NOTICE AND RESPOND: ASSISTING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

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AGENDA

- Logistics
  - Enroll in and take this Canvas course now

- Content overview of online (Canvas) training program
  - Signs & levels of distress
  - Corresponding response options
  - Situational examples
  - Current resources

- Remaining questions and comments
THE 2020-2021 ACADEMIC YEAR IS...DIFFERENT

- COVID-19
  - Fear of infection-self & others, loss of loved ones, grief, wearing face masks, reduced socializing and physical contact, xenophobia, quarantine fatigue, online instruction/ hybrid courses, campus surveillance testing, ambiguous loss, prolonged uncertainty

- Economic crisis
  - New/Increased financial worries – self, parents/family, financial aid concerns, funding concerns for graduate students, significantly reduced internship and job prospects, global and domestic markets uncertainty

- Current social movement against racism in the U.S.
  - Racism and violence by police - departmental practices, policies and attitudes
  - Peaceful protests, agitator counter-protesters and exacerbating, inflated police presence
  - Increase in white supremacy overtly asserting itself
  - Impacts on all; racial trauma for BIPOC (stemming from seeing or experiencing violence against Black and Brown communities)
1st Level of Distress: Concern

• **Signs of Concern:**
  • Anxiety, sadness, crying, panic attacks, neglecting hygiene
  • **Feeling overwhelmed by academics, COVID behavior expectations, or national/world events**
  • Lack of motivation, drop in academic performance
  • Problems eating or sleeping: too little or too much
  • Irritability, arguments, anger
  • Not showing up for classes, study groups, project teams
  • Personal loss, traumatic life event, bias experience

• **Response options:**
  • Talk with student directly
  • Refer to campus resources; help with connecting
  • Consult with someone else who can help

Experiencing 1 or 2 signs for a short period of time.
RESPONSE OPTIONS: CONCERN LEVEL

- **Talk with the student**
  - Email and suggest meeting together on Zoom

- **Refer the student**
  - Academic, health-related or social support resource

- **Consult with someone else who can help**
  - Advising or student services in the college
  - Cornell Health → CCI
CAMPUS RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

**Academic Support**
- Advising/ Student Services
- OADI & College Diversity Programs
- Learning Strategies Center
- Cornell Writing Centers
- Math Support Center
- Career Services
- Librarians

**Cornell Health (24/7 phone consultation)**
- Medical Services
- Counseling & Psychological Services
  - Individual & Group counseling
  - Medication management
- Let’s Talk drop-in consultation
- Let’s Meditate
- Nutrition Support & Body Positive Cornell
- Patient Advocate
- Student Disability Services

**Social Support**
- Residential staff
- Africana
- Akwe:kon
- Asian, Desi, Asian-American Center
- Latino Living Center
- LGBT Resource Center
- Ujamaa Residential College
- Women’s Resource Center
- Cornell United Religious Work
- Cornell Minds Matter
- First Gen, Low Income Student Support
- Student Development Diversity Initiatives
- Undocumented and DACA Student Support

**Additional Support**
- Bias Response: biasconcerns.cornell.edu
- EARS peer counseling
- Hazing: hazing.cornell.edu
- Sexual Harassment and Assault
  - share.cornell.edu
  - Victim Advocate
  - Caring Community website
CCI or Community Consultation & Intervention is a resource developed to support faculty and staff who are concerned about a student’s mental health and well-being.
How faculty can support students during COVID-19

General considerations
Students, staff, and faculty are experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic together. Many of us are worried, uncertain, disoriented, grieving, feeling isolated, and generally “not at our best.” Yet we are having individual experiences, too.

This situation is unprecedented. There are no clear road maps, no playbooks. We are all doing what we can to adapt and cope. Below are some considerations for engaging with students about the pandemic through your virtual classroom environments.

Potential stressors & concerns
- Fear of COVID-19: for themselves and others
- Uncertainty: duration of crisis, implications for health, finances, education, career
- Uplift or disruption of daily routines
- Loss of normalcy, opportunities, social connections
- Frustration, boredom, social isolation
- Re-immersion in family of origin: may be experienced as oppressive, constraining, conflictual, and/or abusive
- Grief: illness or death of loved one; secondary trauma/grief
- Performance issues: unclear thinking, diminished focus, inability to do best work
- Other stressors: financial, limited access to technology/need for academic work, food insecurity, etc.

