

Assisting Students In Distress



Student
Services
Counselling Services

Assisting Students In Distress

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events, changes in physical appearance or hygiene, physical injuries, absences, failing or worsening grades, acting withdrawn, unusual behavior, expressions of hopelessness or grief.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:**

The Student Intervention Team
506-458-7293 sit@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 506-453-4830

Situations Requiring Immediate Referral/Reporting

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

**Counselling Services
506-453-4820 | counsel@unb.ca
Student Health Centre
506-453-4837 | shc@unb.ca**

After hours crisis support for someone needing immediate help

**Mobile Crisis Unit
506-453-2132**

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

**CHIMO Helpline
506-450-HELP (4357)**

Non-Emergency/Non-Immediate Referral

Concerns about well-being

**Student Intervention Team
506-458-7293 sit@unb.ca**

Primary Health Care

**Student Health Centre
506-453-4837 | shc@unb.ca**

Accessibility and disability support

**Student Accessibility Centre
506-453-3515 | unbds@unb.ca**

Learning and academic challenges

**Writing & Study Skills Centre
506-452-6346 | wss@unb.ca**

Financial concerns

**Financial Aid
506-453-4796 | finaid@unb.ca**

Academic Complaints or Appeals

**Student Advocate
506-453-4527 | langmaid@unb.ca**

Discrimination or Harassment

**Human Rights Officer
506-458-7889 | humanright@unb.ca**

Academic or program concerns

**Academic Advisors
go.unb.ca/advisors-fr**

Peer Support

**go.unb.ca/counselling-fr/
peersupport@unb.ca**

Virtual Support

**Togetherall
<https://www.unb.ca/sas/wellness/counselling/togetherall.html>**

Sexual Assault

**Campus Sexual Assault Support Advocate
506-453-4530 | csasa@bellaliant.com**

To inquire about training opportunities and workshops to support student mental health and wellbeing, please contact Counselling Services

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