

Responding to Students with Anxiety

Anxiety can be generalized across a range of situations, or it may be situation-specific (e.g., test anxiety, social anxiety, public speaking anxiety).

Symptoms of anxiety include:

- stress
- panic
- avoidance
- irrational fears (losing control, phobias, dying, falling apart)
- excessive worry (ruminations and obsessions)
- sleep or eating problems
- depression, impatience, irritability, frustration

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Talk to the student in private.
- Remain calm and take the lead in a soothing manner (“I am quite interested to hear what’s bothering you. Can you tell me about it?”).
- Focus on relevant information, speaking concretely and concisely.
- Help the student develop an action plan that addresses main concerns. Breaking larger problems into smaller parts will make things less overwhelming to the student.
- Refer the student to the Counseling Center 607-274-3136, the Health Center, 607-274-3177, or other appropriate resources.

AVOID

- Overwhelming the student with information or complicated solutions.
- Arguing with student’s irrational thoughts (“You have nothing really to worry about, your grades are good”).
- Devaluing the information presented (“It’s not as bad as you think” or “Don’t worry, you have everything going for you”).
- Assuming the student will get over the anxiety without treatment