




Faculty & Staff as Helping Resources

- Faculty & staff members at UST have the unique opportunity of having ongoing, direct contact with students and can identify students who are struggling.
- To support your efforts, here are helpful practical tips about assisting students most effectively and referring them to other helpers when needed.



Facts About Personal Counseling Clients; 2002-2003

- Personal Counseling staff saw 312 students for 2,136 individual sessions
- 66% were women, 34% were men
- 40% reported a GPA of 3.5 or better
- 14% identified as minority/international
- 23.6% reported they were suicidal



Facts About Personal Counseling Clients

- 38.6% were on psychotropic medication
- 62% had previous counseling
- 12.9% reported physical abuse, 11.5 sexual abuse and 21.5 emotional abuse
- 29.4% had a history of mental illness in their family, 40.8 had a history of chemical dependency
- 51% reported depression, 40% reported anxiety, 26% reported problems with a romantic relationship

What We Know About Today's College Students



- Level of severity of student's concerns is much greater than that seen from the '50s through the early '80s
- Counseling center directors nationally report an increase in "severe psychological problems over the last 5 years"
- College students are coming to school "overwhelmed and more damaged than those of previous years"

From Kitzrow, A.J. (2003). The mental health needs of today's college students: Challenges & recommendations. 2003. Journal of Career Assessment, 11(1), 1-11.

Identifying Struggling Students

- Stress is a natural part of life and no stranger to college students. Most students cope successfully with the rigors of college life. Those who don't tend to show signs that they are struggling in some way. You will often see these signs in the classroom or on campus.
- Not every student will be willing to accept your help, but by being available and ready to listen, you may play an important role in helping students regain the emotional balance needed to get back on track.

What to Look For

- Marked changes in academic/personal performance or behavior
- Unusual behavior or appearance
- References to suicide, homicide or death



Marked Changes in Performance or Behavior

- You find you're spending more time with the student doing "counseling" rather than advising.
- Marked decrease in performance and/or preparation
- Withdrawal from others
- Excessive absence or tardiness
- Repeated requests for special consideration
- Excessively anxious when called upon in class
- Dominates or avoids discussion
- Disruptive behavior
- Problems with roommates or family
- Exaggerated emotional response inappropriate to the situation



Unusual Behavior or Appearance

- Depressed or lethargic mood
- Marked increase or decrease in activity
- Outbursts of anger
- Unexplained crying
- Conversations that do not make sense
- Marked decline in personal hygiene
- Dramatic weight loss or gain
- Coming to class or events intoxicated or high/smelling of alcohol or drugs
- Difficulty concentrating



References to Suicide or Homicide

- If a student talk or writes about suicide or homicide ALWAYS take it seriously.
- Overt references to suicide
- Expressed thoughts of hopelessness or hopelessness
- Expressed plan for suicide/homicide
- Isolation from friends and family
- Giving away possessions



What Can You Do?

If you talk with a student you are concerned about, or if a student approaches you directly for help...

- ✓ Talk
- ✓ Listen
- ✓ Communicate
- ✓ Give Hope
- ✓ Maintain Boundaries
- ✓ Refer



TALK

- Talk to the student in private when both of you have time and are not rushed or preoccupied
- Give the student your undivided attention. Often a few minutes of effective listening may be enough to help the student feel cared about and more confident about what to do
- If you feel anxious, keep your door open or meet the student in a public place



LISTEN

- Listen to the students' thoughts and feeling in a non-threatening way
- If you have initiated the contact, express your concerns in behavioral, non-judgmental terms. For example "I've noticed you've been absent from class over the last two weeks and I'm concerned," rather than "You keep skipping class. You're going to fail if you don't watch it."



COMMUNICATE

- Let the student talk. Your job is to listen.
- Communicate understanding by repeating back the essence of what the student told you.
- Try to include both content and feelings for example "It sounds like you haven't made new friends since you've been here and are feeling lonely and worried."



GIVE HOPE

- Assure the student that things can get better.
- It's important to help them realize there are options and things won't always seem hopeless.
- Suggest resources: family, friends, clergy or professionals on campus.



MAINTAIN BOUNDARIES

- Maintain clear and consistent boundaries and expectations. You are the professor/advisor/etc., not their counselor, parent or friend.
- It is important to maintain the professional nature of the staff/student relationship and the consistency of academic and other expectations, such as exam schedules, etc. If the student cannot maintain these expectations, they should look at options such as withdrawing from the course, taking an incomplete, etc.

REFER

Refer to other resources, such as Personal Counseling, when

- The student asks for assistance with a problem that is outside your range of knowledge
- You are very busy and don't have the time to give the student the time they need
- The problem is more serious than you feel comfortable handling
- Helping the student would compromise your relationship e.g. asking for money, a place to live or your home number to call in crisis

REFER

- The support you've already provided doesn't seem to be enough
- You feel overwhelmed, overly responsible for or worried about the student's safety
- You think your personal feelings about the student will interfere with your objectivity
- The student admits there's a problem but doesn't want to talk about it.
- The student is disrupting others

Making a Counseling Referral

- Inform the student of your concern in a matter of fact manner, being specific about behavior you've observed.
- Do not attempt to make a referral when the student is so upset they can't listen to you. Wait until they've calmed down enough to be able to respond to your suggestions.





