pain cannot easily be expressed through language alone. For Ukrainian students affected by war, loss, and chronic stress, creative modalities, such as art, music, writing, photography, and movement, provide gentle, accessible ways to release emotions, reconnect with the body, and cultivate a sense of safety and wholeness.

Alongside creative expression, reflective practices help students process experiences, deepen self-understanding, and integrate new insights into their personal story. Techniques such as free writing, guided prompts, mindfulness, and peer sharing support this process without requiring students to disclose more than they are comfortable sharing.

The educator's role is not interpretation but containment: providing supportive structures, encouraging authenticity, and validating students' expressions. By integrating creative and reflective practices into academic spaces, tutors help students heal, build resilience, and engage more meaningfully with both their emotional life and their learning.

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, tutors will be able to:

- Explain how creative and reflective practices support emotional healing.

- Identify different types of creative activities (art, music, photography, movement) that foster expression and regulation.
- Use reflective exercises to encourage meaning-making and resilience.
- Create safe, non-judgmental frameworks for students to share creative work.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries by avoiding interpretation and focusing on validation.
- Integrate simple creative or reflective practices into academic or workshop settings.
- Support students in reconnecting with their bodies and emotions through gentle, trauma-sensitive activities.
- Recognize the importance of offering choice and respecting students' comfort levels.

## **Lesson Structure**

### 1. Introduction

- Recap of Lesson 9 (resilience and post-traumatic growth).
- Today's focus: how creativity and reflection facilitate emotional expression and integration.
- Emphasize that healing is not only cognitive, it is sensory, emotional, and embodied.

### 2. Why Creative Practices Matter

- Trauma often affects the body and emotions before language.
- Creative expression offers non-verbal pathways for release and grounding.
- Importance for students who "have no words" for their experiences.

### 3. Creative Practices for Emotional Expression

#### Art Journaling

- Drawing + writing to visualize safety, strength, or memory.
- Focus on expression, not artistic skill.

#### Music and Rhythm

- Singing, drumming, listening circles to support connection and regulation.
- Role of Ukrainian folk music in expressing loss and hope.

#### Photography Projects

- Capturing images of resilience, belonging, or recovery.
- Safe externalization of internal experiences.

#### Movement and Body Awareness

- Stretching, gentle dance, mindful walking.
- Reconnecting the body with feeling states.

#### 4. Reflective Practices for Meaning-Making

##### Free Writing

- Short, timed writing to process what resonates emotionally.

##### Guided Reflection Questions

- Prompts such as:
  - “What have I learned about myself through this challenge?”
  - “What helped me today?”

##### Peer Sharing

- Optional small-group discussions that normalize feelings and build empathy.

##### Mindfulness Moments

- One-minute breathing or grounding practices to reduce anxiety.

#### 5. The Role of the Tutor: Holding the Frame

- Provide structure, safety, and choice.
- Do not interpret drawings, stories, or symbols.
- Validate the courage to share:
  - “Thank you for sharing; it feels meaningful.”
- Respect silence—sharing is optional.

#### 6. Integrating Creativity with Academic Learning

- Linking psychological or theoretical concepts to personal creative reflections.
- Encouraging students to express understanding through art or metaphor.
- Enhancing both emotional well-being and academic engagement.

#### 7. Summary and Key Takeaways

- Creative and reflective practices offer powerful pathways to healing.
- They support regulation, expression, connection, and resilience.
- Tutors enable healing by offering safe, flexible, empathic spaces.

### **Practical Exercise**

#### **Scenario: A Student Expresses Grief Through Art**

##### **Context:**

You are leading a small workshop where students are invited to participate in an optional art journaling activity. The prompt is simple:

“Draw or write about something that gives you strength.”

Most students create abstract shapes, colors, or brief reflections.

One student, Oksana, produces a drawing that surprises you: a broken house with a small blooming flower growing through the cracks. She sits silently for several minutes after finishing. When you gently ask how the activity felt, she quietly says:

“I didn’t expect this to come out. It’s strange... I feel sad but also... lighter.”

She hesitates and then adds:

“Please don’t try to explain my drawing. I don’t want anyone to analyze it.”

