HELPING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS
A Faculty and Staff Guide for Assisting Students in Distress
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Southern Connecticut State University
Division of Student Affairs
Dear Colleagues,

Has this ever happened to you?

• A student in your class is obviously intoxicated or on drugs
• You overhear students exchange hostile words and threaten one another with physical violence
• A student comes to your office and is angry and belligerent, and you feel threatened
• A student reveals to you that he/she is having thoughts of suicide
• A student reveals that he/she was sexually assaulted, or is being stalked, or is being targeted or ‘flamed’ in cyberspace
• A student tells you about racist remarks made against another student
• A student is suffering discrimination and/or hostile treatment because of his/her sexual identity/gender diversity
• A student who is usually well-prepared for class begins to miss class, fails to complete assignments, and becomes inattentive to hygiene and personal appearance

Such interactions leave us troubled and wondering what to do. Should I call someone and report this incident? Should I get involved and try to help the student myself?

College students often experience high levels of stress, conflict, and personal challenges that can derail them psychologically and profoundly affect their health, behavior, and academic performance. Some students lose their ability to cope, contemplate dropping out of college or running off to escape the pressures, or have thoughts of harming themselves or others. Although most students successfully contend with the daily struggles of university life, some are so distressed that they may intentionally or unconsciously seek out your help. As members of the faculty and staff, you play a key role in identifying and responding to these distressed students, because you often get the first glimpse of students in trouble and may be the first person to whom students turn for help.

When that happens, we hope that you will turn to this Guide for Assisting Students in Distress.

We realize that faculty and staff want to help students but often don’t know the right approach, can’t find the right words, and don’t know which campus office to call for assistance. The purpose of this guidebook is to provide some guidelines and practical hints on the signs of distress for which you should be on the lookout, and on language for you to either use or avoid. The guidebook also is intended to inform you of the appropriate offices to contact for assistance. There are skilled professionals within the University Division of Student Affairs including the staff members of the Counseling Center, Women’s Center, Drug and Alcohol Resource Center, Sexuality and Gender Equality (SAGE) Center, Disability Resource Center, Multicultural Center, Student Supportive Services, Health Services, Office of Judicial Affairs, Campus Police, et al., who are eager to assist and provide interventive support when necessary.
The way you choose to respond to a student in distress is up to you. It may be a phone call or e-mail message to one of the university’s professional staff listed in this publication, alerting us to the situation and/or asking us for specific guidance in responding to the student. Or it may be a conversation with the student in which you can express concern and offer general advice or refer the student directly to one of the university offices listed here that work with distressed students every day. What is important is that we do acknowledge the student in distress and do whatever we can to provide the assistance. Just give us a call. We are all partners at the university who can work together to identify and help students find guidance, understanding, professional care and a network of supportive services to address their needs. By working together to provide this coordinated response, we can build a stronger, safer university community.

We wish to thank our University of Connecticut colleagues, especially Dr. Lee Burdette Williams, Dean of Students and Dr. Barry A. Schreier, director, Counseling and Mental Health Services who generously and collegially have encouraged us to borrow directly their language, ideas and structural organization for our own SCSU edition of *Helping Students in Distress*. We also wish to thank our colleagues from the University of Maryland Counseling Center whose publication likewise served as a template in helping us to formulate our guidebook for faculty and staff. We respectfully acknowledge them with gratitude for their wisdom and succinct clarity in shaping the issues presented within and formulating the recommendations that serve all of us in higher education. In turn, we encourage our colleagues at other colleges and universities to borrow freely from our guidebook, because as higher education colleagues, we all share in the mission to serve our students with the best skills and support possible.

Sincerely,

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Vice President for Student Affairs

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Assistant Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs
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I. RESPONDING TO STUDENT EMERGENCIES

The University encourages and will support faculty and staff decisions to respond to students in distress. Students in distress often display behavior that may pose a threat to self or others. Such behavior may include:

• Suicidal gestures, intentions, or attempts
• Other behavior posing a threat to the student (e.g., drug abuse)
• Threats or aggression directed toward others
• Demonstrated inability to care for oneself

WHAT YOU CAN DO

• Move the student to a quiet and secure place if possible.
• Enlist the help of someone else so the student isn’t left alone and you aren’t left alone with the student.
• Listen attentively and respond in a straightforward and considerate way.
• When contacting a campus resource, have available as much information as possible, including your name, the student’s name and location, a description of the circumstances and the type of assistance needed, and an accurate description of the student.
• Alert the Dean of Student Affairs Office at (203) 392-5556 or Counseling Services at (203) 392-5475 as soon as possible.

NEED ADVICE?

For consultation with a campus mental health clinician, call Counseling Services at (203) 392-5475. The office is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. During these times, you may also walk the student to Counseling Services, located in Engleman Hall, Room 219 B. A clinician is available to see the student immediately in a crisis.

If the student requires immediate medical attention or hospitalization or is unmanageable (e.g., aggressive, hostile, refusing care), or if you feel directly threatened by a student or feel others are at risk, do not hesitate to call Campus Police at (203) 392-5375 (24/7) or call 911.
II. REFERRING A STUDENT FOR PROFESSIONAL HELP

When to refer

In many cases of student distress, faculty and staff can provide adequate help through empathic listening, facilitating open discussion of problems, instilling hope, validating and normalizing concerns, conveying acceptance, giving reassurance, and offering basic advice.

In some cases, however, students need professional help to overcome problems and to resume effective functioning. The following signs indicate a student may need counseling:

- The student remains distressed following repeated attempts by you and others to be helpful.
- The student becomes increasingly isolated, unkempt, irritable, or disconnected.
- The student’s academic or social performance deteriorates.
- The student’s behavior reflects increased hopelessness or helplessness.
- You find yourself doing ongoing counseling rather than consultation or advising and feeling yourself pulled in directions that make you uncomfortable.
- The student shows significant and marked changes in behavior and mood.

How to refer

- Speak to the student in a direct, concerned, and caring manner.
- Because students may initially resist the idea of counseling, be caring but firm in your judgment that counseling would be helpful. Also, be clear about the reasons that you are concerned. ("I am worried about your doing okay in school, and I bring this up really because I care about how you are doing.")
- Be knowledgeable in advance about the services and procedures of Counseling Services and other campus help-giving agencies. The best referrals are made to specific people or services. (You can find out about Counseling Services clinicians at our website: SouthernCT.edu/counseling.)
- Suggest that the student call to make an appointment, and provide the phone number to Counseling Services — (203) 392-5475 — as well as the location — EN 219-B.
- Remind the student that the university counseling services are FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL
- Sometimes it is useful to actively assist students in scheduling an initial counseling appointment. You can offer the use of your phone or call the Counseling Services receptionist yourself while the student waits in your office. In some situations, you may find it wise to walk the student over to Counseling Services. You could review our website with the student as well. SouthernCT.edu/counseling
- If you need help in deciding whether it is appropriate to make a referral, call Counseling Services at (203) 392-5475, for consultation with a clinician.
- Counseling staff will also come to your department or staff to speak further regarding referrals and our procedures/services. Please call (203) 392-5475 to schedule.
A NOTE ON CONFIDENTIALITY

All clinical contact with the Counseling Services is privileged and confidential. While the staff is responsive to the needs and concerns of the Southern community in regard to individual students, no information regarding a student’s treatment will be divulged to anyone including parents or Southern faculty or staff without the student's written consent. However, by law, a clinician must report any knowledge of suspected child, elder, or other dependent abuse, or of risk to an individual’s (self or others) physical safety. In addition, a clinician must disclose records if ordered by a court to do so. In these very unlikely situations, the clinician will only reveal information as specifically required.
III.

