



How You Can Identify and Help Students in Distress: Some Suggestions For Faculty and Staff

Attending university is an exciting and dynamic experience that can include making lifelong friends, engaging in exciting intellectual pursuits, playing on a team, joining groups and clubs. It is a time to grow in self-awareness, and to develop a sense of adult identity. It may also be a time of turmoil and distress. Students may have to deal with stresses such as physical or mental illness (e.g. depression, anxiety) financial stress, illness or death of a loved one, and the end of important relationships. Because of their frequent contact with students, members of faculty and staff may be in a position to be of assistance.

How can we recognize and respond effectively to students in distress?



What to Look For in Students:

- Significant changes in academic performance, including deterioration in quality of work, frequent missed assignments, excessive procrastination, or avoidance of classroom participation
- Increased class absences or tardiness
- Listlessness, lack of energy, or falling asleep in class
- Unusual or bizarre behavior, including unexplained crying, laughing to self, very rapid speech, disorganized thinking, suspiciousness
- High levels of irritability, including angry outbursts or unruly behavior
- Significant weight loss or weight gain
- Complaints about physical symptoms, including nausea, stomach aches, headaches, or problems with eating or sleeping
- Marked changes in personal hygiene or dress
- Direct or indirect references to either suicide or intention to harm or kill another person
- Changes or disturbances in personal relationships
- Visible signs of anxiety or depressed mood
- Talking explicitly about hopelessness or suicide
- Difficulty concentrating, difficulty carrying on normal conversation
- Social isolation, social withdrawal or excessive dependency on Dons, Professors, or TA's
- Excessive sleeping, internet use/gaming
- Significant changes in personal, sexual or cultural identity