



**MENTAL
HEALTH**
QUICK GUIDE FOR
FACULTY & STAFF



AS HUMANS, we can have a tremendous impact on individual well-being. Distress has been elevated by the pandemic. Please use this guide as a way to get a sense of what individuals are experiencing, and how to best support them.

For questions and consultation, contact DSU Counseling Center at counseling.center@dsu.edu or DSU Human Resources at humanresources@dsu.edu.



MENTAL
HEALTH

+ HOW DO I LET SOMEONE KNOW I CARE ABOUT THEM, AND THEY CAN TALK TO ME?

Tell them right from the start.

Take time during your first interaction to acknowledge how important mental well-being is. Tell them you care about their well-being, and you want them to get the support they need. Make sure to highlight you are a source of support, and how they can connect with you if they need.

+ HOW CAN I BE RESPONSIVE TO INDIVIDUAL'S NEEDS?

Talk about the challenges

Don't ignore the obvious.

Talk about COVID. Talk about pervasive social injustice. Talk about the complex emotions many are feeling. Talk about mental health. This is an opportunity for you to establish norms of open communication and psychological safety.

Humanize the situation.

Emotions happen. Stress happens. We all experience discomfort at times. Consider sharing how you cope with your emotions.

Be flexible.

Continue to challenge individuals intellectually. At times individuals may need more support than rigor. Be patient with students, faculty, staff, and yourself.

Make space for well-being

Be Proactive.

Have conversations about well-being early and often. This normalizes the process of accessing help and working on our mental health. Ask students, faculty, and staff what kind of support they need from you.

Create space/time for emotional expression.

Uncertainty is uncomfortable and can cause significant distress. Your role is to be a warm, supportive presence for those who are struggling.

Practice self-care (and talk about it!).

Supporting individuals' well-being can take a toll on our own. If this happens, please do what you need to recover and recharge.

When others see you practicing self-care it helps them realize their community makes it a priority. Remember that the Employee Assistance Program is available to you as a confidential resource.

Instill hope.

Hope boosts our spirits during difficult times. When appropriate, create space for humor, and share uplifting news.

Facilitate connection

Connect them to other support resources.

You are a wonderful first source of support for students and colleagues, but you shouldn't do it alone. Dakota State University has resources dedicated to mental health and well-being. Connect individuals to these resources to supplement the support you are already providing.

If possible, connect individually.

It can be difficult to gauge how students and colleagues are faring without seeing them in person, or only seeing them in a group context. Connect one-on-one through private conversation. This creates a safe space for individuals to share their struggles with you.

Connect individuals to each other.

Offer individuals an opportunity to connect informally. Introduce a new colleague to someone they don't know. Connect students to clubs and organizations. Promote on and off campus activities.





HOW TO RESPOND TO AN INDIVIDUAL IN DISTRESS **FOLLOW THESE 5 GOLDEN RULES FROM [Bethere.org](https://www.bethere.org)**

1. SAY WHAT YOU SEE

Be direct.

Let the individual know you've noticed a change and you want to talk. Say what you have noticed and avoid making any judgement or assumptions. Start in a setting where the person will feel safe to be open and honest. Follow-up with the Counseling Center for students or Human Resources for faculty and staff if you still have concerns.

Everyone is distressed.

Operate under the assumption that anyone you're interacting with is experiencing significant challenges and feeling distressed, whether they're showing it or not. Err on the side of checking in with individuals frequently and warmly. We all could benefit from creating a culture of care in which we check-in with each other, acknowledge and make space for our whole, complex selves.

Indicators of distress

Unwanted changes and/or ongoing challenges in their lives.

In general, distress occurs when the amount of stress exceeds the perceived resources one has to handle it. Sometimes you won't see any overt signs of distress, but you'll still be aware of many things happening in the world that may be causing distress in individuals' lives. Distress is not always obvious, but it's still there.

Most distress comes from the loss (or even anticipated loss) of important mental health elements,

such as: connection, status, health, purpose/meaning, stability/security, hope, community, time, comfort, joy, peace, identity.

What are the signs someone might be struggling with their mental health?

