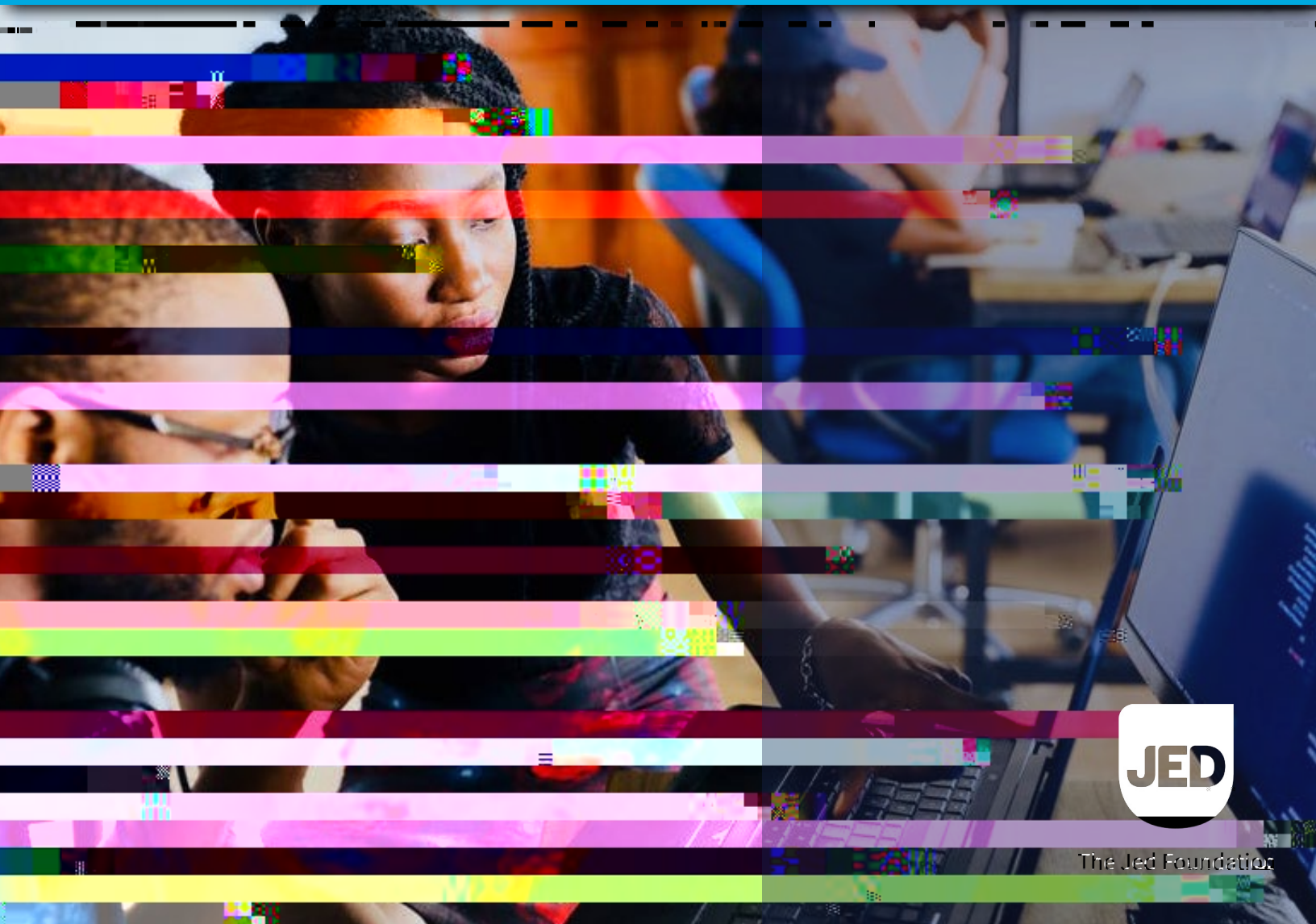


Faculty Guide to Supporting Student Mental Health

How to create a culture of care on campus



The Jed Foundation

Faculty Are on the Frontlines

- Nearly 80% of higher education faculty reported having dealt with student mental health issues over the past 12 months. ([The Role of Faculty in Student Mental Health](#), Mary Christie Foundation, 2021)
- Nationally, 35% of students said they would talk to a faculty member if they had a mental health issue affecting their academic performance. ([Healthy Minds, 2020](#))
- Academic pressure is associated with many common mental health symptoms, including anxiety, depression, substance use, and poor sleep quality. ([Pascoe, Hetrick & Parker, 2019](#))

Most faculty are not clinicians, and we know from working with faculty that it can feel intimidating or overwhelming to think about supporting students' emotional health, especially given all of the responsibilities you already have. But the good news is that you do not have to be a mental health professional to support a student with their mental health. You just need to pay attention, listen, and connect students to help if—or when—they need it.

This guide will walk you through straightforward—but significant—steps you can take to:

Support mental health in the classroom

Recognize a student who is struggling

Reach out to a struggling student

Connect students to professional help when it is needed

Begin your semester by telling the class that students can come to you when they are struggling, and reiterate that message during high-pressure times, such as exams or charged political or campus events.

How to Recognize a Student Who Is Struggling

You know your students. If something concerns you, trust your gut and err on the side of checking in. It may turn out that nothing substantial is going on, but showing students you care is also a part of supporting mental health. Students—like all of us—fare better when they feel seen, cared for, and part of a community.

These are important signs to pay attention to, because they may indicate a student is struggling and needs support:

- Missed assignments
- Repeated absences
- Decline in academic performance
- Reduced participation in class
- Excessive fatigue
- Poor personal hygiene
- Inappropriate or exaggerated behavior
- Alarming or worrisome content in assignments

How to Reach Out to a Struggling Student



DO

- Find a way to speak privately to the student, for instance after class when other students have left, or in your office.
- Tell them what you are observing that makes you concerned.
- Ask open-ended questions about how they are doing.
- Let them know you are here to listen and connect them to support if they need it.
- Share campus resources and ask if they need support or help in accessing them.
- Report any concern that a student is at immediate risk (see next page) to campus authorities (BIT or CARE teams, counseling center, or campus security).



DON'T

- Underestimate the student's struggles. It is far better to check in unnecessarily than to dismiss a potentially harmful situation.
- Promise confidentiality—school guidelines might require you to report a student who is at immediate risk of harming themselves (see next page).
- Leave the student alone if you feel they are at immediate risk.

How to Know When a Student Needs Immediate Help

A student may be at immediate risk and should be connected to professional mental health services right away if they:

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What to do:

- Stay calm. This will help you think clearly about how to respond and can help reduce the student's anxiety.
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How to Start the Conversation

Ways to approach a struggling student.

“I’ve noticed you’ve seemed a little down lately, so I wanted to check in with you. What’s been going on?”

“I noticed you missed class a few times. What’s going on for you?”

“You seem really tired in class lately. How are you doing these days?”

Ways to respond when a student shares their struggle with you.

“I’m so glad you told me about this. Let’s brainstorm how we can get you some support.”

“Thank you for sharing this with me. There’s good support on campus—I’ll help connect you to it.”

“Wow, that sounds really hard. It makes sense you are struggling. Let’s figure out what on-campus supports can help you right now.”

Ways to talk with a student who needs immediate help.

“I understand that you are hurting right now. I am here to help you and connect you to good support on campus.”

“I hear that you feel hopeless right now. I’ve worked with the counseling center, and I think they could help. Let’s walk over together.”

“I can tell that you’re very upset, and I’m concerned about you. I’m going to connect you with someone who can help you stay safe.”

If a student declines support, call campus security or 911.



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