

# HELPING A STUDENT IN DISTRESS

## A GUIDE

..... *for* .....

# UM FACULTY AND STAFF

The college years can be very stressful. Faculty and Staff are often the first to see signs of distress and are in a unique position to offer resources and support. Included are some helpful ways to respond to students who may be struggling.

### ACADEMIC

#### SIGNS OF DISTRESS

- Deterioration in quality of work
- Missed assignments or appointments
- Repeated absences
- Continual seeking of unusual accommodations (late papers, postponed exams)
- Written assignments expressing hopelessness, isolation, rage or despair
- Lack of engagement in classes or labs
- Inappropriate disruptions, monopolizing class time

### PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL

#### SIGNS OF DISTRESS

- Deterioration of physical appearance or hygiene
- Visible increase or decrease in weight
- Excessive fatigue or difficulty sleeping
- Exaggerated personality traits or behaviors (agitation, withdrawal)
- Excessive use of alcohol or other drugs
- Unprovoked anger or hostility
- Irritability, constant anxiety, tearfulness
- Marked changes in concentration and motivation
- Overtly suicidal thoughts, such as referring to suicide as a current options

#### OTHER SIGNS OF DISTRESS

- Direct statements indicating problems such as death of a family member or friend, break-up, academic failure
- Written or verbal statements of hopelessness or finality
- Friends or classmates expressing concern for a student

# WHAT YOU CAN DO

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**Listen** By using active listening you will be able to help the student uncover next best steps. Practice active listening by truly listening to what the student is saying both verbally and non-verbally by:

- Give the student undivided attention by limiting distractions and creating a quiet space.
- Show your listening by making eye contact and be aware of you non-verbal cues.
- Establish trust by listening respectfully and without judgement and ask permission before giving advice.

**Reflect** By repeating back what you've heard you will let the student know you understand what they have shared, ensuring effective communication.

- Restate or summarize in your own words what you heard the student say.
- "So you feel..."
- "It sounds like you..."

**Refer** to specific resources and mention that seeking help is a sign of strength.

- Be familiar with all support services available to UM students. Use the list on reverse to get started.
- Ask if the student has talked about their concern to anyone else. If appropriate encourage the student to talk to a professional.
- If you are very concerned or feel the student's behavior is beyond your ability to address, please consult with Curry Counseling and refer the student to the Behavioral Intervention Team.

# STRESS, DISTRESS, OR CRISIS

## HOW TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

### SIGNS OF STRESS

- Bad mood (irritability, impatience, sadness)
- Lacking energy
- Sleep difficulties
- Inability to relax
- Lack of enjoyment
- Physical complaints (headaches, muscle tension)

### SIGNS OF DISTRESS

- Sudden changes from regular behavior patterns.
- Deterioration of work
- Multiple absences
- Display of intense emotions
- Deterioration of physical appearance
- Significant weight change
- Self-disclosure of distress
- Upsetting life events
- Concern expressed by others
- Your instinct

### SIGNS OF CRISIS

- Suicidal statements or attempts
- Violent actions, attempts, statements or threats
- Destruction of property or criminal acts
- Extreme emotions like uncontrolled rage or panic
- Difficulty communicating (garbled or slurred speech, disjointed thoughts)
- Loss of contact with reality (seeing or hearing things that aren't there, bizarre or troubling beliefs)
- Experiencing trauma
- History of substance abuse
- Impulsive or aggressive tendencies

### RESPONDING TO A SERIOUS CONCERN

Contact UM's Behavioral Intervention Team about students who engage in worrisome behaviors that you feel are beyond your ability to address. Complete the online referral form available on the UM Student Affairs Webpage.

Walk student to Curry Health Center Counseling immediately if he/she/they are suicidal.

Contact UM Police and 911 for immediate emergencies.

## UM RESOURCES

ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT	243-2815
AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENT SERVICES	243-6306
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING & CAREER SUCCESS	243-2022
CURRY HEALTH CENTER	243-4330
CURRY HEALTH COUNSELING	243-4711
OFFICE FOR DISABILITY EQUITY	243-5530
FINANCIAL AID	243-5373
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & SCHOLAR	243-2288
OFFICE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS	243-2800
VETS OFFICE	243-2744

## CRISIS RESOURCES

CURRY COUNSELING	243-4711
STUDENT ADVOCACY RESOURCE CENTER	243-4429
UM POLICE	243-4000
BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION TEAM	UM WEBSITE
SUICIDE CRISIS LINE	800-273-8255

— CURRY —  
**HEALTH CENTER**  
wellness