

# THE *HEALTHY MINDS* GUIDE

A Guide for Faculty, Staff, and Residence Hall Assistants



# **THE *HEALTHY MINDS* GUIDE**

A Guide for Faculty, Staff, and Residence Hall Assistants

Counseling & Testing Services  
Student Support Services  
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# INTRODUCTION

As a member of the Southern Adventist University campus community, you are constantly interacting with students. At times, you will encounter a student who is exhibiting signs that they are struggling and requires support and care. These difficulties most often do not resolve on their own and the signals that you receive from students—difficulty managing emotions, participating academically, etc. – are often a cry for help.

Emotional and mental health challenges can make it difficult for students to be successful in the university setting and it is important that employees and student leaders feel equipped to help a student in distress. It can be overwhelming to see a student in need and feel uncertain of how to respond. This booklet describes our campus' protocol for helping a student in crisis, provides resources and tools to help students in distress, and outlines our after-hours procedure for a mental health emergency.

Our mental health guide would not be complete, however, without a section on how to care for your own mental health. Southern employees and student leaders serve students in a variety of ways that require dedication, persistence, and creativity. As you perform the dual role of serving in your role at the university, and supporting student health, it is important to take care of your own mental and emotional wellbeing.

This booklet is by no means comprehensive but serves as a brief guide to the most common challenges that students may experience with their mental health while in college. Thank you for all that you do.



# SECTION ONE:

## HELPING STUDENTS IN CRISIS

Dear Southern colleagues,

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You probably have heard, read, or even witnessed the realities of some of the mental health issues that today's university students are experiencing. As Dr. Gregg Henriques, a professor of psychology at James Madison University, states, "It is neither an exaggeration nor it is alarmist to claim that there is a mental health crisis today facing America's college students. Evidence suggests that this group has greater levels of stress and psychopathology than any [other] time in the nation's history."

As a result, all members of the Southern community need to work together to notice and communicate student behavior that could be a threat to the safety of the campus. The Office of Student Development, the Student Support Services, and Campus Safety have developed a Behavioral Intervention Team to evaluate reported behavior from both a safety and counseling perspective.

If a student's behavior leads you to wonder if he or she is a self-harm risk or a threat to others on campus, please go to the Academic Support Team web page at Retention Services: <https://www.southern.edu/academics/retentionservices/ast-referral-form.html> Fill out this form to submit the specifics of your concerns to the team.

**If the behavior needs immediate emergency intervention, call Campus Safety at 423-236-2100.**

Thank you for your observance and help in keeping our students safe.

*Dennis Negron*

Vice President for Student Development

Office Number: 423-236-2813

## CONSULTATION

If you are unsure of how to work with a specific student, you are encouraged to consult with one of the counselors in the Counseling & Testing Office (C&T). Call and inform the office manager of who you are and ask to speak with a counselor. A brief consultation may help you sort out the relevant issues and explore alternative approaches. Conveying your concern and a willingness to help (including referral) is probably the most important thing you can do. Your support, encouragement, and reassurance will be particularly valuable.

## REFERRAL

When you discuss a referral to the C&T office with a student, it is helpful for that student to hear in a clear and concise manner your concerns and why you think counseling would be helpful. To schedule an appointment, the student should call or go to the C&T office and request a counselor. A student who requests an urgent appointment will be asked to wait and talk with the next available counselor. A student who does not request an urgent appointment will be offered an appointment at the earliest available date. The referral of a student who is in crisis is facilitated by a phone call to alert the staff regarding the students' concerns and when he or she will be coming in for an appointment. Offer to walk the student to the C&T office if you doubt that he or she will follow through.



### **Urgent concerns that require immediate intervention are:**

- » Suicidal Ideation
- » Fear of losing control and possibly harming/hurting oneself or someone else
- » Sexual assault
- » Physical assault
- » Abuse
- » Recent death of a friend or family member

Counseling is confidential, except when the student presents a danger to him or herself or others, or when abuse of a child or elder is involved. Individual counseling services are designed for students who can benefit from brief counseling. If longer-term therapy is indicated, the student will be referred to an appropriate off-campus resource.

## RECOGNIZING A STUDENT IN A CRISIS

The first and most important determination you will need to make is whether the situation a student is experiencing warrants the immediate intervention of a trained professional. A crisis situation occurs when a student feels unable to cope with the circumstances of his or her life. The more helpless the individual feels, the greater the crisis will be.