RESPONDING TO DIFFERENCES AND DIVERSITIES:
Race, Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation, Appearance, Age

Race, ethnicity, cultural background, sexual orientation, and other dimensions of human differences are important to keep mind as you help a distressed student. Reactions to racism, sexism, homophobia, disability status, appearances, size, etc. can affect the way in which emotional distress is manifested and also the way a student may reach out for help. General barriers to seeking help (e.g., denial, shame, fear of being labeled in a negative way, lack of information about campus resources) can be even more troublesome for students from underrepresented groups. Communicating support, concern, and understanding is critical in reaching students who may feel isolated and marginalized. Your sensitivity to the unique needs of international students, LGBT students, students of color, students with disabilities, students from foster care who have been removed from their birth parents or other custodial adults by state authorities because of abuse or neglect, non-traditional-aged college students, and other underrepresented groups can be important in helping culturally different students get assistance. Furthermore, being knowledgeable about campus resources that address the unique needs of different and underrepresented students is also important.

RESOURCES: STUDENTS OF COLOR/CULTURAL DIVERSITY
Multicultural Center: Adanti Student Center 234; (203) 392-5888 SouthernCT.edu/mcc/
Student Clubs and Organizations/Student Life: Adanti Student Center 213; (203) 392-5782 SouthernCT.edu/officeofstudentlife/organizationlist/:

- African Students Organization
- Asian Academic Society
- Baka Chan Anime Society
- Black Student Union (BSU)
- Chinese Student Organization
- Ciao Italian Club
- French Club
- Hispanic Cultural Society
- Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS)
- People to People Club (International Students)
- South Asian Student Association
- West Indian Society
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
International Students Office: Adanti Student Center 231; (203) 392-6821
SouthernCT.edu/internationalstudents/

NON-TRADITIONAL-AGED STUDENTS
Non-Traditional Students Office: Engleman B222; (203) 392-6812

LGBT STUDENTS
Sexuality and Gender Equality (SAGE) Center, Schwartz Hall, Room 2, ground floor;
SouthernCT.edu/LGBT/
LGBTQI Prism (student organization) SouthernCT.edu/officeofstudentlife/organizationlist/
organizationinformation/?club_id=33

STUDENTS FROM FOSTER CARE
Dean of Student Affairs Office, EN A 106, (203) 392-5556

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Disabilities Resource Center, Engleman Hall, Room C-105A; (203) 392-6828
SouthernCT.edu/drc/

Anyone who has a complaint alleging an act of discrimination should contact Pamela Lassiter, Director of Diversity and Equity, Buley Library, Room 207, (203) 392-5899.
Facts about disability

Students with documentation are eligible to access accommodations through the Disability Resource Center (DRC). Common disabilities at the college level include physical, learning, psychiatric, autism spectrum, and chronic health disabilities.

Students with **physical disabilities** may present special classroom access needs associated with limitations in mobility, speaking, hearing, and/or vision.

Students with **chronic health disorders** may experience difficulties participating in their academic programs due to the condition itself or the ongoing treatment protocol. Flexibility of non-essential attendance requirements may be appropriate depending on the courses curriculum.

Students with **learning disabilities** have neurological impairments that interfere with and slow down information processing, memory and retrieval, and output. These disabilities can have an impact on reading, writing, math, attention, concentration, and/or overall organization. Students may need to use technology or other strategies to compensate.

Students with **psychiatric disabilities** may have a chronic and debilitating psychological condition that may at times affect their ability to participate fully in the routine educational program. Many side effects of medication may cause delays in processing. Examples of conditions that fall under this classification include Bipolar Disorder, Major Depression, Anxiety Disorders, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Students with **Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)** may experience inattentive, hyperactive, and/or impulsive behaviors due to a dysfunction of the central nervous system. These behaviors may make longer class periods and time management difficult at times.

Students with **Autism Spectrum Disorders** may have difficulty negotiating social situations, group work, or giving eye contact, or may exhibit impulsive behaviors. Typically, students with Autism Spectrum disorders, including Asperger’s, are concrete thinkers and may have difficulty with vague assignments and taking another perspective.

Students with disabilities may not realize that they have a particular problem and that treatment/accommodations are available. If you have concerns about a student, please contact the DRC at (203) 392-6828, for advice and support.
WHAT YOU CAN DO

• Speak to the student in private about your concerns.
• Treat each student with sensitivity and respect.
• Acknowledge the difficulties that the student is having.
• Refer the student to the Disability Resource Center (DRC), (203) 392-6828, Engleman Hall C105.
• Be open to follow-up consultation with the DRC regarding accommodations for the student.
• Remember students requesting accommodations must present an accommodations letter from the DRC with approved accommodations listed. Students affiliated with the DRC have valid documentation on file. Professors may not ask to see the documentation, but may request to see the accommodations letter.
• Remember that all students, regardless of disability, were admitted to Southern under the same admissions requirements as their peers, and therefore need to be held to the same standards. However, accommodations are a part of providing equal access.

AVOID

• Prejudging a student’s potential based on a disability.
• Making reference to the student’s disability in class or in front of others.
• Using patronizing language with the student.
• Underestimating or questioning the validity of the stated disability.
• Assuming the student understands the academic limitations potentially imposed by the disability.
• Assuming the student qualifies for accommodations without the DRC verification.

NEED ADVICE?
Contact the Disability Resource Center, EN C 105, (203) 392-6828. SouthernCT.edu/drc
1. THE STUDENT WITH ANXIETY

Facts about anxiety
Anxiety can be generalized across a range of situations, or it may be situation-specific (e.g., test anxiety, social anxiety, public speaking anxiety).

SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY INCLUDE:

• stress
• agitation
• panic
• avoidance
• irrational fears (of losing control, phobias, of dying, of falling apart)
• excessive worry (ruminations and obsessions)
• sleep or eating problems
• depression

WHAT YOU CAN DO

• Talk to the student in private.
• Remain calm and take the lead in a soothing manner. (“I am interested to hear what’s bothering you. Can you tell me about it?”)
• Focus on relevant information, speaking concretely and concisely.
• Help the student develop an action plan that addresses his or her main concerns, breaking larger problems into smaller parts so they are less overwhelming to the student.
• Refer the student to Counseling Services at (203) 392-5475, or suggest visiting our website at SouthernCT.edu/counseling to learn about anxiety.

AVOID

• Overwhelming the student with information or complicated solutions.
• Arguing with student’s irrational thoughts. (“You have nothing really to worry about; your grades are good.”)
• Devaluing the information presented (“It’s not as bad as you think” or “Don’t worry, you have everything going for you.”)
• Assuming the student will get over the anxiety without treatment.

NEED ADVICE?
Contact Counseling Services
EN B 219, (203) 392-5475.
SouthernCT.edu/counseling
2. THE STUDENT WHO IS DEMANDING

Facts about students who are demanding

Students who are demanding can be intrusive and persistent and may require much time and attention.

Demanding traits can be associated with anxiety, panic, depression, personality problems, and/or thought disorders, mania, drug use/abuse.

CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS WHO ARE DEMANDING INCLUDE:

• a sense of entitlement
• an inability to empathize
• a need for control
• difficulty in dealing with ambiguity
• perfectionism
• difficulty with structure and limits
• dependency
• fears about handling life
• elevated mood
• drug use or abuse
• inability to accept any limits

WHAT YOU CAN DO

• Talk to the student in a place that is safe and comfortable.
• Remain calm and take the lead. (“Tell me what is bothering you and then let’s decide what solutions there might be.”)
• Set clear limits up front and hold the student to the allotted time for the discussion. (“I have 10 minutes today, and so within that time, what can I try and help you with?”)
• Emphasize behaviors that are and aren’t acceptable. (“If you want me to continue with this, I will need you to be as respectful of me when you are talking as you would want me to be respectful of you.”)
• Respond quickly and with clear limits to behavior that disrupts class, study sessions, or consultations.
• Be prepared for manipulative requests and behaviors. (“You came asking for my help and I have offered you several ideas, but they do not seem okay with you. What ideas do you have?”)
• Call the Dean of Student Affairs Office at (203) 392-5556 for help with identifying strategies for dealing with disruptive behaviors.
• Refer the student to Counseling Services, (203) 392-5475.

AVOID

• Arguing with the student. (“No, you are not correct and I do not agree.”)
• Giving in to inappropriate requests.
• Adjusting your schedule or policies to accommodate the student.
• Ignoring inappropriate behavior that has a negative impact on you or other students.
• Feeling obligated to take care of the student or feeling guilty for not doing more.
• Allowing the student to intimidate or manipulate you to not deal with the problematic behavior.

NEED ADVICE?

Contact the Office of Judicial Affairs
EN B 116, (203) 392-6188.
3. THE STUDENT WHO IS DEPRESSED

Facts about depression
Depression is a common mental health problem that varies in severity and duration.

In its less serious form, depression is a temporary reaction to loss, stress, or life challenges. It can be alleviated through the passage of time and/or the natural healing effects of social supports, daily routines, and simple coping strategies like distraction, a structured daily schedule, and exercise.

Severe or chronic depression requires professional help.

SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION CAN INCLUDE:
• feelings of emptiness, hopelessness, helplessness, and worthlessness
• a deep sense of sadness
• an inability to experience pleasure
• irregular eating and sleeping
• difficulties with concentration, memory, and decision-making
• fatigue and social withdrawal

Sometimes depression includes irritation, anxiety, and anger.

In its most serious form, depression can be accompanied by self-destructive thoughts and intentions as a way to escape from the emotional pain.

Research shows that depression can be highly responsive to both psychotherapy and/or medication.

WHAT YOU CAN DO
• Talk to the student in private.
• Listen carefully and validate the student’s feelings and experiences. ("It is very difficult, tiring, and distressing to feel this sad so often.")
• Be supportive and express your concern about the situation. ("That you are feeling this sad concerns me greatly, and I am glad you told me about it.")
• Discuss clearly and concisely an action plan such as having the student immediately call for a counseling appointment. ("I know depression can’t get better as long as it is a secret and is not actively responded to. Counseling can really make a difference here.")
• Refer the student to Counseling Services, (203) 392-5475, or suggest a visit to our website at SouthernCT.edu/counseling to learn about depression.
• Be willing to consider or offer flexible arrangements (e.g., extension on a paper or exam), if appropriate, as a way to alleviate stress and instill hope.
• Ask the student if he/she has thoughts of suicide. (See section about suicide.) If so, do not leave the student alone. If possible, walk the student over to Counseling Services. If it is after 4:30 pm or on the weekend, access emergency services of Campus Police by calling (203) 392-5375.
• If you feel overwhelmed or unprepared to help a depressed student, call the Dean of Student Affairs Office, (203) 392-5556, or Counseling Services, (203) 392-5475, for advisement as to how proceed.
AVOID

• Downplaying the situation. ("But you normally seem so happy.")

• Arguing with the student or disputing that the student is feeling depressed. ("Your grades are so good. Are you sure you’re really depressed?")

• Providing too much information for the student to process.

• Expecting the student to stop feeling depressed without intervention. ("Sad feelings pass and maybe they will for you, too.")

• Assuming the family knows about the student’s depression.

• Assuming that the student has a family or a network of supporters.

NEED ADVICE?
Contact Counseling Services
EN B 219, (203) 392-5475.
SouthernCT.edu/counseling
4. THE STUDENT WHO HAS DISORDERED EATING

Facts about Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are not necessarily about food, but food is the substance that people with eating disorders abuse. Eating disorders have both physical and psychological symptoms. They are characterized by problematic attitudes and feelings about food, weight and body shape, a disruption in eating behaviors and weight management, and intense anxiety about body weight and size. Eating disorders usually refer to anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and/or binge eating behavior.

Eating disorders arise from a combination of psychological, interpersonal, and socio-cultural factors and have serious emotional, mental, and medical consequences.

- **Characteristics of anorexia nervosa** include severe restriction of food intake; self-starvation; refusal to maintain minimally normal weight; intense fear of weight and fat; and obsessive focus on weight as a basis of self-worth.
- **Characteristics of bulimia** include excessive concern with body weight/shape; recurrent episodes of binge eating and “purging behaviors,” such as self-induced vomiting; misuse of laxatives, diuretics, and diet pills; fasting; or excessive exercise.
- **Binge eating behavior** is characterized by recurrent episodes of excessive overeating that are not followed by inappropriate compensatory behaviors (purging) to prevent weight gain.

Depression/anxiety often accompany eating disorders.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Select a time to talk to the student when you are not rushed and won’t be interrupted.
- In a direct and non-punitive manner, indicate to the student all the specific observations that have aroused your concern, trying not to focus on body weight or food.
- Your responsibilities are not to diagnose or provide therapy; it is the development of a compassionate and forthright conversation that ultimately helps a student in trouble find understanding, support, and the proper therapeutic resources.
- If the information you receive is compelling, communicate to the student your tentative sense that he or she might have an eating disorder as well as your conviction that the matter clearly needs to be evaluated.

AVOID

- conflicts or a battle of the wills with your student.
- placing shame, blame, or guilt on your student regarding actions or attitudes.
- giving simple solutions. For example, “If you’d just stop, then everything would be fine!”
- intentionally or unintentionally becoming the student’s therapist, savior, or victim.

NEED ADVICE?

If you have any questions regarding the resources available or approaching a student, call the University Health Services Office at (203) 392-6300 or Counseling Services at (203) 392-5475. You can also refer the student to the Counseling Center website at SouthernCT.edu/ counseling to learn about eating disorders.
5. THE STUDENT WHO MAY BE SUICIDAL

Facts about suicide

Although suicide is a rare event, it is a leading cause of death among college students.

Suicidal states are often associated with major depression, a combination of acute anxiety and depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, drug and alcohol abuse, and bipolar disorder.

People who are suicidal often tell people about their thoughts or give clues to others about their feelings.

SOME FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SUICIDE RISK ARE:

- suicidal thoughts
- pessimistic view of the future
- intense feelings of helplessness, especially when combined with anxiety
- feelings of alienation and isolation
- viewing death as a means of escape from distress
- previous suicide attempts
- personal or family history of depression and/or suicide
- personal or family history of suicide attempts
- substance abuse
- history of self-mutilation
- Be confident to ask directly about suicide. Asking a student if he/she is suicidal will not put the idea in the student’s head if it isn’t there already; it will make a secret no longer a secret, which is the first step to a solution.

A student who is suicidal and who confides in someone is often highly ambivalent about suicide and open to discussion.

Students who are at high risk usually have a specific plan, have a means that is lethal (e.g., medication, knife, gun), a timeframe in which they will kill themselves, and tend to be or feel isolated.
WHAT YOU CAN DO

• Call 911 if the student is in immediate danger to him/herself.

• Talk to the student privately (not in front of others).

• Remain calm and take the lead.

• Take a student’s disclosure as a serious plea for help. (“I hear clearly that you are really considering killing yourself to just end the pain of how badly you are feeling.”)

• Ask the student directly about feelings and plans. (“Are you thinking of killing yourself?” “How have you thought about doing it?”)

