MASTERING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING ABROAD: CONSIDERATIONS ON MENTAL HEALTH AND STUDY ABROAD

1. Why this guide:
This guide aims to:

- **Prioritize** the emotional well-being of students embarking on study-abroad journeys.
- **Prevent** early departures, devastating experiences, and burnout of staff and faculty members.

Recognizing the transformative potential of international education, we understand that **supporting students' mental health is integral to their overall success and fulfillment during their time abroad**.

2. Mental Health in Study Abroad:
Studying abroad is an enriching experience, offering countless opportunities for personal growth and cultural exchange. However, alongside its myriad benefits, the past few years have seen **a noticeable uptick in challenges faced by students participating in international programs**:

1. Many arrive with high expectations, assuming that **being in a new environment will magically resolve their existing issues**.
2. Others, unfortunately, **overlook the importance of maintaining their mental health support systems or medications** when transitioning to a foreign country.
3. Some **underestimate the complexities of adapting to a new culture**, naively expecting a seamless transition.

These issues carry significant ramifications, not only for the students themselves but also for program faculty and staff:

- **Early departures** from the program or medical withdrawals due to untreated conditions disrupt the academic and social fabric of the abroad experience.
- Addressing these challenges demands **considerable time, resources, and energy from program administrators**, diverting attention from other critical responsibilities and student needs.

3**. Considerations before deciding to study abroad:**
Before deciding to study abroad, it is crucial to consider various factors, especially regarding mental health:

1. While mental health conditions should not hinder anyone from enjoying the enriching experience of studying abroad, **it's important to acknowledge whether these conditions might cause significant distress or dysfunctionality**.
2. For students managing mental health issues, it's advisable to ensure they have an ample **supply of medication and to communicate with their program well in advance to arrange necessary support from psychiatrists and psychologists abroad**, ideally starting from the program's inception. Establishing contact between their current mental health care providers and those in the host country can facilitate a smoother transition.
3. Students should secure comprehensive **insurance coverage to address any potential needs while abroad**.
4. In order to respond quickly in the event of any unforeseen emergency, it is a good idea to encourage **families** to keep their **passports and other documents updated**.
5. If a student harbors doubts about their readiness for a study abroad program, **it's prudent to explore alternative options** such as adjusting program dates or considering hybrid or shorter programs.

Our aim is for students to embark on their study abroad journey at a time conducive to their enjoyment and growth. By providing guidance and support, we strive to assist both students and their families in making informed decisions that align with their well-being and aspirations.