## CRISIS: Psychology Emergency

### Student Symptoms:

- » Suicidal
- » Homicidal
- » Gravely Impaired
- » Confused
- » Extremely Hyperactive
- » Hallucinating
- » Not in control of

### Instructions/Response:

Contact C&T and Campus Safety Immediately

### Until help arrives:

Listen – allow student to talk

Assist – provide a quiet atmosphere

Recognize – know your limitations; clearly convey their behavior them to the student



### Important:

Don't try to solve the student's problems.

Avoid physical contact.

Do not leave student alone.

## PROTOCOL FOR AFTER-HOURS MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

(Weekdays 5pm-8am; Weekends):

### Active Emergency

If a student is in imminent harm and has or is engaging in harmful behaviors (overdose, self-harm, or other forms of suicide attempt) call

911 for immediate medical intervention. Next, call the following:

**Campus Safety:** 423.236.2100

#### Residence Hall Dean

**Thatcher:** 423.236.2904

**Thatcher South:** 423.236.2910

**Talge:** 423.236.2994

Ask for the dean on duty and let them know it is an emergency.

### Suicidal Thoughts & Behaviors

**If a residence hall student (lives on campus or in campus housing) has suicidal thoughts and/or behaviors:**

#### Protocol

Take student to the dean's office, or if they are unable to get to the office, call the dean on duty for assistance. The deans will follow protocol for after-hours screening for suicidality and decision-making for treatment, in collaboration with our counselors.



If a **non-residence hall student** (lives off campus in housing without dean coverage) has suicidal thoughts and/or behaviors.

**Protocol:**

Call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 988 (they provide resources and support).

**If the student is violent or actively harmful to self or others, call 911.**

When C&T or Campus Safety is warranted to handle a student's psychological emergency, the student's family or significant other will be contacted by appropriate SAU staff if it becomes necessary to protect the health and safety of the student or others. If the student is under 18-years old, parents **MUST** be contacted (Information may be released based upon the Family Rights and Privacy of 1974 if the knowledge of such information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other persons).





# SECTION TWO:

## SUPPORT STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

### ANXIOUS STUDENTS

Anxiety is a normal response to a perceived danger or threat to one's well-being or self-esteem. For some students, the cause of their anxiety will be clear, but for others it may be difficult to determine. Anxiety is the common mental health diagnosis in college students and so it is important to be able to recognize the symptoms and give appropriate support. It is also very treatable and so connecting students to services is key.



#### Symptoms:

- » Rapid heartbeat
- » Chest pain or discomfort
- » Dizziness
- » Sweating
- » Shaking
- » Difficulty concentrating
- » Anxious thoughts



#### Do:

- » Allow them to share their thoughts and feelings—this can relieve some of the immediate pressure.
- » Provide reassurance and a calm presence.
- » Provide a safe and quiet environment until symptoms subside.
- » Use a low, calming tone of voice to invite co-regulation.
- » Take a deep breath and invite them to breathe with you—if they are willing.
- » Encourage them to seek support at C&T.
- » Remind them that they are worth receiving help and support.



#### Don't:

- » Minimize the perceived threat to which student is responding.
- » Overwhelm them with information or ideas to “fix” their feelings.
- » Become anxious or overwhelmed yourself.

## DEPRESSED STUDENTS

Depression, and the variety of ways it manifests itself, is part of the natural emotional and physical response to life's ups and downs. With the busy and demanding life of a college student, it is safe to assume that most students will experience periods of reactive and/or situational depression. Major depression, however, involves a student's body, mood, thoughts, and behavior and affects the way they eat and sleep, the way they feel about themselves, and the way they think about things. Major depression is not a passing blue mood; it is not a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be wished or willed away. People with depression cannot merely "pull themselves together" and get better. Depression interferes with a student's ability to function in an academic and social environment. Without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks, months, or years. Appropriate treatment, however, can often help those who suffer from depression.

Be aware of the following symptoms of depression but understand that not everyone who is depressed experiences every symptom. It is also important to note that the severity of symptoms varies with individuals.

### DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS

- » Persistent sad, anxious, empty mood.
- » Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism.
- » Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness.
- » Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyed.
- » Insomnia, early morning awakening, oversleeping.
- » Appetite and weight loss, overeating and weight gain.
- » Decreased energy, fatigue.
- » Thoughts of death or suicide or suicide attempts.
- » Restlessness, irritability.
- » Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions.
- » Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain.
- » Inconsistent class attendance.
- » Decline in personal hygiene.

Students experiencing depression often respond well to a small amount of attention for a short period of time. Early intervention increases the chances of the student getting better sooner.

**Do:**

- » Let the student know you're aware that he or she is feeling down and that you would like to help.
- » Reach out and encourage the student to discuss how he or she is feeling.
- » Offer options to further investigate/manage the symptoms of depression.
- » Encourage them to seek help at C&T.
- » Contact the appropriate residence hall administrator.

**Don't:**

- » Minimize the student's feelings (everything will be better tomorrow).
- » Bombard the student with fix-it solutions or advice.
- » Be afraid to ask whether the student is suicidal if you think he or she may be.
- » Ignore remarks about suicide.

## SUICIDAL STUDENTS

It is not uncommon for students to engage in some degree of suicidal thinking. As a member of the faculty or staff, you may be in contact with students who have expressed these thoughts. It is important that you do not overlook these comments, as the student may be reaching out to you.

Suicidal risk is assessed across many symptoms and clues.

These clues fall into the following categories:

**Symptoms and Clues:**

- » Hopeless, helpless, or powerless statements: *"I just can't go on anymore," "There's nothing I can do to make things better," "Nothing matters,"* etc.
- » Statements about dying: *"I wish I was dead," "No one would miss me if I was gone," "If \_\_\_ happened I'll kill myself," "I'm tired of living," "I wouldn't mind if I died,"* etc.
- » Changes in behavior or mood: Giving away possessions, social isolation, decrease in hygiene, change in grade and class participation, crying spells, sudden, unexplained recovery from severe depression, increased substance use, increased oversleeping, apathetic mood, loss of contact with reality, and other behaviors unusual for the student.

**Do:**

- » Talk about suicide openly and directly.
- » Take charge and enact protocol (see page #7).
- » Try to sound calm and understanding.
- » Be confident, caring, and know the resources available.

**Don't:**

- » Appear shocked.
- » Tell the student that it would embarrass or hurt their family.
- » Engage in a philosophical or religious debate on the morality of suicide.
- » Ignore signs or clues.

## STUDENTS UNDER THE INFLUENCE

In a survey of college presidents, alcohol abuse was identified as the campus-life issue of greatest concern. Risks associated with substance use include academic struggles, vandalism, sexual assault and other concerns.

**Warning Signs of Alcohol and Other Substance Abuse:**

- » Impairment of mental alertness: Issues with concentration, memory, confusion, or difficulty following instructions.
- » Impairment of Mood: Depressive symptoms, extreme mood swings, agitation, unresponsive or flat responses.
- » Impairment of Motor Behavior: Hand tremors, loss of balance, loss of coordination, slurred speech, unconsciousness.
- » Impairment of Interpersonal Relationships: Significant behavioral changes in relationships and interactions with others, decrease in personal hygiene.
- » For additional information, consult Southern Adventist University's Drug and Alcohol Policy.

**Helpful:**

- » Approach the student when they are sober.
- » Communicate concern and care.
- » Encourage the student to reach out to their support system and C&T.
- » Listen closely and without judgment to their thoughts and feelings.

**Not Helpful:**

- » Convey judgment or criticism of substance use.
- » Make allowances for irresponsible behavior.
- » Ignore signs of intoxication in the classroom.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

**Panic Attacks:**

Panic attacks can be frightening for students and it is important to be a calming support to them in the moment. Review the tips on students with anxiety and here are a few additional tips:

- » Ask the student if they have a medication that they use for their panic attacks.
- » Offer an empathetic presence and offer a cold drink of water or other grounding activity.
- » Remember that a panic attack does not last indefinitely and depending on where they are in their cycle, they may be able to decelerate or it may be that they are at a place in the cycle where they need to breathe through it until it passes.
- » Reach out to C&T staff for consultation and support.

