Study Abroad: Helping Students in Distress

On behalf of UConn Counseling & Mental Health Services

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What Are Your Concerns?

• “How do I know when a student is really in distress?”

• “I don’t want to make it worse.”

• “I don’t know what to say.”

• “I may not want to get involved.”
Why Should I Care?

What is the goal of staff intervention when it comes to distressed students?

• Preserving the living/learning environment
• Ensuring campus safety
• Promoting student retention and success
Special Considerations – Study Abroad

• Limits of CMHS’ ability to provide care to students away from campus.

• Importance of identifying local resources in advance.

• Always consult! If you have concerns, get support. Consult with the Directors of Global Affairs by email, or for emergencies contact the 24/7 line 860-420-9112.
Trends at CMHS:

Increasing utilization of services

Increasing acuity

Total Encounters

Hospital Transports by Academic Year:
Anxiety is the most common presenting concern, followed by depression.
Your Experiences Already?

As faculty/staff, what experiences have you already had with student mental health concerns?

○ How did you respond?
○ What went well?
○ What would you do differently, if given the chance?
Setting the Tone: Developing Resilience

**Recognize** - Admit (normalize) struggles/challenges

**Reframe** – Our setbacks can direct innovation and growth

**Reflect** - Define personal role in success

**Reach out** – Encourage connection to resources. Success doesn’t happen in isolation
Statement on Success

Success in this course program depends heavily on your personal health and wellbeing. Recognize that stress is an expected part of the college experience, and it often can be compounded by unexpected setbacks or life changes outside the classroom. Your instructors and I strongly encourage you to reframe challenges as an unavoidable pathway to success. Reflect on your role in taking care of yourself throughout the term, before the demands of exams and projects reach their peak. Please feel free to reach out to me about any difficulty you may be having that may impact your performance in your courses or campus life as soon as it occurs and before it becomes too overwhelming. In addition to your academic advisor, I strongly encourage you to contact the many other support services on campus that stand ready to assist you.
Recognition – Symptoms of Distress

Significant Changes in Mood and Attitude
• Irritability
• Sadness, Helplessness
• Acting-out Behaviors

Changes in academic performance
• Strange or Alarming Comments or Writings

Change in Hygiene
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Healthy (Normative)</th>
<th>Reacting (Common/Reversible)</th>
<th>Injured (Significant Impairment, but return to functioning)</th>
<th>Severe/ Persistent Impairment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nervous about transition to college, worried about academic and social adjustment</td>
<td>Loss of romantic relationship upon transition to college. Anxiety about challenging courses First failing grade Identity Exploration</td>
<td>Ex. Traumatic losses or experiences, recurring depression or other diagnosed d/o in active state. Stable history of functioning, but reacting to event or episode that impacts functioning at some level.</td>
<td>Complex Trauma, Psychosis: Unable to engage or function safely and independently in the college environment. Chronic functional impairment. Maybe accompanied by significantly disruptive life environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleeting anxious mood that dissipates when engaged, some temporary disruption in sleep or appetite, feelings of self-doubt</td>
<td>Tearfulness, some mild to moderate or transient physical distress (sleep, appetite, GI, somatic symptoms), irritability, symptoms relieve when provided with support, or with time</td>
<td>Significant and persistent impairment in functioning and/or mood including cognitive - response to specified trigger or trauma. Able to maintain safety and utilize treatment</td>
<td>Threat to self or others, inability to live in community, unable to provide for basic sustaining activities, enter into basic social exchange/contracts loss of touch with reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal CONNECT Self Help Community Supports Coping Family/Friends</td>
<td>Supportive Listening Offer Resources Supportive Services Self Care Skill Building</td>
<td>Time Out and Refer for further assessment and likely course of treatment Significant Functional Impairment</td>
<td>Identify and Get Immediate Intervention. High Risk Multidisciplinary intensive treatment Contained and monitored setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Advisors Student Activities Religious Communities Study Groups Sports/Exercise Internet Resources Cultural Centers FYE</td>
<td>Drop In Consultation at CMHS Academic Achievement Ctr Tutoring Residential Life Yoga for Stress Reduction Referral to SHS Nutrition Services</td>
<td>Dean Of Students Office Center for Students with Disabilities CMHS SHS Referral for treatment</td>
<td>911 CMHS Community Standards CARE Team</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
You don’t have to have the right answers, being there to **LISTEN** might be all someone needs.
Reflective Listening Statements

• “It sounds like…”

• “What I hear you saying is…”

• “I get a sense that…”

• “It feels as though…”

• “Help me understand... On the one hand you... and on the other hand you...”
Helping Students in Distress

It is not uncommon for students to have thoughts of suicide as a result of a mental health condition... YOU can be the one to intervene!

• Talk to the person alone in a private setting
• If in doubt, don’t wait, ask the question, “Are you having thoughts of suicide?”
• Allow the person to talk freely, use your reflective listening skills
• Be ready to help the person access resources
How to refer:

I can hear that you’re struggling with this, and I want to help in the best way I can. I think it would be good for us to call ________________ for some support and ideas on our next steps. Let’s do it together.
## Resources

### UConn:
- Counseling & Mental Health Services
- Student Health Services
- UConn Police Department
- UConn CARE Team

### National:
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline
- Crisis Text Line
- Prevent Suicide CT
- Samaritans 24-Hour Crisis Hotline
- The Trevor Project

### International:
- International Association for Suicide Prevention
- Talkspace online therapy service
ask
listen
refer
Online Suicide Prevention Training

www.asklistenrefer.org/uconn