COUNSELLING & CLINICAL SERVICES

Identifying, Helping, & Referring Students in Distress

Counselling & Clinical Services
2-600 SUB
780-492-5205
mentalhealth.ualberta.ca
Agenda

- Introductions
- Mental Health Concerns in Context
- Common Concerns
- Indicators of Distress
- How to Help Those in Distress
- Referrals
- Questions
Statistics Canada (2013)

• Met criteria for mental health or substance abuse disorder:
  • 1/3 Canadians: at some point in their life.
  • 1/10 Canadians: in 12 months prior to survey.
  • 1.2% experience mental AND substance use concurrently in the previous year
  • Highest rate of both were youth aged 15-24.
Pop Quiz!
In 2016, Alberta post secondary students reported experiencing the following in the last 12 months:

- Felt very lonely

65%
In 2016, Alberta post secondary students reported experiencing the following in the last 12 months:

- Felt overwhelming anxiety

63.7%
In 2016, Alberta post secondary students reported experiencing the following in the last 12 months:

- Felt so depressed that it was difficult to function
In 2016, Alberta post secondary students reported experiencing the following in the last 12 months:

- Felt things were hopeless

57.5%
In 2016, Alberta post secondary students reported experiencing the following in the last 12 months:

- Seriously considered suicide

13.1%

Top 3 Presenting Concerns at CCS

- Depression
- Anxiety/Panic
- Social & Relationship Problems
Why identifying distress is important...

- Increasing Pressure
- Feeling Overwhelmed

Escalation
Indicators of Distress

- Academic
- Emotional
- Social
- Behavioural
## Academic Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repeated absences, tardiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missed assignments, appointments, meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruptive classroom behaviour, intoxicated in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic procrastination, repeated requests for special consideration, neglect of responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop in grades (deterioration in quality/quantity of work, erratic performance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written work – inappropriate, incoherent or bizarre (violent, morbid, despair, social isolation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emotional Indicators

- Emotional outbursts; extreme mood swings
- High levels of anxiety, dependency
- Overt references to suicide, self-harm, or harm to others
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hopelessness, helplessness
- Extreme suspiciousness/paranoia
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioural Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive, demanding, disruptive, or bizarre behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deterioration in personal hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatic weight gain/loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing or hearing things that are not there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agitation, restlessness, or hyperactivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive Fatigue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Indicators

Open conflict with instructors, students, staff

Isolation from other students, highly withdrawn in class

Significant problems with roommates, friends, family

Little or no contact with friends or family
How can you help?

Talk to them

Consult

Refer
How to Talk to Someone In Distress
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Express Concern</th>
<th>Empathize &amp; Listen</th>
<th>Know your Limits</th>
<th>Check for Safety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**How to Talk to Someone in Distress**

1. **Express Concern**
2. **Empathize & Listen**
3. **Know your Limits**
4. **Check for Safety**
Express Your Concern

- Meet privately
- Express Care
- Be Direct & Honest
- Be Specific
- Ask Open Ended Questions
Empathize & Listen

- Normalize
- Validate
- Allow for Silences
- Empathize without Agreeing or Disagreeing
- Avoid Judgment & Criticism
Empathy vs. Sympathy: What’s the Difference?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw
Know Your Limits

- Avoid Making Promises
- Be Aware & Express Limits to Your Knowledge
- Maintain Boundaries
- Be Mindful of Your Safety
- Consult
Check for Safety

- Look for Signs of Safety Risks
- Ask Directly
- Don’t Promise Confidentiality
How to Ask About Suicide

Do they have a plan?

Do they intend to act on it?

Do they have a timeframe?
Want to learn more?

• QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer)
  – community.ualberta.ca/Programs/QPR-Training.aspx

• Community Helpers
  – community.ualberta.ca/Programs/CommunityHelpersProgram.aspx

• ASIST
  – edmonton.cmha.ca/programs-services/applied-suicide-intervention-training-asist/
Urgent?

Protective Services
780.492.5050

911

Concerned?