What is important is to recognize when the mental distress becomes a mental health problem. Someone may be struggling with their mental health if you notice a change in their thoughts, feelings and behaviors that is:

1. Intense (stronger and more persistent than usual ups and downs)
2. Long-lasting (usually two weeks or more)
3. Negatively affecting their daily routine, relationships, or responsibilities

Behaviors that are having a big impact in someone's life:

- Withdrawing from activities (e.g. dropping out of extra-curriculars)
- Changes in school performance
- Quitting jobs, avoiding social situations
- Impulsive behaviors (e.g. aggression, recklessness)
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Not taking care of personal hygiene
- Increased use of drugs or alcohol
- Repetitive/anxious behaviors that seem out of control
- Self-harming behaviors

Feelings that are intense and long-lasting:

- Overwhelming anger, worthlessness, sadness
- Showing no interest in things that used to feel important, or feeling "numb"
- A very high or "manic" mood such as extreme excitement or overactivity
- Rapid mood swings, cycling through many different intense emotions
- Extreme worry or anxiety that prevents participation in important activities

Thoughts that express intense hopelessness, worthlessness, or things that aren't there:

- "What's the point?" "Nothing matters." "They'd be better off if I was gone."
- "Everything sucks." "I hate myself." "I can't do anything." "No one cares."
- Talking about seeing or hearing things that (to everyone else) aren't there (e.g. hallucinations)
- Expressing thoughts and beliefs that don't make sense to anyone else (e.g. possibly delusions)

Signs of distress

Academic/occupational

- Repeated absences and/or a decline in quality of work or performance
- Essays or creative work that include disturbing content and/or themes of despair, hopelessness, suicide, violence, death, or aggression
- Multiple requests for extensions or grades or job duties

Physical

- Marked changes in physical appearance
- Repeatedly appearing sick, excessively fatigued
- Obvious change in mental state and/or apparent intoxication
- Other behavior that does not seem to match the context/setting

Inter/Intrapersonal

- Direct comments about distress, feelings of overwhelm, family problems, etc.
- Signs/expressions of hopelessness, worthlessness, or shame
- Drastic change in interactions with others, acting out of character
- Expressions of concern by peers
- Implied or direct threats of harm to self/others
- Self-injurious, destructive, or reckless

2. SHOW YOU CARE

Be warm.

We all need to know others care about us. Showing you care about an individual's well-being can have a positive impact on their mental well-being, and increase the likelihood they seek help if needed.

Build trust.

Ask what they need. The kind of support a student needs will change based on the context, and the only way to know what they need from you is to ask. Your words are powerful. What you say and how you say it can signal to students not only that you care about them, but that you are also a safe person to reach out to.

3. HEAR THEM OUT. BE THERE TO LISTEN.

Your priority is to provide a space for the individual to speak and to be heard. They need you to be warm, compassionate, and fully present. Listen patiently as you try to understand where they are coming from and take time to affirm their emotional experience. Your full presence can be healing.

Be curious.

Your job is to be an active listener. Ensure the individual feels heard by asking follow-up and open-ended questions that might help you understand them. Most importantly, listen and let them speak. “Awkward” silences are often, actually, “productive” silences that demonstrate both the safety of your presence and your willingness to be patient and giving with your time.

Share wisely.

It is typically not helpful to share your experiences while an individual is sharing theirs. Your primary role is to be present for the individual, validate their experience, and connect them to additional support resources. Sometimes, usually after the individual has finished sharing, it can be helpful for them to hear about your own experiences with mental health and well-being, including positive interactions you have had with mental health resources.

4. KNOW YOUR ROLE**Safety First.**

Do not hesitate to call Public Safety (911) for help. Your safety, and that of our students and community, is our top priority.

Consult.

Call the counseling center or human resources for further consultation whenever you need. These resources can give you advice or help take over a situation that has escalated and requires mobilization of many resources.

Set clear boundaries.

Set boundaries around anything that helps to preserve your own mental well-being. You can't give individuals the support they need if you are suffering. If a student or colleague starts treating you like a therapist then you've clearly done a good job of building rapport, but make sure you connect them to professional resources that can meet their needs. We want all our students, faculty and staff to have many layers of emotional support instead of relying on just one individual to meet these needs.

Warmth.

Your role is to be a warm, supportive presence for the individual who is struggling. You are not there to fix anything or give unsolicited advice. Acknowledge difficult emotions, and instill hope that, with help, things can get better.

Normalize help-seeking.

College is challenging. COVID is challenging. Life is challenging. To get through it we all need multiple sources of support. One keyway to support students and colleagues is to normalize and encourage help-seeking. You can praise them for reaching out to you for help.

