

RED FOLDER

GUIDANCE FOR FACULTY & STAFF SUPPORTING STUDENT WELL-BEING IN A VIRTUAL CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT

Our Stanford communities value and prioritize well-being. As stewards of scholarship, faculty and staff have a tremendous impact on student well-being. This is an especially trying time for us all, and we know that student distress is elevated by the pandemic. Please review the sections below to get a sense of what student communities are experiencing, and how we can best support them.

For questions and consultation, contact Well-Being at Stanford at yourwellbeing@stanford.edu.



WHAT CHALLENGES ARE STUDENTS EXPERIENCING RIGHT NOW?

Many are struggling with academic-related infrastructure deficits at home. They may not have access to reliable WiFi, their workspaces may be challenging in many ways, and privacy may not be possible. The presence and magnitude of these challenges will not be equitable among students.

They may find themselves living in environments that are not supportive of all their identities. Environments and relational dynamics ranging from invalidating to abusive can negatively impact their well-being, as well as their ability to be fully present in learning spaces.

They are grieving, sad, disappointed. A tremendous sense of loss and disappointment is pervasive throughout our community. Undergraduate seniors are mourning the loss of their final quarters at Stanford, frosh and sophomores their frosh year, others are missing their communities, and all are being asked to manage immense personal challenges while also striving for academic excellence.

Uncertainty is everywhere. Students are grieving what's already being lost, while the inability to make plans and work towards one's goals represents potential future loss, compounding their stress. Summer plans were drastically different than what they planned for, job searches may be on hold, and unique learning opportunities have all been impacted. It's hard to feel safe and secure when so much around us remains unknown.

Financial impacts are significant. Many students and their families depend on income from campus jobs. Family members may have lost sources of income. Existing resource inequities are only exacerbated by this pandemic, also striving for academic excellence.

HOW DO I LET STUDENTS KNOW THAT I CARE ABOUT THEM, AND THAT THEY CAN TALK TO ME?

Tell them right from the start. Take time during your first interaction with students to acknowledge this strange and difficult time we are in, and that you know they are struggling with all these new challenges. Tell them you care about their well-being, and that you want them to get the support they need. Make sure to highlight that you are a source of support for them, and how they can connect with you if they need.

HOW CAN I BE RESPONSIVE TO STUDENT'S NEEDS?

TALK ABOUT THE CHALLENGES WE'RE ALL EXPERIENCING

Don't ignore the obvious. Talk about COVID. Talk about pervasive social injustice. Talk about the complex emotions we're all feeling in response. This is an opportunity for you to establish norms of open communication and psychological safety.

Humanize the situation. With the majority of us now working/learning from home, the separation of our personal and professional lives has decreased. Your professionalism and status does not suffer from showing students that you have a life outside the classroom; quite the opposite. Consider sharing how you're coping during this time—perhaps how you are keeping yourself and loved ones entertained, the kind of anti-racism or sustainability work you're doing, or that home exercise is actually tolerable.

Be flexible. Continue to challenge students intellectually, while understanding that sufficient emotional support is the critical foundation from which learning occurs. This year might be one where students will need more support than rigor. Be patient with students, and yourselves, as we figure out what we all need during this challenging year.

MAKE SPACE FOR WELL-BEING

Be Proactive. Have conversations about well-being with students early and often. This normalizes the process of accessing help and working on our well-being. Ask students what kind of support they need from you.

Create space/time for emotional expression. Uncertainty is uncomfortable and can cause significant distress. Your role is to be a warm, supportive presence for students who are struggling.

Practice self-care (and talk about it!). Supporting students' well-being can take a toll on our own. If this happens, please do what you need to recover and recharge. When students see you practicing self-care it helps them realize that their community supports and prioritizes self-care. Remember that the Faculty Staff Help Center is available to you as a confidential resource.

Instill hope. You're in a powerful position, and what you say greatly impacts students. Levity and hope bolster our spirits during difficult times. When appropriate, create space for humor, and share uplifting news.

FACILITATE CONNECTION

Connect them to other support resources. You are a wonderful first source of support for students, but you shouldn't do it alone. Stanford is full of resources dedicated to student mental health and well-being. Connect students to these resources to supplement the support you're already providing.

If possible, connect with students individually: It can be difficult to gauge how students are faring without seeing them in person, or only seeing them in a group context. Connect to students one-on-one through Zoom office hours and other modes of private conversation. This creates a safe space for students to share their struggles with you. The Faculty Staff Help Center is available to you as a confidential resource.

Connect students to each other: When feasible, offer students an opportunity to connect with each other outside of class. Students are feeling isolated from not seeing their friends/ community face-to-face on a regular basis. Currently, classroom interactions account for more of their social opportunities than they would in a regular year. Consider creating a community discussion board for students to share what is happening in their lives, a place for them to unload and debrief as needed.

HOW TO RESPOND TO A STUDENT IN DISTRESS

SAY WHAT YOU SEE

Be direct. Let the student know that you've noticed a change and you want to talk. Say what you've noticed, and avoid making any judgement or assumptions. Start this conversation in a setting where the student will feel safe to be open and honest with you. Follow-up with a [Residence Dean](#) (for undergrads), [Graduate Life Office Dean](#) (for graduate and professional students), or the [Office of Postdoctoral Affairs](#) (for postdoc trainees) if you still have concerns.

Everyone is distressed. Operate under the assumption that anyone you're interacting with is experiencing significant challenges and feeling distressed, whether they're showing it or not. Err on the side of checking in with students frequently and warmly. We all could benefit from creating a culture of care in which we check-in with each other, acknowledge and make space for our whole, complex selves.

INDICATORS OF DISTRESS

CAUSES OF DISTRESS

Unwanted changes and/or ongoing challenges in their lives. In general, distress occurs when the amount of stress exceeds the perceived resources (both internal and external) one has to handle it. How distress appears on the surface can vary greatly between people. Sometimes you won't see any overt signs of distress, but you'll still be aware of many things happening in the world that may be causing distress in students' lives. Distress is not always obvious, but it's still there.

Most distress comes from the loss (or even anticipated loss) of important mental health elements, such as: connection, status, health, purpose/ meaning, stability/security, hope, community, time, comfort, joy, peace, identity.

SIGNS OF DISTRESS

Due to COVID-19, students are much more isolated, and accessing feelings of community and belonging are especially difficult. Though the indicators of distress may be harder to discern via online interactions, keep an eye out for them because we expect more students to be experiencing distress in this new learning/living environment. If possible, create time for one-on-one interactions with students. This will help them connect with you, and help you better understand what kind of support they need.

ACADEMIC	PHYSICAL	INTER/ INTRAPERSONAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeated absences and/or a decline in quality of work or classroom performance Essays or creative work that include disturbing content and/or themes of despair, hopelessness, suicide, violence, death, or aggression Multiple requests for extensions or grades of Incomplete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marked changes in physical appearance Repeatedly appearing sick, excessively fatigued Obvious change in mental state and/or apparent intoxication Other behavior that doesn't seem to match the context/setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct comments about distress, feelings of overwhelm, family problems, etc. Signs/expressions of hopelessness, worthlessness, or shame Drastic change in interactions with others, acting out of character Expressions of concern by peers Implied or direct threats of harm to self/ others Self-injurious, destructive, or reckless behavior

SHOW YOU CARE

Be warm. We all need to know others care about us. Showing you care about a student's well-being can have a positive impact on their mental well-being, and increase the likelihood they seek help if needed.

Build trust. Ask what they need. The kind of support a student needs will change based on the context, and the only way to know what they need from you is to ask. Your words are powerful. What you say and how you say it can signal to students not only that you care about them, but that you're also a safe person to reach out to.

HEAR THEM OUT

Be there to listen. Your priority is to provide a space for the student to speak and to be heard. They need you to be warm, compassionate, and fully present. Listen patiently as you try to understand where they're coming from, and take time to affirm their emotional experience. Your full presence in itself can be healing.

Be curious. As an active listener, your job is to ask follow-up and open-ended questions that might help you understand the student, ensuring they feel heard. Most importantly, listen and let them speak. "Awkward" silences are often, actually, "productive" silences that demonstrate both the safety of your presence and your willingness to be patient and giving with your time.

Share wisely. It's typically not helpful to share your experiences while a student is sharing theirs. Your primary role is to be present for the student, validate their experience, and connect them to additional support resources. Sometimes, usually after the student has finished sharing, it can be helpful for a student to hear about your own experiences with mental health and well-being, including positive interactions you've had with mental health resources.

KNOW YOUR ROLE

Safety First. Do not hesitate to call Public Safety (911) for help. Your safety, and that of our students and community, is our top priority.

Consult. Call the [RD](#), [GLO Dean](#) on-call, or [CAPS](#) for further consultation whenever you need. These resources can give you advice, or help take over a situation that has escalated and requires mobilization of many resources.

Set clear boundaries. Set boundaries around anything that helps to preserve your own mental well-being. You can't give students the support they need if you are suffering. If a student starts treating you like a therapist then you've clearly done a good job of building rapport, but make sure you connect them to professional resources that can meet their needs. We want all our students to have many layers of emotional support instead of relying on just one individual to meet these needs.

Warmth. Your role is to be a warm, supportive presence for this student who is struggling. You're not there to fix anything or give unsolicited advice. Acknowledge difficult emotions, and instill hope that, with help, things can get better.

Normalize help-seeking. College is challenging, COVID is challenging, and to get through it we all need multiple sources of support. One key way to support students is to normalize and encourage help-seeking. You can praise them for reaching out to you for help

WE WELCOME YOUR FEEDBACK. Email redfolder@stanford.edu with comments & suggestions.

Version 3.1 — Fall 2020. "Say/Show/Hear/Know/Connect" content adapted with permission from [Jack.org's Be There](#) resources.

HOW TO RESPOND TO A STUDENT IN DISTRESS

CONNECT TO HELP

Determine need. Does the student need resources for social connection, specialized professional help, or is this an emergency?

Reaffirm your connection. Sometimes communicating to a student that they may benefit from professional help can feel like they are being passed off as a problem or burden. Prevent this by explicitly reaffirming your connection with them.

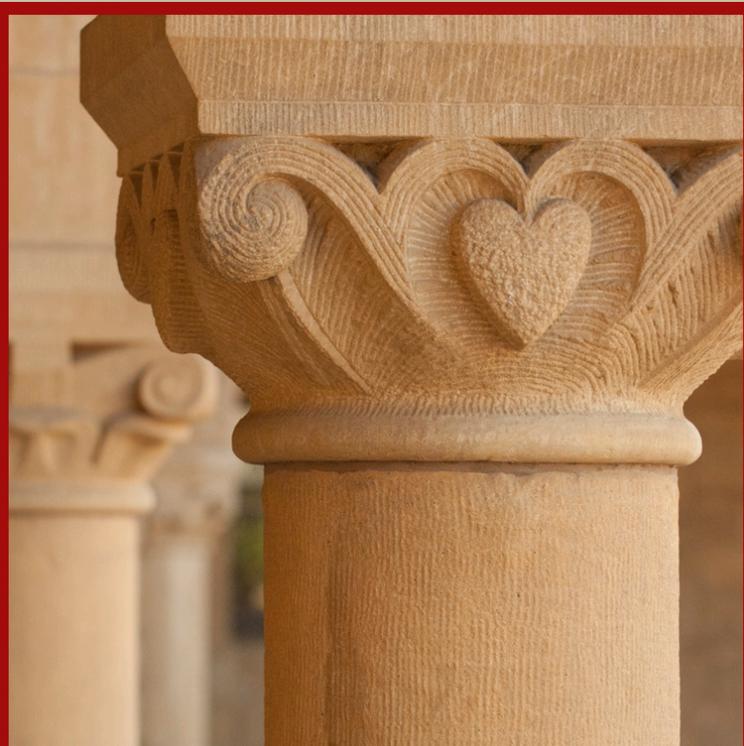
Setting expectations about resources. Help the student be realistic about what to expect from the resource and on what timeline. No single resource can meet all student needs. It often takes patience to access a resource, and persistence to experience the benefits.

Help them connect to resources. Students in distress may need help connecting with a resource. Showing them how to access a resource increases the likelihood that they actually do. Help-seeking requires knowledge and skill sets that may be new to the student. Your help in demonstrating the help-seeking process teaches them what it's actually like, and can build their confidence to do it on their own in the future.

Follow-up. Reconnect with the student to make sure that they successfully connected with the resources that you suggested. This reminds them that you care about them, and helps you understand where they're at in the process of building their support system.

Resource wasn't what the student needed. This is a normal part of the process to get help. Ask follow-up questions to understand what about the resource didn't fit their needs, and to determine which other resources may be a better fit.

Severity of situation unclear. It's possible the severity of the situation won't be obvious, and you won't know which resource is the best fit. In that case always consult with an [RD](#), [GLO Dean](#), [CAPS](#), or the [Office of Postdoctoral Affairs](#).



WHAT YOU CAN SAY

This is not a script, but rather examples of what you might say in a conversation with a student. It is important that you use language that feels natural to you and fits the context of your interaction with the student.

SAY WHAT YOU SEE

"Hi _____, I just wanted to check in. I've noticed _____, and wanted to see if you want to talk about it."

"I've noticed _____ and I want you to know that I am here to support you."

"You seem distracted today. What's going on?"

"Hey, it seems like you're having a hard time. I am here to support you if you want to talk about it."

SHOW YOU CARE

"I care about your well-being, so I just wanted to check in to see how you're doing. I want to know how I can be the most helpful for you."

"Thanks for taking some time to talk with me. I wanted to have this conversation because I care about how you're doing and want you to know that I'm here to support you in the ways you need."

"How can I be helpful?"

HEAR THEM OUT

Focus on listening. If questions are helpful:

"Wow, I'd like to hear more about that."

"I'm sorry, that seems like a difficult situation to be in, what is that like for you?"

"That sounds really hard, how is that affecting your life?"

KNOW YOUR ROLE

Focus on listening. If questions are helpful:

"Wow, I'd like to hear more about that."

"I'm sorry, that seems like a difficult situation to be in, what is that like for you?"

"That sounds really hard, how is that affecting your life?"

CONNECT TO HELP

"Thank you for being so open with me. I want to continue this conversation, and I also want to make sure that you're getting the help you need. I really think you may find _____ to be a very helpful and comforting resource."

"Reaching out to _____ for the first time can be a little confusing. Would you like help connecting to _____?"

"I really think _____ can address some of your needs, but sometimes it takes several tries to find a place that is the best fit. For any reason if it doesn't feel like a match, then ask what other resources may be a better fit for your needs."

Tip: Offering the name of someone from the resource can help the student to feel more comfortable when they reach out.

WHEN IN DOUBT ABOUT A STUDENT'S WELL-BEING, CONSIDER THESE OPTIONS

RD ON-CALL
(Undergrads)

650.504.8022

GLO DEAN ON-CALL
(Graduate & Professional Students)

650.723.7288, Pager ID #25085

OFFICE OF POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS
(Postdoc Trainees)

650.725.5075

PRIVACY AND INFORMATION SHARING: Professionals affiliated with Confidential Resources (CR) will gladly receive information from you about a student's well-being, but, due to FERPA, HIPAA, or professional ethics, some resources, licensed healthcare providers in particular, are often unable to provide reciprocal information to you regarding the student. This can be frustrating but is an essential ethical and legal safeguard for student privacy and confidentiality. Campus Security Authority and Mandated Reporter regulations may also apply to many or all of the resources listed in this guide.

SPECIALIZED PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

The student is showing signs of distress.
This is not an emergency, but I'm concerned about them
and want to get them more help soon.

CR (CONFIDENTIAL RESOURCE) is used below to identify
resources that offer confidential support.

[Dean of Students](#) Contact at 650.723.2733 to access any of the following resources for non-urgent matters:

Graduate Life Office (GLO)	Office of Community Standards (OCS)
Residential Education (ResEd)	Residence Deans (RDs)

[Department of Public Safety \(DPS\)](#) endeavors to be a consultative resource for all members of the community and can be reached 24/7 at 650.329.2413.

[Vaden Medical Services](#) is the first stop for all student medical care, including: diagnosis and treatment of illness, injury, and ongoing conditions, as well as for preventative counseling and education. Contact at 650.498.2336. **CR**

[Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) offers individual consults, skills workshops, process groups, seminars, psychiatry services, community referral resources, and crisis intervention. Contact CAPS at 650.723.3785. **CR**

[Confidential Support Team \(CST\)](#) offers support to Stanford students impacted by sexual assault and relationship violence. Contact CST at 650.736.6933 or 24/7 (for urgent concerns) at 650.725.9955. **CR**

[Office of Alcohol Policy and Education \(OAPE\)](#) aims to reduce high-risk alcohol and other drug use and related harms by enriching the social experience and providing collaborative, educational strategies and programs. Contact at 650.725.5947.

[Well-Being at Stanford](#) advances student well-being through individual coaching, academic courses, consultations, trainings and workshops, and volunteer, internship and funding opportunities.

[Weiland Health Initiative](#) promotes mental health and wellness across the spectrum of gender identities and sexual orientations through education, training and clinical services at Stanford and beyond. **CR**

[Office of the Ombuds](#) is available to all faculty, staff, postdocs, and students where all are welcome to discuss any concern that is interfering with their academic or work life. Contact Ombuds at 650.497.1542. **CR**

[Office for Religious Life \(ORL\)](#) offers pastoral care and spiritual guidance and can be reached at 650.723.1762. **CR**

[The Bridge Peer Counseling Center \(The Bridge\)](#) offers anonymous peer counseling by trained students. Contact at 650.723.3392.

[Office of Sexual Assault and Relationship Abuse Education and Response \(SARA\)](#) promotes caring, empowered, and consensual relationships at Stanford. Contact SARA at 650.725.1056 or saraoffice@stanford.edu.

[Office of Accessible Education \(OAE\)](#) provides a wide array of support services, accommodations, and programs to remove barriers to full participation in the life of the University. Contact OAE at 650.723.1066 or oe-contactus@stanford.edu.

[Schwab Learning Center](#) helps students with learner variability understand how they learn and how to leverage their strengths. Contact at schwablearningcenter@stanford.edu.

[Financial Aid Office \(FAO\)](#) Contact at 650.723.3058 or financialaid@stanford.edu.

ACADEMIC ADVISING RESOURCES

- **For undergraduate students:** [VPUE Academic Advising](#) Contact at 650.723.2426 or advising@stanford.edu.
- **For graduate and professional students:** [VPGE Grad Advising](#) Contact at 650.736.0775 or vpge@stanford.edu.

POSTDOC RESOURCES

- [Office of Postdoctoral Affairs \(OPA\)](#) is the support center for all aspects of personal and professional development and life at Stanford for postdoc trainees. Contact at 650.725.5075.
- [Faculty Staff Help Center](#) provides assistance for faculty, staff and postdocs. Contact at 650.723.4577 or helpcenter@lists.stanford.edu. **CR**
- [Guidance Resources Program for Postdocs](#) 24/7 support, information, and resources for all of life's challenges. Contact at 855.666.0519 or guidanceresources.com. **CR**

URGENT RESOURCES

The student's behavior is dangerous, reckless,
or threatening to themselves or others.

FOR ALL EMERGENCY SITUATIONS: Call **911**
(or **9-911** from a university phone)

URGENT CONSULTATION RESOURCES

[RD on-call](#) Available to help undergraduates 24/7 at 650.504.8022.

[GLO Dean on-call](#) Available to help graduate and professional students 24/7 at 650.723.7288. Please provide pager ID number #25085 to the operator.

[CAPS on-call](#) Available for all students 24/7 at 650.723.3785. **CR**

[Confidential Support Team \(CST\)](#) Available for all students impacted by sexual assault and relationship violence 24/7 at 650.725.9955. **CR**

[Vaden Medical Services](#) Available for all students 24/7 at 650.498.2336 **CR**

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) offers 24/7 free and confidential support for people in distress at 800.273.8255. **CR**

SOCIAL CONNECTION RESOURCES

I'm not concerned for the student's safety, but they're having
a hard time and could use some support.

[Asian American Activities Center \(A³C\)](#) builds a community of Asian and Asian American students, faculty, staff and alumni that fosters greater understanding and awareness of the Asian experience in America.

[Bechtel International Center \(Bechtel\)](#) supports the international student community, assisting with legal status, scholarships abroad, and nurturing cross-cultural relationships.

[Black Community Services Center \(BCSC\)](#) focuses on supporting the total advancement and excellence of Black students and Black student groups within the Stanford community.

[El Centro Chicano y Latino \(El Centro\)](#) works to support Chicano and Latino students academically, personally, socially and culturally.

[Hillel at Stanford \(Hillel\)](#) empowers Jewish students at Stanford to explore and deepen their Jewish identities, and to envision their futures with choices inspired by Jewish values and commitments.

[Office for Inclusion, Belonging and Intergroup Communication \(IBIC\)](#) provides campus leadership for students, faculty and staff to consciously and actively affirm intersectional identities and foster intergroup relationships. Resources include experiential workshops, conflict navigation, staff training, and inclusion consulting.

[Markaz Resource Center \(The Markaz\)](#) supports a vibrant community of students who identify with or are interested in Muslim experiences both here and around the world.

[Native American Cultural Center \(NACC\)](#) works to improve the quality of life for American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and Indigenous Pacific Islanders. Our community reaches out to new students and their families to help them adjust to life at Stanford, and to help them realize goals and prepare for the future.

[Queer Student Resources \(QSR\)](#) is a community of students, university staff, and faculty working to make Stanford a place where people of all genders and sexualities can flourish.

[First-Gen and/or Low Income \(FLI\) Office](#) connects first-generation and/or low-income (FLI) students to resources, builds community and fosters a sense of belonging through mentorship and advocacy.

[Women's Community Center \(WCC\)](#) exists to facilitate growth and engagement for Stanford students around issues of gender, equity, identity, and justice.