

# How to Help a Student in Distress

## Signs of Distress

### Agitation or Irritability

More conflicts with classmates and others  
Undue aggressive or abrasive behavior

### Tearfulness

More emotional than normal; tired in class  
Easily upset by small situations

### Fearfulness or Anxiety

Dependency (excessively clingy)  
Frequent absences or lack of participation

Express your concerns to the student, pointing out your observations and asking about their situation

At this time you may find it useful to have a private conversation with the student. You may consult the Faculty Scripting document as a guide to have this conversation. If during your interaction with student, there are warning signs or concerning behaviors, take steps as indicated below.

DIRECTLY ask about concerns and/or warning signs  
DIRECTLY ask about suicide/homicide as it relates to the displayed warning signs

Yes

No

Do you believe the student is in imminent danger?

DO NOT LEAVE STUDENT ALONE

**YES** (imminent danger is clearly present)

Examples:

Student is disoriented, found unconscious or unresponsive

Student tells you that they have ingested pills beyond the recommended dose

Student attempts or is threatening immediate danger to self

Student attempts or threatens to cause physical harm to someone else

**IMMEDIATELY:**

Immediately call IU Northwest Campus Police at 219.980.6501

Complete a Concerned Persons Referral Form found on the Dean of Students' Website.

**UNCLEAR** (whether imminent danger exists)

Examples: (Not limited to these behaviors.)

Student makes statements that are suggestive of suicidal/homicidal thinking that are not indicative of imminent danger ("I can't do this anymore")

Student appears to be emotionally distraught and does not respond to your attempts to calm them

Student experiences a sudden stressful event (death in family, breakup, etc.) and seems emotionally unstable/inconsolable OR the student's response seems unusual (flat affect, unresponsive verbally, refuses to talk to you)

Student's communications contain material that raises concern about suicide, homicide, and/or violence

**During Business Hours:** Call the Office of Counseling Services at 219-980-6741 for a clinical consultation by telephone.

After consultation, be prepared to encourage student to come to the OOCs for assessment of risk.

Contact Dean of Students directly by email @ [deanstnw@iu.edu](mailto:deanstnw@iu.edu) or phone @ 219-981-4296

**NO** (imminent danger is not present)

Examples: (Not limited to these behaviors.)

Student is very upset about a break up, but denies any suicidal/homicidal thoughts and shows no warning signs

Student reports anxiety and depression, but denies suicidal/homicidal thoughts and shows no warning signs

Student's best friend recently died, but denies suicidal/homicidal thoughts and shows no warning signs

Student reports self-injurious behaviors (cutting or burning), but denies suicidal/homicidal thoughts and shows no warning signs

Listen and provide support.

Provide information about Counseling Services and/or other campus resources that may be helpful and address concerns the student may have about these resources.

If student is open to counseling: Encourage them to email, walk, or call office to schedule an intake appointment.

If the student is not open to counseling: Respectfully accept their decision. Remind them that the resources of the office are voluntary and available when they are ready.

