

Contact Information:

Georgia Tech Counseling Center

Smithgall Student Services Building, Suite 238

404-894-2575

<http://www.counseling.gatech.edu>

Tips for Helping a Distressed Student

Common Warning Signs of Student Distress

Academic Problems

- Excessive procrastination
- Uncharacteristically poor preparation or performance
- Repeated requests for extensions or special considerations
- Disruptive classroom behavior
- Career or course indecision
- Excessive absence or tardiness
- Avoiding or dominating discussions
- References to suicide or homicide in verbal statements or writing

Interpersonal Problems

- Asking instructor for help with personal problems
- Dependency on advisor
- Hanging around office
- Avoidance of advisor
- Disruptive behavior
- Inability to get along with others
- Complaints from other students

Behavioral Problems

- Change in personal hygiene
- Dramatic weight gain or loss
- Frequently falling asleep in class
- Irritability
- Unruly behavior
- Impaired speech
- Disjointed thoughts
- Tearfulness
- Intense emotion
- Inappropriate responses
- Difficulty concentrating
- Physically harming self

Suggestions for Making an Intervention

- Talk to the student privately to help minimize embarrassment and defensiveness.
- Avoid making promises to keep information shared confidential.
- Listen carefully to the student and respond to both the content and the emotion of the situation.
- Discuss your observations and perceptions of the situation directly and honestly with the student.
- Express your concern in a non-judgmental way. Respect the student's value system, even if you don't agree with it.
- Help the student identify options for action and explore the possible consequences.
- Be frank with students about the limits of your ability to help them and let them know that you can help them get to experts who can help them address their concerns.
- If the student appears to be in imminent danger of hurting himself or others, contact the Counseling Center or the Campus Police immediately. Do not promise to keep threats to themselves or others secret.

How to Make a Referral

Emergency Referrals

(when students are in danger of hurting themselves or others)

- If the emergency occurs within Counseling Center business hours (Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. or Thursdays, 8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.), call 404-894-2575 and ask to speak to a Counseling Center administrator or the therapist who is on duty for such calls.
- Provide the therapist with a description of the situation that has led to your concern.
- The therapist will advise you of appropriate actions to take to most effectively help the student.

- If the emergency occurs outside of Counseling Center business hours, call 404-894-2575 and follow the prompts to contact the therapist who is staffing the crisis consultation line. This is appropriate if the student or another person is in immediate danger, or when you believe the student is out of control.
- For students who may need additional support, the Fulton County Mental Health Hotline number is 404-730-1600.

Non-Emergency Referrals

- Encourage the student to contact the Counseling Center directly to schedule an initial appointment.
- Offer to let the student call from your office if you believe they may need extra support and encouragement.
- It might be helpful to share with the student that the Counseling Center is staffed by psychologists and counselors and that the services are free and confidential.