



Identify

Below are some common signs of psychological distress with which it would be helpful to be familiar. While not always indicative of an underlying mental-health problem, students exhibiting these signs do warrant your attention.

| ACADEMICS | BEHAVIOR | APPEARANCE |
|--|--|--|
| Increased / significant lateness | Frequent entering / exiting of the classroom | Noticeable weight gain or loss |
| Increased / significant absenteeism | Lack of social interaction in class and unresponsiveness to instructor | Disheveled appearance: poor grooming, poor hygiene, presence of body odor, soiled clothes, disorganized appearance |
| Missed, late, or incomplete assignments | Agitated, restless behaviors: hyperactivity, pacing, fidgeting | Dilated or constricted pupils |
| Lack of participation in class | Difficulty concentrating | Sweaty or flushed skin when there is no exertion taking place |
| Missed appointments during your office hours | Dazed expression | Absence of facial expression |
| Displays of grandiosity | Falling asleep in class | Smelling of alcohol |
| Inappropriately relating all assignments to his / her self | Noticeably slow or rapid speech | Shaking, trembling, shivering when it is not cold |
| Disorganized presentation of information, expansive writing, tangential thoughts, etc. | Avoidance of eye contact | |
| | Irritable or aggressive behavior | |
| | Marked shifts in mood from one class to the next, or shifts which occur rapidly in the same class period | |
| | Expressed feelings of worthlessness, shame, humiliation, hopelessness, or despair | |
| | Tearfulness in class or during office-hour meetings | |
| | Impulsive or risky behaviors, such as gambling, excessive spending, or unsafe sex | |
| | Sexually provocative behaviors | |



Approach

It's good to talk to students whenever you notice multiple or extreme signs of psychological distress. If you handle these conversations with concern and respect, students will likely be appreciative of you for reaching out to them. Below are some tips for these conversations.

- » Approach students in a supportive manner.
- » Focus on things you have directly observed, showing curiosity and concern. Refrain from making judgments or diagnoses.
- » Invite students to identify what they think is preventing them from performing as well as they can, attending class, completing assignments, etc.
- » Ask open-ended questions instead of yes/no questions.
- » Demonstrate respect for issues students show discomfort discussing.
- » Maintain appropriate boundaries, remaining mindful not to step into the role of a counselor.
- » Offer a referral to campus mental health services (such as the counseling center) if and when you feel that the student's issues warrant it.

Refer

You've made it this far, now it's time to really make a difference. The following techniques will help you make a successful referral to the appropriate local mental health resource (such as the counseling center).

- » Explain that personal counselors are available to help and support students during difficult times.
- » Explain that it has been helpful for other students with similar issues to have someone they can speak to in confidence.
- » Describe your school's counseling services, including information on cost, location, appointments, etc.
- » Provide students with contact information for the campus mental health services office (such as the counseling center).
- » Know someone at your campus mental health services office to whom you feel comfortable referring students.
- » Offer to help students make appointments with the campus mental health services office, or offer to walk them over.