

Working with Students in Distress



University Counseling Service (UCS)
University of Iowa
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Why Are We Here?



50%+

More than half don't feel adequately prepared to recognize when a student is exhibiting signs of psychological distress including depression, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide (88% of faculty/staff and 93% of undergraduate students).



60%+

More than 60% don't feel adequately prepared to approach at-risk students to discuss their concerns (66% of faculty/staff and 61% of undergraduate students).



~50%

At least half don't feel adequately prepared to recommend mental health support services to students (46% of faculty/staff and 50% of undergraduate students).



87%+

More than 80% say that a part of their role as faculty, staff, or students is ensure students experiencing psychological distress with mental health issues receive (85% of faculty/staff and 87% of undergraduate students).

Your Experiences Already?



• Previous Situations:

- What Did You Do That Went Right?
- What Would You Do Over, Given The Chance?



Framework for Recognition

What To Look For & Recognizing It When It Is Happening



- Symptoms of Distress:
 - Significant Changes in Mood & Attitude
 - Irritability
 - Sadness, Helplessness
 - Distancing
 - Acting-Out Behaviors
 - Changes in Academic Performance
 - Unusual or Alarming Comments or Writings
 - Change in Hygiene

Framework for Recognition



- If You Think It Is Odd, It Is!
- Your Worry Is “Smoke” For What May Be Fire.
- If You Have Any Concerns Whatsoever, Ask About It.
- Within The Boundaries Of Your Role, It Is Better To Do Too Much Than Too Little.
- Snapshot Or Pattern

Common Situations of Students in Distress



- Anxious
- Suicidal
- Upset
- Challenging of Boundaries
- Non-Communicative
- Depressed
- Basic Needs Distress
- Relationship Problems
- WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL IDENTITY CHARACTERISTICS!
 - What is the Impact On You!?

Questioning Your Student



- De-Escalation Techniques
- Drawing Out Techniques
 - Minimal Encouragers to Talk
 - Open Ended Questions
 - Naming Affect
- Broaching Topic Techniques
- Yes, but. . . Techniques
- Sitting With Anger Techniques
- Dealing With Dangerousness Techniques

Referral



- Referral Techniques
- Resource Guide (<https://dos.uiowa.edu/assistance>)
- UCS
 - <https://counseling.uiowa.edu>
- Student Care & Assistance
 - <https://dos.uiowa.edu/assistance>
- When to Call the Police (911 Call)

911 Call



Faculty and Staff Responses



- Ideal Responses. . .And Not So Ideal?
- And What About Follow-Up?

A Chance to Try It Out



- Importance Of Practical Experience
- Importance Of Having Words To Express Your Knowledge
- Importance Of Managing The Emotional “Heat” Of The Moment
- No Safer Space To Try Yourself Out Than In A Role Play
- Review The Scenarios Again, Or Use Your Own
- Some Ground Rules For Role Playing
 - Debrief

Some Important Reminders



- Hope!
- Help is Available
- Campuses Are Very Safe
- Reach Out For Assistance
- Trust Your Intuition
- Use The Techniques You Learned
- Refer to The “Quick Guide”
- **CALL** When You Have Questions Or Concerns.

What's Next?



- Invite Us Back For Follow-up Trainings
- Call For Additional Discussion/Follow-Up/Debriefing
- Want To Do More?





Our Survey





Only Hammer For Every Nail

- ~15% of Students Who Complete Suicide Had Contact with the Counseling Service
- B1G 10 Schools Average ~6%-10% of Student Population Contact
- Most Common Service Usage is 1 Session
- Western Model of a Mental Health Service Not the Right Fit for Every Student
- *Everyone* Can Do Prevention



Programs Already in Place?

What Are You Doing Already On Campus?

We have a plan for that.
