Tips for dealing with Self-Disclosure in the Classroom

- It is hypothesized that self-disclosures may have increased due to social media.
- Reactions to disclosures will feel different to individuals based on their own history and personal experiences.
- There is an increased likelihood that students in your classes may have mental health issues and may need mental health services.

1. Welcome the diversity of ideas and experiences as they connect to class
2. Acknowledge the impact of discrimination and hardships in their lives
3. Classroom/writing disclosure can be very useful if it can be tied to class content
4. Research has found that disclosures can help some students connect better with the material
5. When disclosure happens:
   a. Be compassionate
   b. Bring it back to the academic content and try to connect it
   c. Give a referral to CaPS if warranted
6. If disclosure is too much or goes on too long:
   a. Be direct and move back to academics
   b. Speak to the person after class to check in
   c. Refer to CaPS
7. Think about adding something to your syllabus or first class period to address self-disclosure (see Guidance section on 2nd page)
8. Referring to CaPS is as easy as giving them our email and reminding them we are here
   a. caps@spalding.edu
“Guidance for Students

To guide my students to think carefully before they speak or type, I provide them with the following statement:

Courses within the psychology department often have content that can become very personal. Personal experiences and opinions often become part of the class discussion. Disclosing such information, where appropriate, can add to the course content, but any disclosures should be carefully considered before posting as this is not a therapy session and there is no confidentiality.

Sometimes students need more guidance on how to determine whether or not something should be disclosed, whether a class discussion is the proper place and whether their classmates and instructor are the proper audience. Here are some questions for students to consider before choosing to share a personal experience in class:

• Is this relevant to the topic being discussed?
• Will talking about this experience produce emotions that I might not be prepared to experience?
• Will talking about this experience make it difficult to sit through the rest of the class and actively participate?
• Am I sharing this because I have something important to say, or because there’s something I want to hear?
• If I share this and no one really says anything in response and the class moves on to the next topic of conversation, will it bother me?
• If this information gets shared outside of this class, will it bother me?

In the end, students remain better focused on content when teachers make it clear from the start that (a) students are ultimately responsible for the personal information they disclose and (b) teachers don’t attend to their students’ emotional needs other than acknowledging them and referring students to available resources or staff for emotional support when appropriate.”

(https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/ptn/2016/05/student-disclosures)