• Express care and concern, and assure the student that you will help him or her get professional help. (“I believe and trust everything you are saying and that you have not gotten to this point easily. I am highly concerned for you and want you to believe and trust me now, that seeking help can make a difference, even if it doesn’t feel this way right now.”)

• If the student’s disclosure to you takes place during business hours, escort the student to Counseling Services located in EN B 219. If it happens after business hours, escort the student to Campus Police in the Granoff Health Center Building or call (203) 392-5375 for assistance. IF IT IS AN EMERGENCY SITUATION, CALL 911.

• If you feel overwhelmed or unprepared to help a suicidal student, call the Dean of Student Affairs Office at (203) 392-5556 or Counseling Services at (203) 392-5475 for advisement as to how proceed. ALL THREATS MUST BE CONSIDERED POTENTIALLY LETHAL.

AVOID

• Minimizing the situation. (“It is not okay to kill yourself”)

• Arguing with the student about the merits of living. (“You have good grades and everyone loves you. How could you think of killing yourself?”)

• Allowing friends to assume responsibility for the student without contacting a professional.

• Assuming the family knows that the student has suicidal thoughts.

• Assuming the student has a family or support network.

NEED ADVICE?

Contact Counseling Services
EN B 219, (203) 392-5475.
SouthernCT.edu/counseling
6. THE STUDENT WHO IS SEVERELY DISORIENTED OR PSYCHOTIC

Facts about psychotic thinking
The main feature of psychotic thinking is “being disconnected from reality.”

**SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:**
- speech that makes no sense
- extremely odd or eccentric behavior
- significantly inappropriate or an utter lack of emotion
- bizarre behavior that indicates hallucinations
- strange beliefs that involve a serious misinterpretation of reality
- social withdrawal
- inability to connect with or track normal interpersonal communication
- extreme and unwarranted suspicion

**Bipolar disorder** involves periods of serious depression which can be combined with periods of extreme euphoria and frenzied thinking and behavior, the latter of which can reflect a poor connection with reality. A person with bipolar disorder can appear psychotic.

**Psychological illnesses that involve psychotic features** often have an onset between the late teens and early 30s.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO**
- Consult with a clinician at Counseling Services, (203) 392-5475.
- Speak to the student in a direct and concrete manner regarding your plan for getting him/her to a safe environment. (“I am worried you are having trouble tracking things right now, and I think it would be best for you to come with me to speak with someone about this so you can feel safe again.”)
- If the incident occurs during business hours, accompany the student to Counseling Services located in EN B 219, (203) 392-5475. If it happens after business hours, escort the student to Campus Police in the Granoff Health Center Building or call (203) 392-5375 for assistance. If the student is highly impaired, call 911.
- Recognize that psychotic states can involve extreme emotion or lack of emotion and intense fear to the point of paranoia.
- Recognize that a student in this state may be dangerous to self or others.

**AVOID**
- Assuming the student will be able to care for him/herself.
- Agitating the student with questions, pressure, etc. (“You have to do something about yourself, as you are really upsetting others.”)
- Arguing with unrealistic thoughts. (“Don’t think that; it makes no sense and you know it’s not real.”)
- Assuming the student understands you.
- Allowing friends to care for that student without getting professional advice.
- Getting locked into one way of dealing with the student. Be flexible.
- Assuming the family knows about the student’s condition.
- Assuming that the student has a family or a network of support.

**NEED ADVICE?**
Contact Counseling Services
EN B 219, (203) 392-5475.
SouthernCT.edu/counseling
7. THE STUDENT WHO IS AGGRESSIVE OR POTENTIALLY VIOLENT

Facts about aggression
Aggression varies from threats to verbal abuse to physical abuse and violence. It is very difficult to predict aggression and violence.

SOME INDICATORS OF POTENTIAL VIOLENCE MAY INCLUDE:
• expressed paranoia/mistrust
• a highly unstable school or vocational history
• a history of juvenile violence or substance abuse
• prior history of violence or abuse, including history of arrests
• fascination with weapons
• history of cruelty to animals as a child or adolescent
• impulse control problems
• fire-starting behaviors

IF A STUDENT THREATENS YOU BY E-MAIL, MAIL, OR PHONE:
Threatening mail, phone calls, and e-mails received at your home should be referred to your local police department. Notify Campus Police, (203) 392-5375, and inform them of the complaint filed with your local police department.

Mail, phone calls, and e-mails received on campus should be referred to the Campus Police Department, (203) 392-5375.

If you know the identity of the student making these threats, please also contact the Dean of Student Affairs Office, (203) 392-5556 for additional assistance.

WHAT YOU CAN DO
Assess your level of safety. Call 911 if you feel in danger.

• If you feel it is appropriate to stay with the student, remain in an open area with a visible means of escape. For example, sit closest to the door and do not let the student get between you and the door.
• Enlist the help of a co-worker.
• Explain to the student the behaviors that are unacceptable. (“I am glad to talk with you if you are willing to speak with me without yelling.”)
• Stay calm and set limits. (“So, let’s talk about what is upsetting you, but I want to be very clear that we have to both do this without getting angry. Otherwise, we shouldn’t continue this today.”)
• Use a time-out strategy (that is, ask the student to reschedule a meeting with you once the student has calmed down), if the student refuses to cooperate and remains aggressive or agitated. (“I think it is best that we stop for today, but I do not want to drop this so let’s set a time to come back together and then we can both have the chance to settle down.”)
• Contact the Dean of Student Affairs Office, (203) 392-5556, and/or Counseling Services, (203) 392-5475.
AVOID

• Staying in a situation in which you feel unsafe.
• Meeting alone with the student.
• Engaging in a screaming match or behaving in other ways that escalate anxiety and aggression.
• Ignoring signs that the student’s anger is escalating.
• Touching the student or crowding his or her sense of personal space.
• Ignoring a gut reaction that you are in danger.

NEED ADVICE?

Contact the Office of Judicial Affairs
EN B 116, (203) 392-6188.
VI.

RESPONDING TO SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Facts about substance abuse

Alcohol and drug abuse among college students interferes with academic performance, puts them at risk for serious accidents and even death, and can lead to addiction problems for a subset of individuals.

Substance use and abuse among college students is often a misguided way to cope with anxiety, depression, and the stressors of college life.

Research shows that the most abused substance is alcohol and that a large number of college students engage in binge drinking.

SIGNS THAT A STUDENT MAY HAVE A PROBLEM WITH ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS:

• Failure to fulfill major work, school, or home responsibilities.
• A pattern of unexplained underachievement
• Specific school problems such as missing classes, poor grades, and/or recent disciplinary action.
• Participation in high risk situations that are physically dangerous, such as driving a car or walking home from a party alone.
• Frequent blackouts resulting from excessive alcohol and other drug use.
• Having recurring legal problems such as being arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol and other drugs or for physically hurting someone while intoxicated.
• Continued use of alcohol and other drugs despite numerous negative consequences that negatively impact areas of a student’s life such as family, personal relationships, and finances.
• Frequent changes in mood such as temper flare-ups, irritability, and defensiveness.
• Physical or mental impairment such as memory lapses, poor concentration, bloodshot eyes, lack of coordination, or slurred speech.
• Experiencing withdrawal symptoms (e.g., nausea, restlessness, insomnia, concentration problems, sweating, tremors, anxiety).
• Substituting with another substance in order to avoid withdrawal symptoms.
• Spending a lot of time getting, using, and recovering from the effects of a drug.
• Abandoning previously enjoyed activities such as hobbies, sports, and socializing in order to use drugs.
• Continuing to use substances despite physical problems (e.g., blackouts, flashbacks, infections, injuries) or psychological problems (e.g., mood swings, depression, anxiety, delusions, and paranoia).
• Denial of the negative and harmful consequences of substance use, even in the face of serious problems.
WHAT YOU CAN DO

• Treat the situation as serious.
• Recognize that denial is a powerful aspect of substance problems and that it can involve conscious or unconscious lying and distorting of the truth
• Share your concern and encourage the student to seek help.
• Refer the student to the Drug and Alcohol Resource Center (DARC Office), (203) 392-5087, or offer to go with the student to the DARC Office, Schwartz Hall, to set up an appointment.

