

# Recognizing and Responding to Students in Distress



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# Let's talk about Stress

**Stress** is a normal and expected part of the college experience.

It is the tension and strain we feel in response to challenging or adverse circumstances.

Stress, in and of itself, is not **“Bad”**.

It can often lead to increased focus, energy, determination, and clarity.



# Let's talk about Stress



**Stress** becomes problematic when it becomes intense, sustained, and frequent.

This is when stress becomes *Distress*.

Distress can have negative effects on a student's body, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

# What can we do to support students who are in Distress?

- **Recognize**
- **Respond**
- **Resources**

# Recognize the Signs of Students in Distress

# Signs of Distress:

- Significant change in mood, appearance, presentation
- Increase in emotionality
- Changes in pattern of socialization
- Changes in routine
- Report of a major life change
- Direct expressions of distress
- Impairment in functioning
- References to suicide or homicide in verbal or written statements or drawings

# How to Respond

# DO's and DON'T's: Responding to Distress

- DO show that you take the student's feelings seriously
- DO let the student know that you want to help
- DO listen attentively and empathize
- DO reassure that with help things will improve
- DO stay close until help is available, or risk has passed

- DON'T analyze the student's motives
- DON'T become argumentative
- DON'T react with shock or disdain at the student's thoughts and feelings
- DON'T minimize the student's distress
- Don't promise to keep secrets



## “But what do I say...?”

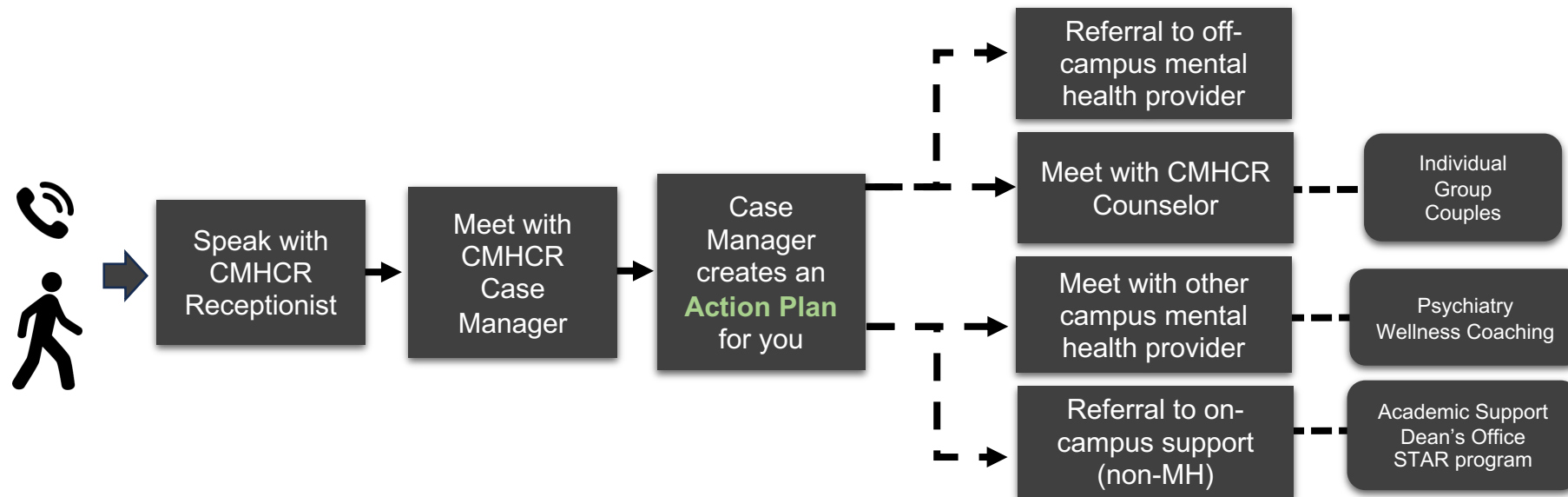
- “Sounds like you are really struggling with\_\_\_\_\_. Many people find it helpful to talk with someone in confidence who is outside of the situation.
- “I want to help you get the help you need and deserve.”
- “Meeting with a counselor is confidential and will not go on your academic record.” “Give counseling a try.”
- “These are services your tuition pays for; take advantage of them.”

# Connect them to Resources

# Providing Resources to Distressed Students

- Make the student aware of campus resources
  - For general concerns - **Dean of Students**
  - For mental health concerns - **Center for Mental Health Care & Resources**
  - If imminent danger of hurting self or others - **Georgia Tech Police Dept.**

# What CMHCR Services Looks Like?





Center for Mental Health  
Care & Resources

**Smithgall Student Services Building ("Flag Building")  
Suite 238**

**(404) 894-2575**

**Monday-Friday 8am-5pm**

**Website: <https://mentalhealth.gatech.edu/>**



**Questions?**