

Signs of Distress

Look for and be aware of any of the following signs of distress:

- Inability to concentrate
- Confusion, indecisiveness
- Persistent worrying
- Social isolation, depression
- Increased irritability, restlessness
- Bizarre or dangerous behavior, mood swings
- Missed class/assignments, procrastination
- Dishevelled appearance

Your Response

Involve yourself only as far as you are willing to go. At times, in an attempt to reach or help a troubled friend, you may become more involved than time or skill permits. It is important to know the boundaries and limitations of your intervention. If you decide to take action, you should follow these guidelines when approaching your friend:

- Request to see him or her in private. This may help minimize embarrassment and defensiveness.
- Openly acknowledge that you are aware of their distress.
- Speak directly and honestly and acknowledge you are sincerely concerned about their welfare and you are willing to help them explore their alternatives.
- Strange or inappropriate behavior should not be ignored. Comment directly on what you have observed.
- Listen carefully to what your friend is troubled about and try to see the issue from his/her point of view without necessarily agreeing or disagreeing.
- Attempt to succinctly identify the problem or concern and explore alternatives to deal with the problem.
- Refer your friend to professional help when appropriate.

Educate yourself: become informed

It also helps if you become informed about the nature of the problem(s) your friend is confronting and the resources available to help them.

Consultation with a Psychologist

If you are unsure of how to handle a situation with a friend or family member, we encourage you to consult with one of the psychologists on our staff. A brief consultation may help you sort out the relevant issues, explore alternative approaches, and identify other resources.