When individuals are not coping well, they may become disoriented, dysfunctional and even attempt harm. If a student is in a serious mental health crisis, you may see or hear:

- Suicidal statements or suicide attempts
- Violent or homicidal actions, attempts, or threats (written or verbal)
- Destruction of property or other criminal acts
- Extreme anxiety, panic reactions
- Difficulty communicating (garbled or slurred speech, disjointed thoughts)
- Loss of contact with reality (seeing or hearing things that aren’t there)

**WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU SUSPECT A SERIOUS CRISIS**

If you believe a student may be in imminent danger of harming him/herself or others,

CALL Penn Police
215-573-3333 or 511 on campus

If you need help assessing the situation,

CALL CAPS 215-898-7021
(including nights/weekends to reach CAPS counselor on call)
or accompany the student to CAPS
A GUIDE for PENN FACULTY AND STAFF

The college years can be very stressful. Faculty and staff are often the first to witness signs of distress and are in a unique position to offer resources and support. CAPS staff can consult with you about the various ways to help a student in need.

ACADEMIC SIGNS OF DISTRESS
• Deterioration in quality of work
• Missed assignments or appointments
• Repeated absences
• Continual seeking of unusual accommodations (late papers, postponed exams)
• Written assignments expressing hopelessness, isolation, rage, or despair
• Lack of engagement in classes or labs
• Inappropriate disruptions, monopolizing classroom time

PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS OF DISTRESS
• Deterioration of physical appearance or hygiene
• Visible increase or decrease in weight
• Excessive fatigue or difficulty sleeping
• Exaggerated personality traits or behaviors (agitation, withdrawal)
• Excessive use of alcohol or other drugs
• Unprovoked anger or hostility
• Irritability, constant anxiety, tearfulness
• Marked changes in concentration and motivation
• Overtly suicidal thoughts, such as referring to suicide as a current option

OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER
• Direct statements indicating problems such as death of a family member or friend, break-up, academic failure
• Written or verbal statement of hopelessness or finality
• Friends or classmates expressing concerns for a student

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If a student approaches you with a problem, take the time to listen respectfully and without judgment:
• Talk to the student in private with no distractions
  Give the student undivided attention; a few minutes of effective listening may help the student feel comfortable deciding what to do next
  Ask if the student has ever talked about her/his concerns with anyone else, including a counselor. If appropriate, encourage the student to talk to a professional
• Listen sensitively, in a non-threatening way
  Communicate understanding by repeating back what the student has shared
• Be direct, specific, and non-judgmental
• Refer to specific resources and mention that seeking help is a sign of strength

MAKING A REFERRAL

Do not attempt to make a referral when the student is so upset and confused that he/she cannot listen or understand. Wait until the student is calm enough to respond to your suggestions.

Suggest in a caring, supportive manner than the student could benefit from meeting a CAPS counselor. Provide the CAPS # (215-898-7021) and encourage the student to call from your office. Offer to accompany student to CAPS if you are able.

Keep in mind, and mention if necessary:
• CAPS services are free and confidential to all Penn students, including those in graduate and professional school
• CAPS does not limit therapy sessions. Length of counseling is determined by the student and the clinician to meet the student’s needs
• Students need not inform parents or insurance about visiting CAPS
• Inform student they can reach a CAPS counselor on call 24/7, at night and on weekends, at 215-898-7021