***RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR FACULTY***

**Counseling and Psychological Services Center**

UP - 348-2434

BBC - 919-5305

**Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution**

UP - 348-3939

BBC – 348-3939

**University Police Department**

UP –Information – 348-2626

*Emergency – 348-5911*

BBC – Information – 919-5559

*Emergency – 919-5911*

**Victim Advocacy Center**

UP – 348-1215

BBC – 348-1215

**Office of Employee Assistance**

UP – 348-2469

*Information used in the development of this guide was adapted from materials from Broward Community College*



***A FACULTY GUIDE***

***TO DEALING WITH TROUBLED***

***AND DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS***

Developed by

Karen A. Dlhosh, Director, Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution

and

Dr. Heidi von Harscher, Psychologist, Counseling and Psychological Services Center

*Division of Student Affairs*

***RECOGNIZING AND DEALING WITH TROUBLED AND DISTUPTIVE STUDENTS***

**Faculty as Helping Resources for Students**

University students typically encounter a great deal of stress (i.e. academic, social, family, work, financial) during the course of their educational experience. While most students cope successfully with the demands of college life, for some the pressures can become overwhelming and unmanageable. Students in difficulty have a number of resources available to them. These include close friends, relatives, clergy, and coaches. In fact, anyone who is seen as caring and trustworthy may be a potential resource in time of trouble.

In your role as faculty or staff, students may perceive you as one of those potential resources that can lend a helping hand or be a good listener. Your expression of interest and concern may be a critical factor in helping a struggling student find appropriate assistance.

**Tips for Recognizing Troubled Students**

Anyone at some time in their lives may have bad days, feel sad or depressed or upset. However, there are different degrees of distress which when present over a period of time, may suggest a more serious problem.

***LEVEL I:***

These behaviors, although not disruptive to others may indicate something is wrong and assistance may be needed.

1. Serious grade problems or a change from consistently passing grades to unaccountably poor performance.
2. Excessive absences, especially if the student had previously demonstrated good, consistent class attendance.
3. Unusual or markedly changed patterns of interaction, i.e., totally avoiding participation, becoming excessively anxious when called upon, dominating discussions, etc.
4. Other characteristics that suggest the student is having trouble managing stress successfully include a depressed, lethargic mood: being excessively active and talkative (very rapid speech): swollen, red eyes, marked change in personal dress and hygiene, falling asleep inappropriately.

***LEVEL II:***

These behaviors may not only indicate significant emotional distress, but also a reluctance or inability to acknowledge a need for more personal help.

1. Repeated requests for special consideration, such as deadline extensions, especially if the student appears uncomfortable or highly emotional while disclosing the circumstances prompting the request.
2. New or repeated behavior, which pushes the limits of decorum and which, interferes with effective management of the immediate environment.
3. Unusual or exaggerated emotional responses which are obviously inappropriate to the situation.

***How to Respond to Level I or Level II:***

For these behaviors or issues you can choose to handle them in the following ways:

1. Deal directly with the behavior/issue according to classroom protocol;
2. Address the situation on a more personal level;
3. Refer the student to one of the University resources;
4. Consult with a colleague, department head, Counseling and Psychological Services staff member; or
5. Not deal with it at all.

***LEVEL III:***

These behaviors usually show a student in obvious crisis who needs emergency care. These problems are the easiest to identify.

1. Highly disruptive behavior (hostile, aggressive, violent, etc.).
2. Inability to communicate clearly (garbled, slurred speech, unconnected, disjointed or rambling thoughts).
3. Loss of contact with reality (seeing/hearing things which others cannot sea/hear, beliefs or actions greatly at odds with reality or probability.
4. Overtly suicidal thoughts (referring to suicide as a current option or in a written assignment).
5. Homicidal thoughts.

