

# THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY FACULTY & STAFF GUIDE TO STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

Distributed by the Psychological Counseling Services in Student Affairs

## NOTICING SIGNS OF DISTRESS:

Signs of distress may be physical, emotional, or behavioral, and usually affect relationships and classroom performance

### Physical

- Poor personal hygiene
- Lacerations or bruises on the face and body
- Swollen or red eyes
- Marked weight gain or loss

### Behavioral & Emotional

- Excessive anxiety, worry or extreme perfectionism
- Extreme fatigue or changes in energy level
- Unwarranted anger, hostility or outbursts
- Unsolicited, unusual remarks
- Frequent crying or tearfulness (not related to any specific situation or event)
- Candid statements indicating family problems, personal losses such as the death of a family member or break-up of a significant relationship
- Excessive hyperactivity or unusually elevated mood (possibly paired with rapid speech that is difficult to interrupt or redirect)

### Classroom behavior

- Withdrawal or changes in participation level
- Inappropriate laughter
- Unusual or changed pattern of interaction with others
- Disruptive behavior
- Significant changes in concentration or motivation
- Unusually demanding of time or excessively dependent i.e.: requests many conferences without significant content, hangs around after class with no identified purpose)
- Disturbing or upsetting content in class projects, writing assignments or classroom discussion (may include excessive themes of death or violence, not representative of artistic expression alone)

## GUIDELINES ON HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE DISTRESSED STUDENT:

- \* Stay calm
- \* Request to see the student in private
- \* Be empathic. Acknowledge the student's feelings.
- \* Listen and convey understanding.
- \* Don't be sworn to secrecy
- \* Respect cultural differences
- \* Let the student know you are aware he/she is having difficulty and you would like to help.
- \* Make a referral to the necessary service with the student present if the student agrees.
- \* If you do not feel safe during a class meeting, contact the Campus Police at 911.
- \* Do not be afraid to ask whether a student is suicidal if you think he/she might be.
- \* Consider keeping your office door open or inviting another faculty or staff member to join you.
- \* Do not be afraid to contact a student outside of class if there is a drastic drop or change in academic performance, or if the student fails to attend class. Express your concern for them rather than your disappointment or intent to punish.

## CONSULTATION & MAKING A REFERRAL

Consultation: If you have questions, concerns or would like to discuss a particular situation, do not hesitate to call **Psychological Counseling Services** on campus at **771-2247** or stop by Eickhoff Hall 107. Any information discussed will remain confidential, provided there is not an imminent threat to the safety of any individual. If you have any questions about the limits of confidentiality, please contact Psychological Counseling Services or refer to Psychological Counseling Services FAQ at [www.tcnj.edu/~sa/counseling/faq.html](http://www.tcnj.edu/~sa/counseling/faq.html)

**IF YOU DO NOT FEEL SAFE APPROACHING A STUDENT ALONE, FOR ANY REASON, ASK FOR HELP!**

## Steps to Take when Making a Referral

1. Make sure the student is in agreement with the referral and have the student with you when calling or stopping by.
2. Ask the student if he/she would like to call for him/her self and encourage them to call in your presence. However, if a student would like to contact the office on his or her own, respect that decision.
3. Follow up with the student to find out if they were successful in making the appropriate contact.

## If you are dealing with students in distress:

- Be aware of the location of the nearest telephone, whether it is within the building, or a personal cell phone.
- **If the student is a threat to others, contact 911 immediately.**
- If the student is causing classroom disruption, but is not a threat to others, discuss with the student individually.
- You may always ask the disruptive student to leave the classroom.

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

- **Imminent danger or emergency – 911**
- Campus Police Department – 771.2167 (from a cell phone)
- Psychological Counseling Services –x2247
- Community Standards - x2201
- Health Services – x2483
- Differing Abilities Services – x2571
- Office of Anti-Violence Initiatives - x2272
- Alcohol and Drug Education Program – x2571
- Educational Opportunity Fund – x2280
- Department of Residential Education & Housing – x3455

**IF IN DOUBT ABOUT IMMEDIATE SAFETY, ALWAYS CALL 911**