

Responding to Students in Distress Using the “EAR” Framework

(Empathize-Ask-Refer)

“EAR” STEP	SAMPLE LANGUAGE TO STUDENT
<p>E EMPATHIZE with student’s experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approach or welcome student from a place of non-judgmental observation and care. Express that you are open to listening, if student wishes to talk. Be present to the student’s story, and avoid problem-solving beyond issues related to the course (deadlines, make up work, etc) 	<p>I sense that you are really stressed out. Would you like to talk about it? I might have some ideas that could help.</p> <hr/> <p>It seems you are having a rough time. If you want to talk about it with someone, I’m here to listen.</p> <hr/> <p>I noticed you haven’t been in class for awhile. If you could send a quick email to let me know how you’re doing, I’d really appreciate it.</p>
<p>A ASK student about potential risk of harm to self or others (if indicated)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust your instincts. If you have a concern, ask. If not, skip this step. Be non-judgmental and straightforward with the student. Your role is to identify potential risk (if possible) and notify resource people. Responding to that risk is their role. Immediate action is only required if you believe there is immediate risk of harm to self or others. In this event, call 911 (MSU campus police). 	<p>You know, when people are as upset as you are, they sometimes wish they were dead. I’m wondering if you’re feeling that way too?</p> <hr/> <p>With all you’re going through, have you experienced thoughts of harming or even killing yourself?</p> <hr/> <p>I noticed your recent submission included an image of suicide/violence. I understand, of course, that writers often use these kinds of themes and images in their work, but we like to touch base with students when these show up. Do you have a few minutes to chat?</p>
<p>R REFER student to other MSU resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share info with student <p>AND/OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask CAL DSW (Jon Ritz) or other resource person to contact student (ask student for permission if possible) <p>AND/OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make crisis (BIT/BTAT) or emergency (911) referral 	<p>CAPS is a free resource available to MSU students. Can I give you some more info about how to get connected?</p> <hr/> <p>Jon Ritz, CAL’s Director of Student Wellness, is a licensed counselor and works with CAL students who are going through these kinds of things. Is it okay if I ask Jon to contact you directly?</p> <hr/> <p>Here’s an important free resource you have access to as an MSU student: You can speak with a counselor 24/7 by calling 517.355.8270 and selecting option “1.”</p>

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACULTY

- Anytime you EAR, it's good practice to document your interactions with the student and consult with others, especially your supervisor and/or CAL DSW (Jon Ritz).
- Staying within EAR will help you maintain healthy boundaries and avoid role confusion with the student.
- Outside of emergencies, students have a right to decline help—but remember you are also providing genuine help through empathy and referral.
- Regarding academic policies in your class: flexibility may be helpful for students in distress, but so is maintaining clear and consistent policies.

GENERAL REFERRAL

- Student's advisor (can also be done by submitting EASE report)
- [CAL DSW](#) (Jon Ritz) – for CAL students
- [MSU CAPS](#)

CRISIS REFERRAL:

- [MSU BIT/BTAT](#)

EMERGENCY REFERRAL:

- MSU Police (911)

LINKS

- [More info](#) about helping support student mental health in your courses
- [Info](#) on trauma informed teaching
- [Info](#) on Kognito training program for faculty
- CAPS [virtual care kit](#) for students
- MSU [Employee Assistance Program](#) for faculty/staff (can also help faculty navigate concerns about students)

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