She does not offer additional details, and she does not appear distressed—but she seems thoughtful, emotional, and somewhat vulnerable.

Your role is to validate, support, and *hold the space*—not to interpret her artwork or push her to talk.

## **Task**

### Step 1. Identify the Key Principles at Play

List three trauma-sensitive principles relevant to this scenario (e.g., offering choice, avoiding interpretation, validating expression, respecting boundaries).

### Step 2. Write Two Compassionate, Non-Interpretive Responses

Write two statements you could say that:

- acknowledge her expression without analyzing it,
- validate her emotional experience,
- respect her boundary about not interpreting the drawing.

Avoid phrases like “This must mean…” or “It looks like you’re trying to say…”

### Step 3. Describe How You Would Hold the Space

Write 2–3 sentences explaining how you would maintain a supportive environment for Oksana and the group.

Consider tone, posture, silence, pacing, and allowing students to control their level of disclosure.

### Step 4. Suggest a Gentle Follow-Up Option

Identify one optional reflective practice you could offer privately to Oksana (e.g., journaling, mindful breathing, free writing).

Explain briefly why this could help her process emerging emotions.

### Step 5. Boundary Reflection

Write 2–3 sentences on how you would avoid crossing boundaries by:

- not asking probing questions,
- not interpreting symbols,
- not encouraging deeper disclosure than she offers.

### Step 6. Reflection Question

- Why is non-interpretive validation essential in creative healing activities?  
Write a short (2–3 sentence) reflection.

## **Script**

In our previous lecture, we discussed resilience and post-traumatic growth - the idea that people can find strength and meaning after hardship.

Today, we'll look at how creative and reflective practices can support this process - especially for students who have no words for their pain.

Creativity helps us express what language cannot.

For many Ukrainian students, grief and trauma are not only psychological experiences but also deeply embodied ones - felt through tension, silence, and fatigue.

Art, writing, and movement offer gentle ways to release these emotions and reconnect with a sense of wholeness.

Let's begin with creative practices.

- **Art journaling:** Encourage students to combine drawing and writing - for example, to depict "what safety looks like" or "what gives me strength." The focus is on expression, not artistic skill.

- **Music and rhythm:** Group singing, drumming, or listening sessions can foster connection and emotional regulation. Ukrainian folk songs, for instance, often carry themes of loss and hope.

- **Photography projects:** Students can take pictures representing resilience, belonging, or memory. Sharing them in small groups can help externalize emotions safely.

- **Movement and body awareness:** Gentle stretching, dance, or even mindful walking allows students to reconnect with their bodies - which trauma often disconnects us from.

Next, reflective practices.

Reflection helps students make sense of experiences and integrate them into their life story.

- **Free writing:** Set aside five minutes at the end of a workshop or class for students to write about something that resonated with them.

- **Guided questions:** Ask prompts like "What have I learned about myself through this challenge?" or "Who has supported me most, and why?"

- **Peer sharing:** When appropriate, small-group discussions can help normalize emotional experiences and deepen empathy.

- **Mindfulness moments:** Even a one-minute breathing exercise can anchor students in the present and reduce anxiety.

As tutors or educators, your role is to create the frame, not to interpret the content.

Let students decide what to share and when. Avoid analyzing their drawings or writings - instead, focus on appreciation and empathy.

You might say: "Thank you for sharing this - it feels very personal."

This simple validation reinforces trust and safety.

Creative and reflective work can also be linked to academic learning.

For instance, after discussing psychological concepts, invite students to illustrate how these ideas connect to their lived experiences.

Integrating reflection into education not only supports emotional health but also deepens understanding.

In summary, creativity and reflection are powerful tools for recovery - accessible, human, and adaptable.

They remind students that healing is not only about talking, but also about creating, feeling, and connecting.

In the next lecture, we will explore how to design inclusive and safe university environments - spaces where such healing practices can flourish for everyone.

## **Lesson 11: DESIGNING INCLUSIVE AND SAFE UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENTS**

### **Description**

This lesson focuses on how universities can move beyond individual support strategies and create institutional environments that are inclusive, safe, and nurturing for all students, especially those coping with grief, trauma, war-related displacement, or cultural transition. An inclusive university is not defined by diversity alone, but by a culture of empathy, fairness, and psychological safety. For Ukrainian students affected by war and loss, such environments are essential for healing, belonging, and academic success.

