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Just Chill Out...

When thinking of disability, it can be easy to overlook mental illness, especially anxiety. Many people think that these illnesses are controllable, and that people who suffer from it can turn it on or off. However, anxiety is not that predictable, nor that simple. The University of Tennessee does not currently have adequate resources available for students suffering from this illness, and could use a website to provide stress and anxiety relief to these students whenever they feel overwhelmed.

Situational anxiety, is when something happens that causes you to become anxious for a short period of time. This anxiety could happen following a bad breakup, when studying for finals, or following a traumatic event. There are currently no resources to help people who experience the panic and uncertainty that comes with unexpected episodes of depression and anxiety. In the *Beacon* article, “As it stands: The tightness in our chests”, by Hancen Sale, Sale discusses his personal battle with anxiety and how it has impacted his life. He begins by describing it when he was a child as it would cause his chest to feel tight, and make him nauseous until “nothing but fear surrounded” him and he had to go home from school. He goes on to talk about how it reoccurred while he was a freshman at UT, leaving him shaking and having difficulty breathing while in his dorm room. I greatly relate to his explanation of anxiety, as it mirrors my own experiences. Earlier in this semester, I was a victim of sexual harassment and stalking. That experience has dramatically changed the way I live my life. I can no longer be

in social situations with large groups of people without feeling as if I am being watched by my attacker and instantly feel fear envelop me like a blanket that I can't shake off. Often, my anxiety and panic attacks will be debilitating and make me retreat to my room, where even behind 4 personal I.D. cards worth of security, I still don't feel safe. This anxiety and terror will never leave me.

The only assistance available for students attending the University of Tennessee with unexpected anxiety, is to make an appointment with the Health and Wellness center for the next month, since they do not accept walk-ins. This leaves many students without support when they need it most. Although the University of Tennessee currently has almost no resources available for these students, there are several online resources that could help students manage stress and anxiety that colleges can subscribe to, and make available to students at all times. UT could either create or build a website of their own, or use an already existing service. One of the leaders in online stress and anxiety relief, is the website Calm Circle College. Their website provides a service available to colleges to help reduce and relieve depression, anxiety, and stress relief, and focuses on using meditation and mindfulness to do so. The website has three different levels of help needed to reduce anxiety in every situation. Each session can be done using earbuds and a computer and phone and is discreet, making anyone feel comfortable using it at anytime. The first level of sessions is called Pause, and it offers a way to actively integrate relaxation and mental rest into all aspects of your life. The second level is called Calm, and helps create quiet relaxation and mental rest, to increase focus and destress. The highest level of intensity in the sessions is called Emergency, and helps you "reboot" your mind by combining physical and mental techniques of relaxation. This website is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, so anytime students feel anxiety, or stress, they can log on using their phone or laptop and

get help calming down, relaxing, and gaining perspective. The continuous accessibility of this website, combined with its different levels of intensity, is what makes it very effective as a stress and anxiety reducer. If the University of Tennessee were to create it's own app or website to help reduce stress or anxiety, it would be important that it also has different levels of relaxation.

Although it can be easy to overlook, people suffering from anxiety and mental illnesses are disabled and marginalized, not just by "normal" people but also by the disabled community, since theirs is not obvious. Most people think anxiety is just being nervous. It's not. It is the inability to calm down and it is impossible to predict. Together we can make something great happen to positively impact the lives of people suffering from situational anxiety, and anxiety in general, and that starts by getting them tools to help how they respond to their attacks. By providing a website that helps walk through stress and anxiety relief, The University of Tennessee as a whole could help these students.

Works Cited

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