

FOR UVIC FACULTY, LIBRARIANS AND STAFF

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING REFERENCE GUIDE

UVIC is committed to fostering environments for work and study that are safe, supportive, inclusive and healthy, encourage mutual respect and civility, while recognizing that people are our primary strength.

HOW CAN I HELP A COLLEAGUE?

It can be difficult to know what to do when a colleague is dealing with mental health issues. Knowing how to support your colleagues can make a difference in their ability to cope. How do you know if a colleague has a mental health problem? At times it will seem obvious when someone you work with is going through a hard time, but there is no simple way of knowing if they have a mental health problem and sometimes you don't need to know. It's more important to respond sensitively to someone who seems troubled than to find out whether or not they have a diagnosis.

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF DISTRESS

- **Significant changes in behaviour or performance** (e.g. decreased interest or involvement in work, tardiness, increased absences, showing signs of lethargy, agitation, confusion, outbursts, excessive anger, changes in physical appearance)
- **Social withdrawal or isolation** (e.g. uncommunicative, avoidance, not showing up for meetings, lack of cooperation)
- **Signs of excessive drug or alcohol use**
- **Difficulty concentrating, remembering things or making decisions**
- **Expressed feelings of hopelessness, despair, behaviours that indicate a likelihood of harm to self or others** (e.g. suicidal ideation, verbal or written communication that includes plans to harm self and/or others)
- **Preoccupation with/or expressions of violence, or persons who have engaged in violent acts or with weapons**

SUPPORTING A COLLEAGUE

- Take time to ask others how they are. After all, we're all in this together.
- Pay attention to changes—notice when someone is not quite themselves.
- If you notice changes and are concerned about a colleague, it's best to express concern without making assumptions or judgments or diagnosing.
- Offer a listening ear—simply being there will mean a lot.
- Ask how you can help—and respect your colleague's wishes.
- Suggest resources both on campus and community resources
- Depending on your relationship, you can still keep in touch with a colleague who takes time off.
- When a colleague returns to work after time off due to a mental illness, make them feel welcome and appreciated. Saying nothing because you're worried about saying the wrong thing can make your colleague feel worse.



MIND & BODY—YOUR HEALTH, YOUR WAY