***How to respond to Level III:***

1. You need to stay calm and know who to call for help, if necessary.
2. Find someone to stay with the student while calls to the appropriate departments are made.
3. For students expressing a direct call to themselves or others or acting in a bazaar, highly irrational or disruptive way these are the numbers to call:

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

UP -348-2626, Emergency – 348- 2911

BBC – 919-5559, Emergency – 919-5911

**Counseling and Psychological Services**

UP - 348-2434

BBC - 919-5305

**Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution**

348-3939

***GUIDELINES FOR TALKING WITH A STUDENT IN DISTRESS***

**If someone wants to talk:**

* Accept what is said and take it seriously
* It may be necessary to ask the person if she/he is contemplating suicide. It won’t give the person the idea, if the person already has not thought about it. Ask direct questions, i.e. “Are you thinking about hurting yourself?”
* Try to focus on the problem.
* Help determine what needs to be done or changed.
* Help identify resources needed to improve things.
* Help the person recall constructive methods used in the past to cope.
* Get the person to agree to do something constructive to change things
* Offer yourself as a caring person until professional assistance has been obtained.
* Trust your gut feelings.
* Let the person know you are worried about their safety.
* Let others know your concerns.
* Encourage the person to seek help.
* Respect the student’s value system, even if you don’t agree.

**Don’t:**

* Do not give advice if possible.
* Do not say “everything will be all right”.
* Do not back off or try to delay dealing with the person.
* Do not add to the person’s guilt.
* Do not leave the person alone if you believe the risk of harm to self is immediate.
* Do not swear secrecy to the person.
* Avoid criticizing, judging, or evaluating.

***DISRUPTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM***

**How to Deal with Disruption in the Classroom**

1. Before a situation develops into a major crisis, if you observe any bizarre or inappropriate behavior consult with the Counseling and Psychological Services or Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.
2. When should an intervention by faculty be made? Faculty should keep in mind that once there is a situation where the student’s behavior becomes disruptive in the classroom, there is a legal basis for intervention. Part of the faculty’s role is to establish a safe environment where dignity and integrity are left intact. When this becomes impossible due to disruptive behavior, the law is on the side of faculty to make an intervention, however it must be done accordingly to our University procedures.
3. Consult with Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution or Counseling and Psychological Services to determine possible intervention strategies and appropriate courses of action.
4. If someone’s safety is in imminent danger then call Public Safety. It is important to assess the level and degree of a situation before you call Public Safety.
5. Often these matters are best resolved through discussion, counseling, mediation or judicial action.
6. Conflicts will be lessened if faculty react in a consistent, similar manner to all students and students will hopefully realize the consequences of their actions.

*However, sometimes acts of aggression cannot be avoided.*

***Dealing with Students in the Classroom***

**Guidelines:**

1. Know the symptoms of anxiety and frustration:
2. Angry speech
3. Tremors
4. Poor Impulse Control
5. Pacing
6. Inability to sit in a chair
7. Know your own Mental State
8. Know your own Physical Capabilities
9. Know the Environment – barriers, exits, doors, objects
10. Know Where and How to Get Assistance
11. Assessment and Evaluation of the Crisis Situation – Good questions to ask yourself:
12. What must be done?
13. What is the intention of the disruption?
14. Is there a genuine threat of physical harm?
15. Has the student lost touch with reality?

**If you determine there is no physical threat present – attempt to follow these steps:**

1. Enter into a conversation with the student on an empathetic level.
2. Acknowledge student’s feelings.
3. Try to identify what is threatening or why the student is upset.
4. Appeal to the student’s sense of reason.
5. Validate back to the student a summary of the problem and state what you are going to do in a firm way.

**If the possibility of a threat or danger becomes evident, more help may be necessary. Ask one of the other students to call for Public Safety.**

1. Faculty should assume a non-threatening physical posture (one leg slightly forward and talk in a calm, reassuring tone).
2. Talk softly.
3. Maintain neutrality.
4. Do not get too close.
5. State in clear, concise terms what you want the student to do. State what you can do to help them if anything.
6. Be aware of others in the situation who may be supporting the crisis.
7. You may ask them to be quiet, ask them to leave or possibly enlist their help. Time limits for their leaving the classroom may be necessary.
8. In all crisis situations, the instructor must be designated as being in charge to direct other students to help if need be.

