

Responding to or Preventing a Crisis

Questions and Answers for Durham Tech Faculty and Staff

I've noticed that some students are having a difficult time as a result of this incident. How can I support these students?

The American Psychological Association recently published a great summary of ideas for students after this type of crisis. Here is that list:

Encourage students to talk about it — Invite students to ask for support from people who care about them and who will listen to their concerns. Receiving support and care can be comforting and reassuring. If they would like to talk with someone, ask them to visit the Counseling Office in the Wynn Center. It also often helps students to speak with others who have shared their experience so they do not feel so different or alone. If parents, partners, or other significant others seem particularly distressed, it may be because they are reacting to their own sense of not being able to control the college environment to keep their students as safe as they would like.

Strive for balance — When a tragedy occurs, it's easy to become overwhelmed and have a negative or pessimistic outlook. Balance that view. Balance empowers people and allows for breaks to take a break from thinking about the incident and focus instead on something enjoyable. Get students to do something that will lift their spirits.

Honor their feelings — Remember that it is common to have a range of emotions after a traumatic incident. Remind students to take it easy on themselves and on their friends. Students may experience intense stress similar to the effects of a physical injury. For example, they may feel exhausted, sore, or off balance.

Remind students to be healthy — Healthy behaviors enhance students' ability to cope with excessive stress. Remind them to eat well-balanced meals, get plenty of rest, and build physical activity into their day. Avoid alcohol and drugs because they can suppress feelings rather than help them manage and lessen distress. In addition, alcohol and drugs may intensify students' emotional or physical pain. Help students establish or reestablish routines such as eating meals at regular times and following an exercise program. If students are having trouble sleeping, encourage some relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, meditation, or yoga.

Help others or do something productive — Suggest students find out how they can help people who have been affected by this incident, or have other needs. Helping someone else often has the benefit of making students feel better, too. Encourage volunteerism.

Remember that grief is a long process. If

What if a student becomes inappropriate or disruptive?

Know the Student Code of Conduct. Familiarize yourself with the student code of conduct found online in the Durham Tech Catalog and Student Handbook. If you are an instructor include a statement in your syllabus that outlines your expectations for classroom etiquette. At the beginning of the class, take a minute to discuss your expectations for how students should appropriately conduct the business of the classroom.

Talk with your supervisor. Talk with your supervisor about any potential student disruption issues prior to talking with a student. Learn about the specific, suggested guidelines for managing inappropriate and disruptive behavior. Get some support and ideas for how to best proceed, then you'll be well prepared.

Schedule a meeting with you, the student, and a counselor. If you suspect that personal concerns are contributing to a student's inappropriate behavior, consider scheduling a meeting with the student, you, and a counselor present to discuss your concerns.

Avoid confronting a student. Confrontation, especially in a public setting will only escalate the behavior. Whenever possible, schedule a time to meet with the student to discuss your concerns in private and make specific requests for changes in the student's behavior. If appropriate or necessary, ask your supervisor to be present with you at this meeting.

Have a plan of action.