5. CONNECT TO HELP

Determine need.

Does the individual need resources for social connection, specialized professional help, or is this an emergency?

Reaffirm your connection.

Sometimes communicating to someone that they may benefit from professional help can feel like they are being passed off as a problem or burden. Prevent this by explicitly reaffirming your connection with them.

Setting expectations about resources.

Help them be realistic about what to expect from the resource and on what timeline. No single resource can meet all needs. It often takes patience to access a resource, and persistence to experience the benefits.

Help them connect to resources.

Individuals in distress may need help connecting with a resource. Showing them how to access a resource increases the likelihood that they actually do. Help-seeking requires knowledge and skill sets that may be new to them. Your help in demonstrating the help-seeking process teaches them what it's actually like, and can build their confidence to do it on their own in the future.

Follow-up.

Reconnect with them to make sure that they successfully connected with the resources that you suggested. This reminds them that you care about them, and helps you understand where they're at in the process of building their support system.

Resource was not what they needed.

This is a normal part of the process to get help. Ask follow-up questions to understand what about the resource didn't fit their needs, and to determine which other resources may be a better fit.

Severity of situation unclear.

It's possible the severity of the situation won't be obvious, and you won't know which resource is the best fit. In that case always consult with the counseling center or human resources.

+ WHAT YOU CAN SAY

This is not a script, but rather examples of what you might say in a conversation. It is important you use language that feels natural to you and fits the context of your interaction with the individual.

Say what you see

"Hi _____, I just wanted to check in. I've noticed _____, and wanted to see if you want to talk about it."

"I've noticed _____ and I want you to know I am here to support you."

"You seem distracted today. What's going on?"

"Hey, it seems like you're having a hard time. I am here to support you if you want to talk about it."

Show you care

"I care about your well-being, so I just wanted to check in to see how you're doing. I want to know how I can be the most helpful for you."

"Thanks for taking some time to talk with me. I wanted to have this conversation because I care about how you're doing and want you to know that I'm here to support you in the ways you need."

"How can I be helpful?"

Hear them out. Focus on listening.

"Wow, I'd like to hear more about that."

"I'm sorry, that seems like a difficult situation to be in, what is that like for you?"

"That sounds really hard, how is that affecting your life?"

Know your role

"I'm sorry you have not found resources to help. Maybe I can help you?"

"It seems you have been trying some things. Have you talked to your doctor or a therapist about this?"

"I will be here to listen as your friend."

Connect to help

"Thank you for being so open with me. I want to continue this conversation, and I also want to make sure that you're getting the help you need. I really think you may find _____ to be a very helpful and comforting resource."

"Reaching out to _____ for the first time can be a little confusing. Would you like help connecting to _____?"

"I really think _____ can address some of your needs, but sometimes it takes several tries to find a place that is the best fit. For any reason if it doesn't feel like a match, then ask what other resources may be a better fit for your needs."

Tip: Offering the name of someone from the resource can help the individual to feel more comfortable when they reach out.



Take care of your

BRAIN



When in doubt about an individual's well-being, consider these options:

- 911
- Campus Safety
- College Dean's Office
- Counseling Center
- DSU Health Nurse
- Human Resources
- Residence Life

Privacy and information sharing:

Professionals affiliated with Confidential Resources will gladly receive information from you about an individual's well-being, but, due to FERPA, HIPAA, or professional ethics, licensed healthcare and mental health providers are often unable to provide reciprocal information to you regarding the individual. This can be frustrating but is an essential ethical and legal safeguard for student, faculty, and staff privacy and confidentiality. Campus Security Authority and Mandated Reporter regulations may also apply to many or all of the resources listed in this guide.



+ PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

The individual is showing signs of distress. This is not an emergency, but I'm concerned about them and want to get them more help soon.

Vice President for Student Affairs
(605) 256-5124

Provost
(605) 256-5136

Safety Resource Officer
(605) 270-0055

On Campus Nurse
(605) 256-5864

Counseling and Center
(605) 256-5121

Title IX
(605) 256-7481

Ombudsperson
dsu-ombudsperson@dsu.edu

Disability Services
(605) 256-5121

Trojan Tutoring
(605) 256-5900

Financial Aid Office
(605) 256-5152

Human Resources
(605) 256-5647

Employee Assistance Program

1. Call (833) 955-3043. You'll speak to a counseling professional who can listen to your concerns and guide you to the appropriate services.
2. Visit guidanceresources.com and enter the WebID southdakota.
3. Download the GuidanceNow® and MyStrength® mobile app and enter the WebID southdakota.