# *KEYS TO GOOD VERBAL INTERVENTIONS*

# *"DO"*

*1. Remain calm* You are the professional. Don't lose control of yourself.

*2. Isolate situation* Get other students away from the area. Lessen stimuli.

*3. Enforce limits* Set limits when appropriate and stick to them.

*4. Really listen* Listen to what the student is disturbed about.

*5. Be aware of nonverbal cues* Watch posture, hands. Get a sense of whether the student is escalating

# *“DON’T”*

1. Overreact, you are the professional

2. Get into power struggle

3. Fake attention ‑ Be sincere

4. Make false promises

5. Threaten clients

6. Negate feelings

**Additional Tips for Verbal Interventions**

1. Tone of your voice – soft and calm is more effective.

2. Proximity ‑ the distance you place between yourself and an agitated person often has calming or threatening effects. The closer one stands to another, the more threatening the effect.

3. Body language ‑ stand in a neutral but protective stance. Facing students at angles are less threatening than facing straight on. Talking to the student should be attempted as an initial recourse to defuse a crisis situation.

4. Avoid stereotypic, insincere, or stilted responses.

5. Following a verbal intervention, try to come to some closure so that the encounter becomes a learning event for the student.

a.) Have the student summarize what happened.

1. Possibly develop a verbal contract between you and the student.

**Communications To Avoid**

Some responses make bad situations worse. They serve to either escalate a charged emotional state or to further isolate or undermine the self-concept of the student.

* *Evaluation or Judgement*
* *Advice Giving*
* *Word for Word Repetition*

**Examples of poor responses:**

*Student:* “Every time I come to class, I feel like a loser. I’ll never be any good.”

*Instructor*: “There is nothing wrong with you that a little practice wouldn’t cure.” (judgement)

*Instructor:* “Well, if I were you, I would just drop the class.” (advice giving)

*Instructor:* “I know you feel like a loser and you feel you’ll never be any good.” (word for word repetition or hollow listening)

‑adapted from Tom Sitzberger, Apogee

# *10 TIPS FOR CRISIS PREVENTION*

**1. BE EMPATHIC**

Try not to be judgmental of resident feelings. They are real ‑ even if not based on reality and must be attended to.

**2. CLARIFY MESSAGES**

Listen to what is being said. Ask reflective questions; use both silence and restatements.

1. **RESPECT PERSONAL SPACE**

Stand at least one and a half to three feet from acting out person. Encroaching on personal space tends to arouse and escalate an individual.

1. **BE AWARE OF BODY POSITION**

Standing eye to eye, toe to toe with the person sends a challenge message. Standing one leg length away and at an angle off to the side is less likely to escalate the individual.

1. **PERMIT VERBAL VENTING WHEN POSSIBLE**

Allow the individual to release as much energy as possible by venting verbally. If this cannot be allowed, state directions and reasonable limits during levels in the venting process.

1. **SET AND ENFORCE REASONABLE LIMITS**

If the individual becomes belligerent, defensive, or disrupting, state limits clearly and concisely.

1. **AVOID OVER REACTING**

Remain calm, rational, and professional. How you, the staff member, respond will directly affect the individual.

**8. USE PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES AS A VERY LAST RESORT**

Use the least restrictive method of intervention possible. Employing physical techniques on an individual who is only acting out verbally can put you in a vulnerable position and escalate the situation.

**9. IGNORE CHALLENGE QUESTIONS**

When the student challenges your position, training, policy, etc. redirect the individual's attention to the issue at hand. Answering these questions often fuels a power struggle.

**10. KEEP YOUR NON‑VERBAL CUES NON‑THREATENING**

Be aware of your body language, movement and tone of voice. The more an individual loses control the less they listen to your actual words. More attention is paid to your nonverbal cues.

# *RECOGNIZING LEVELS OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR*

## LEVEL I ‑ Mild Agitation:

1) Profanity directed toward self, others or objects.

2) The use of ethnic, racial or sexual slurs directed to self, others or objects.

3) Statements which imply threat of harm to self, others or objects.

4) The use of excessive loudness such as screaming, regardless of the content of speech.

