

HELPLINE

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Nilsson, who has spent time working on crisis lines at the University and elsewhere, said there is a certain amount of stress involved in the work, but that the staff has several ways of handling this stress.

The regular staff meetings are important for lending support and offering relief from the emotional stress that sometimes occurs while working on the line, Nilsson said.

"Confidentiality is extremely

important, so the staff meetings are places to provide support and a place to share personal feelings and reactions to the calls," she said.

The extensive training that the staff receives also aids in keeping its own stress level low, as does the rotational system that the staff uses for scheduling work times. In addition, whenever somebody is working on the line, backup and added support are always available, said Nilsson.

When a person calls the Helpline, the staff member an-

swering follows a basic procedure that starts by assessing the severity of the situation and letting the caller express his or her feelings.

"People usually don't know what they're upset about when they call," Nilsson said. "People just know they're upset. They might say something vague like, 'It's just really bad, I can't sit still, I can't study, I have a test tomorrow, and I'm going to fail.'"

The work people have done on the Crisis Helpline often leads to related careers else-

where. Two former counselors pursued a master's program in counseling and social work, and various past directors are now psychologists.

Working on the crisis line helps people in all their human relationships, Kemp said. She also added that it was good on a resume, demonstrating to employers that the person can work under stress, and can work well with people.

Nilsson said working on the Helpline gives students a chance to decide whether they

would like a career in counseling or psychology if they were considering one.

Last year, the Helpline received between 600 and 700 calls, Kemp said. Out of these calls, about 34 percent were from non-University students. These figures represent a decline from the 800 calls received during the previous year. Nilsson said the number of calls seems to be on an upswing again, and attributed this increase in calls to more publicity both on and off campus.

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