



SOS for Higher Ed: Suicide Prevention for Faculty & Staff

Extension Activities



Shawn's Story

Instructions: Read Shawn's story and use as reference for the Acknowledge, Care, and Tell activities.

Your student advisee, Shawn, has come to meet with you during required academic advising office hours. You don't know this student well but when you met earlier in the semester, Shawn talked about working full time while attending your community college and seemed motivated to balance school and work.

Shawn arrives today seeming distracted and, as you two talk, you notice the smell of alcohol. While talking through the courseload, Shawn becomes tearful. Eventually Shawn says it's time to drop out: "I'm already working full time, I'm so in debt. How will any of this make a difference? There's no point."

Shawn is exhausted saying that after working until late in the evening last night, they nearly fell asleep at the wheel. When you suggest getting a ride or changing shifts, saying it can be dangerous driving so tired, Shawn shrugs you off, saying that if something bad did happen, "that would solve all my problems."

Activity 1: Acknowledge the Signs

Instructions: If Shawn were your student, identify which behaviors are concerning to you, and what you would say to Shawn to acknowledge your concerns.

- Circle the signs of distress you see in Shawn's story.
- Write sample phrases you would use to acknowledge Shawn's signs of distress.

If you are participating in a group training, discuss your answers with the group.

How would you acknowledge Shawn's behaviors without making any judgements or assumptions?

Changes in behavior often communicate underlying emotions. What would you say to Shawn to acknowledge the underlying emotions they may be feeling?

Activity 2: Prioritize Connection

Instructions: Think of the ways you can help students to feel a sense of connection on campus. Consider the notes you marked that you would consider trying during the on-screen activity.

Using sticky notes or paper, write down five ways you can help students to feel connected to others. When you are done, place your notes on your own wall or bulletin board. Use these as a visual reminder to support students' emotional wellbeing by building connection.

If you are participating in a group training, post all of the connection ideas on the wall and take time to read them throughout the training. Inspire your colleagues with your ideas and learn new strategies from others!

Activity 3: Show You Care

Instructions: When you care through listening, you reflect back what you hear and validate the feelings they express. Continue your conversation with Shawn with a focus on showing your student you care. Circle the best response for each statement. If you are participating in a group training, discuss your answers.

- 1. Shawn says: “I’m already working full time, now I’m so in debt. How will any of this make a difference? There’s no point.”**

What response “reflects back” what Shawn said?

- A** You are feeling pretty overwhelmed right now, huh?
- B** Sounds like school feels pointless with everything on your plate.
- C** You work full-time and you have debt, so you’re wondering what the purpose of school is at this point.
- D** All of the above

- 2. Shawn says: “After class I work so late, by the time I get home and get my schoolwork done, there’s no time for me to eat or sleep. It is all too much. I can’t do this anymore.”**

What response lets your student know their feelings are valid?

- A** I’m sure that if you can learn some better time management skills, you’ll be able to find some balance.
- B** Maybe you need to stop working and prioritize school right now?
- C** Your days are completely packed; you don’t have time to eat or sleep. I understand why you feel like it has become too much.

- 3. When Shawn says getting in a car accident “would solve all my problems,” how would you show you care by asking about suicide?**
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Activity 4: Map Our Campus Resources

Instructions: On screen, you considered the resource categories you might suggest for a student. Now, think about the categories and consider the specific resources that students on your campus have available to them in times of distress.

Use the space below to create a visual representation of your local resources. You can be creative and draw circles smaller or larger and near or far from the center to indicate which resources you might highlight depending on a student's needs.

If you are participating in a group training, share your image with others and highlight your top resources. Feel free to add to your resource map as you gain ideas from others.

Resource Map

How would you encourage Shawn to seek help?

Refer to your resource map and suggest a few resources for Shawn to consider.

Activity 5: My Plan to ACT

Instructions: Complete the sample plan so you are ready if you need to ACT to take care of yourself. Keep your personal ACT plan on hand and set an example by sharing with others. Everyone needs a plan to ACT!

ACKNOWLEDGE

Signs I can recognize that I am beginning to feel overwhelmed or distressed (eg. Neglecting responsibilities)

1.
-
2.
-
3.
-

CARE

Things I do to take my mind off my problems and reduce distress (eg. Take a walk outside)

1.
-
2.
-
3.
-

TELL

People I call when I need help (eg. Friend or partner)

1.
-
2.
-
3.
-

TELL

Professional resources if I need help (eg. 988, physician, therapist)

1.
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2.
-
3.
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