AVOID

• Ignoring or making light of the problem.
• Chastising or condoning the behavior.
• Being confrontational with the student.
• Assuming that experimenting with drugs or alcohol is harmless.

NEED ADVICE?

Contact Drug and Alcohol Resource Center (DARC), Schwartz Hall basement level. (203) 392-5087.
SouthernCT.edu/drugalcoholresource/
1. SEXUAL ASSAULT

Facts about sexual assault

- Sexual assault is sexual contact initiated against a person without that person's consent.
- Guidelines for consent include, but are not limited to, the following: sexual activity that is informed, freely and actively given, and with an understandable exchange of affirmative words or actions, which indicate a willingness to participate in mutually agreed upon sexual activity.
- It is the responsibility of the initiator to obtain clear and affirmative responses at each stage of sexual involvement.
- The lack of a negative response is NOT consent. Consent can't be inferred from passivity or silence.
- Past consent of sexual activities does not imply ongoing consent.
- Consent cannot be given by anyone who is intoxicated or incapacitated by drugs and/or alcohol, either voluntarily or involuntarily consumed.
- Some sexual assaults are committed by strangers, but they may also be committed by someone the student knows. Sexual assault by a friend, date, partner, or casual acquaintance is the most prevalent form of sexual assault on college campuses.
- According to the U.S. Department of Justice, one in 36 college women is sexually assaulted or us the victim/survivor of attempted rapes in any given academic year, and 74 percent knew their attackers.
- Although most assaults are committed by men against women, men can be assaulted by women.
- Same-sex assaults may occur.

EXAMPLES OF SEXUAL ASSAULT INCLUDE:

- completed or attempted rape
- threats of rape
- sexual coercion
- unwanted sexual contact with force or threat of force
- unwanted sexual contact without consent
The Southern Sexual Assault Response Team (S.A.R.T.) provides a collaborative victim-centered team response to sexual assault. The mission of S.A.R.T is to provide services that ensure a transition from victim to survivor for every individual whose life is impacted by sexual violence. S.A.R.T. members provide a survivor with many supportive options including counseling, medical attention, judicial services, advocacy, referrals, and general information regarding sexual assault. Should a survivor choose to file a police report, the Campus Police and Women’s Center staff will assist her/him with the reporting process and will empower the survivor to make her/his own decisions by providing on and off campus resources and by offering support as needed. The S.A.R.T. members will maintain confidentiality as is legally permitted.

For information or to report a sexual assault case, students may contact any member of the S.A.R.T. team listed below. **In cases of immediate danger or an emergency, call Campus Police at 911.**

- Denise Bentley-Drobish, Director  
  Office of Student Life, Adanti Student Center 213, (203) 392-5782
- Christine Barrett, Assistant Dean  
  School of Arts and Sciences, Engleman Hall A112, (203) 392-5468
- Dian Brown-Albert, Coordinator for Multicultural Student Activities  
  Multicultural Center, Adanti Student Center 234, (203) 392-5888
- Catherine Christy, Coordinator, Women’s Center  
  SART Coordinator and University Victim Advocate  
  Schwartz Hall, (203) 392-6946
- Joseph Dooley, Chief  
  Campus Police, Granoff Hall, (203) 392-5375 or 911
- Michelle Lawler, LPC, Associate Counselor  
  Counseling Services, Engleman Hall B219, (203) 392-5475
- Christopher Piscitelli, Director  
  Office of Judicial Affairs, Engleman Hall B 116, (203) 392-6188
- Dr. Deb Risisky, Assistant Professor  
  Department of Public Health, Orlando House, (203) 392-5136
- Stephanie Szeman, APRN-BC  
  Health Services, Granoff Hall, (203) 392-6300
- Dr. Angela Todaro, Director  
  Office of Residence Life, Schwartz Hall, (203) 392-5870
- Dr. Peter Troiano, Assistant Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs  
  Division of Student Affairs, Engleman Hall A106, (203) 392-5556
- Off-campus resource:  
  Women and Families Center of Greater New Haven: Sexual Assault Crisis Services  
  24 hour hotline – 1-888-999-5545 (English) or 1-888-568-8332 (Spanish)
WHAT YOU CAN DO

IF THE STUDENT IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER OR NEEDS IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION, CALL CAMPUS POLICE AT (203) 392-5375 OR DIAL 911.

• Contact any member of the SCSU S.A.R.T. on previous page.
• Listen without conveying judgment and be aware that survivors can feel shame and anger.
• Contact the SCSU Women’s Center on-campus at (203) 392-6946, or the Women and Families Center Rape Crisis Services off-campus at its 24-hour hotline 1-888-999-5545 (English) or 1-888-568-8332 (Spanish). Both agencies provide advocacy to assist survivors with negotiating post-assault decisions and resources.
• If the student wants medical attention (excluding a sexual assault collection kit), or is seeking medical advice, the student may call University Health Services at (203) 392-6300 and speak to the S.A.R.T. contact person, Stephanie Szeman, APRN-BC.
• If the student wants a medical examination, necessary treatment, and/or to have a sexual assault evidence kit done, the student may go to the local emergency room at either Yale-New Haven Hospital, (203) 688-2222, or the Yale-New Haven Hospital Saint Raphael Campus, (203) 789-3000.
• Refer the student to Counseling Services, (203) 392-5475, for assessment and counseling options.
• If the student wants to report the sexual assault to Campus Police, the student should call (203) 392-5375 or 911 if it is an emergency.
• If the student needs help dealing with academic issues as a result of the sexual assault and/or if she/he would like to learn about the campus Student Code of Conduct options, refer the student to the Dean of Student Affairs Office, (203) 392-5556.
• Inform the student of other S.A.R.T. resources

AVOID

• Expressing judgment even when high-risk behaviors on the part of the victim (e.g., intoxication or drug use) were involved.
• Pressuring the student to file a police report, although it is fine to suggest it.
• Saying things like, “You will get over this,” or “You will forget all about this someday.” It is better to say that you are sorry that this happened to her/him, and that there are support services available to help.
• Asking details about the sexual assault. It is better to ask what the student may need to help her/him and to discuss the support services that are available.

NEED ADVICE?

Contact the Women’s Center Schwartz Hall basement level (203) 392-6946 SouthernCT.edu/womenscenter
2. ABUSIVE DATING RELATIONSHIP

**Facts about abusive relationships:**
Abusive relationships are marked by strategies used by one person to maintain power and control over the other. Because of the cycle of abuse, power, and control, victims may feel trapped and fearful of their partner’s anger, violence, and/or abandonment, and thus may be reticent to disclose information about their relationship, even when abuse is suspected. Abuse can be physical, emotional, or verbal.