We explore three levels of inclusive design: institutional policies, classroom culture, and physical/social spaces. Drawing on Amy Edmondson's concept of psychological safety, the lesson examines how universities can foster climates where students feel respected, heard, and free from judgment. We review practices such as flexible academic accommodations, accessible counseling, culturally sensitive communication, and the creation of safe campus spaces.

Findings from the UkraStud research underscore the measurable impact of inclusive environments—showing that supportive policies, positive interactions, and culturally competent staff significantly enhance well-being, belonging, and integration. Inclusive environments are not symbolic; they are protective factors that build resilience and promote flourishing.

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, tutors will be able to:

- Define psychological safety and explain its importance in higher education settings.
- Identify institutional policies that support inclusion, mental health, and crisis flexibility.
- Apply inclusive communication strategies that foster trust, dignity, and belonging.
- Promote classroom cultures that encourage collaboration, empathy, and respect.
- Recognize the role of physical and social spaces in creating safe environments.
- Understand the implications of UkraStud research for Ukrainian students' well-being.
- Demonstrate culturally competent and trauma-informed behaviors within academic settings.
- Contribute to an ongoing institutional commitment to inclusion and safety.

### **Lesson Structure**

#### **1. Introduction**

- Transition to institutional-level strategies for safety and inclusion.
- Importance of belonging and psychological security for students affected by trauma.

#### **2. Understanding Psychological Safety**

- Amy Edmondson's definition: freedom to express oneself without fear of judgment or punishment.

- Application in universities: safe expression of opinions, emotions, challenges, and mistakes.
- Why psychological safety is vital for grief recovery and academic engagement.

### 3. Level 1: Institutional Policies that Support Inclusion

- Clear anti-discrimination and inclusion frameworks.
- Transparent mental health pathways and accessible counseling services.
- Academic flexibility for students in crisis (extensions, modified attendance).
- Visibility of support resources across campus.
- Link to UkraStud findings: institutional care is a predictor of well-being and confidence.

### 4. Level 2: Inclusive Classroom Culture

- Educators set the emotional tone through communication and behavior.
- Practices that encourage belonging: greeting students by name, acknowledging effort, offering encouragement.
- Collaborative learning over competitive culture.
- Inclusive teaching materials and avoidance of stereotypes.
- Language shifts:
  - from “What’s wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?”
  - using gender-neutral, culturally aware terminology.

### 5. Level 3: Physical and Social Spaces that Support Healing

- Creating “safe corners” or quiet zones for reflection and rest.
- Posting supportive messages in English and Ukrainian.
- Community events: remembrance days, intercultural evenings, volunteer opportunities.
- Reducing stigma through visibility and shared humanity.

### 6. Insights from UkraStud Research

- Inclusive policies strongly predict student well-being, flourishing, and self-efficacy.
- Students report more positive than negative interactions with staff and peers.
- Positive contacts strengthen belonging and openness toward host communities.
- These experiences influence identification with Europe and social integration.
- Implication: inclusion is not symbolic. It is empirically protective.

### 7. Behavior and Communication of Staff Across Campus

- Importance of trauma awareness for all staff, not only tutors.
- Consistency in messaging and tone across departments.

- The university as a compassionate ecosystem.

#### 8. Ongoing Commitment to Inclusion

- Inclusion as a continuous process, not a one-time initiative.
- The power of everyday gestures: checking in, offering support, showing respect.
- Building institutional cultures of safety and empathy.

#### 9. Summary and Key Takeaways

- Inclusive environments foster healing, resilience, and integration.
- Psychological safety and trauma awareness are foundational.
- Collaboration across departments creates strong protective networks.

### **Practical Exercise**

#### **Scenario: A Student Feeling Unseen and Unsafe in the University Environment**

##### **Context:**

You work at a university hosting many Ukrainian students who relocated during the war. One of your students, Mariia, has been attending classes regularly, but you notice she rarely participates. In group activities, she remains silent even when invited to speak.

