

## **ABSTRACT**

**RESEARCH PROJECT:** Compassion and Company: Realizing an Expanded Role and Preparedness for Tutors to Handle Emotional Stress

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The role of tutors, their defined responsibilities, and training needed to manage the varying levels of stress that clients bring into sessions have been in debate by many scholars (Suffredini; Murphy; Johnson). However, these works neglect to offer any practical method to train tutors to handle the sometimes intense, emotional client and the stress they bring into the session with them. This paper charts the pervasiveness of mental health issues on college campuses to highlight the exigence facing administrators. In addition, this paper offers suggestions to include tutor training for emotionally intense sessions through the creation and examination of an emotional well-being resource sheet and an online tutor training activity to demonstrate the importance of a counseling approach for tutors within sessions.

I argue to position the writing center as a crucial gateway in improving student confidence, idea of self-worth, and social-activeness—and that to neglect the counseling aspect

of tutoring is to intrinsically perform a disservice to the client and the writing process. Additionally, I argue that mental health issues place students into a categorization of marginalization, and the writing center may serve as a space where they can reify or expunge their battles in terms of their writing and identity. This falls in line with Harry Denny et. al's call for identity to be considered in writing center work in *Out in the Center*. This project will closely examine three prior tutoring sessions and offer suggestions of modified tutor to student interaction through resources in the field of psychology. Finally, this project will interpret a collection of online tutor blog responses where tutors were asked to reflect on the implemented well-being resource sheet and online training activity to provide an assessment on future implications for mental health advocacy, resources, and training for tutors. This motivation to collect data through blogging falls in line with Mark Hall's chapter on the importance of online blogging for tutor education in *Around the Texts of Writing Center Work: An Inquiry-Based Approach to Tutor Education*. In conclusion, this project offers a feasible, practical way to implement tutor training to handle the often intense, emotional sessions tutors will encounter.