**INDICATORS OF ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS CAN INCLUDE:**

- **Intimidation:** Use of looks, actions, or gestures, such as smashing things, destroying property, abusing pets, or displaying weapons so as to cause fear.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Use of put-downs, name-calling, “mind-games,” humiliation, or guilt in an effort to erode self-esteem of partner.
- **Isolation:** Controlling social interaction, movement, and involvements with friends and activities. Abuser may use jealousy to justify actions.
- **Minimizing, Denying, and Blaming:** Making light of the abuse or not taking it seriously. Shifting blame for the abuse onto the victim; saying the victim “caused the abuse.”
- **Violation of Privacy:** Abusive partners may read notes, e-mails, or text messages from others. Abuser may go through personal belongings.
- **Using Privilege (For women who are abused by men):** Partners may use male privilege to make decisions on behalf of the other person. Those may include attempts to control aspects of academic life, requiring permission for important decisions, etc.
- **Coercion and Threats:** Making or carrying out threats to do something to hurt the partner, including leaving, threatening suicide, reporting partner to authorities regarding some behavioral or academic violation, making partner engage in illegal activity.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO**

- Speak to the student privately.
- Recognize that the student may be fearful and vulnerable.
- Remember that abusive relationships involve complex dynamics, including high levels of controlling behavior on the part of the perpetrator and/or denial or fear on the part of the survivor. Therefore the situation may be difficult to change.
- Realize that interventions from a variety of sources increase the chances for change.
- Refer the student to the members of the Sexual Assault Response Team (S.A.R.T.) listed above
- Encourage the student to connect with family and friends.

**AVOID**

- Downplaying the situation.
- Lecturing the student about poor judgment.
- Expecting the student to make quick decisions or any changes.
- Pressuring students to follow any particular course of action.

**NEED ADVICE?**
Contact the Women’s Center
Schwartz Hall basement level
(203) 392-6946 SouthernCT.edu/womenscenter/
3. STALKING/CYBERSTALKING

Facts about stalking
• Stalking is repeated following or harassment of an individual that is designed to instill a sense of fear or danger.
• Stalkers often have an irrational obsession with the victim and try to gain power and omnipotence through control and intimidation.
• Stalking behavior includes tailing the victim; harassment via phone, e-mail, text messages, FAX, and letters; unwanted gifts; and unwanted attentiveness.
• Stalkers can be male or female and targets can be of the same or opposite sex.

IF A STUDENT THREATENS YOU BY E-MAIL, MAIL, TEXT MESSAGES, OR PHONE:
• Threatening mail, phone calls, text messages, and e-mails received at your home should be referred to your local police department. Campus Police, (203) 392-5375, should be informed as well.
• Mail, phone calls, text messages, and e-mails received on campus should be referred to Campus Police, (203) 392-5375.
• If you know the identity of the student making these threats, please contact Campus Police at (203) 392-5375 and the Dean of Student Affairs Office at (203) 392-5556 for additional assistance.

WHAT YOU CAN DO
• Encourage the student who is being stalked to trust her/his instincts.
• Advise the student to contact Campus Police, (203) 392-5475.
• Advise the student to document unwanted contacts and maintain evidence of harassment.
• Refer the student to the members of the Sexual Assault Response Team (S.A.R.T.).
• Advise the student to take precautions to ensure safety, including a change in routine travel routes and schedules, and making use of Southern safety services listed on the Campus Police website: SouthernCT.edu/universitypolice/.
• If you feel overwhelmed or unprepared to help a victim of stalking, call the Dean of Student Affairs Office at (203) 392-5556 and arrange a meeting with that student.

AVOID
• Ignoring or minimizing the situation.
• Suggesting that the victim is responsible for the unwanted attention.
• Taking responsibility for protecting the student.
• Failing to alert the proper authorities.

NEED ADVICE?
Contact the Women’s Center
Schwartz Hall basement level
(203) 392-6946 SouthernCT.edu/womenscenter/
4. THE VICTIM OF A HATE INCIDENT

Facts about hate incidents
A hate crime is a criminal act against a person or her/his property because of that person’s actual or perceived race, perceived ethnicity, color, religion, nationality, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, or physical appearance.

A hate incident is an act that, while not meeting the legal definition of a crime, involves the same behaviors and targeting of underrepresented groups. Hate incidents are more common on college campuses than hate crimes.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

• Talk to the victimized student in private. ("Something terrible has happened and I am very concerned. Please tell me what happened.")

• Recognize that the student is probably experiencing a range of intense feelings, including shame, anger, fear, and denial. ("I can only imagine that this might be embarrassing and humiliating. And it is important to share it with someone so that it does not become your problem only.")

• Refer the student to the Dean of Student Affairs Office, (203) 392-5556.

• Explain the importance of notifying Campus Police, (203) 392-5375. ("Think about the option of telling the police so they can be helpful to you, too.")

• Refer the student to Counseling Services, (203) 392-5475, for assessment and counseling.

AVOID

• Downplaying the situation. ("I am sure nothing was meant by it and you have to pick your battles.")

• Expressing personal biases. ("Well, what did you expect? You have to be careful about yourself.")

• Getting caught up in the technicalities or legalities of the situation. ("This technically is a crime and is a violation of the student code of conduct and so you have to do something about reporting it.")

NEED ADVICE?
Contact the Office of Judicial Affairs
EN B 116, (203) 392-6188.
5. THE VICTIM OF HAZING

Facts about hazing

• Hazing in any form is prohibited at Southern Connecticut State University.
• Hazing is defined as any action taken or situation created on or off campus that recklessly or intentionally produces mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule.
• Hazing is sometimes used as a rite of passage or initiation into a campus organization.
• Hazing can be psychologically damaging and present serious physical risks (including death) to students.
• A student may or may not know that hazing will be a part of an initiation process.
• A student may or may not know how extreme hazing might become during an initiation process.
• Hazing is illegal in the State of Connecticut

WHAT YOU CAN DO

• Talk to the victimized student in private.
• Recognize that the student may be feeling vulnerable and experiencing a range of emotions.
• Advise the student to report the incident to the Dean of Student Affairs Office, (203) 392-5556.
• Advise the student to report the incident to Campus Police, (203) 392-5375.
• Advise the student to report the incident to the Office of Student Life, which oversees the organization in question. (203) 392-5782
• Refer the student for follow-up counseling to Counseling Services, (203) 392-5475, if appropriate.
• Refer to resources at hazingprevention.org/

AVOID

• Minimizing the situation.
• Agreeing to maintain confidentiality

NEED ADVICE?
Contact the Office of Judicial Affairs
EN B 116, (203) 392-6188.
RESPONDING TO STUDENTS WITH ACADEMIC PROBLEMS

1. THE FAILING STUDENT

Facts about the failing student
• The student may come to class late or often may be absent.
• The student usually does not understand the course content.
• The student may be unaware of campus resources to combat the problem.
• The student may exhibit negative thinking and behavior early in the course.
• The student might lack preparation or interest in the course.
• The student may not be able to balance work, social activities, and study hours.

WHAT YOU CAN DO
• Encourage the student to make a private appointment.
• Review the student’s performance in the course.
• Make suggestions for improvement.
• Refer the student to Student Supportive Services, (203) 392-6814, for assistance.
• Refer the student to the Counseling Center, 393-5475.

AVOID
• Concluding that the student is just lazy.
• Waiting to connect with the student.
• Presuming the student lacks the ability to be successful.
• Discouraging the student who really does have the time to improve.

NEED ADVICE?
Contact the Counseling Office
EN B 219, (203) 392-5475.
SouthernCT.edu/counseling
2. THE ACADEMICALLY DISMISSED STUDENT

Facts about the academically dismissed student
Check the University’s official policies regarding academic dismissal in the Undergraduate Catalog and the Graduate Catalog

Problems leading to academic dismissal often include wrong major, financial difficulties, loss of financial aid, too many outside work hours, an accident, illness of student or family members, a death in the student’s family, a student not having a family and/or coming from foster care, a student’s pregnancy, international students’ visa complications, poor study skills, poor time management, and a failure to use campus resources.

