

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS IN DISTRESS

At College of Western Idaho (CWI), we strive to create a culture of wellness and caring, and you play a valuable role in that! As a student or employee of the College, you may see signs or changes that indicate an individual is experiencing distress. While you are not expected to serve as a mental health professional, there are simple steps you can take to promote their well being.

Reduce the **Stigma**

What is stigma?

- Stigma is the negative or discriminatory attitudes others have about mental illness.
- Stigma keeps individuals from admitting they are struggling and seeking help.
- According to the American Psychiatric Association, 50+ % of people with mental illness do not seek help for their disorders due to fear of being treated differently.

What you can do:

- Share a personal story to normalize the experience and encourage help-seeking behavior.
- Refer the individual to academic and support resources on campus.
- Encourage the individual to practice self-care, or share examples of how you practice self-care.

On-Campus Resources

Academic Advising (cwi.edu/academic-advising)

Counseling & Wellness Services (cwi.edu/support-resources/counseling-wellness-services)

Center for New Directions (cwi.edu/academic-resources/center-new-directions)

International Student Resources (cwi.edu/apply-cwi/international-students)

Success Coaching (cwi.edu/support-resources/success-coaching)

Student Handbook (cwi.edu/student-handbook)

Case Management (cwi.edu/current-students/case-management)

Student Disability Services (cwi.edu/support-resources/student-disability-services)

Veterans & Military Family Services (cwi.edu/support-resources/veterans-military-family-services)

Title IX Information (cwi.edu/support-resources/title-ix-information)

For more tools on how to assist struggling students, CWI employees can take our self-paced, brief training: Supporting Students in Distress: A Guide for Mental Health Situations

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Off-Campus Resources

For a Medical or Mental Health Emergency call 911

OR Idaho Crisis and Suicide Hotline call 988

[24-Hour Resources](http://cwi.edu/current-students/local-counseling-resources) (cwi.edu/current-students/local-counseling-resources)

[Local Counseling Resources](http://cwi.edu/current-students/local-counseling-resources) (cwi.edu/current-students/local-counseling-resources)

[Safety Net Resources](http://cwi.edu/support-resources/safety-net-resources) (cwi.edu/support-resources/safety-net-resources)

(for basic need support including food and financial insecurities)

Tips for Helping Someone in Distress

- 1. Safety first.** The safety of our campus community is a priority. When an individual displays potentially violent or suicidal thoughts or behaviors, do not hesitate to call for help.
- 2. Find a private space to speak with the individual.** Use a calm voice and a non-confrontational approach. Do not promise confidentiality. The individual may reveal things you need to share with others on campus.
- 3. Be fully present for the individual.** Often people just need to feel heard. Practice active, nonjudgmental listening. You don't have to agree with them to listen with respect.
- 4. Let the student know that you care and that you are concerned.** If you initiate the conversation, let the individual know what changes or concerning behaviors you have observed.
- 5. Be direct.** Ask the individual directly if they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, feeling confused, or having thoughts of harming themselves or others.
- 6. Explore available options and resources with the individual.** Follow up, and do your best to ensure the individual is connected to the necessary support.
- 7. Involve yourself only as far as you are comfortable.** Refer the individual to appropriate resources. Do not become more involved than your time or skill level permits.
- 8. Work with a team.** Always consult with your advisor, instructor, or supervisor and submit a Student of Concern report after any incident.

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Submitting a Report

Student of Concern Referrals are designed to submit information when you witness a student having significant barriers to academic success.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Mental health concerns (reported by a student or your observations of a student's behavior)
- Significant life events/changes causing distress
- Family concerns
- Financial barriers
- Food insecurity
- Housing barriers (e.g., homelessness, couch surfing, etc.)
- Illnesses or hospitalizations (beyond a cold or the flu)

Before submitting a report:

1. **Let the student know you are planning to submit a report.** Individuals may respond best when they are expecting outreach from the College. (e.g., "It sounds like you have a lot going on in your life right now. There are resources on campus that may be able to help. I would like to submit a report and have someone on campus reach out to you.")
2. **If the student is adamant they do not want you to submit a report,** let them know you need to document your conversation. Note in the report the student did not want you to submit one.

Student of Concern Referral Form

(cwi.edu/support-resources/student-care-conduct)

Self Care for After Helping Someone in Distress

Stressful interactions with students can take their toll on even the most resilient of us. Be sure to take some time to care for yourself after assisting a distressed student. Examples of self-care include:

- Physical activity, debriefing with a colleague or loved one, spending time in nature, prayer or meditation, listening to music, engaging in your favorite hobby, writing about the experience, pampering yourself in ways that are meaningful for you.
- Contact **Counseling and Wellness Services** for consultation OR **Human Resources** for information about the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), a short-term counseling and referral service provided to all benefit eligible employees.