One afternoon after a seminar, Mariia quietly approaches you and says:

“I don’t feel like I belong here. I’m afraid of saying something wrong. Some students make jokes about accents, and last week someone told me ‘You Ukrainians are always so emotional.’ I know they meant it as a joke, but it made me shut down. I just try to stay invisible now.”

She also mentions she has not visited the counseling center because she assumed it was “only for local students” and did not know services were available in English.

In class, you’ve noticed she always sits near the door and becomes tense when discussions turn to war or politics. She has no quiet place on campus where she feels comfortable spending time between classes.

This situation highlights several barriers to inclusion: lack of psychological safety, microaggressions, limited awareness of support services, and absence of welcoming physical spaces.

### **Task**

#### **Step 1. Identify Barriers to Inclusion**

List four barriers Mariia is experiencing.

Consider: microaggressions, fear of judgment, lack of psychological safety, cultural misunderstandings, insufficient communication about services, absence of safe spaces.

#### **Step 2. Apply the Three Levels of Inclusive Design**

Using the levels discussed in the lesson, identify one concrete improvement for each level:

- Institutional level (e.g., clearer communication about support services, multilingual signage, anti-discrimination policies)

- Classroom culture (e.g., inclusive discussion guidelines, addressing microaggressions, promoting collaboration)
- Physical/social spaces (e.g., creating quiet corners, culturally welcoming environments)

Write 1–2 sentences per level.

### Step 3. Formulate a Supportive Response to Maria

Write two statements you could say that:

- validate her feelings,
- acknowledge the harm caused by microaggressions,
- reassure her of her belonging,
- explain clearly that support services are available to her.

Avoid minimizing phrases like “Don’t take it personally” or “They didn’t mean anything by it.”

### Step 4. Promote Psychological Safety

Describe two steps you could take in your classroom to strengthen psychological safety for all students (e.g., setting norms, promoting respect, modeling inclusive communication).

### Step 5. Institutional Collaboration

Write 1–2 sentences explaining which university services or staff members you might collaborate with to ensure long-term improvement (e.g., counseling center, diversity office, academic advisors).

### Step 6. Reflection Question

- How do everyday interactions, positive or negative, shape a student’s sense of safety and belonging?

Write a short reflection (2–3 sentences).

## Script

In our previous lecture, we explored creative and reflective practices that help students heal.

Today, we will move from individual strategies to the institutional level - how to design universities that are truly inclusive and safe for all, especially for those coping with loss and trauma.

An inclusive university environment is more than a diverse campus - it’s a culture of empathy, fairness, and respect.

For Ukrainian students who have experienced war, displacement, or grief, a sense of belonging and safety is essential for recovery and academic success.

Let’s start with psychological safety.

This concept, introduced by Amy Edmondson, means that people feel free to express themselves without fear of humiliation or punishment.

In the university context, it means students can share opinions, emotions, or mistakes without being judged.

When students trust that their vulnerability will be met with respect, learning and well-being flourish together.

Building such an environment requires intentional action at three levels:

1. Institutional policies.

Universities should adopt clear policies on inclusion, anti-discrimination, and mental health support.

This includes accessible counseling services, flexibility for students in crisis (for example, deadline extensions), and visible communication about available help.

When institutional care is transparent, students feel less isolated.

2. Classroom culture.

Educators play a central role in setting the emotional tone.

Simple habits make a big difference - such as greeting students by name, acknowledging effort rather than perfection, and promoting collaboration instead of competition.

Inclusive teaching also means using materials that reflect cultural diversity and avoid stereotypes.

3. Physical and social spaces.

Create “safe corners” - quiet areas on campus where students can rest, reflect, or talk privately.

Display supportive messages in both English and Ukrainian.

Organize community-building events that emphasize solidarity and shared humanity, such as remembrance days, intercultural evenings, or volunteer initiatives.

These experiences reduce stigma and promote mutual care.

Tutors and staff also model inclusivity through their behavior and language.

For example, replacing “What’s wrong with you?” with “What happened to you?” shifts focus from judgment to understanding.

Similarly, inclusive communication means using gender-neutral language, acknowledging diversity of experiences, and avoiding assumptions about a student’s background.

