

When Stress Escalates to a Crisis....

If you suspect that someone you know is struggling with a mental illness that is reaching a crisis point, there are a number of resources available to help you take the appropriate action. This could be a student, colleague, or a family member. In any case, you will want to prepare for the discussion and access the resources to available guide you.

Signs and symptoms that an individual may be in distress:

- Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness
- Decreased interest or involvement in work or family
- Use of drugs and/or alcohol to cope
- Expressions of strange or grandiose ideas
- Confusion or mixed up thoughts
- Outbursts of anger, hostility or fear
- Anxiety or panic (episodes of intense, sudden fear and physical symptoms like difficulty breathing)
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Taking action:

Ideally, you will find or create an opportunity to have a conversation that will guide the individual to assistance.

- Allow adequate time for the conversation
- Choose a location that is private but one where you have access to assistance in the event the conversation escalates
- Introduce the conversation by noting your concern for their wellbeing, without judgment refer to what you have observed
- Once the conversation is going listen to what they are saying
- Even if the conversation becomes increasingly difficult don't change the subject
- Do not interrupt, or placate their feelings by saying things like "don't worry" or "I know how you feel"
- Avoid advising the individual but rather offer suggestions and at least a few different options like "Have you ever thought about...." .
- You may want to talk about some practical ways you can offer support
- Let the individual know that you care about them getting support and follow up with them.
- Encourage the individual to seek help from their family doctor, or to call the EFAP, Student Counselling Services or The Edmonton Support Network. You may offer to make this call on their behalf

IN THE EVENT THE SITUATION PRESENTS A POTENTIAL RISK OF HARM TO THE INDIVIDUAL OR OTHERS, IT IS IMPORTANT YOU TAKE THE APPROPRIATE ACTION. IF THIS OCCURS ON OR OFF CAMPUS, PHONE 911 IMMEDIATELY.

Resources and Supports Available:

Assistance for Staff
Human Resource Services
Phone: 780.492.7124
www.hrs.ualberta.ca/worklife

Employee and Family Assistance Program
Phone: 780.428.7587
www.hrs.ualberta.ca/efap

Assistance for Postdoctoral Fellows
Postdoctoral Fellows Assistance Program (PDAP)
Phone: 780.428.7587
www.hrs.ualberta.ca/pdap

Assistance for Students
Counseling & Clinical Services
Phone: 780.492.5205
www.uwell.ualberta.ca

Graduate Student Assistance Program (GSAP)
Phone: 780.428.7587
www.hrs.ualberta.ca/efap/gsap

When a loved one does not have direct access to above noted services discuss what help is available with their family physician, specialist, or call the Edmonton Support Network at 211 for help.
For more information about mental illness, and assistance available visit "Facing Facts" at www.virtualwellness.ualberta.ca .