Making a Counseling Referral

- Suggest that the student may benefit from meeting with a counselor at Personal Counseling & Testing (St. Paul) or the Life Work Center (Minneapolis).
- Encourage the student to come to either center during crisis hours (in St. Paul 9-11 & 2-4) daily or call (962-6780 St. Paul; 962-4763 Mpls) or stop by to set up an appointment.
- Describe where we are. Personal Counseling is on the third floor of Murray Herrick above the bookstore. Life Work Center is on the first floor of Terrence Murphy Hall next to the bookstore.



Alternative Services for Help

- Campus Ministry 962-6560
- Academic Advising 962-6300
- Dean of Student Life 962-6053
- Ombudsperson 962-6461
- Student Health Services 962-6879



Emergencies

- If possible, find a quiet place for the student to talk
- Do not leave the student alone, unless you feel concerned for your own safety.
- Call the appropriate office yourself or have the student call from your office. Tell the receptionist it is an emergency and she will contact the on-call counselor. Typically, the student can be seen immediately.
- You may walk the student over to the office if needed.
- After hours, you may call UST Public Safety who will contact the on-call counselor.
- When in doubt, please consult with Personal Counseling for advice.



If a Student is Reluctant to Seek Help

- Normalize the procedure of seeking help as a smart thing to do. Last year more than 40% of our clients reported a GPA of 3.5 or better.
- Seeking help is a sign of strength and courage rather than weakness or failure
- Many students come for counseling and find it helpful (average 350 students per year for about 2,300 individual sessions)
- Tell the student what you know about the staff and the service.
- Remind them it is confidential and we can't share information with parents, faculty, administration or even you without a written request from the student.



Faculty & Staff FAQs

What Happens to the Student at the Counseling Center?

- On any given day, there are many times open for appointments. Students can usually get an appointment within a week of their first request, depending on their schedules. Their first appointment is called an "intake." They fill out basic information forms and meet with a counselor. That counselor may or may not be the person they'll continue with.
- They discuss options and make decisions about next steps.
- These steps may include ongoing counseling with the intake counselor or another staff member, a medical evaluation referral, referral to an off campus counselor, or in an emergency, referral to a local emergency room for further evaluation.
- Our average number of sessions is 6-8. Some students come once, some come weekly for their college career.



FAQs

What if I'm uneasy about a student?

- Call Personal Counseling for advice (962-6780) before you meet
- Do not ignore your uneasy feelings
- Try to identify what specific behavior makes you uncomfortable and ask the student to change that behavior
- Do not confront the person, but don't give in to inappropriate behavior to help feel safe. Set boundaries immediately. E.g. "I'd like you to lower your voice".
- Stay in a public place or keep your door open and make sure colleagues are around
- Offer to listen. Ask what the student wants to accomplish



FAQs

If I'm uneasy, continued

- Involve a third party; tell student "I'll get ...to help me understand how we can help you."
- Have a code word for calling a colleague or Public Safety if you feel threatened e.g. "Please call *Dr. Thomas* to help me understand what I can do for this student"
- Call Public Safety beforehand (962-5100) to stand by in the vicinity if you feel frightened or to intervene in the early stages if the person acts out.
- You can and should take disciplinary action with respect to the student. Contact the Dean of Student Life Office (962-6054) for advice. Often informal mediation will help. The DOSL Office can also contact other professors to find out if there is a broader problem. Often, what is perceived as a psychological problem, is a discipline issue.



FAQs

What should I do if a student tells me they have a psychological problem or are having problems with their medication?

- Ask if they are registered with the Enhancement Program and/or are getting help. It's important to be flexible and understanding. You are legally obligated to provide **reasonable** accommodations, but not **unreasonable** ones! To clarify what these might be in a specific situation, call Kim Schumann 962-6315
- Even if a student does have a psychological problem, they still must meet behavioral expectations on campus.



FAQ

How can I best help a student with problems?

- The best thing you can do is call us (962-6780) and consult. Faculty and staff are here at UST because they care about students. The best way to show you care is to ask for advice early on. We can consult with you about maintaining your professional role while still helping the student.

Finally...

The counseling staff strives to provide services to help students that will enable them to succeed academically and personally. We know that faculty and staff have the same goals and we believe we can accomplish these goals most effectively, the closer we work together.



Information on this PowerPoint was adapted from the Counseling Centers at Kansas State University, Hobart & William Smith Colleges, Franklin College, and Dr. Tim Beyer, USTC Life Work Center.
