

AU Center for Wholeness and Wellness

TIPS FOR HELPING A DISTRESSED STUDENT

Common Warning Signs

Academic Problems

- Excessive procrastination
- Uncharacteristically poor academic preparation or performance
- Repeated requests for extensions or special considerations
- Disruptive classroom behavior
- Excessive career or course choice indecision
- A pattern of absence or tardiness
- Avoiding or dominating discussions
- Verbal or written references to suicide or homicide
- Frequently falling asleep in class

Interpersonal Problems

- Asking advisor/instructor for help with personal problems
- Dependency on an advisor/instructor
- Hanging around the office
- Avoidance of an advisor/instructor
- Disruptive behavior
- Inability to get along with others
- Withdrawal from friends
- Complaints from other students

Behavioral Problems

- Change in personal hygiene
- Dramatic weight gain or loss
- Irritability
- Alcohol/drug use
- Impaired speech
- Disjointed thoughts
- Tearfulness
- Intense emotion
- Inappropriate responses
- Difficulty concentrating
- Engaging in self-injury
- Sudden mood or behavior changes

Suggestions for Intervening

- Talk to the student privately to help minimize embarrassment and defensiveness.
- Listen carefully to the student and respond to both the content and emotion in the conversation.
- Discuss your observations and perceptions of the situation frankly and honestly with the student.
- Ask if the student is having any thoughts of harming self or others.
- Acknowledge inappropriate or strange behavior without being judgmental.
- Try to respect the student's value system even if you don't agree with it.
- Clarify the limits on your ability to help. Instead, offer to connect the student with experts trained to assist struggling students.
- Avoid making promises of complete confidentiality (it is difficult to get others involved in helping if you can't tell them what is going on). Instead, you might promise to only share the information that others "need to know" to do their jobs.



How to Make a Referral

Emergency Referrals

- If a student appears to be at imminent risk of causing harm to self or others, call the switchboard and ask to speak with a counselor for an emergency/crisis and/or call 911 immediately.
- If the student does not appear to be an imminent risk and the emergency occurs between Monday – Friday 8:00am to 5:00pm, call the Asbury University Center for Wholeness and Wellness at 859-858-3511 ext. 2323 and ask to speak to a counselor. Please be prepared to provide a description of the situation and someone will work with you to determine appropriate actions to take to most effectively help the student.
- If the emergency occurs outside of normal business hours, call the AU switchboard and ask for the RD on call and/or 911.

Non-Emergency Referrals

- Encourage the student to visit our office, call 859-858-3511, ext. 2323, or register for counseling through their student portal.
- Offer to let the student call from your office if you believe extra support and encouragement are needed
- Consider walking the student over to our office as an extra support
- Share with the student that AU counseling services are confidential and free of charge.