

Assisting Students In Distress



Student
Services
Counselling Services

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Why You Should Reach Out To A Student In Distress

Being part of the UNB community means looking out for the people around you. When someone needs help, they don't always know how to get it. By reaching out to a student in distress, you can get them access to the support they need.



SEE

Pay attention to warning signs



SAY

Say something
Trust your instincts



DO

Reach out
and help

REMEMBER: IF YOU ARE UNSURE, SAYING SOMETHING TO A STUDENT IS ALWAYS BETTER THAN DOING NOTHING.

What Is Distress?

Distress is a reaction to a single or multiple stressors, such as a relationship problem, traumatic event, homesickness, or health concern that may compromise daily functioning and overwhelm a person's normal coping methods.

Possible Warning Signs

Intense sadness or anger beyond a normal reaction to upsetting events, changes in physical appearance or hygiene, physical injuries, absences, failing or worsening grades, acting withdrawn, unusual behavior, expressions of hopelessness or grief.

Expectations and Boundaries

At a minimum, you should respond to student distress with an empathic response ("Thank you for sharing this with me", "I'm sorry to hear you are having a difficult time") and an appropriate referral ("I know just the place you should go for support").

On the other end of the spectrum, you should ensure that responding to student distress does not exceed healthy boundaries for you and your students. Here are some possible questions regarding boundaries that you may wish to consider:

- 1. Dependency:** Do you feel students are using you as a primary source of support?
- 2. Chronic Needs:** Is a student coming to you repeatedly with the same concern(s)?
- 3. Risk:** Are students sharing thoughts or behaviours containing more risk than you feel comfortable responding to?
- 4. Amount of Time:** Are you spending more time than you'd like responding to student distress?
- 5. Stress:** Does responding to student distress result in unhealthy levels of stress or worry?

For help on setting and maintaining boundaries, we encourage you to consult with Counselling Services and other members of your faculty/unit.

Talking To A Student In Distress - What To Say

Express Concern: Let the student know what you've observed and why you are concerned.

"I've noticed you've been absent from class lately and I am concerned you will fall behind."

"You seem withdrawn lately and not like your usual self. I'm worried that you are dealing with something difficult."

"I saw you crying in class last week and your grades have recently gotten worse."

Listen And Ask Questions: Ask the student open-ended questions to elicit more information about what they're experiencing.

"I'm here to listen. What is worrying you?"

"What have you been dealing with?"

"What is the reason you have been struggling lately?"

Provide Resources & Encourage To Seek Support: Explain in a straightforward and open manner why you feel it is desirable or necessary for the student to seek support.

"You've told me that you are worried about school to the point that you can't sleep at night. I think you could benefit from learning some skills to manage that worry. This is something counselling services can help with."

When faced with resistance

1. Do they just need more encouragement? Provide more explicit reasons why they should go.
2. Unease about going? Offer to go with them, or allow them to contact the resource while in your office or contact the resource yourself while the student is still in your office.
3. If the student emphatically says "no", then respect that decision, and leave the door open for possible reconsideration at a later time.

Follow Up: Encourage the student to get back in touch with you after visiting the recommended resource, but don't insist on knowing what the student has done.

"How are things since we last spoke? Do you need to talk?"

**For unusual or particularly complex student concerns,
or for questions, contact: UNB Counselling Services
453-4820 | counsel@unb.ca**

Emergency Situations

Physical violence; immediate or imminent concern for their or someone else's safety; specific threats of violence or harm

First call 911, then Campus Security
453-4830

Situations Requiring Immediate Referral/Reporting

Direct or indirect references to suicide, such as expressing feelings of worthlessness or hopelessness; distorted reality

Counselling Services
453-4820 | counsel@unb.ca

Student Health Centre
453-4837 | shc@unb.ca

After hours crisis support for someone needing immediate help

Mobile Crisis Unit
453-2132

24/7 support for someone who may need crisis support later on

CHIMO Helpline
450-HELP (4357)

Non-Emergency/Non-Immediate Referral

Primary Health Care

Student Health Centre
453-4837 | shc@unb.ca

Accessibility and disability support

Student Accessibility Centre
453-3515 | unbds@unb.ca

Learning and academic challenges

Writing & Study Skills Centre
452-6346 | wss@unb.ca

Financial concerns

Financial Aid
453-4796 | finaid@unb.ca

Academic Complaints or Appeals

Student Advocate
453-4527 | langmaid@unb.ca

Discrimination or Harassment

Human Rights Officer
458-7889 | humanright@unb.ca

Academic or program concerns

Academic Advisors
go.unb.ca/advisors-fr

Online mobile-friendly self-help resources

TAO (thepath-ca.taoconnect.org)
Using enrolment key Unb1785!

Disruptive or concerning behavior

Student Intervention Team
sit@unb.ca 458-7293

Sexual Assault

Campus Sexual Assault Support Advocate
453-4530 | csasa@bellaliant.com

Mental Health First Aid Training for faculty/staff.
To inquire about training opportunities and cost,
please contact Counselling Services.

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