WHAT YOU CAN DO
• Talk with the student in private.
• Remind the student that current academic requirements and policies are listed in the Undergraduate/Graduate Catalogs and on the University website.
• Have the student explain the main reasons for the dismissal.
• Ask the student if he/she has seen an academic adviser
• Refer the student to an academic adviser to develop a corrective plan.
• Refer the student to Student Supportive Services, (203) 392-6814, for tutoring and writing workshops.
• Refer the student to Counseling Services, (203) 392-5475, to discuss personal/social issues or to have educational/vocational counseling, if needed.

AVOID
• Overwhelming the student with too much information.
• Assuming the student can work through the problems without developing a network of support on campus.
• Discouraging the student from applying for reinstatement.
• Reaching the conclusion that the student will not be reinstated.

NEED ADVICE?
Contact Student Supportive Services EN B 018 A, (203) 392-6814.
SouthernCT.edu/ studentsupportiveservices
3. THE STUDENT WITH WRITING ANXIETY

Facts about writing anxiety
Anxiety may result in assignments being late or not turned in at all. A history of incompletes may be a sign of writing anxiety. Often the student is emotional when discussing his/her writing.

WRITING ANXIETY CAN BE RELATED TO:
• a failure to understand the assignment
• the lack of pre-writing techniques for starting the assignment
• lack of general time management skills
• procrastination
• poor organization skills
• problems with grammar
• poor grades on writing assignments in the past
• a learning disability

WHAT YOU CAN DO
• Have a private appointment with the student.
• Listen carefully to the student’s explanation of the problem.
• Look for patterns and repetition of the problem behavior.
• For remediation of the problem, refer the student to The Writing/Tutorial Centers located in Engleman Hall A 012. Call (203) 392-6824 or e-mail ferruccit1@SouthernCT.edu. For more information, SouthernCT.edu/studentsupportiveservices/tutorialwritingcenters.
• Refer the student who speaks about a learning disability to the Disability Resource Center, (203) 392-6828, Engleman C 05A.
• Refer the student to Counseling Services, (203) 392-5475, Engleman Hall B 219, for psychological counseling, if needed.

AVOID
• Concluding that the student is only trying to obtain extra time for the assignment.
• Assuming the student can simply control the behavior by him/herself.

NEED ADVICE?
Contact Student Supportive Services
EN B 018 A, (203) 392-6814.
SouthernCT.edu/studentsupportiveservices
4. THE STUDENT WHO LACKS LEARNING SKILLS

Facts about learning skills

• A student may not have been taught specific learning skills prior to coming to college.
• Good time management can promote academic success.
• “To do” lists, schedules, and calendars can help students analyze and organize their time.
• Notes and text material can promote learning (e.g., making marginal notes, giving visual emphasis to material, scheduling frequent reviews, etc.).
• A student can plan effective study strategies based on his/her learning style.
• Sometimes a student’s learning style does not match the teaching style of the instructor.
• Learning skills and strategies vary according to the specific nature and content of the course.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

• Ask the student about his/her personal study time and study strategies.
• Determine if the student understands the course content.
• Provide clarification of course content, if needed.
• Build into your class a session on how to study for the course at the beginning of the semester.
• Take time to review past exams to analyze the student’s strengths and weaknesses.
• Make suggestions and encourage the student to adjust learning strategies before the next test.
• Ask if the student is utilizing any other campus resources.
• Stress the value of group study.

AVOID

• Assuming the student does not understand the course material.
• Believing the student should know how to learn course content.
• Thinking the student knows about available campus resources.

NEED ADVICE?

Contact Student Supportive Services
EN B 018 A, (203) 392-6814.
SouthernCT.edu/
studentsupportiveservices
5. THE STUDENT WITH TEST ANXIETY

Facts about test anxiety

Some anxiety often helps a student perform better under pressure. However, if students experience too much anxiety, it can affect both academic and psychological wellbeing.

Test anxiety can be caused by many factors, such as the pressure to succeed, past experiences, and/or fear of failure.

SYMPTOMS OF TEST ANXIETY CAN INCLUDE:

• rapid heartbeat
• sweaty palms
• negative self-talk
• feelings of inadequacy
• tears
• inability to retain test information
• fear of fainting or vomiting

The student with test anxiety may not perform well on tests, although grades on other course requirements are good. A student can have anxiety related to certain types of exams. For example, there may be a great discrepancy between a student’s grades in multiple-choice and essay exams in the same course.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

• See the student privately.
• Ask about the student’s exam preparation and time management skills. Suggest useful study strategies and exam preparation techniques.
• Go over the exam with the student so that the student understands his/her performance and what caused the errors.
• Refer the student to Student Supportive Services, (203) 392-6814, for learning skills to overcome test anxiety.
• Refer the student to Counseling Services, (203) 392-5475, for stress management and/or psychological counseling, if needed.
• Encourage the student to join or form a study group for the course to provide academic and psychological support.
• Recommend tutoring if the student does not understand the course material. Tutoring referrals may be made to the campus Tutorial Center, Engleman Hall A 14, (203) 392-6824.

AVOID

• Minimizing the situation.
• Assuming the student is simply trying to ask for special attention.
• Thinking the student should be able to handle the problem without support.
• Concluding that the student must have a learning disability.
• Believing that if the student really understands the material, the student should be able to perform better on exams.

NEED ADVICE?

Contact Student Supportive Services
EN B 018 A, (203) 392-6814.
SouthernCT.edu/studentsupportiveservices
6. THE STUDENT WHO PROCRASTINATES

Facts about procrastination
Procrastination is putting off something that is in the student’s best interests to do, or doing less important things first.

Avoidance of important work can lead to stress, depression, shame, and guilt, which, in turn, can cause the student to avoid the same tasks in the future.

While some students procrastinate because a given task is aversive, there is usually an emotional cause at the root of serious procrastination.

EMOTIONAL CAUSES UNDERLYING PROCRASTINATION MAY BE CLASSIFIED INTO FOUR categories:

• perfectionism
• fear of success
• fear of failure
• rebellion

WHAT YOU CAN DO

• See the student privately.
• Help the student assess time management skills and refer the student to Student Supportive Services, (203) 392-6814, for skill building.
• Help the student set specific and realistic goals.
• Be clear with deadlines, limits, and consequences.
• Identify how procrastination hurts the student and use his/her suffering as a motivator for change. Procrastinators will not seek help unless they are suffering from the procrastination.
• Recognize that there are often strong emotions underlying procrastination, such as guilt, fear, anger, depression, panic, and shame. Chronic procrastinators may have low self-esteem and suffer extreme guilt.
• Refer the student for individual or group counseling at Counseling Services, (203) 392-5475, when the student is suffering emotionally or academically from her/his procrastination.

AVOID

• Assuming that the student is lazy or unintelligent.
• Communicating in ways that increase shame and thereby decrease motivation to change.
• Being harsh or pushy because the student could respond with resentment or rebellion.
• Conveying disappointment or irritation if the student does not make quick progress. Such messages may lead to a stand off, which is a relationship pattern that procrastinators often have with others.

NEED ADVICE?
Contact Student Supportive Services
EN B 018 A, (203) 392-6814.
SouthernCT.edu/
studentsupportiveservices
IX.

