**FOCUS**

**F:** friendly approach. Think about the qualities that you appreciate in your own friends.
- Be open and trustworthy
- Present an interest and willingness to listen and help
- Speak with direct but concerned and supportive tone

**O:** outward reaching
- Promote a sense of community
- Explore more about the student and their concerns/struggles

**C:** caring.
- Authenticity. State your concern for student and encourage them to seek help.
- Avoid promises such as “Everything will be alright” or “It will all work out”.

**U:** understanding
- Empathy
- Active listening (reflecting, summarizing)
- Accept and respect what is said and the student’s value system (does NOT mean you agree with what is being said)

**S:** safety for both YOU and the STUDENT
- Try to focus on an aspect of the problem that is manageable (if there is one!)
- Help identify (collaboratively brainstorm) resources or individuals who will be helpful in improving things.
- Confidential environment that student feels safe sharing UNLESS you feel that puts your own safety at risk. If concerned about meeting with a student, let a colleague know of your meeting. DO NOT swear secrecy or offer confidentiality to the person.
- Referral to campus resources: Counseling Services; Student Health Services; Women’s Center; LGBTQRC; UPD; Ombudsman; etc.
- Consultations: Counseling Services, Ombudsman, Department Chair or VP; co-workers. Try to have as much information as possible (i.e. your name and location, student name and location, description of situation or event, type of assistance needed or looking for; accurate description of the student, etc.)
- TRUST your instincts

**Help student recall any healthy coping methods used in the past . . . leave this until the end and only**

if student agrees that brainstorming coping methods would be helpful.

*Counseling Services, Admin Bldg. 201; www.sjsu.edu/counseling; 408-924-5910*
Crisis Responses

General Guidelines:
1. Know your strengths and limitations.
2. Remember that you’re not these students’ counselor.
3. Know your resources for referral (e.g., Counseling Services, University Police)
4. Don’t take responsibility for the other persons’ problem (but do seek consult with your supervisor and/or counselor at Counseling Services).
5. Remain calm and communicate care and respect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If the Student is:</th>
<th>Some Suggestions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isolating her/himself</td>
<td>Approach student and ask if you can talk with he/she. Share your observations of his/her behavior (e.g., I noticed that you stay in your room quite a bit”). Ask open-ended questions about how they have been doing both personally and academically. Do not immediately offer advice. Instead, ask if there is something you can do to help. Refer student to Counseling Services, or walk them to that office.</td>
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<td>Tearful, crying</td>
<td>Crying generally indicates that the person is upset, but not necessarily in crisis. Respond with soft, gentle tone and find out what happened. Ask open-ended questions (though avoid “why” questions, which tends to increase others’ defenses).</td>
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<td>Anxious, tense, fearful</td>
<td>Be calm, understanding and reassuring. Speak in lowered tone and pitch. Reflect their feelings (e.g., “You seem anxious.”) to show your empathy. Again, respond with gentle tone and ask open-ended questions to find out what happened that led to current emotional state.</td>
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<td>Confused thoughts or speech; out of touch w/ reality; not making sense</td>
<td>Listen respectfully and try to understand the source of their confusion. Do not agree with person’s confused perceptions, thoughts, or hallucinations. If the person starts to get agitated and paranoid, remain calm. Speak in lowered tone and pitch and excuse yourself to get help (e.g., call Counseling Services, 924-5910). (If student seems to need immediate intervention, you can say “I’m not sure how I can help, but I am concern about you. Let me go find someone whom may be better able to help.”)</td>
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<td>Agitated and frustrated</td>
<td>Paraphrase what they have said to be clear that you understand them. Acknowledge their emotions (e.g., “I know you’re frustrated.”) Remain calm, again keeping a lowered tone of voice. If things escalate, seek some help.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Angry, hostile, and demanding</td>
<td>Remain calm, keep a safe distance. Be aware of whether they have a specific target for anger or if you are now the focus of the anger. If appropriate, you may want to reflect their emotions (e.g., “You’re very angry”) so that the student becomes more aware of how they are coming across to another person. If the student is too agitated and angry, excuse yourself to get help from someone else.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Losing Control, going into a rage, making serious threats, violence</td>
<td>This situation is very rare, but should it happen, do not hesitate to leave the student’s presence! Notify an authority immediately or call 911 (or have someone else make these calls)! If you can warn others, do so.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seeming to have profound sadness or hopelessness</td>
<td>Directly ask whether the student is considering suicide. If yes, convey your concern and immediately notify an authority. Try not to leave the student alone. Call 911 if appropriate, and/or refer the student to the Counseling Services.</td>
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Suicide Warning Signs

- Withdraw from those around them.
- Change in eating or sleeping patterns.
- Loose interest in prior activities or relationships.
- May prepare for death by giving away prized possessions.
- Feel an overwhelming and prolonged sense of sadness and helplessness, and lack hope in their lives.
- Emotional difficulties make it hard for them to function from day to day. For example, unable to concentrate on assignments and job/school performance suffers as a result; disheveled appearance.
- Actions are harmful to themselves or to others. For instance, drink too much alcohol and become overly aggressive.
- Emotional reaction to stressors seemed out of proportion to the precipitating event.

How You Can Help

- **Remain calm.** In most instances, there is no rush. Sit & listen—*really* listen to what the person is saying. Show your care first and foremost. Reflect and convey your understanding of their struggles, and actively support his/her feelings.
- **Directly ask about suicide.** Most have mixed feelings about death and dying and do want help. Don’t be afraid to ask or talk directly about suicide. Contrary to myth, talking about suicide will *not* give a person the idea. Your openness and concern in asking about them will allow the person to talk about the problem which may help reduce his/her anxiety. They may also allow the person with suicidal thoughts to feel less lonely or isolated, and perhaps a bit relieved.
- **Encourage problem solving and positive actions.** Typically a person in crisis is not thinking clearly; encourage her/him to refrain from making any serious, irreversible decision while in a crisis. After conveying your understanding of their struggles, ask if the person wants to brainstorm some solutions. Suggest different options and alternatives that may establish hope for the future.
- **Get assistance.** Although you want to help, do not take the full responsibility by trying to be the sole counselor. Seek out resources and solicit professional help, even if it means breaking this person’s confidence. Let the person in crisis know that you are concerned, so concerned that you are willing to arrange help beyond that which you can offer.

How Psychotherapy Can Help

- Psychotherapy is a partnership between an individual and a professional such as a psychologist, who is licensed and trained to help people understand their feelings and assist them with changing their behavior.
- Research suggests that therapy effectively decreases a person’s depression, anxiety, and related symptoms (e.g., pain, fatigue and nausea). Psychotherapy can also have a positive effect on the body’s immune system.
- There is convincing evidence that most people who have at least several sessions of psychotherapy are far better off than untreated individuals with emotional difficulties.
- There are many approaches to psychotherapy. Despite the variations, all psychotherapy is a two-way process that works especially well when the client and the therapist communicate openly. Research has shown that the outcome of psychotherapy is improved when the therapist and client agree early about what the major problems are and how psychotherapy can help.
- Be clear with the therapist about your expectations and share any concerns that may arise. Psychotherapy works best when the client attend all scheduled sessions and give some forethought to what they want to discuss during each one.
- Psychotherapy isn’t easy, but those who are willing to work in close partnership with their therapist often find relief from their emotional distress and begin to lead more productive and fulfilling lives.

Students are encouraged to visit SJSU Counseling Services in Administration Building, Room 201.