

Supporting Other Students: Mental Health Resources

The stress of post-secondary education is felt by all students at some point, and it can be overwhelming for some. You may have the opportunity to support other students who are struggling with issues that affect their mental health and well-being.

This handout provides tips on how to respond to a student in distress and refer them for further assistance through counselling services or other appropriate resources.

On-Campus and Community Resources

Campus Security: _____

Counselling Services: _____

Indigenous Services: _____

International Student Services: _____

Academic Advice: _____

Accessibility Services: _____

Student Services: _____

Pride Centre: _____

Health Services: _____

Financial Aid: _____

Sexualized Violence Support: _____

Equity and Human Rights: _____

If it's an emergency, call 911 and then contact campus security (if the student is on campus). If the student is not on campus, call 911 and tell the operator the student's current location as soon as possible.

Crisis Lines

If you or someone you know needs immediate help, call one of the numbers below:

- **Mental Health Support Line:** 310-6789 (no need for area code)
- **Here2Talk:** 1-877-857-3397 – a 24-hour phone and chat counselling support service for B.C. post-secondary students that offers free, confidential counselling and community referral services via app, phone, and web (<https://here2talk.ca>)
- **BC Suicide Line:** 1-800-784-2433 (1-800-SUICIDE) – A crisis line for anyone considering suicide or concerned about someone who may be
- **KUU-US Crisis Response Services:** 1-800-588-8717 – provides culturally safe support, 24/7, for Indigenous people in B.C. (www.kuu-uscrisisline.com/24-hour-crisis-line)

This resource is adapted from Vancouver Island University, Counselling Services, *Capacity to Connect: Supporting Students from Distress to Suicide*. This handout is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license \(CC BY 4.0 license\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

How to Respond to a Distressed Student

APPROACH

- It's okay to ask questions and express concern.
- Be specific about what you're concerned about.
- Be aware of cultural and/or gender norms.

I noticed you were tearful in class today.

Is everything okay?

LISTEN

- Listen in a non-judgmental way.
- Be patient and give your undivided attention.
- Be clear about your concerns and how you can (or cannot) help.

Is there something I can do to help you?

SUPPORT

- Acknowledge the other student's thoughts and feelings in a compassionate way.
- Offer support and reassurance that you want to help.

It sounds like you're feeling overwhelmed.

How to Refer

- Often, all a student needs is for someone to listen to them. If you think the student could use extra support, you can suggest this and support the student in getting more support.
- It can be helpful to give the student information about campus services, such as those listed on page 1 of this handout.
- If possible, you can offer to walk with the student to the support service.

Would you like me to help you connect with resources on campus?

Would you like to call together and book an appointment?

Counselling services provides confidential help.

Would you like me to walk with you to the support services?

What If a Student Doesn't Want to Seek Help?

Accessing services is voluntary, unless the situation is urgent and the student is not safe on their own.

Assess for Danger

- Is anyone at risk of immediate harm? If yes, call 911 and then call campus security.
- If there is no risk of harm, ultimately it is the individual's right to choose whether to seek help. Individuals are resilient and often come to their own solutions.

Boundaries and Balance

Most of the time you will be able to assist another overwhelmed distressed student on your own by simply listening.

Sometimes, however, you may realize that another student may need more support than you can give them. It is important to remember that you are not a counsellor and you should never attempt to diagnose another person's mental health. You can, however, encourage the student to talk to a counsellor.

Consult with Others

You can consult with campus counsellors, support services, or faculty and staff if you're unsure about how to handle a situation. You can also call a crisis line if you have serious concerns about a student.

You should consult when:

- You are concerned about a student's safety or well-being but are unsure how or whether to intervene.
- You are uncertain about how to respond to a student's request for help.
- You continue to be concerned about a student who has declined help.

Trust your instincts and respond if another student leaves you feeling worried, alarmed, or threatened. If you are unsure, consult. Once the student is supported, ensure that you are supported, too, while maintaining the confidentiality of the student. Talk to friends, family, Elders, colleagues.