Universities should also integrate training in cultural competence and trauma awareness for academic and administrative staff.

Recent findings from the UkraStud research confirm how essential inclusive and safe environments are for Ukrainian students navigating trauma, displacement, and uncertainty. The study shows that satisfaction with university inclusion policies is one of the strongest predictors of student well-being, influencing flourishing, social connectedness, and self-efficacy. Moreover, students report significantly more positive than negative interactions on campus, and these positive contacts foster a sense of belonging and openness toward the host society. Importantly, positive interpersonal experiences also strengthen students’ identification with Europe, both directly and indirectly through more favorable attitudes toward European communities. These insights underscore that inclusive university environments are not symbolic - they are measurable protective factors that directly support psychological recovery, resilience, and long-term integration for Ukrainian students.

When everyone - from professors to librarians - understands how trauma affects behavior, the entire institution becomes more compassionate and effective.

Remember, inclusion is not a one-time project - it’s a continuous commitment. Every welcoming gesture, every supportive policy, every safe space communicates: You belong here. You are safe here.

In the next and final lecture, we’ll explore institutional strategies for crisis preparedness and mental health promotion - how universities can sustain all these efforts in a long-term, systemic way.

## **Lesson 12: INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR CRISIS PREPAREDNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION**

### **Description**

In this final lesson, we shift from individual and classroom-level interventions to a broader institutional perspective, exploring how universities can build sustainable systems that support student mental health, crisis preparedness, and long-term well-being. Effective crisis response is not based on intuition alone. It requires strategic planning, coordinated action, and evidence-informed policies. Findings from the UkraStud research provide strong empirical support for the institutional practices discussed in this session, demonstrating what truly works for Ukrainian students across multiple countries.

We examine four pillars of institutional preparedness: prevention and early detection, clear crisis response protocols, integration of mental health into academic life, and sustainability through continuous improvement. Each pillar is supported by data showing how inclusion policies, positive social climate, administrative clarity, and academic flexibility directly influence student flourishing, belonging, and resilience.

This lesson emphasizes the importance of collaboration, transparency, and long-term institutional commitment, not temporary measures. By embedding care into systems, policies, and daily practices, universities can create environments where students not only recover from adversity but thrive academically, emotionally, and socially.

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, tutors and staff will be able to:

- Describe the four pillars of institutional crisis preparedness and mental health promotion.
- Explain how inclusion policies and positive campus climate protect student well-being.
- Understand research findings from UkraStud and their implications for university practice.
- Recognize the importance of early detection and preventive mental health strategies.
- Identify key components of clear, effective crisis response protocols.
- Integrate mental health promotion into academic structures, communication, and curriculum.
- Appreciate the need for sustainability, evaluation, and long-term planning.
- Advocate for institutional practices that support recovery, resilience, and social integration.

### **Lesson Structure**

#### **1. Introduction**

- Recap of previous lessons; shift from individual care to institutional systems.
- Emphasize long-term commitment and the role of evidence (UkraStud findings).

- Universities as communities that must be prepared, coordinated, and compassionate.

## 2. Pillar 1: Prevention and Early Detection

- Importance of awareness and proactive support.
- UkraStud findings:
  - Inclusion policies strongly predict flourishing.
  - Positive interactions on campus act as protective factors.
- Preventive practices:
  - Workshops for staff on early warning signs.
  - Anonymous well-being surveys.
  - Peer networks, mentoring systems, resilience-building activities.
- Goal: identify needs early, prevent crises before they escalate.

## 3. Pillar 2: Clear Crisis Response Protocols

- Students thrive when systems are predictable and transparent.
- UkraStud evidence:
  - High satisfaction with administrative clarity across countries.
  - In Ukraine, inclusion policy satisfaction even more strongly predicts well-being.
- Essential components of crisis protocols:
  - Emergency contacts and referral pathways.
  - Communication guidelines across departments.
  - Confidentiality and documentation procedures.
  - Simulation exercises and training for rapid, coordinated action.

