

TEXAS STATE

Counseling Center

5-4.1 LBJ Student Center

245-2208

counselingcenter@txstate.edu

www.counseling.txstate.edu

TIPS FOR RECOGNIZING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

At one time or another, everyone feels depressed or upset. The following may help to identify some signs which, when present over a period of time, suggest that the problem is more than “normal”. It is important to note that any single symptom by itself may not indicate the presence of unmanageable stress. It may be helpful to look for combinations of symptoms, overall patterns of behavior, or significant changes in behavior.

Marked Changes in Academic Performance or Behavior

- Poor performance and preparation
- Excessive absences or tardiness
- Repeated requests for special consideration especially when this represents a change from previous functioning
- Unusual or changed pattern of interaction
- Avoiding participation
- Dominating discussions
- Excessively anxious when called upon
- Attention/memory difficulties
- Disruptive behavior
- Problems with roommates or family
- Exaggerated emotional response obviously inappropriate to the situation

Unusual Behavior or Appearance

- Depressed or lethargic mood
- Hyperactivity or very rapid speech
- Swollen or red eyes
- Change in personal hygiene or dress
- Dramatic weight loss or gain
- Strange or bizarre behavior indicating loss of contact with reality
- Abrupt or radical changes in behavior
- Overuse or regular use of illicit drugs, alcohol, and/or medication (without medical monitoring)

References to Emotional or Life Stressors

- Problems with roommates, family, or significant others
- Experiencing a death of a significant other
- Experiencing a physical or sexual assault
- Experiencing discrimination based on gender, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disabilities
- Experiencing legal difficulties
- Other problems of major stress or loss

References to Suicide, Homicide, or Death

- Feelings of helplessness or hopelessness
- Overt references to suicide
- Isolation from friends or family
- Homicidal threats

References to any of the above may occur in students' verbal or written statements.

TIPS FOR ASSISTING DISTRESSED STUDENTS

If You Identify Signs of Distress in a Student

- Communicate your empathy and compassion
- Speak directly to the student (respect the student's confidentiality by pulling her/him aside or asking them to come to your office)

(If You Identify Signs of Distress in a Student, cont.)

- If you believe that the student could benefit from counseling, it is usually best to present this in a non-threatening way
- Express your concerns directly to the student
- Explain why you are concerned
- Use specific behavioral examples
- Ask questions to help you understand the student's situation and avoid making generalizations or assumptions
- Be honest

Assist the Student in Understanding How Counseling May Help

- For some people there is a stigma attached to seeking professional help
- They may interpret your referral as a comment about the severity of their problem
- Reassure them that counselors work with people who have a wide range of concerns (relationship issues, transition from high school to college, depression, stress, etc.)
- Seeking professional help is a sign of strength, courage, and good judgment
- Leave option open for student to decide if they want to pursue counseling (except in extreme circumstance)

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

- If student is violent, suicidal, has severe loss of emotional control, or has gross impairment in thinking ability, call UPD at 512-245-2805 or 911
- If a student is disruptive or breaking The Code of Conduct, contact the Behavioral Assessment Team at the Dean of Students Office at 512-245-2124
- Call the Counseling Center and ask to speak to an On-Call Counselor at 512-245-2208
- Provide the student with the Available 24/7 Crisis Hotline at 1-877-466-0660

INITIAL CONSULATION PROCESS FOR STUDENTS

- Tell the student to call the Counseling Center as early in the day as possible on the day they have flexibility and at least an hour in their schedule
- There are a certain number of allocated same-day appointments per day for consultations
- Referrals should be made to the Counseling Center in general; not for a specific counselor
- Details about initial consultations can be found at :
 - www.counseling.txstate.edu : Make an appointment

COUNSELING CENTER SERVICES

- Initial Consultation Appointments (ICONS)
- Individual Counseling (Brief Counseling Model)
- Group Therapy
- Psychiatric Services (in collaboration with the SHC)
- On-Call Counselor available for consultations for Faculty, Staff, Parents, and Other Students
- How to D.E.A.L. Workshops (Stress & Mood Management)
- Biofeedback Training for Stress and Anxiety Management
- On-Line Assessments
- On-Line Stress Management
- Self-Help Brochures (Print & On-Line)
- Self – Improvement Workshops
- Emergency Services

Note: All Counseling Center Services are free with the exception of co-pay for Psychiatric Services at the Student Health Center