



Let's Talk is a Community Counseling program, originally developed at Cornell University, which provides Bentley students with **informal drop-in conversations** with Bentley Counseling clinicians. Let's Talk prioritizes equity, safety & accessibility, providing a comfortable non-treatment alternative to formal mental health care.

Let's Talk Conversations are:

Confidential – Legal limits to confidentiality are described below.

On Demand – No scheduled appointment is necessary.

Free – There is no charge.

Accessible – We do not require you to divulge any information, sign any documents, or agree to any form of follow-up you don't desire, barring situations of 'imminent risk of harm.'

Convenient – Conversations are held in commonly traveled student spaces across campus at pre-published times.

Equitable – Let's Talk emphasizes fairness by minimizing structural barriers to access, which disproportionately effect marginalized and underserved populations.

Helpful - Counselors can listen to specific problems, provide support, explore solutions, and give recommendations, information, and referrals.

Informal – **Let's Talk is not a substitute for formal counseling and does not constitute mental health treatment.** Your counselor may recommend and assist you in scheduling an appointment for formal care if desired and appropriate.

Not appropriate for emergency situations. If you need crisis support, please contact the Bentley Counseling Center or Campus Police immediately.

If you are a Bentley Staff member and would like to request Let's Talk at your location, or are in need of paper materials for students, please reach out to Bentley's Let's Talk Coordinator, Alex Lemiszki, at Alemiszki@Bentley.edu

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is Let's Talk?

Let's Talk is a community counseling program, initially developed at Cornell University, and now spread nationally to nearly 100 institutions of higher learning, that provides easy access to informal confidential consultations with counselors from the Bentley Counseling Center. Counselors hold walk-in hours at various sites and times around campus. There is no appointment, paperwork, intake process or fee necessary.

Is Let's Talk an evidence-based practice?

Yes, the model for Bentley's Let's Talk program was initially developed by a group of Psychologists, Social Workers and other mental health clinicians at Cornell University. For information on Let's Talk's development and research base, please review this article:

Boone, M., Edwards, G., Haltom, M., Hill, J., Liang, Y., Mier, S., Shropshire, S., Belizaire, L., Kamp, L., Murthi, M., Wong, W., & Yau, T. (2011). Let's Talk: Getting Out of the Counseling Center to Serve Hard-to-Reach Students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, October 2011, Vol 39.

Who should visit Let's Talk?

This service is open to all Bentley undergraduate & graduate students. Let's Talk is the best fit for the following people:

1. Students who are not sure about counseling and wonder what it's like to talk with a professional.
2. Students who are not interested in ongoing care but want the perspective of a professional.

What happens at a visit to Let's Talk?

Appointments are first-come, first-served, and usually there is not much, or no wait. The counselor will listen closely to your concerns and provide support, perspective, and suggestions for resources. Counselors may ask you information, which you can provide or not at your own discretion, as well will offer you the opportunity to give feedback at the conclusion of the conversations. Counselors can help you make an appointment for formal mental health care if desired and appropriate.

Let's Talk visits are confidential, with the same limits as traditional mental health care. What are those limits?

Conversations with Let's Talk counselors are confidential, with a few very rare exceptions. Counselors may need to share information in an emergency when there is an "imminent threat of harm to self or others." This is a Massachusetts state law, not a Bentley rule. Typically, these are cases where students

have a significantly elevated desire to harm themselves or someone else, and counselors carry a responsibility to make sure you and others are safe. Rarely, students have been transported directly from Let's Talk conversations to a local hospital for emergency mental health care.

Counselors are also required by law to report when a minor, elderly person, or someone otherwise incapacitated and unable to act on his/her own behalf is being abused.

Let's Talk counselors keep brief written notes of their contacts with students, containing very basic information, such as your name (if given), the date and time of the appointment, the counselor, if a referral was made, and a brief description of the topics covered. These notes are helpful to further develop and improve the program, as well as help smooth the transition should you accept a referral to the Counseling Center. Only Bentley Counseling staff may see these notes. Let's Talk conversations are *never* recorded on a student's official university or medical record, and are kept safely and securely as 'non-clinical' notes, rendering them inaccessible to outside parties.

We don't want anything to be a barrier to students accessing help. If you have further questions about confidentiality, we encourage you to discuss them with a Let's Talk counselor.

I think I have a problem that would benefit from counseling, but I don't know anything about counseling. Would going to Let's Talk help me figure out what to do?

Absolutely. The counselor will talk through your issue with you and help you determine the best way to get help.

I have an upcoming appointment at the Counseling Center, but I want to talk to someone sooner. Can I come by Let's Talk in the meantime?

If you believe you need to be seen sooner than the appointment you have arranged, it's best to call the Counseling Center directly (781-891-2274) and explain your situation. Often, the Counseling Center will accommodate your request. Alternatively, you can call the 'After Hours Line' 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, reached through 781-891-2274.

I spoke with the Counseling Center, and they recommended a referral to an off-campus therapist. Can I go to Let's Talk instead?

Since regular counseling visits are not available at Let's Talk, as well conversations with Let's Talk are not mental health treatment, following up with the referral is the best idea – the Counseling Center made this referral to you as it presents the most effective pathway for you to achieve your mental health goals. If connecting with your referral is not feasible for you for whatever reason, please return to the Counseling Center and let us know, we'll work together to figure out the best solution.

I'm currently seeing a counselor at the Counseling Center, and I'm not happy with how things are going. Can I go to Let's Talk instead?

We're sorry to hear things aren't going well - the best thing to do in this situation is to talk directly with your counselor. Counselors are eager to get your feedback, positive or negative, and are trained to respond helpfully. Don't worry, they won't take any negative feedback personally, counselors understand not every pairing is the right fit. Usually, an open conversation about your concern helps smooth out any wrinkles. If, after talking with your counselor, you still prefer to transfer to someone else, just ask your counselor directly, or speak with Linda, our office administrator, either in person or by calling us at 781-891-2274.

If you have any more questions, suggestions, or comments please contact Alex Lemiszki, Bentley's Let's Talk Coordinator, at 781-891-2274 or Alemiszki@Bentley.edu.