RESPONDING TO STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

There are three basic steps for responding to students in emotional distress:

1. **Deal with Safety Concerns**
   - Rule out any emergency needs requiring immediate response. If there is imminent danger to the student or to others, call UPD at 392-1111 if you are on campus, or 911 if you are off campus. Establishing safety is essential and emergency responders are trained to intervene in these circumstances.

2. **Listen to the Student**
   - Whether or not you know how to fix the problem, genuine concern can provide a human connection at a critical moment. Sometimes a student may only need someone to listen for a short time in order to clarify concerns and validate feelings. The student can then be referred to a resource working within the university system, if needed. Students with suicide risk factors should be referred for professional help. Yet even those who are not suicidal may need more help than you can provide. There are many campus and community resources that can offer professional help, including crisis intervention, counseling for the student and consultation for you. The resources are listed at the back of this brochure.

3. **Encourage Hope for the Future**
   - Often people in crisis may not be thinking clearly and are in a state of confusion. You can acknowledge this and remind them not to make any significant decisions during this time. This crisis is not usually a permanent state and there may be alternatives that provide hope for the future.

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THE DANGER OF SUICIDE

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15 to 24 year olds in the U.S. and the second leading cause of death among college age students. Suicide claims more lives each year in the U.S. than homicide. In a national survey of college students, 9.5% reported thinking seriously about suicide and 1.5% reported having made a suicide attempt.

SUICIDE RISK FACTORS

Unbearable psychological pain is the common element of suicide. People consider killing themselves when they lose hope of finding another way to stop the pain. The risk factors listed below do not predict how any individual will behave. Many people may show some of these signs without ever trying to kill themselves. These are signs that let us know something may be seriously wrong and give us an opportunity to reach out and offer help.

- Significant loss
- Prolonged stress
- Unrelieved symptoms of mental health problems (especially depression)
- Noticeable changes in personality or lifestyle
- Social isolation
- Loss of interest in activities
- Direct or indirect statements about suicide or hopelessness
- Preoccupation with death
- Making a plan or other preparations
- History of previous suicide attempt(s)
GUIDELINES FOR HELPING

- Deal with safety concerns
- Listen empathically to the student
- Talk openly about suicide
- Get the student appropriate help
- Consult with a counselor

COUNSELING RESOURCES

COUNSELING CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
301 Peabody Hall
352.392.1575 • www.counsel.ufl.edu

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
352.392.1171 • http://www.shcc.ufl.edu/smhs
[24-hour phone consultation]

ALACHUA COUNTY CRISIS CENTER
352.264.6789 • [24-hour crisis hotline]

SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE
1.800.273.8255

PSYCHOLOGY CLINIC (fee required)
UF Health Science Center, Shands G-901
352.265.0294 • www.hp.ufl.edu/chp/clinic/index.html

OTHER CAMPUS RESOURCES

DEAN OF STUDENTS OFFICE
352.392.1261 • www.dso.ufl.edu

CAMPUS MINISTRIES COOPERATIVE
352.392.1261 • CONTACT DEAN OF STUDENTS

UNIVERSITY POLICE DEPARTMENT
352.392.1111

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EDUCATING LEADERS FOR A GLOBAL COMMUNITY

This brochure is available in alternative print format upon request.