

Guide to Assist Distressed Individuals

1

Invite

- Find a private and quiet place to talk.
- Put away all distractions like your phone or computer.
- Sit/stand at the same level.
- Make gentle eye contact.
- Speak slowly and calmly.

► **Try inviting like this:**

“Could we talk for a moment?”

“Would it be okay to chat in private for a second?”

IF PERSON IS WILLING TO TALK

► **Start by saying something like this:**

“I’m worried about you because…”

“I care about you.”

“I’m concerned about you.”

“I’ve noticed _____ and it just doesn’t seem like you.”

► **Then, try asking something like this:**

“You haven’t seemed like yourself – is everything OK?”

“Is everything OK at home/school/work?”

“How are you?”

“How are you really?”

IF PERSON IS UNWILLING TO TALK

► **Then, try saying something like this:**

“OK, but I want you to know you can talk to me if you ever need to. I may not have all the answers, but I can help you find them.”

“I understand things might be tough for you right now, and that talking about them might be really hard. I respect your decision, but it could help to have someone help you sort it out, so please know I’m here for you should you change your mind.”

“It seems like you have been carrying around this burden by yourself, but the good news is that you don’t have to do that anymore. There are people and resources here on campus to help you.”

“Is there someone else you might feel more comfortable talking to instead?”

2

Listen

- Listen without interrupting. Then listen some more.
- While listening, make sure to keep eye contact, nod along and be encouraging.
- Don’t immediately offer solutions. Avoid giving advice or making assumptions.

- Validate how they are feeling.
- Don’t diagnose their problem.
- Ask open ended questions to encourage the conversation.

► **Start by saying something like this:**

“Take your time, there’s no rush.”

“I know talking about this can be difficult.”

“I’m here to listen.”

“I know it’s possible you might have never talked about this with anyone before.”

► **Then, try asking something like this:**

“How’s that affecting you?”

“What’s that like for you?”

“Can you share more about _____?”

“Can I just check that I have understood you correctly? I’m hearing that _____.”

“What you’re saying is really important and I want to be sure I’m hearing you right. It seems like _____. Do I have this right?”

3

Ask

- Use short sentences.
- Be calm.
- Don’t make it about you.

► **Avoid saying:**

“I know how you feel.”

“Here’s how you should solve your problem.”

“That’s foolish – don’t talk like that.”

“I promise I won’t tell anybody that you are suicidal.”

“Other people have it worse than you.”

► **Start by saying something like this:**

“I know it can be hard to talk about this – thank you for trusting me with it.”

“You are not alone. There are people who can help.”

“I’m here for you, and I’m hopeful that we can find a way to get through this together.”

“I may not be able to understand what it’s like to be in your situation, or exactly how you feel, but I do care about you, and I want to help.”

“I want you to know I am here for you.”

► **Then, try asking directly about suicide**
Be gently persistent

“It really sounds like you have a lot going on at the moment. I know that people who feel this way sometimes have thoughts of suicide. Have you had any thoughts of death?”

“Have you recently thought about ending your life?”

IF YES, ASK:

“Have you thought about how you would end your life?”

- Do not leave them alone.
- Call Campus Police or CALL 911.

IF NO, SAY:

“OK. I’m glad to hear that this isn’t something you’re struggling with right now. But if you ever notice those types of thoughts I want you to know I want to help you.”

“I still think it would be helpful for you to talk to someone. Remember, you don’t have to be feeling suicidal to benefit from getting help. Let’s not wait or just hope things get better on their own. Let’s get you the help you need. There are people and resources who can help you get through this.”

4

Support

► **Start by saying something like this:**

“What steps have you already taken or how have you tried to get help?”

“What can I do to support you right now?”

“What is making it difficult for you to get help? Could I help make that easier for you?”

► **Then, try saying something like this:**

“Would it be OK if I check back in with you to see how you are doing?”

“Would you be willing to check back in with me to let me know how things are going for you?”

“Could we make a phone call over to CCS together to see how they might be able to help?”

5

Follow Up

- If you say you will follow up, be sure to do so.
- Continue to offer resources and options for support as appropriate.

- Continue to take all suicide threats seriously.

Emergency: 911

University Police: 614-292-2121

Student Life Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) (students): 614-292-5766

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (faculty and staff): 1-800-678-6265

24-Hour Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Local: 614-221-5445

National: 800-273-8255 (TALK)

Crisis Text Line: Text 4HOPE to 741741

Call for yourself or for someone else.