THE STUDENT WHO MAY BE DEPRESSED

Depression, and the variety of ways it manifests itself, is part of a natural emotional and physical response to life’s ups and downs. With the busy and demanding life of a college student, it is safe to presume that most students will experience periods of reactive depression during their college careers. It is when the depressive symptoms become so extreme or are so enduring that they begin to interfere with the student’s ability to function in school, work, or social environments, that the student will come to your attention and be in need of assistance. Due to the opportunities that faculty and staff have to observe and interact with students, you are often the first to recognize that a student is in distress.

In its most serious form, depression can be accompanied by self-destructive thoughts and intentions as a way to escape from the emotional pain (refer to “The Suicidal

Student”).

**Look for a pattern of these indicators:**

* Tearfulness / general emotionality or a marked lack of emotion
* Dependency (a student who makes excessive requests for your time)
* Markedly diminished performance
* Lack of energy / motivation
* Infrequent or sporadic class attendance
* Increased anxiety / test anxiety / performance anxiety
* Irritability
* Deterioration in personal hygiene
* Alcohol or drug use
* Problems eating (loss of weight)
* Problems Sleeping

Students experiencing depression often respond well to a small amount of attention for a short period of time. Early intervention increases the chances of the student’s rapid return to optimal performance.

**WHAT TO DO:**

* Let the student know you’ve noticed that s/he appears to be feeling down and you would like to help
* Reach out and encourage the student to discuss how s/he is feeling
* Offer options to further examine and manage the symptoms of depression
* Discuss making an appointment with an Advocacy Counselor.
* Be willing to consider or offer flexible arrangements (e.g., extension on a paper or exam), if appropriate, as a way to alleviate stress and instill hope.
* If you feel overwhelmed or unprepared to help this student, use the student referral form to request assistance <https://webapps.mccneb.edu/bcat/default.aspx>

**WHAT NOT TO DO:**

* Minimizing the student’s feelings,

e.g. “Don’t worry. Everything will be better tomorrow.”

* Bombarding the student with “fix it” solutions or advice
* Chastise the student for poor or incomplete work
* Don’t be afraid to ask whether the student is suicidal if you suspect s/he may be (e.g. “Have you had thoughts of harming yourself?” See below “The Suicidal Student” for further information).