Tips for responding with compassion

Listen sensitively and carefully.
Vulnerable students need you to listen and help. Ask directly how they are doing or if they have thoughts of harming themselves or others.

Trust your gut.
If you are concerned about a student, talk to your department chair, supervisor, or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Connect with campus resources.
We have other professionals and campus resources dedicated to helping you and students. You can start with the AWARE network or any of the other resources listed in this guide.

Your firsthand knowledge and personal connection to this student is valuable in supporting them.

Take care.
Helping a distressed student can take a toll on you. Please think of your own wellbeing and seek support if needed.

Stay safe.
Safety is always our top priority. Call 911 if a student poses an immediate threat to self or others.

Share what you know.
State and federal laws and University policies mandate reporting in some situations. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) allows faculty and staff to report student health and safety concerns to relevant campus offices trained to handle situations with sensitivity and care. Taking appropriate action does not violate a student’s privacy. In some instances, employees have an obligation to report behavior, visit oeo.wsu.edu for more information on reporting requirements.

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RECOGNIZE

“Not sure what, but something’s wrong.”

Disturbing content in paper/emails
Decline in academic performance
Excessive absenteeism
Irrational or bizarre behavior
Sudden change in demeanor (e.g. an overreached, disengaged, student forgetful, etc.)

EXPRESS CONCERN AND CARE

Express concern and care
Give an example of a time that the student’s behavior has worried you
Listen to and believe student’s responses
Be supportive and encouraging if student agrees to get help

URGENT: 911
Advice and consultation: Counseling and Psychological Services 509-335-4351
WSU Police 509-335-8548
Office of the Dean of Students 509-335-5757
Academic Dean

REPORT

Inappropriate outbursts

REPORT

RESPOND

REFER

REPORT

Family or personal tragedy, loss, or crisis (illness or death of family member, job loss, breakup, legal difficulties, etc.)

Frequent or extended absences
Decline in academic performance
Mentions relationship, financial or other challenges
Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
Exhaustion/tamfit, excessive worry, sleeping/ eating problems

EXPRESS CONCERN AND CARE

Express concern and care
Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming
Listen to and believe student’s responses
Be supportive and encouraging if student agrees to get help

URGENT: 911
Advice and consultation: Counseling and Psychological Services 509-335-4351
Dean of Students 509-335-5757
Student Legal Services 509-335-9510
International Programs 509-335-2547

Office of the Dean of Students 509-335-5757
AWARE Network aware.wsu.edu
Academic Dean

RECOGNIZE

Medical and mental health concerns (Sudden or long-term illness, depression, or anxiety)

Direct statements about medical or mental health concerns
Frequent or extended absences
Excessive fatigue, falling asleep in class
Significant decline in appearance, behavior or personal hygiene
Noticeable weight loss or gain
Instability, agitation, or anxiety
Emotionless facial expression, slow speech, difficulty concentrating, expressing feelings of helplessness or worthlessness
Crying or tearfulness
Unusually withdrawn or animated behavior
Disorganized speech, rapid or slurred speech, confusion
Decline in academic performance, leaving class abruptly
Extreme disorganization or erratic academic performance

EXPRESS CONCERN AND CARE

Express concern and care
Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming
Listen to and believe student’s responses

URGENT: 911
Advice and consultation: Counseling and Psychological Services 509-335-3575
Counseling and Psychological Services 509-335-4351
Office of the Dean of Students 509-335-5757
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Self-harm, suicide, safety risk

Written or verbal statements presupposed with themes of death, suicide, or harming self or others
Fresh cuts, scratches, or other wounds
Withdrawal from activities and friends
Statements of hopelessness such as, “I hate this life” or “Everyone is better off without me”
Statements to the effect that the student is “going away for a long time”
Physical or verbal aggression that is directed at self, others, animals, or property
May accompany other types of emotional distress (see medical and mental health concerns above)

EXPRESS CONCERN AND CARE

Express concern and care
Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming
Always take suicidal statements, thoughts or behaviors very seriously
If you suspect a student may be thinking about suicide, seek immediate consultation
If possible, ask directly about their thoughts and plans
Call 911 if there is a direct threat to student’s safety or the safety of others (consult with the AWARE Network if you are unsure)

