

Recognizing a student in distress



- Persistent problems with sleep, appetite, concentration, or motivation
- Deterioration in academic functioning, including falling behind and missing class
- Social isolation
- Unrelenting sadness, hopelessness, apathy
- Loss of interest in pleasurable activities
- Unusual emotional outbursts (anger, sobbing)
- Worrisome changes in hygiene, appearance, or weight
- Noticeable cuts, bruises, or burns
- Preoccupation with death, or verbal or written threats of suicide
- Increased use of alcohol or other drugs
- Threats of violence

It is common for students to go to a family member, friend, loved one, coach, or close faculty/staff member on campus for support before coming to a counselor.

Communicating with a student in distress



1 Empathize and normalize

Let the student know you care and want to help. Normalize mental health care.

2 Communicate carefully

Resist the need to fix, blame, assume, advise, disagree or agree. Ask direct questions, clarify, paraphrase, and summarize.

3 Know one's abilities and limitations

It takes courage to interact with an at-risk student; however, it is important to seek help when you notice the student's issues are outside of your level of competency. At the Counseling Center, we are happy to consult with you in supporting students.

4 Refer to a Counselor / Emergency Help

If possible, walk with the student to the Counseling Center, encourage the student to make a counseling request with you, or call the Counseling Center together (724-852-3225). Then, complete a MUM referral as well. If after hours or in an emergency situation, call Campus Security at **724-852-3303** or **911**.