Supporting students online
- Remind students that they are not alone; that this is new for all, but we are in it together.
- Provide resources (to CAPS, Let’s Meditate, crisis lines, chat lines, etc.) in your course materials.
- Remind students of your office hours, your e-mail address, and/or your willingness to “meet” individually online.
- If a student is notably upset or tearful in class, or if you have other reasons to be concerned about an individual or a group of students:
  - Consider making a general statement of support for student concerns (i.e., expressing that you care about students well-being both in and outside of class, and are familiar with resources that can help

https://health.cornell.edu/sites/health/files/pdff-library/Faculty_COVID-support-for-students.pdf
CONCERN LEVEL EXAMPLE #1: HOW COULD YOU RESPOND?

Your student shares in a written assignment that they are feeling homesick and lonely.

1. Invite them to come to your office hours. If conducting virtual drop in office hours, offer to meet at a specific, private, time.

2. Acknowledge that you saw what they wrote, and invite them to tell you more. Validate their feelings by saying something like: “I think I get it; what you wrote about. It’s really hard and completely normal to feel lonely while starting college even during “non-pandemic” times! Not to mention adding in physical distancing, masks, not being able to visit family, and hybrid classes into this mix…it can be really hard to make friends and find your place here right now. I know that many people are feeling this way, you are not alone in this, and try not to be too hard on yourself.”

3. Ask: “What's one thing that might help you feel more connected?” Gently suggest they might try to start or join a study group or attend programming offered by the Tatkon Center, Rec Services or one of the student orgs.
A student shares that they are finding it hard to stay on top of the workload with the hybrid classes they are taking.

1. Acknowledge and validate the student’s feelings, by saying something like: “I can understand that this format of part online and part in-person class can be challenging. What would you say is the most challenging part for you?”

2. Ask: “Have you met with someone from the Learning Strategies Center yet? They have staff who can help you with whatever it is. Motivation, concentration, time management, or understanding the material.”

3. Then say: “Everybody needs a little help sometimes and especially this year with everything that is way more different than usual.”
2<sup>nd</sup> Level of Distress: **Urgent**

- **Signs of Urgent Situations:**
  - Concern level signs lasting more than a week
  - Worsening symptoms of psychological distress
  - Expressions of hopelessness
  - Talk of suicide or harm to others
  - Writing about death, dying, suicide
  - Student has not slept in past 72 hours
  - Any bizarre, atypical behavior for the student

- **Response option**
  - Get immediate assistance from a mental health provider 24/7
    - Cornell Health 607-255-5155
You receive a writing assignment in which the student says they feel really anxious because their roommate isn’t physically distancing or wearing a mask when they should. The writer says they are having more frequent, severe panic attacks because of this and they don’t know how much longer they can take it.

1. Email the student: “I’m so sorry this is happening and I’m really glad you told me. Are you able to meet virtually today so we can sort this out together.”

2. Before you meet with the student, you could speak with CCI about the situation. When you meet virtually: “I’d like to help. Can you tell me a little bit more about this? Is this familiar to you or is this new?

3. And/or go right to: “In your paper you said ‘I don’t know how much longer I can take it.’ I am wondering if you are having thoughts of suicide.”
No! I’m not suicidal – I just want to feel better, not anxious and panicky all the time.

▪ “Of course you want to feel better. So let’s talk a little bit about what you need right now, what would make things better for you.” It sounds like there are two issues here, first, deciding about how to respond to your roommate’s behavior, and second, coping with panic attacks. Am I getting that right? What’s concerning you the most right now?

▪ Okay, so let’s talk about some ways to deal with your roommate’s behavior. What are your ideas for how to approach this? I also want to mention that you can talk with your residence hall staff and/or report the behavior confidentially if you’re comfortable with that. Reflect/summarize generated plan.

▪ I want to circle back to what you shared about struggling with panic attacks. What do you think might help/how have you coped with this in the past? Reflect and validate. There are also a few resources that might be helpful. Would it be alright for me to share a couple with you? Would you be interested in trying out a drop-in Let’s Talk virtual visit with a CAPS counselor?” Reflect/summarize generated plan.