## Verbally Aggressive and/or Violent Students:



### Watch for the following symptoms

- » Hypervigilance
- » Loud and pressured verbal communication
- » Loss of control or fearfulness
- » Threatening behavior towards others
- » Aggressive behavior



### Do:

- » Stay calm, but assertive.
- » Avoid physical contact.
- » Use eye contact sparingly.
- » Leave an unobstructed exit for the perpetrator.



### Don't:

- » Ignore warning signs.
- » Engage in an argument or shouting match.
- » Become aggressive.

- » Call Campus Safety as soon as possible
- » Once the student leaves your area, be sure to debrief with your immediate supervisor or department chair. The counselors in C&T are available for consultation; do not hesitate to contact them. **Take any threats seriously and be prepared to act accordingly.**

## Additional Concerns:

If a student displays paranoid behavior or appears to be in poor contact with reality, follow the consultation and referral instructions. If the situation is emergent, follow the crisis protocol outlined in this booklet.

# SECTION THREE

## RESOURCING STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

### THE CARING CLASSROOM

Faculty are uniquely positioned in the university to offer individualized support and resourcing to students. There are several ways that you can teach and promote healthy help-seeking to your students.

- » At the beginning of your course, invite students to come to talk to you if they experience challenges during the course and repeat the message regularly.
- » Place key campus and national resources in your syllabi (C&T phone number, national suicide hotline numbers, etc.).
- » Make referrals to C&T or Retention as soon as you notice that a student is struggling.
- » Incorporate conversations and practices of self-care into your course—such as a breathing exercise at the beginning of class, debriefing time after discussing controversial subjects, journaling exercises, or even a class period outdoors.
- » Consider adjusting assignments to emphasize the importance of sleep—such as avoiding late night submission deadlines.
- » Include trigger warnings and appropriate accommodations when broaching subjects that may be difficult for some students.
- » Consider class activities where students take a picture of a hotline, scan a QR code, or put a resource into their phone to ensure that individual students have access to needed resources without feeling singled out.



#### Signs a Student is Struggling:

- » Class absences and missed assignments
- » Decline in academic performance
- » Decreased personal hygiene
- » Reduced engagement in class or inappropriate behavior in class
- » Concerning content in assignments



#### Tips:

- » Reach out to students who seem to be struggling early and check in as they go through the course.
- » Ask open-ended questions when a student is doing poorly, such as “What happened for you on this quiz?”
- » Listen carefully, withholding judgment and ensuring that they feel heard before suggesting solutions.
- » Validate their experience and thank them for sharing their experience or feelings.
- » Express personal concern with statements, such as, “I noticed you don’t seem like yourself lately.”

# SECTION FOUR:

## CARING FOR OUR CAMPUS

### CARING FOR OUR CAMPUS

This mental health guide would not be complete without a section on how to care for our faculty, staff, and student leadership. Balancing self-care, personal wellness, and the demands of the school year can be challenging so we have included a few tips and resources for caring for your own mental health.



#### **Building Wellness:**

- » Prioritize the three pillars of mental health in your life: Sleep, Exercise, and Nutrition.
- » Cultivate strong social support—Family time, trusted friendships, connected church community.
- » Create a recipe for your best self: What are the 5 things that you need each week to be balanced and content at the end of it? What quantity do you need of each and how do you know if you've lived well each week? What would it take to enter Sabbath feeling calm and well?



#### **Building Balance:**

- » Schedule daily, weekly, quarterly, and annual breaks to step away from work and experience rejuvenation.
- » Try adding up your commitments, desired wellness activities, and social time for each week and then divide by 7 to ensure that your daily expectations for yourself are doable.
- » Collaborate with a trusted person to check your expectations of yourself to ensure that they are health-promoting and kind—adjust as needed in different seasons of life.



#### **Building Resources:**

- » Ask for help! Check in with your supervisor or administrator if you are struggling and need support.
- » If you are a campus leader or administrator, create safe spaces for help-seeking conversations with your staff and check in if you notice them struggling
- » Check out the EAP resources on the SAU Human Resources page.
- » Check out local mental health providers that accept SAU insurance (found on the *Healthy Minds* QEP website).



**! IMPORTANT NUMBERS**

**COUNSELING & TESTING:**

423.236.2782

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**CAMPUS SAFETY:**

423.236.2100

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**SUICIDE AND CRISIS LIFELINE:**

988

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**SOUTHERN**  
ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

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**Power for Mind & Soul**