



How to approach a distressed student

Does a student's situation or behavior leave you feeling helpless, unprepared, baffled, anxious, angry, intimidated, burdened, or sensitive? It is easier to reach out to a troubled student when there is a relationship based on mutual respect and trust. However, that isn't always the case and you might still want to help. Check in with yourself to see if you are willing to approach the student.

“How Can I Help?”

- **Express care and concern**
“I've been concerned about you lately. May we speak privately?”
- **Share what you have noticed**
“I've noticed you've been missing class lately.”
- **Offer to help**
“How can I help?”
- **Listen carefully, then reflect what you understand**
“You have a lot going on in your personal life and you are worried that it is affecting your school work.”
- **Empathize. normalize**
“With so much going on, it is normal to feel overwhelmed.” “I can sure relate. I remember wondering if I would ever be able to get it all done.”
- **Define your role**
“I can help you organize your assignments. Our class also has a study group that some students find help lighten their reading load.”
- **Share about resources**
“I'm not a professional counselor; you might want to consider making an appointment with our behavioral health counselor. She can help you sort out things in your life that are causing you stress and give you some skills to help with that.” “We also have people in our Connect to Success program that can help you with time management.”
- **Make a plan**
“Here is the contact information. Do you think you will call and make some appointments to get the help you need?”
- **Compliment and encourage**
“Thank you for being so honest with me. It took courage to share with me. I have confidence that you can succeed with just a little help.”

Use good judgment about approaching a student when emotions are elevated or exaggerated. Never try to handle a situation where you believe a student is dangerous. If you are unsure, call 911.

If you need coaching or suggestions on how to approach a specific student, call the behavioral health provider at 303-914-6316.

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