Helping Individuals at Risk
Counselling & Clinical Services
Peer Support Centre
Sexual Assault Centre
Chaplain’s Association
The Landing
24 Hour Distress Line
Helping Individuals at Risk (HIAR)

300 Campus Tower
8625-112 Street
Edmonton, AB T6G 1K8

Telephone: 780.492.4372

E-mail: hiarua@ualberta.ca

Counselling & Clinical Services

Initial Consults

Individual & Group Counselling

Drop-In Workshop

Psychiatry Referrals

Community Referrals

Consults for Staff & Faculty

Outreach & Collaboration

SUB 2-600
780-492-5205

Office Hours:
Monday-Friday 8:30 – 4:30 pm
Tues/Wed 8:30 – 7pm

www.mentalhealth.ualberta.ca
Free Drop-in Workshops

Anxiety Management
- Addressing Anxious Thoughts
- Facing Fears and Gaining Control
- Impostor Syndrome

Mood & Wellness
- Cultivating Self-Compassion
- Happiness: Moving to Wellness
- How to Set Healthy Boundaries
- Make Stress Your New BFF
- The Student Life: Managing Stress
- Understanding Depression & Addressing Unhelpful Thinking Patterns

Mindfulness
- Introduction to Mindfulness
- Yoga for Mental Hygiene
- Yoga for Peace of Mind - Mindfulness, Meditation & Motion

*Check website for updated schedule and registration INFO
ualberta.ca/current-students/counselling/workshops
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helping a Student in Distress</th>
<th>Depression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• How to help guide</td>
<td>• Depression coping strategies (short)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Interest</td>
<td>• Depression coping strategies (long)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Everything you wanted to know about couns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety &amp; Stress</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Panic/Anxiety Attacks</td>
<td>• Romantic relationship tips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social anxiety</td>
<td>• Surviving a relationship breakup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stress management</td>
<td>• How to Break Up With Someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Psychologists Grad School Survival Guide</td>
<td>• Anger management tips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student self-help booklet</td>
<td>• Body image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Test anxiety</td>
<td>• Grief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Procrastination</td>
<td>• Isolation &amp; loneliness tips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>• &quot;Normalizing&quot; your eating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assertiveness</td>
<td>• Obsessive Compulsive Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Making small talk</td>
<td>• Perfectionism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self harm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sleep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[upalberta.ca/current-students/counselling/resources]
CCS - Faculty & Staff Consults

Contact your Faculty Satellite Psychologist to schedule consult

- Arts – Suman Varghese
  - suman@ualberta.ca
- Engineering – Jasmine Bajwa
  - jbajwa@ualberta.ca
- Sciences – Maddi Genovese
  - genovese@ualberta.ca

Phone: 780.492.5205
Employee and Family Assistance Program

- Homewood Health
- 780-428-7857
- www.homewoodhealth.com/health

- StudentCare – Counselling
- https://psyvitaliti.ca/

- Private Psychologist – Student Plan covers 80% max $600/year
Additional Campus Resources: Counselling & Support

- Peer Support Centre
- Academic Success Centre*
- Sexual Assault Centre
- The Landing
- Chaplains’ Association
- Community Social Work Team
- ACCESS Open Minds
- First Peoples’ House*
University of Alberta – Faculty and Staff Resources

• [https://www.ualberta.ca/provost/dean-of-students/faculty-staff-resources](https://www.ualberta.ca/provost/dean-of-students/faculty-staff-resources)

• Resource Guides:
  – How to help
  – Where to send for Academic Support
  – Responding to a Sexual Assault Disclosure

• “Digest” emails – students, academics, staff
Many members of the U of A community will experience stressors throughout the year. For most, speaking with someone and feeling understood will be enough. The following six guidelines are a framework on how to listen and communicate with care when assisting someone. The questions in steps two through five can also be useful when checking in with ourselves.

This section is based on the Helping Skills™ content from the Community Helpers Program.

### step 1: State Your Concern
- State specific behaviours you have witnessed.
- Express your concern and willingness to talk about what they are experiencing.
- Arrange an alternative time and place if either you or the individual do not have adequate time to talk.

**Express your concern by saying:**
- “You look...”
- “You sound...”
- “I heard...”
- “I saw...”

### step 2: Identify the Problem
- Listen without judgment and give the person time to express their thoughts and feelings.
- Clarify that you understand the problem correctly by asking open-ended questions, such as, “What I hear you saying is...”

