

Dipl.-Psych.
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Ihr Zeichen:

Ihre Nachricht vom:

Unser Zeichen:

Datum:

Dear academic staff,

some months ago you have started working at the University of Bremen and today I want to inform you about our In-House Social Counseling Service. If you know about it already - feel free to click this email away, I don't want to bore you!

Now then:

The In-House Social Counseling Service of the University of Bremen is a central place of help for all employees at the university who have problems at work, private problems or health related problems. The counseling is free of charge and is fully confidential. The counseling service has a staff of one: that's me. I am a psychologist and my name is Kassandra Ruhm.

In the following text you can find detailed information about my work.

You can consult with me for many different reasons, for instance:

- if you have difficulties with your doctoral thesis or conflicts with your professor or your colleague
- in case of burn-out, if you have difficulties planning your time or if you have other questions concerning your work at the university
- when you have problems in your private life, e.g. with your relationship or your family, in case of loneliness, if you are doing badly or if you are preoccupied with personal private matters or with questions concerning plans and the organization of your life,...

... and for many other reasons (see below).

Of course, I am not a specialist in all possible fields, but I can help you to find the right offers at the university, in Bremen and the surroundings where you will be able to find the help and support you need.

I can offer a sympathetic ear to your worries and help you look for the right path for you. I can support you in finding and defining your position and, if you would like, changing things, but I cannot solve your problems for you and I do not have the authority to change conditions at your place of work. The decisions you make regarding difficulties in your workplace or elsewhere remain entirely in your hands. All information I receive from you will be treated confidentially. You always have the responsibility to act and the choice to decide on those actions independently.

Maybe you do not *need* any help, but maybe professional support could make things easier? You do not have to resolve every problem on your own!

In order to make an appointment you can reach me best via email or telephone:

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For those of you who would like to know more, at the end of this letter, I give examples of some typical situations where someone could come to the advice centre. Maybe you or a colleague are in a similar situation and preoccupied with the same problems.

Best wishes,

Kassandra Ruhm.

Private life

There are problems in your relationship, marriage or personal environment.

You are worried about your children.

You think about how to best balance the challenges of your job and research work against those of your family, and you want to talk to someone about it.

The situation at your home has changed and you need to figure out how to best cope with it.

Someone close to you is seriously ill or dying.

You haven't been in Germany for long, and some aspects of the culture and interaction between people seems so alien, strange and weird. Maybe you don't know everything yet that might be useful in this situation? You feel like you need "instructions for use" for Germany, or a place where you can ask questions and talk about the sometimes astonishing behavior of German people?

You've fallen in love with another man and are unsure how to explain it gently to your wife.

Your way of life suits you, but does not fit in with the mainstream. You yourself do not have a problem with that, but some of the people in your life, including co-workers, may feel differently.

You're looking for a way out because of violence in your relationship.

You are in great distress.

You have psychological problems.

You are often unhappy or scared.

After work you go home and only want to go to bed and not get up again. Nothing pleases you or makes you happy.

You are considering going into therapy, but you are not sure what to expect there, which form of therapy would suit you or how you can find the right therapist. Perhaps one who can communicate in a language other than German.

Professional

There are conflicts among your colleagues or superiors.

Your work atmosphere has become uncomfortable because of miscommunication or work overload.

You suffer from writer's block in your scientific work.

You are looking for a reasonable way of handling stress, unclear demands, or expectations that you cannot fulfill.

You are so preoccupied with private or professional concerns that you are not able to concentrate on your daily tasks.

You have the feeling that a colleague is not well and you wonder how you can help.

You are looking for a neutral party to help moderate discussions or conflicts within the workplace.

As a moderator in workplace conflicts I have to remain neutral. When I give advice to a single person, I concentrate on the wishes and needs of the person concerned. I cannot work for two or more parties with differing interests at the same time. Therefore it would be advisable to consider whether you want a confidential one-to-one session or whether I should be the neutral moderator in a conflict.

Job Coaching

You wonder if you are happy with your professional situation, and you think about your professional aims and how you can achieve them.

You think about your life plans and how your resume and your life plan fit together.

You would like to analyze the demands you make on yourself and those made on you by others.

You have the feeling that something in your life is not right, but you do not know what it is.

You want to think about what you expect from life.

You are looking for the right way to deal with a life full of changes and demands for flexibility, with dependencies, with difficulties arising from a lack of motivation and with frustration resulting from conditions you cannot alter (i.e. economic and employment situation etc...).

Supervisors can contact the counseling service when they debate how to best cope with a conflict among colleagues or when they want to prepare for a difficult conversation with an employee. They can approach me when they want to discuss something concerning their role as a supervisor or when they are worried about an employee.

Organizational matters

You want to know if there are special counseling services for specific concerns in Bremen.

One of your relatives is in need of (long term) care.

You are up to your ears in debt.

Sometimes it is not easy to find one's way in the jungle of so many different offers of advice and support. I can help you to get the help you really need.

Or you have other organizational issues that might benefit from a social worker's competence.

Health

You are looking for the best way to cope with health problems.

You have health related problems which result from or are aggravated by the conditions in your workplace.

After a long period of recovery and convalescence you want to prepare for the return to work or you want to have someone to talk to through the first time back. (There is also the *Schwerbehindertenvertretung* for disabled employees.)

You have got a chronic or even life threatening illness.

...or any other problems concerning your private life or your professional environment.