How you can recognize and help troubled students

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Today’s Objectives:

- Identifying Students at Risk
- What should I do?
- What information can I share?
- Resources
Most major mental illnesses appear for the first time during the high school and college years.

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<th>DIAGNOSIS</th>
<th>Avg. Age of Onset</th>
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<td>Anxiety Disorders and Bipolar Disorder</td>
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<td>Depression</td>
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<td>Eating Disorders</td>
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<td>Schizophrenia</td>
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<td>Drugs &amp; Alcohol Abuse</td>
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<td>Anti-social Personality Disorder</td>
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Student Suicide

✓ Suicide is the second leading cause of death for college students

✓ Among college students, 7.5 of every 100,000 take their own lives.

✓ Almost 1,100 suicides are projected to occur on U.S. campuses this year

✓ 4 out of 5 young adults who attempt suicide have given clear warnings
How to identify distressed students?
INDICATORS OF DISTRESS

Look for clusters, frequency, duration, and severity – not just isolated symptoms

- Academic/Co-curricular activities Indicators
- Psychosocial Indicators
- Physical Indicators
- Safety Risk Indicators
Identifying Distressed Students

Low Level Signs

• Sudden changes in grades
• Changes in interaction patterns
• Changes in overall behavior or appearance
• Recent loss or traumatic event
• Unusual emotional response

Higher Level Signs

• Serious grade problems
• Highly disruptive behavior
• Inability to communicate clearly
• Loss of contact with reality (visual and/or auditory hallucinations, paranoid, delusional)
• Expression of homicidal or suicidal thoughts

Red folder
Additional “red flags”

- A CHANGE from typical behavior
- Focus on negatives
- Impulsive behaviors
- Willingness to take excessive risks
- Blame others for own difficulties
- Isolation and withdrawal
Academic/Work signs

- Deterioration in quality of work
- Missed assignments or appointments
- Repeated absences from class (or work)
- Essays/discussions center on hopelessness, social isolation, rage or despair
- Lack of engagement in participation-oriented classes
- Inappropriate disruptions/outbursts of anger
Cognitive signs

- Reduced ability to concentrate or think logically
- Makes simple mistakes
- Increased efforts with diminished results
- Excitement diminishes
Physical signs of poor stress management

- Fatigue/exhaustion
- Deterioration in personal appearance
- Headaches
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Sweating
- Hyperventilation
Behavioral signs of poor stress management

- Cursing increases
- Backs out of commitments at last minute
- Complaining becomes routine
- Angry outbursts become volatile
- Excuse making, not problem solving
- Giving-up
How to respond?
When engaging with the student:

- Reach out and connect with the distressed student. Meet and talk in private, if feeling safe, to minimize embarrassment and defensiveness.

- Clearly express your concerns with behavioral and non-disparaging terms. Refrain from arguments.

- Listen to the student empathically and supportively. Repeat what the student is saying for clarification. Do not try to minimize the student’s distress.

- Ask if the student is having suicidal thoughts: “Have you been thinking of death or ending your life?” Asking does not plant ideas in the students mind. If student says “yes” – assist student in getting connected with CAPS.
• Respect the student’s privacy without promising confidentiality.

• Ask the student about his/her support systems.

• Offer resources and referrals letting the student know that you believe it is important to access professional assistance in this situation.

• Frame any decision to seek and accept help as an intelligent and wise choice.
• Assure them that many students seek help over the course of their college career to effectively achieve their goals.

• Encourage and help the student to access resources. If necessary, find someone to stay with the student while calls to the appropriate resources are made, or escort the student to the service.
Making a referral:

- Be frank with the student about your limits (time, expertise, reluctance of the student to discuss his/her situation with you).
- Set up follow-up appointment with student.
- Follow up with your supervisor and with the Dean of Student Affairs.
When to Consult and Make a Referral

Know your limits. REFER when...

✓ You are worried about the student’s safety

✓ Signs of distress are disrupting student’s progress

✓ Problem is more serious than you are comfortable handling
• Decision process:
  – High level emergency: very rare; Campus Police
  – Moderate level emergency: CAPS urgent care psychologist (M-F: 8:00am-4:30pm)
  – Low level emergency: ascertain student needs (CAPS, SHS, SARC, OSD etc.)
CAMPUS POLICE

CAMPUS POLICE AS PARTNERS:

• Campus Police Officers have been trained and possess specialized skills on how to respond to psychiatric emergencies involving student disruptive behavior.

• Campus Police is the only entity on campus with the capacity to take a student for an evaluation to an in-patient psychiatric hospital and hold that person against his/her will (5150) if the individual presents as:

  1. A danger to self
  2. A danger to others, or
  3. Gravely disabled

Call 534-HELP (534-4357)
Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)

- We offer short-term individual and couple’s counseling.
- We also offer a wide range of personal growth and counseling groups, structured educational workshops, and informal drop-in forums.
- In addition, a variety of outreach and consultation programs are available that seek to enhance the personal and academic adjustment of students.
- Services are free for registered students.
Who We Are

• 17 Psychologists, 1 Post Doctoral Fellow, & 5 Pre-doctoral Interns
  • Housed at all six colleges and our central office
• 0.5 FTE Psychiatrist + 0.5 FTE Psychiatry Resident
  • Available for urgent and short term treatment
• 23 Student Peers
  • Wellness
  • Women’s
Contact US

Schedule an appointment: 858-534-3755
Central Office: Room 190, Galbraith Hall
Hours: 8-4:30 p.m.
Urgent Care Psychologist: for urgent/same day student concerns and consultation

www.psychservices.ucsd.edu
Weekend and After-Hours Help

- Call the Campus Police Dispatcher at:
  534-HELP

Call CAPS 858-534-3755 (option #2) to speak with a mental health counselor
Confidentiality

Under the state & federal law, clinicians cannot disclose protected health care information to University officials.

CAPS is generally not able to share information with you unless there is explicit, written permission from the student to do so.

However, you can always share information with CAPS.
Taking Care of You

- Faculty Staff & Assistance Program (FSAP)
- Call 858-534-5523
- Confidential counseling and consultation
- Services are free
- Location: Torrey Pines Center South, Ste 406
“See something… Say something”: 
Scenario 1:

Jeff is a 22 year old Asian male, senior, majoring in engineering. He is failing classes. This is his 2\textsuperscript{nd} quarter on probation. Jeff’s father just lost his job and is encouraging him to get a job to help with finances. Additionally, Jeff’s girlfriend recently broke up with him. You learn about this as Jeff is crying in your office. He says, “nothing is working; there’s no reason to go on; I’m under so much stress; no one understands; I’m disappointing my parents; education in my family means everything; I can’t imagine going through another day like this”. 
Heather is a first generation Latina college student leader. She is a second year student. She comes to your office and shares that she experiences test anxiety. She has difficulty paying attention, and she procrastinates and is not following through on things. She is sleeping too much and eating too much.
Scenario 3:

You hear a student (male) shouting loudly to himself in a hallway. This student has been a problem before because he usually hangs around your area. You see the student is physically agitated. He is pacing around and getting louder. He is yelling “I can’t take it anymore”.

Scenario 4:

Sharon is a freshman female student, Caucasian, in your writing class. On her latest writing assignment she writes about abusive childhood experiences and makes existential comments in the paper like “there must have been a reason why this all happened to me”. The TA tells you they are concerned.
“SEE, SAY AND DO SOMETHING”

3 SIMPLE STEPS can save students' careers and lives:

1. Learn to spot signs of distress early.
2. Know how to offer support.
3. Connect student to resources.
Questions?
Thoughts?
Comments?