

Counseling and Psychological Services

RESPONDING TO BEHAVIORS OF CONCERN: A GUIDE FOR FACULTY & STAFF

The college experience is often characterized by a great deal of stress for students and those who work with them. These challenging moments are caused by various stressors: academic, social, family, work, and financial. Many students cope successfully with the demands of college life, but for others the pressures become overwhelming and unmanageable. Students often state that they feel alone, isolated, helpless, sad and even hopeless. Considering the close correlation between successful academic performance and good mental health, being able to identify behaviors of concern early in the process can assist students in achieving well-being and may avoid dysfunctional coping strategies such as drugs and alcohol and enable early intervention for depression and other mental health concerns..

Faculty and staff play a key role identifying and assisting students in distress. Often, the student who is hesitant to seek professional help, and ashamed to turn to family or friends, will share some feelings with a trusted professor, advisor, or helpful staff member. Campus community members are valuable resources in times of distress, and responding to observed behaviors or student requests for assistance with interest and concern may prove to be a critical element in helping students access the support they need.

Identifying students in distress: Certain behaviors indicate that the student in question may be in distress. For example:

- Threatening self-harm or harm to others
- Inability to concentrate or remain focused
- Obvious deterioration in hygiene, appearance
- Changes in the level of academic performance
- Frequent absences
- Disruptive behaviors
- Sudden aggressive or confrontational behaviors
- Disorientation, confusion, or bizarre behaviors
- Chronic fatigue or low energy; falling asleep in class
- Sadness
- Poor self-esteem
- Inability to work in a group
- Persistent anxiety, nervousness or irritability
- Extreme text anxiety
- Apparent use of drugs/alcohol
- Signs of physical abuse
- Dramatic weight loss or gain
- Isolation from others
- Adjustment issues
- Relationship problems
- Identity issues
- Evidence of sexual assault or interpersonal violence

How should you respond? It will vary from student to student, but consider that it may be helpful to:

- Talk to the student in private, not before or after class; listen to thoughts and feelings in a sensitive, non-threatening way
- Provide some hope by assuring the student that things can get better
- Avoid judging, evaluating, or criticizing even if the student asks your opinion
- Maintain clear and consistent boundaries
- Review your expectations and those of the student
- Stress the fact that help is available
- Recommend on-campus support services, including Counseling and Psychological Services, Disability Services, Health Services, Tutoring, the Writing and Math Centers, etc., depending on the type of problem observed.
- Stress the fact that services are free, and that counseling and medical services are also confidential
- Consult a professional when you are in doubt about a certain behavior. Speak with your Chair or Supervisor. Call one of the campus support offices for assistance.
- If you have any SAFETY concerns, call MU Police at 732-571-3472. Assistance is available 24-hours a day.

What happens after a student is referred?

Students should make their own appointment if possible. You can assist this process by offering the student immediate use of your phone. Some faculty and staff prefer to walk the student to the appropriate office. Students can also visit any of the offices listed to schedule an appointment. We will arrange for the student to meet with someone immediately in urgent situations. In all other situations, we will offer the student the first available appointment. Encourage the student to state if they need an appointment that day.

Important Numbers:

- Monmouth University Police: 732-571-4444
- Counseling and Psychological Services: 732-571-7517
- Health Services: 732-571-3464
- Student Services: 732-571-3417
- Residential Life: 732-571-3465
- Disability Services: 732-571-3460
- The Center for Student Success: 732-571-3487

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