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**Southern Arkansas University Tech**  
Personal Counseling Services  
Referral Guidelines

***When to refer a student to counseling:***

There are many times when listening and providing your support are all that a student needs. There are also times when it is appropriate to encourage a student to seek help from a mental health professional. If you are unsure about how to respond to a student, you may want to consult with a counselor by calling 574-4530. In general, it is a good idea to refer a student to counseling when:

- The student is using an ineffective, self-destructive strategy to cope with problems (e.g., excessive use of alcohol or other drugs, withdrawing from others, suicidal thoughts).
- The problem the student is experiencing has existed for an extended period of time and the student's attempts to solve it have been unsuccessful.
- The student seems stuck in an overwhelming or panicked state.
- Support from yourself and the student's friends do not seem adequate to alleviate the problem.

***Referring a student to counseling:***

- Counseling services are free to all SAU Tech students. Appointments can be made by calling 574-4530 or by stopping by our office in the basement of the Administration Building. Refer by:
  - Reminding the student that counseling is confidential.
  - Reassuring the student that recognizing a problem and reaching out for help are signs of strength, not weakness.
  - Allowing the student to use your phone and staying with the student while they make the initial contact with the counseling center, or offering them the option of making the call privately.
  - Offering to walk over to the counseling center with the student.
  - Communicating your positive feelings about the student's decision to seek counseling.
  - Reassuring the student that you will not tell others about their seeking counseling.

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### ***Signs of Emotional Distress:***

- Frequently missing or arriving late for class.
- Marked shifts in quality of performance on academic tasks.
- Complaints of inability to concentrate, difficulty remembering material.
- Apathy, chronic fatigue, falling asleep in class.
- Drastic changes in personal appearance/hygiene.
- Social behavior changes (e.g., stammering, withdrawal, inability to sit still, emotional outbursts).
- Somatic complaints (e.g., muscle aches, stomach aches, headaches), frequent illnesses.
- References to death, suicidal statements or allusions.
- Report of a life crisis (e.g., death in family, relationship break-up, legal problem, loss of job injury or serious illness).

### ***Approaching a student in distress:***

- You may not want to wait for a student to ask for help when he or she is obviously in trouble. You might decide to actively make contact by asking the student to drop by your office or stay after class.
- Once you are together in a private place with the student, comment on what you have observed and express your concern.
- If a student discloses a problem, try to allow him or her to discuss it openly. You can convey your support by listening in a calm, accepting, and non-judgmental manner.
- Sometimes a student will not want to discuss a problem. In this case, simply express your concern and tell the student that he or she can get help at the Counseling Center by calling 574-4530. Remember that you cannot help someone who is not ready to be helped.

### ***Virtual Counseling Resources:***

- [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)
- [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)
- [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org)