## 4. Pillar 3: Integration of Mental Health into Academic Life

- Mental health and academic performance are closely linked.
- UkraStud findings:
  - Positive peer contact improves academic performance; negative contact reduces it.
  - Psychological flourishing remains high when students feel included.
- Institutional actions:
  - Mental health orientation sessions and psychoeducation.
  - Academic flexibility (exam deferrals, compassionate leave).
  - Collaboration across departments for a holistic approach.
  - Online self-help tools and regular communication about support services.

## 5. Pillar 4: Sustainability and Continuous Improvement

- UkraStud findings:
  - Positive intergroup contact strengthens European identification and integration.
  - Sustained support systems improve flourishing and self-efficacy long-term.
- Institutional commitments:
  - Partnerships with NGOs, Ukrainian psychological associations, and international networks.
  - Regular evaluation and adaptation of programs.
  - Long-term strategic planning, not short-term interventions.
- Key message: mental health promotion must be embedded in institutional identity.

## 6. Creating a Culture of Care Across the University

- Care is everyone's responsibility: faculty, staff, librarians, administrators.
- Training in cultural competence, trauma awareness, and inclusive communication.
- Consistency in messaging and behavior across all university levels.

## 7. Final Reflections and Key Takeaways

- Crisis preparedness is about coordination, continuity, and compassion.
- Inclusive policies and supportive climates are protective mental health factors.
- Long-term systems empower students to thrive emotionally and academically.
- Educators and tutors are guardians of hope and belonging within the university.
- Closing message: education and care must remain inseparable.

## Practical Exercise

### Scenario: A Breakdown in Crisis Response

#### Context:

Your university recently welcomed a new cohort of Ukrainian students. The administration has general guidelines for student support, but crisis procedures have not been fully updated or communicated to staff.

One afternoon, a tutor from another department, Dr. Sokolov, urgently contacts you. He explains that a student, Illya, experienced a panic attack during an exam. Illya disclosed that he had received distressing news from home earlier that morning. Dr. Sokolov tried to comfort him but was unsure what steps to take. No clear emergency contact list was available, and he did not know whom to notify.

Eventually, Illya was escorted by a classmate to the library "quiet room" to rest. No counselor was informed, no documentation was made, and the department chair learned about the event only by accident the next day.

The student later reported feeling “abandoned” because no one followed up with him officially. The tutor, meanwhile, felt distressed and guilty because he wanted to help but did not know the correct procedure. This situation highlights several gaps in institutional preparedness.

## **Task**

### **Step 1. Identify System Failures**

List four institutional gaps revealed by this situation.

Consider areas such as:

- unclear crisis protocols,
- lack of communication channels,
- absence of emergency contact lists,
- lack of training for staff,
- no follow-up system,
- no documentation procedures.

### **Step 2. Apply the Four Pillars of Crisis Preparedness**

Using the lesson’s framework, propose one improvement for each pillar:

1. Prevention and Early Detection
2. Clear Crisis Response Protocols
3. Integration of Mental Health into Academic Life
4. Sustainability and Continuous Improvement

Write 1–2 sentences for each improvement.

### **Step 3. Formulate an Immediate Response Plan**

Imagine you were consulted right after the incident.

Describe three actions you would recommend taking within the next 24 hours, addressing:

- student safety and follow-up,
- staff support,
- documentation and reporting,
- communication with relevant services.

### **Step 4. Connect to UkraStud Research**

Write 2–3 sentences explaining how the UkraStud findings (e.g., importance of inclusion policies, positive interactions, transparency, administrative support) show what went wrong in this scenario, and how the university could improve.

### **Step 5. Long-Term Institutional Recommendations**

List three structural changes the university should implement to prevent similar failures.

Examples:

- routine staff trainings,
- updated crisis manuals,
- multilingual communication materials,
- creation of a crisis response team,
- regular evaluation and feedback loops.

#### Step 6. Reflection Question

- How does institutional preparedness, or lack of it, directly influence students' well-being, trust, and academic experience?  
Write a brief reflection (2–3 sentences).

### Script

Over the past eleven lectures, we have explored how to support Ukrainian students coping with loss and trauma - through empathy, communication, creativity, and inclusion. In this final lecture, we will look at the bigger picture: how universities can build institutional systems that sustain these efforts beyond individual actions or short-term projects.

