

Helping Distressed Students: The 4 R's

RECOGNIZE signs that a student might be struggling:

Obvious behaviors might include:

- Frequently missing class or work
- Coming to class or work under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Marked deterioration in personal hygiene
- Angry or threatening outbursts
- Uncontrollable crying
- Talking about hurting themselves or someone else
- Strange or bizarre behavior or ideas; incoherence

Subtle behaviors to look for:

- Anxiety, nervousness, agitation
- Forgetfulness, difficulty concentrating
- Low energy, sad appearance, hopelessness
- Irritability, low frustration tolerance
- Fatigue, reports of sleeplessness
- Extreme weight gain or loss
- Excessive procrastination, dramatic change in class or work performance
- High dependency or exaggerated "neediness"

RESPOND by showing your desire to understand and help:

ASK purposeful questions that communicate your concerns:

"Hey, I've noticed you haven't been yourself lately, are you doing ok?" or,
"We haven't touched base in a while, how have things been going?"

LISTEN to what the student has to say:

The goal of communication is understanding. "Listening is much more than allowing another to talk while waiting for a chance to respond. Listening is paying full attention to others and welcoming them into our very beings" (Nouwen). To listen is as much an attitude as a skill; removing distractions, focusing on the individual, and approaching the situation with respect, authenticity and openness help a student feel cared for and understood.

EVALUATE what the student needs or wants from you:

Sometimes just allowing students to "vent" for a few minutes is helpful. Other students may require help brainstorming next steps or making a plan to address their situation. Support and encouragement from a respected professor or staff often motivate students to seek further help.

REFER the student to the appropriate office:

- Academic difficulties: Academic Advising and Retention (x3886)
- Career concerns: Center for Career and Calling (x2103)
- Emotional issues: University Counseling Center (x2109)
- Financial concerns: Student Financial Services (888) 788-6090
- Health issues: Student Health Center (x2100)
- Sexual assault: Associate Dean of Students (x2067)
- Learning or other disability: Learning Enrichment Center (x3849)
- Spiritual concerns: Office of the Campus Pastors (x3855)
- Victim of a crime: Department of Campus Safety (x3898)

Remember that students often feel more comfortable if you make the time to walk with them to the referral office, if possible. Following up later with a student to see that they have taken the suggested next steps communicates your investment and gives the student a sense of accountability for his or her own well-being.

REPORT the student's situation to the Student Life Care Team:

The **Student Life Care Team** is a group of faculty and staff that meets weekly to identify potential students in crisis and other concerns within the university community that may impact student well-being. If you believe a student is experiencing a crisis and would benefit from further follow-up from a member of the Care Team, please relay your concerns using the Student in Crisis Notification Form found on our website (www.apu.edu/counselingcenter/careteam/).

If you are concerned about a student but do not believe the situation is urgent, or if you are unsure, **University Counseling Center** personnel are available for consultation by phone at (626) 815-2109. Follow recorded directions if calling after business hours.

You may also contact the **Department of Campus Safety** at any time if you feel their presence would help to insure the welfare of yourself, a student or any other persons present.

If you believe that any person is in immediate danger of harm please call 911 first, then APU's Department of Campus Safety at (626) 815-3898.



