Anxiety and Stress Go Abroad

Best practices for working with students with anxiety on faculty-led international programs

**Institutions can:** collect mental health histories; provide training to leaders; assess resources at sites; ensure insurance includes mental health.

**Leaders can:** ensure program info is complete; identify/meet with vulnerable students; preview itinerary.

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**Prevention**

Anxiety may look like a **focus on details** or asking **repeated questions.**

**Institutions can:** provide information; support leaders; encourage students to discuss plans with a therapist.

**Leaders can:** meet with individuals to establish strategies/boundaries.

**“Clear, concise information. Gather as much information about student as is available before trip.”**

- Landmark Botswana program leader

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**During program**

Anxiety may look like **isolation,** or clinging to leaders or friends. **Panic attacks** can include **physical symptoms.**

**Leaders can** **listen actively** to concerns; **review options,** including students’ coping mechanisms; **get outdoors** or otherwise change location; use deep breathing or mindfulness techniques.

**Response**

**“Helping students to preview experiences and possible sources of anxiety. Normalizing that travel can be disorienting.”**

- Landmark Ireland program leader

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**“Walking with a student, or other activity requiring movement. Listen rather than give advice, validate anxiety.”**

- Landmark Germany program leader

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**Learning to cope with anxiety can be an opportunity:** just one of many possible areas of personal growth on an experiential program abroad.

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**Sources:** see handout.

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