

Assisting Students in Distress

Presenter: Angel B. Johnson, Coordinator, Counseling Center Outreach

Talley Student Center, Walnut Room

Thursday, February 28, 2013 12:30 - 2:30PM

Angel Johnson presented a workshop on college students and mental health. She explained the role teachers have in intervention, accommodations, confidentiality, boundaries, and suicide prevention/awareness efforts on campus.

Assisting Students in Distress was an informative and interesting workshop. We discussed the kinds of stresses that have contributed to a mental health crisis affecting one-third of NCSU students while they are in school. One-third of the students arrive on campus already having been in treatment for mental health counseling. Counseling Centers cannot handle the demand alone. Teachers and staff have an important role in recognizing when their students may need help and what is the best action they can take to help mediate a situation.

Thinking about today's student and society as a whole, it is easy to understand how anyone could become overwhelmed. Students often self-medicate with drugs (both legal and illegal) and alcohol to alleviate the symptoms of frustration, interpersonal problems, financial difficulties, academic difficulties, depression, grief, loss, or a host of other untenable emotionally draining circumstances. Coupled with a fundamental lack of coping skills, due in part to spending more time with technology and less time in direct social situations, students are at a greater risk of emotional distress than ever before.

Learning the basic signs and symptoms of emotional distress could potentially make a huge difference in someone's life and future. If teachers are aware of what to look for and how to make basic assessments they may be able to help a student get some help from the counseling center or other sources. The Counseling Center offers further training on mental health to the campus community.

It is part of a teacher/professor/academic advisor's job to report abuse, harm, or suicide attempts or concerns directly to a professional counselor, and if safety is a concern student conduct. Imminent danger must be reported to campus police.

Angel presented tough situations with concern and respect. She gave everyone materials with the information to follow through with the situations we discussed. Active listening to our students can make a difference in their lives and the university has professional staff available to help or find help for all students.