▪ Make a plan to check back in with the student to see how the resource worked out for them.

Well, not actual plans or anything… I have struggled with some thoughts but I would never act on them.

▪ It’s completely understandable to have these thoughts when you’re feeling so anxious and overwhelmed. I want you to know that it’s ok to share these feelings, and I appreciate you sharing this with me.

▪ I’m concerned about you and I think it would be best for me to connect you with someone at Cornell Health who is a professional and can help you with this better than I can.

▪ With your permission, we can make the call together. I’ll talk first and then if you’re comfortable, I’ll have you talk to the provider directly so we can come up with a plan for going forward. How does that sound to you?
When to ask about suicide

- Expressions of hopelessness, giving up - “no one understands”, “things will never get better”, “I can’t take it anymore”
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
- Loneliness, social isolation – “there’s no one I can talk to”
- Giving away possessions
- Sudden bright mood after long depression
- Your own gut level feeling

If you are going to ask, use one of these options:
   - Have you had thoughts of suicide?
   - Are you thinking about killing yourself?
   - Are you thinking of ending your life?

**REMEMBER:** ASKING DIRECTLY ABOUT SUICIDE DOES NOT INCREASE THE RISK* THAT THE PERSON WILL ACT EVEN IF THEY HAVE/ ARE HAVING THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE. AND THE ANSWER TELLS YOU WHAT YOUR RESPONSE OPTIONS ARE.

*Evaluating Iatrogenic Risk of Youth Suicide Screening Programs - A Randomized Controlled Trial*
Madelyn S. Gould, PhD, MPH; Frank A. Marrocco, PhD; Marjorie Kleinman, MS; John Graham Thomas, BS; Katherine Mostkoff, CSW; Jean Cote, CSW; Mark Davies, MPH  *JAMA.* 2005;293:1635-1643. (*Journal of the American Medical Association Vol. 293, # 13  April 6, 2005*)
NEXT STEPS & POSSIBLE OUTCOMES
WHEN YOU CALL CORNELL HEALTH IN URGENT SITUATIONS

- For the student: The Cornell Health professional will assess the situation to make a recommendation for next steps for the student of concern.

- For the faculty or staff member: Report to your supervisor and then get support for yourself - debrief and de-stress.
3rd Level of Distress: Emergency

- **Sign of Emergency Situations:**
  - Immediate threat of harm to self or others
    - A student emails/texts you to say they’ve taken “a lot of pills”, when you email/text back they do not respond
    - You’re out on a walk and you see someone pacing and mumbling in front of the Stewart Ave bridge

- **Response options:**
  - Get immediate assistance (from police)
  - Call 911 OR CUPD 607-255-1111
Cornell Wellness Program serves all staff, faculty, retirees, and their spouses and partners in the areas of fitness, nutrition, general health and wellness.

- **Offerings during COVID-19 include:**
  - Live Group Fitness Classes
  - Recorded Healthy Living Program Group Fitness classes
  - Free Wellness Consultations
  - Google Doc Of Wellness And Fitness Apps And Resources.
  - More!

Cornell Faculty & Staff Assistance Program

During COVID-19, FSAP’s in-person services have moved to Telehealth services (phone or Zoom video sessions) and are available to benefits-eligible faculty and staff members, postdoctoral fellows and associates, visiting scholars, retirees, and their partners/spouses, residing in NY State.

- Call FSAP at **607-255-2673** Monday–Friday, 8:30 am–5:00 pm to schedule an appointment; or anytime 24/7 for an urgent mental health concern.
WHAT ARE YOUR REMAINING QUESTIONS?

WHAT ELSE WOULD BE HELPFUL FOR YOU TO KNOW?
CONCLUSION

• If you notice something → say/do something.
  • Remember: You do not have to handle a situation alone
  • Cornell Health and CUPD are available 24/7 to assist

• Familiarize yourself with campus resources
  • Reduce stigma by endorsing campus resources

• Remember → Things CAN get better for a student! Your support helps; mental health treatment works.

For more information, visit health.cornell.edu

Thank you!

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