## LEVEL II ‑ Uncontrolled Mild Agitation:

Is defined as the continuation of mild agitated behavior after three attempts of verbal intervention. Individuals who do not calm down on their own or who do not respond to three verbal interventions often escalate to more dangerous situation of contagion for aggressive acts.

## LEVEL III‑ Extreme Agitation:

1) Includes direct statements of intent to harm self, others or objects.

2) Or actual behaviors which may result in physical injury or damage to self, others or objects.

If the "Mild Agitation" continues longer than 3 minutes, begin the first verbal intervention for "Mild Agitation":

a) Call student by name.

b) Inform student that his/her behavior is not acceptable.

c) Prompt student for alternative behaviors (i.e. ‑ suggest other ways the person could express his/her feelings).

d) This verbal intervention may be repeated three times.

If the students behavior doesn't respond or the behavior escalates to physical threat begin intervention procedures for "Extreme Agitation".

a) Position yourself between student and the nearest unblocked exit.

b) Maintain a safe distance: position yourself at a distance of no closer than 5 or 6 feet.

c) Give verbal instruction to stop the behavior: Tell person to stop in a clear, firm, forceful voice. Say it in a way that shows you mean it and that will get attention.

d) Develop eye contact: If possible, continue eye contact throughout the process, but do not glare.

e) Call for staff assistance: Call out for a student to call for security.

f) If possible, position yourself so that there is a chair, table, or some other object between the two of you

***Remember*** ‑ Potentially aggressive individuals often have difficulty with mental and physical boundaries. If you are aware of specific paranoid or aggressive tendencies in an individual a distance of 5 feet may be more

appropriate.

# *OFFICE SAFETY*

1. Remove objects as "weapons", i.e. staplers, tape dispensers, heavy bookends.

1. Equal and unimpeded exit. No desks or students between you and the door.

3. Develop an emergency plan for your office and staff.

4. Interoffice communication and backup.

5. Storage of "unknown" possessions, i.e. backpacks, suitcase, bulky raincoats.

6. Clerical ‑ secretarial training.

7. Unobtrusive and protective barriers.

8. Office scheduling patters. Don't meet students alone: vary routine.

9. Debrief following an incident.

1. Overall security plan: rehearse, use code words.

11. When possible keep door open when meeting with students.

# *BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY TECHNIQUES*

Although returning to school is a sign of progress and health for the student, the move into an academic environment can be very stressful. Examples of events or procedures which may be intimidating or threatening to the individual with a psychiatric disability include: parking, registration lines, admissions and financial aid forms, renewing or developing relationships with peers and preparing for and participating in class. There may be times when these circumstances or others may cause the student with psychiatric disabilities (or any others, for that matter) to become anxious or angry. It is important to recognize the signs of these emotional states and understand what actions to take in order to maintain control of the situation and prevent it from escaping.

###### SIGNS OF ANXIETY:

‑rigidity

‑skin blanches

‑increased perspiration, clammy skin

‑increased small motor activity, ie.:

restlessness, tremors, scratching, pacing

-decreased attention span

‑decreased ability to follow directions

‑increased acting out ‑increased immobility

‑increased number of questions

‑frequently shifts topic of conversation

‑increased heart rate ‑increased respiration rate

‑dry mouth ‑dilation of pupils

###### COMMUNICATING WITH THE ANXIOUS STUDENT:

‑Provide calm, quiet environment away from groups of people and activity

‑Allow ample personal space

‑Create climate of warmth and acceptance

Maintain composure during interaction

Keep voice soft, confident, and firm

Demonstrate genuineness and respect

‑Face student, maintaining same eye level

‑Maintain "open" position (avoid crossing arms and legs)

‑Lean toward student and remain relaxed

‑Take time to listen to what the student says. Concentrate, don't interrupt, listen between the lines

‑Make replies simple, clearly related to the situation

‑Be concrete in your response

‑Use accurate empathy. State what you understand the message to be.

‑Use questions and responses based on hierarchy: description of experience, thoughts about experience, feelings that experience generates.

-Use open ended questions.