URGENT: 911
Advice and consultation: Counseling and Psychological Services 509-335-4351
WSU Police 509-335-8548
Office of the Dean of Students 509-335-5757
AWARE Network aware.wsu.edu

RECOGNIZE

Alcohol or other drug abuse

Intoxicated in class or at meetings/events
Excessive sleepiness or hyper energy
Decline in academic performance
Reference to alcohol or drug use in conversations, papers, projects, etc.
Deterioration in physical appearance (bloodshot eyes, dilated pupils, trembling hands, etc.)
Unusual smells on breath, body or clothes

EXPRESS CONCERN AND CARE

Express concern or care
Give an example of a time that the student’s behavior has worried you
Listen to and believe student’s responses
Be supportive and encouraging if the student agrees to get help

URGENT: 911
Advice and consultation: Counseling and Psychological Services 509-335-4351
Health & Wellness Services 509-335-3375

Office of the Dean of Students 509-335-5757
AWARE Network aware.wsu.edu
Academic Dean

RECOGNIZE

Disruptive Conduct: Inappropriate outbursts or persistent interruptions, continued arguing beyond the scope of academic debate, use of threats

EXPRESS CONCERN AND CARE

Express concern and care
Explain the impact of student’s behavior on the group or class
Clarity or outline your expectations
Contact police if student does not respond to your intervention and continues serious disorderly conduct and threatening behavior

URGENT: 911
Advice and consultation: Counseling and Psychological Services 509-335-4351

Office of the Dean of Students 509-335-5757
AWARE Network aware.wsu.edu
Academic Dean

RECOGNIZE

Crime victimization, hazing

Appears fearful, anxious, nervous or angry
Withdrawal from activities and friends
Visible injuries or bruises
Cuts, brands, or scars with a distinct pattern (e.g. Greek alphabet letter)
Unusual absence or damage to personal items such as laptop, cell phone, etc.

EXPRESS CONCERN AND CARE

Express concern and care
Listen to and believe the student’s responses
Do not interpret student’s emotions as evidence of crime
Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming
Say things like, “I’m sorry that happened, but I’m glad you’re safe now.”

URGENT: 911
Advice and consultation: Counseling and Psychological Services 509-335-4351
Dean of Students 509-335-5757
AWARE Network aware.wsu.edu
Academic Dean

Violence, harassment, interpersonal/sexual assault

Appears fearful or unusually anxious about pleasing others
Apologizers or makes excuses for partner/ other’s behavior
Mentions partner/other’s possessiveness, jealousy or violent behavior, but may laugh it off
Visible injuries or bruises
Frequent mishaps or injuries with illogical or no explanations
Crying or leaving when sexual violence, domestic violence, stalking or child abuse is brought up

EXPRESS CONCERN AND CARE

Express concern and care
Listen to and believe student’s responses
Do not interpret student’s emotions as evidence of assault or violence
Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming
Recommend (or, if necessary, insist upon) medical intervention
Provide information on resources and reporting options

URGENT: 911
Advice and consultation: Counseling and Psychological Services 509-335-4351
Health & Wellness Services 509-335-3375

Office of the Dean of Students 509-335-5757
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Bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, cyberstalking

Internet trolling, name-calling or harassment
Communications that continue after being told to stop
Threatening to release private information/photos
Verbal abuse, intimidation of a sexual nature, unwarranted sexual flirtations
Demand for sexual favors by peer or supervisor accompanied by implied or overt threat concerning an individual’s academic status or employment
Display of sexually suggestive pictures or cartoons in workplace, residence halls or online
Continued jokes, language, gestures or remarks of a sexual nature

EXPRESS CONCERN AND CARE

Express concern and care
Listen to and believe student’s responses
Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming
Encourage targeted student to save all digital communications as downloaded files and/or hard copies
Provide information on resources and reporting options

URGENT: 911
Advice and consultation: Counseling and Psychological Services 509-335-4351
Alternatives to Violence of the Palouse 509-332-4557

Office of the Dean of Students 509-335-5757
AWARE Network aware.wsu.edu
Academic Dean