

REFERRING A DISTRESSED STUDENT

Referring others for counseling is an important and sometimes difficult task. Every year many students, faculty and staff call or come to the Counseling Center expressing concern about someone - a friend, relative, roommate, or student. Student problems may include stress overload, depression, anxiety, family or relationship issues, physical or sexual abuse, academic difficulties, substance abuse, eating issues, and identity concerns

IN AN EMERGENCY

Signs That a Student Is in Crisis and Needs Emergency Care:

- Highly disruptive behavior (hostility, aggression, etc.).
- Strange or bizarre behavior indicating a loss of contact with reality.
- Suicidal or other self-destructive thoughts or actions: direct or indirect; verbal or in written material (assignments, journals, etc.).
- Homicidal threats.

What You Can Do To Help:

- Stay safe: If danger seems imminent, call Campus Police at x3114. Maintain a safe distance and route of escape should you need it.
- Stay calm and avoid escalation.
- Call the Counseling Center at x2196 (make sure someone is with the student while the call is being made).
- Ask the student directly if she or he is drunk, confused, or having thoughts of hurting her- or himself.
- Show that you take the student's feelings seriously.
- Let the student know that you want to help.
- Reassure the student that with help she or he will recover and feel better.
- Stay close until help is available

How to Intervene

- Talk to the student in private
- Be gentle and caring
- Specifically state your reasons for concern
- Listen carefully
- Avoid criticizing or sounding judgmental

When to Intervene

Some signs of student distress are: social withdrawal, lack of energy, falling asleep in class, inability to concentrate, marked changes in personal hygiene, impaired speech, garbled and disjointed thoughts, threats to harm self or others, and marked irritability. Faculty members may observe other behaviors that indicate distress such as frequently missing class, a drop in the quality of academic work, crying in class or the office, or disturbing material in submitted assignments.

When Is A Referral Appropriate?

- The problem is more serious than you feel comfortable or capable of dealing with
- You are extremely busy or are experiencing stress in your own life and are unable or unwilling to handle the student's needs
- You have talked to the student and helped as much as you can but further assistance is needed
- You think that your personal feelings about the student would interfere with your ability to be helpful
- The student admits there is a problem but does not want to talk to you about it
- The student asks for information or assistance which you are unable to provide

What to Do If the Student Refuses Help

While it is important to care about the emotional well-being of students, we cannot make their decisions for them. If the student resists referral and you remain uncomfortable with the situation, contact the Counseling Center (974-2196) to discuss your concern.

Ways to Assist a Student Reluctant To Accept a Referral

- Acknowledge and discuss the student's fears and concerns seeking help
- Remind the student that counseling sessions are strictly confidential
- Remind the student that counseling at the Counseling Center is free
- Point out that a situation does not have to reach crisis proportions for him/her to benefit from professional help. A medical analogy may be useful
- Emphasize that, although some people believe that seeking counseling is an admission of weakness and failure, in fact it often takes considerable courage to face oneself and acknowledge one's limitations
- Offer to accompany the student to the Counseling Center

ABOUT THE COUNSELING CENTER

The Counseling Center is the university's primary facility for personal counseling, psychotherapy, and psychological outreach and consultation services. Our mission is to promote the psychological, educational, and social well-being of the students of The University of Tennessee and to help prepare them to be productive members of society. Our staff members provide a variety of services for students, faculty and staff, including walk-in intake; crisis intervention; individual, couples and group counseling and psychotherapy; psycho-educational workshops, and consultation.

Eligibility For Services

All UT students who have paid their student activities fee for the current semester are eligible for services. Services are free of charge except for a select group of assessment services. UT faculty and staff are eligible for limited consultation. Partners of students are eligible only in conjunction with couples counseling.

Hours of Service

During the regular academic year, the Center's business hours are:

Mon - Fri: 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Walk-in services are available:

Mon - Fri: 10:00 am to 11:30 am
& 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm