



SOS Digital - Providing Support to Students in Distress

Depressive Behaviour

Self-Help Guide for Staff



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DEPRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR: HOW TO RESPOND

DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS

Depression is a lowed mood that lasts for at least two weeks. When we are dealing with depressive symptoms, it does not always mean that the person has a diagnosis of depression.

Possible signs indicating students might be struggling with depression symptoms:

- ✓ They are often tired and apathetic,
- ✓ They show changes in mood (sadness, pessimism, irritability),
- ✓ They are often absent from classes,
- ✓ During classes they have problems with focusing attention, remembering,
- ✓ They exceed deadlines for assignments for no good reason,
- ✓ Sometimes, despite their best efforts, it is difficult for them to fulfill their duties and pass exams.

Importantly, not all of these symptoms have to be present in a given person.

HOW TO HANDLE A STUDENT THAT SHOWS SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION?

- ✓ Discreetly, suggest an interview in a place where you can talk privately.
- ✓ Openly express why the student's behaviour arouses concern without judging the student or his/her behaviour.
- ✓ Express your desire/willingness to help.
- ✓ Maintain an open and friendly attitude. The lecturer's announcement after the student's absence - "I'm glad you are back in class" - can mean a lot to the student.
- ✓ Listen carefully, even when the student reacts with reluctance to your initiative.
- ✓ Assure the student of your discretion.
- ✓ If a student is rarely present and little involved in work during the classes, inform him/her about the current situation in studies and about the minimum conditions that must be met in order to pass the subject.
- ✓ Express your belief that the situation can develop well in the future, and express your conviction that many things can be solved, sometimes with the help of others.
- ✓ Inform about possible forms of psychological help at the university and encourage the student to use them. Provide all relevant information (name, telephone number, e-mail, web-site link) on a sheet of paper or send the information by e-mail.
- ✓ It is useful to make a clear distinction between the work that the student has done and the student as a person. The essay may be of poor quality, but that does not mean that we rate the student very low. The fact that the student did not submit his/her work on time does not mean that we take it personally. It is worth telling this to the student directly.

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE STUDENT ASKS FOR HELP?

- ✓ Show him kindness and openness.
- ✓ Show the student understanding for his/her malaise.
- ✓ Assure the student about the possibility of solving many difficulties at the university, outline a positive perspective for the future, despite the student's current indisposition.
- ✓ Encourage the student to attend and participate in classes in order to maintain at least the minimum necessary involvement in the subject of the classes.
- ✓ Inform the student and encourage him/her to seek professional psychological help at the university.

USEFUL CONTACTS

- ✓ If you are a staff from UMinho please click [here](#)
- ✓ If you are a staff from UniTrento please click [here](#)
- ✓ If you are a staff from USC please click [here](#)
- ✓ If you are a staff from AMU please click [here](#)

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