‑Don't let communication breakdown occur. Do not belittle devalue, ignore or get angry or defensive. Be able to acknowledge and control your own anxiety.

###### SIGNS OF ANGER:

Similar to anxiety, but may also include:

-yelling

-threatening

-gesturing

-throwing items

-intimidation

-physical violence

###### COMMUNICATING WITH THE ANGRY STUDENT:

‑Maintain adequate distance.

‑Maintain an open exit.

‑Do not close door.

‑Make sure that your gestures are slow and deliberate rather than sudden and abrupt.

‑Try to maintain same position as student ‑ ie: if he/she is standing, you stand.

‑Gradually move to a more relaxed position.

‑Keep your shoulders slightly down and relaxed.

‑Look toward student, but avoid glaring or intense eye contact.

‑Maintain "open" position.

‑Avoid crossing arms and legs.

‑Keep hands unclenched and relaxed.

‑Face slightly toward student.

‑Avoid defensive listening.

‑Use therapeutic silence.

‑Use responses based on this hierarchy: description of experience, thoughts about experience, feelings that experience has generated.

‑Make vague statements more specific.

‑Practice accurate empathy.

‑Explore alternatives to situation.

‑Present your perspective calmly and firmly.

‑Use repeated assertion. Firmly repeat original response rather than argue each point.

‑Use open‑ended questions.

‑Avoid direct questions, or why and how.

***HOW TO MAKE A REFERRAL TO THE COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES CENTER***

While many students come to the Counseling and Psychological Services Center on their own, your high exposure to students increased the likelihood of confronting signs or behaviors of distress in a student.

What can you do?

1. Recommend the services to the student. Hand him/her one of the brochures if you have one available.
2. Determine his/her willingness to go to the Center.
3. Reassure the student that it is an act of strength to ask for help.
4. Dispute the myth that only “crazy” people go for counseling.
5. If you know one of our staff members you may wish to refer the student to that particular counselor (if the person is available at the time.
6. Explain to the student what is to be expected.
7. If you have questions or are unsure about the student, please call and consul with us.
8. You may also call the Counseling and Psychological Services Center while the student is in your office to facilitate making an appointment. If you feel an emergency or crisis situation is involved, please state this directly. Same day emergency appointments are available.
9. If it is possible, walk with the student to the Counseling and Psychological Services Center.

Please note: all communications between students and the professional staff members are confidential.

***HOW TO MAKE A REFERRAL TO STUDENT CONDUCT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION***

1. If you reported the situation to Public Safety, they will automatically refer the incident to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (SCCR) for review.
2. If you did not report the situation to Public Safety and you wish to consult with Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution regarding disruptive behavior, please contact us at 348-3939.
3. The faculty or staff member will be asked to submit a written summary of the incident, including, date, time, location and details of the account, including observations and quotes. This report will be reviewed for Student Code of Conduct violations, if appropriate, the student will be informed and charged with alleged policy violations and requested to meet with Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. The student judicial process is outlined in the Student Handbook.
4. Once the student is charged, then the faculty or staff member would be requested to serve as a witness if the case went to a formal hearing. This would entail the faculty member attending the hearing to provide information and to answer questions from the hearing officer/panel and the charged student. In the event that the student is charged with endangerment, stalking, harassment or sexual misconduct, the faculty member would have certain rights during the process. Examples include: submitting written questions for the board to consider posing to the student, being present for part or all of the hearing, having an advisor for support, testifying in limited privacy, and being informed of the outcome of the hearing.
5. The student has the opportunity to accept responsibility and have the matter resolved through summary resolution, where an administrator will assign appropriate sanctions. If a student does not wish to accept responsibility the matter could be adjudicated via an Administrative Hearing or Student Conduct Committee Hearing. These forums follow a set of procedures outlined in the FIU Student Handbook. A decision would be rendered and if found responsible, the student would be assigned sanctions as outlined in the Student Handbook.
6. All judicial matters are considered to be educational records and are protected under FERPA. Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution is not permitted to provide any information regarding a student’s judicial file or record unless the student provides authorization.