

How to Help a Student in Distress

Signs of Distress

Agitation or Irritability

More conflicts with classmates and others
Undue aggressive or abrasive behavior

Tearfulness

More emotional than normal; tired in class
Easily upset by small situations

Fearfulness or Anxiety

High distress about assignments and exams
Frequent absences or lack of participation

Express your concerns to the student, pointing out your observations and asking about their situation.

Are you worried about the student's safety or do you see possible warning signs? **WARNING SIGNS include:**

Reports self-hate (not deserving to live)

Marked change in appearance or hygiene

Appears agitated

Talks about or threatens suicide

Bizarre or dangerous behavior

Appears/reports hopelessness

Making statements about hurting others

Significant confusion

No longer attending classes

Making statements such as "I want this all to end" or "I don't deserve to live" or "I can't do this anymore"

DIRECTLY ask about concerns and/or warning signs

DIRECTLY ask about suicide/homicide as it relates

Yes

No

Do you believe the student is in imminent danger?

DO NOT LEAVE STUDENT ALONE

YES (imminent danger is clearly present)

Examples:

Student is disoriented, found unconscious or unresponsive

Student tells you that they have ingested pills beyond the recommended dose

Student attempts or is threatening immediate danger to self

Student attempts or threatens to cause physical harm to someone else

IMMEDIATELY: Call WCU Public Safety at 610-436-3311

Submit CARE Report:

<https://www.wcupa.edu/services/studentAssistance/CARE/default.aspx>

Contact Department Chair

UNCLEAR (whether imminent danger exists)

Examples:

Student makes statements that are suggestive of suicidal/homicidal thinking that are not indicative of imminent danger ("I can't do this anymore")

Student appears to be emotionally distraught and does not respond to your attempts to calm them

Student experiences a sudden stressful event (death in family, breakup, etc.) and seems emotionally unstable/inconsolable OR the student's response seems unusual (flat affect, unresponsive verbally, refuses to talk to you)

Student's communications contain material that raises concern about suicide, homicide, and/or violence

During Business Hours:

Call the Counseling Center at 610-436-2301

Provide all the relevant information you have about the student and the situation to the Front Desk Staff

Student will either be encouraged to come to the Counseling Center right away or scheduled for a Triage Appointment that day to be assessed by a counselor for risk

After Hours:

Call Public Safety and provide all the relevant information you have about the student and the situation

Student must agree to talk to Public Safety who will contact the Counselor On-Call for further instructions

NO (imminent danger is not present)

Examples:

Student is very upset about a break up, but denies any suicidal/homicidal thoughts and shows no warning signs

Student reports anxiety and depression, but denies suicidal/homicidal thoughts and shows no warning signs

Student's best friend recently died, but denies suicidal/homicidal thoughts and shows no warning signs

Student reports self-injurious behaviors (cutting or burning), but denies suicidal/homicidal thoughts and shows no warning signs

Listen and provide support

Provide information about Counseling Services and/or other campus resources that may be helpful and address concerns the student may have about these resources

If student is open to counseling: Consider calling the Counseling Center at 610-436-2301 with the student and asking for a Triage Appointment

If the student is not open to counseling: Consider sending in a Student Alert to the CARE team -

<https://www.wcupa.edu/services/studentAssistance/CARE/default.aspx>



Adapted from Berry College Counseling Center