+ URGENT RESOURCES

The individual's behavior is dangerous, reckless, or threatening to themselves or others.

FOR ALL EMERGENCY SITUATIONS:

Call 911 *(or 9-911 from a university phone)*

URGENT CONSULTATION RESOURCES

Counseling Center (605) 256-5121 *(during office hours only)*

Human Resources (605) 256-5647 *(during office hours only)*

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800) 273-8255 *(24/7 free and confidential)*

South Dakota Helpline Call 211

SOCIAL CONNECTION RESOURCES

I'm not concerned for the individual's safety, but they're having a hard time and could use some support.

Community Center (605) 256-5837

Madison Community www.amazingmadison.com

Residence Life (605) 256-5146

Student Engagement and Leadership (605) 256-5244



+ TAKING CARE OF YOU

Be There for Yourself

Learn to recognize your limits and take care of yourself. Your mental health is just as important as anyone else's. Learn to recognize when you're struggling, devote some time to self-care and reach out for help when you need it.

Signs You're Stressed

Often, we become hyper-aware to signs a loved one is stressed, but do you also pick up on your own tell-tale signs? Here are a few common signs that you're stressed out:

- Mood swings, or crying more often and more easily
- Feeling helpless, overwhelmed, inadequate, unable to cope, or burned out
- Talking and hanging out with friends less
- Difficulty making decisions, solving problems, concentrating or remembering things
- Feeling restless, tired, or having a hard time falling asleep
- Eating more than usual, or not feeling hungry
- Smoking, drinking, or doing drugs more than usual
- Headaches, increased blood pressure, or increased susceptibility to colds, flu, or infection

It's normal to get stressed. Setting clear boundaries may help avoid excessive stress, but it's vital to check in with yourself once in a while and carve out some time to unwind.

Take care of your mental health.

It's important to take care of your mental health just like you do your physical health, but being there for yourself is about more than stereotypical self-care activities (like journaling or treating yourself to a bubble bath). Maintaining your own mental health looks different for everyone and it usually isn't a shopping spree or an Instagram-worthy cupcake. It's about noticing when you're stressed or struggling, knowing what you need to be healthy, and taking the time to do it.

1. CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF.

Check in with yourself from time to time to see how you're feeling and think about what makes you happy.

Ask yourself:

- What are signs (thoughts, feelings, behaviors) of poor mental health for me?
- What are a few things I like to do that recharge my batteries?
- Who can I talk to if I'm struggling?

Your answers to these questions can change over time, so remember to check in with yourself regularly. If changes in your thoughts, feelings or behaviors become intense, long-lasting, and are having a big impact on your life, these are signs of a mental health problem. Show yourself some love and reach out for help.

2. SHOW YOURSELF SOME LOVE.

Make time to do the things that make you happy.

- Relax: Read a book, listen to music, stargaze, watch a movie, take a nap.
- Pamper yourself: Run a hot bath or shower, paint your nails, sleep in.
- Laugh: at anything.
- Be active: Walk, skate, bike, board, play sports, get outside.
- Connect to: land, family, friends.
- Get creative: Sketch, write poetry, paint, play music.
- Get your hands dirty: Cook, bake, garden, clean.
- Reflect: Meditate, journal, spiritual or cultural practices.

Life is busy so sometimes self care is all about quality over quantity. If you're having trouble fitting in self care, make a point of eating well, sleeping well and savoring a bath or shower. To get a good night's sleep try to stick to a regular schedule, make your room a sleep haven (blinds, fan, whatever you need), stop staring at screens before winding down and instead create a relaxing bedtime routine like reading or meditating. Oh, and avoid having a big meal, caffeine or nicotine a few hours before bed!

3. REACH OUT FOR HELP.

If you notice that you're really struggling with your mental health - if your struggles become intense, long-lasting, and are having a big impact on your life - reach out for help.

Even just talking to someone can help. Remember, no problem is too small! You could reach out to a friend or family member, a trusted teacher, coach, elder or maybe you'd rather talk to a professional or someone anonymously through hotlines, like SD Helpline 211. The main thing is you're not alone; there is help.

Content for this quick guide adapted from bethere.org

