

RESPONDING TO LESS DISTRESSING CONTENT

Consider meeting with the student privately to explore the impetus for the distressing work.

Some guidelines include:

- Be specific and direct when exploring your concerns, like “I noticed in your essay you wrote about experiences you have had with cutting yourself and feeling alone. Is this something you continue to experience?”
- Express in a direct, yet concerned manner your recommendation that they consider meeting with a counselor.
- If the student agrees to the referral, with the student present, you could call the Counseling Center to make an appointment.
- If the student is not ready to schedule an appointment, encourage seeking help and provide information about the Counseling Center. You can do this by describing the Center or referring to the website.
- Consider arranging a follow-up meeting with the student in order to both gauge how they are doing and whether they have visited the Center.
- Remember it is the student’s decision whether to visit the Center and that it is the Center’s responsibility to protect the student’s confidentiality.

REMINDERS:

If you feel threatened or uncomfortable do not meet with the student alone. Instead, seek consultation from a Staff and/or Faculty member as needed.

Use your resources. You are not expected to provide counseling or make decisions alone. Indeed, doing so could lead to a worsening of the situation.

Respond to distressing work because early intervention and referral can prevent more serious problems.

EMERGENCIES:

To reach the on-call counselor during daytime hours, call 401-254-3124. **If the situation calls for immediate response, tell the receptionist the situation is urgent and that you need to speak with a counselor.**

After hours or weekends, call Public Safety at 401-254-3333 and they will respond to you. If a counselor needs to be reached, Public Safety will assist you in that process.

Center for Counseling and Student Development

Location: Second floor of the Center for Student Development

Hours:

During the academic year:

Monday – Friday,
8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

During the Summer and January:

Monday – Friday,
8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information:

Call (401) 254-3124

Or visit our website at <http://rwu.edu/campus-life/health-counseling/counseling-center>

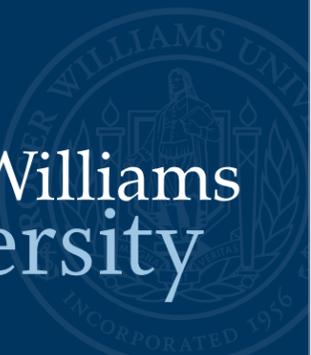
Managing Disruptive Classroom Behavior and Distressing Content in Student Academic Work



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Roger Williams
University





DISRUPTIVE AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS

Disruptive behaviors are those that interfere with or prevent instruction and learning activities in the classroom. These behaviors may range from mild distraction to violence.

Students may act out or become verbally abusive when they encounter obstacles or situations that they believe they lack the ability to control. The students may also displace anger from those situations on others who sometimes have little to do with the initial source of frustration.

A professor or staff member may use their own judgment in determining what constitutes disruptive behavior and how to respond.

ESTABLISH CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

Lay the groundwork for a positive classroom experience by taking time to provide expectations.

- Directly state reasonable and clear expectations at the start of the semester (e.g., no cell phone use)
- Define behavior standards and discuss rules of etiquette in class and in the syllabus (e.g., derogatory language and intimidating behavior is not acceptable)
- Explain reasons for classroom expectations and invite student comments.

RESPONDING TO DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR:

If disruptive behavior occurs, the following are possible options:

- Exercise authority with compassion and self-restraint. Correct innocent mistakes and minor offenses gently without ridiculing student remarks
- Caution the entire class rather than identifying a specific student publicly
- Calmly specify what the problem is and state that the class will not continue until the behavior stops (e.g., no cell phone use in class)
- Before resuming the class, enlist the support of others by reminding the group that disruptive behaviors take valuable time away from class (e.g., exam material may not be fully covered in class)
- Speak to individuals about disruptive behavior after class discretely. If the situation requires an immediate response, courteously ask the student to stop the behavior and speak with you after class or during office hours (e.g., if a student becomes verbally aggressive do not react in a threatening, hostile, or punitive manner)

If verbal aggression occurs, the following are guidelines to help the situation:

- Be careful not to insist the student explain their behavior
- Be careful not to become hostile or punitive in response
- If needed, seek consultation with others, such as colleagues, your Dean, Counseling Center or Public Safety
- Be careful not to ignore the situation. Directly address and acknowledge the student's anger or frustration (e.g., "I hear how angry you are" or "It appears that you are upset")

GET A CONSULTATION

Please feel free to contact the Counseling Center at 401-254-3124 to consult about a student that is concerning you. Ask for the on-call counselor. **If it is an emergency**, please tell the receptionist that it is urgent.



DISTRESSING CONTENT IN STUDENT WORK

Content that might be viewed as concerning to faculty occurs with some frequency in students' academic work. Students may express distress through academic assignments.

The following are forms of distress that students may share:

- Trauma, abuse or neglect
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Graphic sexual content
- Graphic violent content
- Eating or body image concerns
- Alcohol or drug use
- Bizarre or incoherent content
- Self-harm such as cutting
- Threats or plans to harm self
- Threats or plans to harm others

Distressing content may simply indicate a creative or dramatic style, but may also suggest:

- Potential risk to themselves or others
- Attention-seeking
- A desire for help

RESPONDING TO EXTREMELY DISTRESSING CONTENT

Specific threats or plans to harm oneself or others necessitates immediate attention and response.

It is imperative to seek support in managing such situations with administrators at RWU for the best assessment and planning.

Individuals you can notify, include, but not limited to:

- Dean of your School
- Dean of Students :: 401-254-3161
- Vice President of Student Affairs :: 401-254-3093
- Public Safety :: 401-254-3333
- Counseling Center :: 401-254-3124

For concerning content without an immediate threat, it may be appropriate to respond in writing or to set-up a meeting with the student.

- Acknowledge the content with empathic comments like, "That must have been hard for you."
- Invite discussion with comments like, "Do you have someone to talk with about this? If you would like to talk, stop by after class."

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