

Dealing with Distressed Individuals:

What is my role?

As a leader, you are in a good position to identify someone who may be emotionally distressed. While some of this is expected, especially during stressful times, you may notice someone acting in a way that is inconsistent with your normal experience with that person. You may be able to be a resource in times of difficulty. Your expression of interest and concern may be critical factors in helping the individual re-establish emotional equilibrium. You may also be able to alert the university so that an appropriate intervention can be made.

Possible Signs of Distress	
Be Aware of	Take Immediate Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marked change in performance or behavior • Excessive absence or tardiness • Has trouble eating and/or sleeping • Disruptive behavior • Exaggerated emotional response that is obviously inappropriate to the situation • Depressed or lethargic mood • Hyperactivity or very rapid speech • Marked change in personal hygiene • Excessive confusion • Dramatic weight loss or gain • Dependency (individual hangs around or makes excessive appointments to see you) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strange or bizarre behavior indicating loss of contact with reality • Feelings of helplessness or hopelessness • Isolation from friends, family, or co-workers • Gives away prized possessions • Prepares for death by making a will and final arrangements • Aggressiveness behavior • Verbal or written references to suicide • Verbal or written references to homicide or assaultive behavior
How to Respond	
The DOs and the DON'Ts	Referrals and Resources
<p>THE DOs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DO speak with the employee privately • DO let them know you are concerned about their welfare • DO express your concern in behavioral, non-judgmental terms • DO tell them you are willing to help • DO listen carefully to what they are troubled about • DO help them explore options • DO suggest resources • DO make referrals to the appropriate campus department • DO point out that help is available and seeking such help is a sign of strength and courage, rather than of weakness or failure • DO maintain clear and consistent boundaries and expectation • DO recognize your limits • DO document the interaction or incident <p>THE DON'Ts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DON'T promise confidentiality • DON'T judge or criticize • DON'T ignore the unusual behavior • DON'T make the problem your own • DON'T involve yourself beyond the limits of your time or skill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a crisis situation, call 911 • Contact UI Threat Assessment Team: 319-384-2955 uitat@uiowa.edu • To consult regarding an employee, contact the UI Employee Assistance Program (EAP): 319-335-2085 eaphelp@uiowa.edu • Community 24 hour a day Crisis Line: 855-325-4296 • Contact your Human Resources Representative <p>Visit these websites for more information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Threat Assessment Program: https://hr.uiowa.edu/threat-assessment • The University of Iowa Department of Public Safety: police@uiowa.edu • The UI Employee Assistance Program (EAP): https://hr.uiowa.edu/well-being/employee-assistance-program

Adapted from materials from Ohio State University, The University of Colorado at Boulder and Penn State University. Used with permission



Human Resources

UI Employee Assistance Program
 319-335-2085 or EAPhelp@uiowa.edu
 Website: hr.uiowa.edu/ueiap