**Start the conversation by asking:**
- “What is happening?”
- “How have you been feeling?”

### step 3: Explore Alternatives
- Explore alternatives and offer suggestions while respecting the individual and their experience.
- Discuss what they see as appropriate action on how to address their situation.
- The most sustainable action plans are those developed by the individual.

**Explore solutions by asking:**
- “What ideas do you have?”
- “Have you thought about...”
- “How likely are you to do that?”

### step 4: Consider Outcomes
- Encourage the individual to consider how their course of action might impact others, including how they might react.

**Consider the impact of the solutions by asking:**
- “What would happen if you did that?”
- “What might the impact of these actions be?”
- “Is that a problem for anyone else?”

### step 5: Determine What to Do
- Acknowledge that others in similar situations often feel the same way.
- Establish a sense of hope by offering support and encouragement while reinforcing that change is possible.
- Support them in their decision.

**Inquire what the person is going to do by asking:**
- “What would you like to do?”
- “How can I help you move forward with this?”

### step 6: Express Support
- Suggest and accompany the individual to a helping resource, if desired.
- Inform the individual you will check in with them to see how they are doing.
- Believe what the person is telling you, and don’t promise something that you can’t deliver.

**Express support by saying:**
- “Let me know what happens.”
- “Let me know if you need me.”
Understanding the common behavioural indicators of someone in distress can help determine the appropriate level of response. By trusting your instincts and using the indicators listed below, you can help connect the individual to the support they need before their situation escalates.

### Concerning Situations
Individuals showing signs of concerning behaviours and/or appear to be in moderate distress likely have support options, but may need to be reminded of them.

#### Indicators
- Change in mood and attitude
- Isolating oneself from others
- Altered class participation
- Procrastination on personal commitments or academic assignments
- Slight drop in attendance and grades
- Lack of motivation
- Deterioration in personal hygiene or dress
- Dramatic weight gain or loss and/or change in appetite and food behaviours
- Heightened levels of stress and anxiety
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Increase in risk-taking behaviour

#### What to Do
- Address the individual’s situation empathetically and without judgment using the steps from the “How to Help” section.
- Provide resources and follow up, if required.
- Contact the Helping Individuals At Risk office at 780-492-4372 if the individual’s behaviour continues to be of concern.

### Critical Situations
Individuals showing signs of critical behaviours and/or appear to be in high distress likely need professional support due to the disruptive nature of their concerns. These situations need to be addressed and followed up with, but may not require immediate action.

#### Indicators
- Extreme mood swings, aggression, or other disruptive behaviour
- Significant depressive state or devoid of emotion
- Acute emotional distress or high levels of anxiety and worry
- Bullying or harassment
- Dominating classroom discussion
- Hostile or sarcastic remarks
- Considerable problems with roommate, partner, friends, and/or family
- Disclosure of self-harm, disordered eating, substance abuse, current or prior sexual assault and/or partner/family violence
- Serious academic concerns (e.g., significant drop in attendance and grades)
- Severe/prolonged illness or injury
- Lack of food, shelter, and/or financial means

#### What to Do
- Listen to the individual and connect them to appropriate support services using the “Quick Referral Guide”.
- Contact the Helping Individuals At Risk office at 780-492-4372 to note concern, establish a follow up plan, and discuss further support for the individual.

### Urgent Situations
Individuals showing signs of severe behaviours and/or appear to be in imminent harm are in need of immediate attention and intervention by other helping professionals and/or emergency services.

#### Indicators
- Thoughts of suicide or suicidal behaviours
- Threats and actions of aggression towards others (i.e., physical, verbal, correspondence)
- Imminent threat or action of serious injury to others
- Serious actions of harassment towards others (i.e., physical, verbal, online)
- Persistence of unwanted/unwarranted contact or harassment/bullying
- Physical contact/attack
- Presence of or threat to use a weapon

#### What to Do
- Contact 911.

If unsure who to refer to, contact the Community Social Work Team at 780-492-3342.
QUESTIONS?
Thank You!

COUNSELLING & CLINICAL SERVICES
2-600 SUB
780-492-5205
http://mentalhealth.ualberta.ca