

Tips for Recognizing Students in Distress

At one time or another everyone feels upset or distressed. However, there are three levels of student distress which, when present over a period of time, suggest that the problems are more than the “normal” ones.

RECOGNIZING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS	RESPONDING TO STUDENTS IN DISTRESS
<p>Level 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in academic performance in the classroom • Significant drop in examination scores • Change in patterns of interaction or attendance • Changes in physical appearance or hygiene • Problems concentrating and remembering things or making decisions 	<p>Levels 1 and 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to the student in private when you are both available • Express your concern in non-judgmental terms • Listen to the student and repeat the gist of what the student is saying • Identify options available to the student • Clarify the costs and benefits of each option for handling the problem from the student’s point of view • Respect the student’s value system • Ask if the student is considering suicide (or taking their life – preferred to “if they plan to hurt themselves”) • Make appropriate referrals if necessary • Make sure the student understands what action is necessary and make plans to follow-up with the student on this action
<p>Level 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeated request for special consideration • New or regularly occurring behavior which pushes the limits and may interfere with class • Management or be disruptive to other students, faculty or staff • Unusual or exaggerated emotional responses • Persistent sadness or unexplained crying • High levels of irritability or inappropriate excitement 	
<p>Level 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly disturbed behavior • Outbursts of anger • Inability to communicate clearly • Irrational conversation or speech that seems disconnected • Loss of contact with reality (seeing/hearing things that are not there, beliefs or actions at odds with reality) • Suspiciousness, irrational feelings of persecution • Statements related to death or dying or feelings of hopelessness • Threats of harming self or harming others 	<p>Level 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay calm • Find someone to stay with the student if possible • Call Campus Safety at (605) 321-6400 if there is an immediate risk of harm to self or others. • Otherwise, contact appropriate office: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dean of Students (605) 331-6620 ○ Counseling (605) 331-6619 ○ Residence Hall Director

NOTE

If at any time you feel there is an imminent threat of harm to self or others, either 911 or USF Campus Safety & Security should be contacted at (605) 321-6400.