how to help

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 do you have to do?”
- “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.”

quick referral guide

On Campus

Aboriginal Student Services Centre
2-400 SUB | 780-492-5677

Campus Food Bank
1-81 SUB | 780-492-8677

Community Social Work Team
209 HUB | 780-492-3342

Counselling & Clinical Services
2-400 SUB | 780-492-5205

Employee & Family Assistance Program
780-492-2249

Helping Individuals at Risk
300 Campus Tower | 780-492-4372

Interfaith Chaplains Assoc.
3-02 SUB | 169 HUB | 780-492-0339

International Student Services
142 Telus Centre | 780-492-2672

Office of Safe Disclosure & Human Rights
300 Campus Tower | 780-492-7325

Office of the Student Ombuds
2-702 SUB (by appointment) | 780-492-4689

Peer Support Centre
2-707 SUB | 780-492-4357

Protective Services
Education Car Park | 780-492-5050

Sexual Assault Centre
2-705 SUB | 780-492-9771

Student Accessibility Services
1-80 SUB | 780-492-3381

Student Connect (Financial Support Services)
Administration Building | 780-492-3113

Student Legal Services
11036 88 Ave | 780-492-2226

Student Success Centre
2-300 SUB | 780-492-2682

The Landing: A Space for Gender & Sexual Diversity
0-68A SUB | 780-492-4949

University Health Centre
2-200 SUB | 780-492-2612

Off Campus

211 Alberta
211 (24-hour service referral)

Alberta Mental Health Help Line
1-877-303-2642 (24-hour)

Canadian Mental Health Association
780-482-4357 (24-hour support)

Community Urgent Services & Stabilization Team
780-342-7777 (24-hour support)

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line
1-855-242-3310

Health Link Alberta
811 (24-hour support)

Kids Help Phone (24-hour support for individuals up to age 22)
1-800-668-6888

Today Family Violence Help Centre
780-455-6880

If there is risk of immediate harm to self or others, contact 911.

If unsure who to refer to, contact the Community Social Work Team at 780-492-3342.
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, online)
- 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.