

Tips for Managing Emotionally-laden Classroom Discussions

Sometimes troubling events from outside the classroom have a way of intruding on classroom and one-on-one discussions with students. After all, students often look to faculty for guidance in understanding the world around them, and course topics often focus or touch on troubling world events. What follows are some general guidelines that may prove helpful in managing emotionally-laden classroom and one-on-one discussions.

Listen Actively

The goal of active listening is to understand and be able to reflect back the unique experiences of your students. This is critical to any helping relationship because:

- It gives you more information and insight into students and their concerns.
- It gives distressed students a chance to talk and as a result calm down. In addition, the students may be able to clarify their concerns for themselves.
- It gives students a feeling of genuine caring and concern.

Components of active listening include undivided attention, restating and clarifying students' comments, labeling and validating feelings, open ended questioning, and expression of genuine concern.

Promote Resilience

Resilience is “the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially highly stressful or traumatic events” (Butler, Hobfoll, & Keane, 2003, p. 1). Steps in promoting resilience include:

- Assure the students that their reactions to distressing events, although unpleasant, are normal (i.e., it is normal to experience sleep problems, changes in appetite, sadness, low energy, irritability, anger, fear, inability to focus, difficulty making decisions, bouts of crying, and nightmares for a short time after a traumatic event). It is of concern, however, if symptoms persist for several weeks or have a significant impact on day-to-day functioning.
- Listen for and correct misconceptions, misinterpretations, and misinformation.
- Help re-establish a sense of control, reinforce the ways that students can keep safe and the proactive things they can do to effect positive changes.
- Learn more about resilience. One source is the “Road to Resilience” brochure on the CAPS website (http://caps.ucdavis.edu/resources/brochures/the_road_to_resilience.pdf).

Don't Beat a Dead Horse

While some group discussions can be very helpful, people sometimes also need a break from thinking and talking about a traumatic event, and can feel distressed when it seems like the event is inescapable. Go with the flow of your class. If you feel you are beating a dead horse, stop the conversation.

Take Care of Yourself

Hearing about someone else's struggles can be difficult and can leave you feeling emotionally drained. Remember to find your own outlets for dealing with your own emotions.

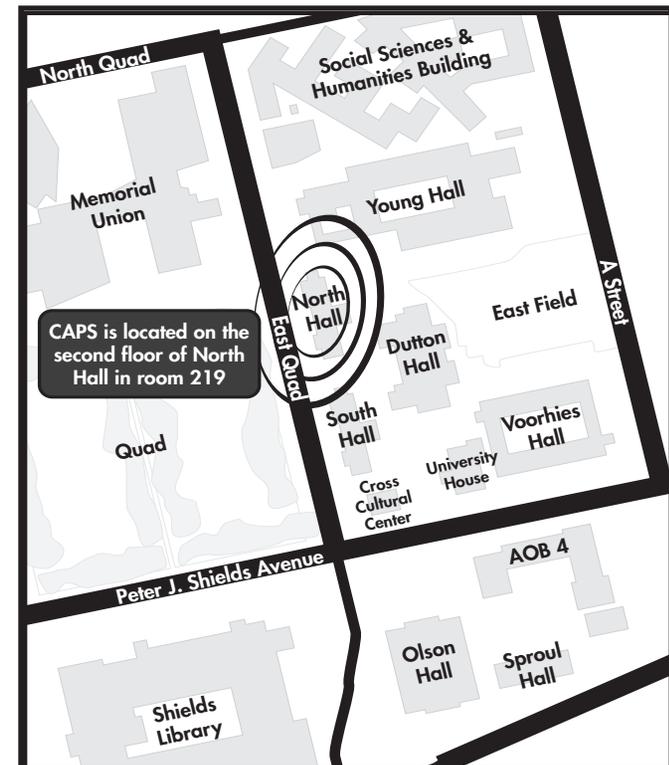
Note: This information was compiled by Sheila Singh, one of the counselors at the Hobart and William Smith College Counseling Center, as part of a presentation requested by Hobart and William Smith College faculty.

Consult after hours or on the weekend if the situation is urgent. Simply call CAPS at 530-752-0871 and follow the prompt to press “5-5” and you will be connected with a mental health professional affiliated with CAPS.

Refer to CAPS or other resources. If you refer to CAPS, the student may use CAPS Urgent Care/walk-in services, or can schedule a regular appointment.

<http://caps.ucdavis.edu>

Information and resources are available on the CAPS website.



PROVIDING YOU WITH...

- Urgent Care Assessment
- Crisis Intervention
- Individual Counseling
- Couples Counseling
- Group Counseling
- Psychiatry
- 24 Hour Consultation
- Behavioral Health Clinic
- Stress & Wellness Clinic
- Eating Disorder Management Team
- Applied Sports Psychology Program
- Referrals
- Workshops
- Consultations
- Peer Counseling
- Online Resources, www.caps.ucdavis.edu

TO HELP YOU WITH...

- Personal Development
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress Management
- Academic Problems
- Performance Anxiety
- Athletic Concerns
- Identity Concerns
- Loneliness
- Relationship Concerns
- Career Concerns
- Family Problems
- Sexual Assault
- Problems with Intimacy
- Eating Disorders
- Concerns with Alcohol/Drug Use
- Conflict Resolution

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Cowell Student Health Center
530-752-2300

Campus Violence Prevention Program
530-752-3299

Suicide Prevention
530-756-5000

**Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence
Center Crisis Line**
530-662-1133

**Alcohol & Drug Abuse Prevention
and Treatment (ADAPT)**
530-752-6334

County Mental Health: Mobile Crisis
(Nights/ Weekends)
530-666-8515

CAPS HOURS

Monday through Friday, 8:00 am - 4:45 pm.

FOR AN APPOINTMENT

Call CAPS at 530-752-0871
during regular office hours.

FOR 24-HOUR CONSULTATION

Call CAPS after hours
and follow the prompts.

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