A university prepared for crisis is not one that prevents every problem - but one that responds with coordination, compassion, and continuity.

What strengthens such systems is not intuition alone, but also evidence.

The recently uploaded UkraStud research provides strong empirical support for the institutional strategies we will discuss today. It shows what actually works for Ukrainian students across multiple countries.

Let's look at four pillars of institutional crisis preparedness and mental health promotion.

#### 1. Prevention and Early Detection.

Prevention begins with awareness. The research clearly shows why this matters.

According to the results of the Research :

- Satisfaction with inclusion policies is one of the strongest predictors of psychological flourishing. This means that when students feel supported early - by administration, tutors, or buddies - their well-being improves long before crises emerge;
- Students across all countries report significantly more positive than negative interactions with peers and host communities.

Positive campus climate is, therefore, a protective factor in itself.

This supports the need for:

Regular workshops for tutors, faculty, and administrative staff on recognizing early signs of distress can stop crises before they escalate.

Universities can also conduct anonymous well-being surveys to monitor stress levels and identify emerging needs.

Peer networks, mentoring programs, and resilience-building activities - such as mindfulness groups or creative clubs - all serve as preventive buffers.

#### 2. Clear Crisis Response Protocols.

Our Research highlights that students flourish when institutional structures are predictable and transparent.

For example:

- Ukrainian students show high satisfaction with administrative support and inclusion structures across all host universities.  
In other words, clear and responsive systems reduce uncertainty — a major source of stress for displaced or trauma-affected students.
- In Ukraine itself, satisfaction with the inclusion policy is even more strongly predictive of well-being, showing the importance of institutional clarity in crisis contexts.

Every institution should have a written, accessible plan detailing who does what in a crisis.

This includes:

- Emergency contact lists and referral pathways.
- Procedures for communication between tutors, counselors, and university management.
- Guidelines on confidentiality, documentation, and follow-up.

Regular simulation exercises can help ensure everyone knows their role and acts swiftly during real emergencies.

### 3. Integration of Mental Health into Academic Life.

One of the most significant findings of the study is that mental health is closely linked to academic success.

The results of the Research show:

- among students in Ukraine, positive contact with international peers and foreign communities significantly predicts academic performance, while negative interactions lower it. This means that mental well-being and social climate directly affect learning outcomes;
- Across all countries, psychological flourishing remains high when students feel included - aligning with the idea that well-being must be embedded in education, not treated as an add-on.

Promoting well-being is not just the job of counselors - it's the responsibility of the entire academic community.

Universities can embed mental health awareness into orientation sessions, include psychoeducation in curricula, and provide self-help materials online.

Academic flexibility, such as compassionate leave or exam deferrals during grief, shows students that well-being is valued as much as performance.

Collaboration between departments - psychology, education, administration - ensures a holistic approach.

### 4. Sustainability and Continuous Improvement.

The Research's findings reveal another key insight:

- Positive intergroup contact does not only improve well-being, but it also strengthens pro-European attitudes and identification with Europe (Figures 4-6, pp. 28-30). This

matters because identification is linked to trust, belonging, and long-term social integration;

- Sustained, structured support systems have long-term measurable effects on flourishing and self-efficacy.

This shows that mental health promotion cannot be a temporary project. It must be a continuous institutional commitment supported by partnerships, evaluation, and long-term planning. Mental health promotion must continue beyond project timelines.

Establishing partnerships with local NGOs, Ukrainian psychological associations, and international mental health networks can help sustain services and expertise.

Regular evaluation allows institutions to adapt programs to real needs.

A sustainable system is one that learns, grows, and evolves with its community.

Institutions that prioritize crisis preparedness and psychological health send a powerful message:

Education and care are not separate - they are inseparable.

Investing in mental health is investing in human potential.

It strengthens academic performance, community resilience, and the moral fabric of the university itself.

As we conclude this course, remember: every conversation, every policy, every act of kindness matters.

You, as educators and tutors, are not only transmitters of knowledge but also guardians of hope.

Together, we can build universities that heal, include, and empower - even in the face of loss.

Thank you for your attention and for your commitment to supporting Ukrainian students with compassion, dignity, and courage.