RESPONDING TO STUDENTS STRUGGLING WITH TRANSITION

Facts about transitions

- Transitions are times of change that usually involve both loss and opportunity.
- Entering college is one of life’s most demanding transitions — arguably the most significant transition since the start of kindergarten.
- College students face many challenging transitions, including graduating and entering the work force.
- The changes inherent in a transition can produce stress and challenge a student’s coping resources.
- Students can experience a decline in functioning (academic, social, emotional) during transitions.
- Transition stress can be compounded by counterproductive coping mechanisms such as avoidance of stress-producing situations and people, excessive partying, denial of academic workload, and alcohol abuse.
- Transitions can pose greater problems to students who have existing psychological problems or difficult life circumstances.
- Students going through a transition can benefit from counseling to enhance their coping efforts and prevent the onset of serious problems.

SIGNS THAT A STUDENT IS HAVING TRANSITION PROBLEMS INCLUDE:

- Anxiety symptoms such as nervousness, irritability, tearfulness, and sleep problems.
- Depressed mood.
- Difficulty managing responsibilities or relationships.
- Homesickness that goes on for a significant period of time.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Convey to the student that transition stress is normal and often brings a temporary decline in performance. (“Making the transition to college can be difficult and so what you are experiencing can simply be a normal reaction, but let’s watch it to make sure it doesn’t last too long.”)
- Encourage the student to use positive coping strategies to manage transition stress, including regular exercise, use of social support, a reasonable eating and sleeping regimen, and scheduling pleasurable activities. (“Tell me what you have done in the past that worked when things have been tough.”)
- Refer the student to Counseling Services, (203) 392-5475, if performance problems persist beyond a reasonable amount of time, if the symptoms are acute, or if the student feels they could benefit by talking with someone about it.
AVOID

- Assuming that the student understands the impact of transitions and is aware of the source of stress.
- Minimizing or trivializing the student’s feelings and reactions. (“This is perfectly okay and will pass. I wouldn’t worry about it.”)
- Discounting or overlooking factors that put the student at risk of more serious problems. (“Everyone goes through this and I am sure it is nothing to worry about.”)

**NEED ADVICE?**
Contact Student Supportive Services
EN B 018 A, (203) 392-6814.
SouthernCT.edu/studentsupportiveservices
RESPONDING TO STUDENTS WHO ARE MILITARY VETERANS

Each semester, students enroll or are readmitted to Southern after serving in the armed forces. Some of these students have completed their military obligations, and others are still involved with the military in some way, whether they continue on active duty or are involved with the Reserves or National Guard. Some students are very forthcoming about their veteran status and experiences, while others choose not to reveal their veteran status to faculty, staff, or other students because they believe they may be treated differently or stigmatized by political issues associated with their military service.

Things to know:

• Students with veteran status often have complex issues related to their academic and financial relationships with the University due to federal policies.

• The University works with veteran students to make their transition as seamless as possible, but federal policies often make this quite difficult.

• Students who are still involved with the military may be redeployed at any time (in as little as 72 hours), so they may have difficulty fulfilling their course requirements. The University’s policy is to do whatever is in the student’s best interest so as to allow them to complete their courses.

• Like any student, veteran students may encounter obstacles to their academic success. These may include:
  – The distraction of potential redeployment.
  – Money and family demands.
  – Emotional and psychological traumas that result from combat experiences.
  – Physical injury, some visible and some invisible, such as a traumatic brain injury.
  – Interactions with students, faculty, and staff who are perceived as being insensitive to the experiences student veterans have had.

• Veteran students may be in need of emotional or other health-related support, but some may not be comfortable seeking this support on campus.

• It is also not unusual for student veterans to be reluctant to seek any help due to the need to be strongly self-reliant.

NEED ADVICE?

Contact the Office of Veterans Affairs at (203) 392-6822
Student Supportive Services, EN B 018 A.
XI.

RESPONDING TO THE STUDENT WITH CHOICE OF MAJOR OR CAREER CONCERNS

Facts about being undecided about a major or a career

FOR THE STUDENT WHO IS UNDECIDED ABOUT A MAJOR:

• Being undecided about a major or career is a normal developmental process. The majority of the student population is undecided about choice of major.
• Many students will change their major several times prior to choosing one that is right for them.
• Self-exploration and gathering information about majors and careers are important steps in identifying a major and making a career decision.

FOR THE STUDENT WHO IS UNDECIDED ABOUT A CAREER PATH:

• Many students will choose a major but need assistance with understanding traditional and non-traditional career paths.
• Students often associate the more well known professions with their course of study and need assistance with career exploration to understand professions that they did not know existed.
• Students will often need assistance in realizing that the path to a particular career is not necessarily linear. A major in “X” does not limit you to a profession in “Y.”

FOR THE STUDENT WHO IS LOOKING TO GAIN EXPERIENCE OR EMPLOYMENT:

• Students may want to clarify their career goals and utilize experiential learning opportunities to confirm their choice of major and occupational interests.
• Students may need assistance with developing a comprehensive job search process utilizing various methods and resources to assist with obtaining employment.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

• Encourage exploration through course selection, work, volunteering, extracurricular activities, and career counseling.
• Normalize the developmental process for the student.
• Refer the student to the Academic Advisement Center, Wintergreen Building, (203) 392-5367.
• Refer first-year students to Professor Nicole Henderson, Academic Director of the First-Year Experience, (203) 392-6196, hendersonn1@SouthernCT.edu, Engleman Hall B 115.
• Refer the student to the Center for Career Services, Wintergreen Building 119, (203) 392-6536, careers.SouthernCT.edu for major and career advisement, occupational information, internships, and other pertinent information.
The Center for Career Services offers several additional resources to address students' may and/or career concerns:

- **Discover Program**: Web-based assessment tool is available to assist students explore strengths and interests as they relate to majors and careers.

- **Career Resource Computer Lab and Library**: Located in Wintergreen Building 119, it offers books, videos, and multi-media tools for researching majors and careers, finding a job, and developing interviewing skills.

- **Workshops**: Career Services offers career-related programs, events, and workshops. Topics include Choosing a Major and Don't Sweat the Interview. Students should visit the website for the schedule. careers.SouthernCT.edu

- **JOBS**: A new on-line job board designed just for Southern students to search for full-time jobs, part-time jobs, co-ops, internships, and on-campus jobs.

- **Experiential Learning**: Information and instruction is available to students on the importance of gaining experience through Cooperative Education or an internship.

- **Career Fairs**: Several recruitment events are held annually on campus giving students multiple opportunities to connect with employers for jobs and career information. Students should visit the website for the schedule. careers.SouthernCT.edu
Any emergency - call 911

Campus Police .......................... (203) 392-5375
Academic Advisement Center .............. (203) 392-5267
Career Services .......................... (203) 392-6536
Counseling Services ........................ (203) 392-5475
Dean of Student Affairs .................. (203) 392-5556
Disability Resource Center ............... (203) 392-6828
Drug and Alcohol Resource Center .......... (203) 392-5087
Health Services .......................... (203) 392-6300
Interfaith Office ......................... (203) 392-5331
International Students ................. (203) 392-6821
Judicial Affairs .......................... (203) 392-6188
Multicultural Affairs .................. (203) 392-5888
Sexuality and Gender Equality (SAGE) Center .... (203) 392-8988
Vice President for Student and University Affairs ..... (203) 392-5553
Student Supportive Services ........... (203) 392-6814
Veterans Affairs ........................ (203) 392-6822
Women’s Center ........................ (203) 392-6946

Local and National Resources for Helping Students in Distress

Local Police Emergency .......................... 911
Sexual Assault Crisis Services 24-hour hotline ........ 1-888-999-5545
The National Sexual Assault 24-hour hotline .......... 1-800-656-HOPE
Domestic Violence Services 24-hour hotline ........ (203) 789-8104
National Domestic Violence hotline ............. 1-800-799-SAFE
Hospital of Saint Raphael .................. (203) 789-5000
Yale-New Haven Hospital .................. (203) 688-2222