What can be done in the event of a crisis?

A crisis is defined as a situation in which the individual concerned feels that their current circumstances are extremely stressful, their state of health is very fragile, they are no longer able to cope with everyday life, they pose a danger to themselves or others, and they urgently need help. In a crisis situation, those affected can attend any of the three psychiatric clinics around the clock without an appointment.

1.) Take any warning signs seriously and listen to your own “gut feeling” if you have the impression that the student is struggling.

2.) Take your time and initiate contact in a personal and sympathetic way in quiet, safe and private surroundings.

3.) Be open and direct with the individual and tell them that you are concerned about certain patterns of behaviour and what you have observed.

4.) Ask questions in a friendly and approachable way in order to better understand the individual’s personal circumstances. It is important that: You let them speak, don’t make judgements (“Oh, it’s not so bad”), don’t give advice (“You just need to ...”) and refrain from using platitudes (“time will tell”).

5.) Ask the individual how they feel about their current situation and whether they have any support.

6.) Tell them about the professional support that is available (see flyer appendix) or about Studentenwerk Leipzig’s psychosocial counselling service website and the psychosocial counselling service for employees of the university.

7.) Arrange another meeting with them to find out if they have sought professional help. Let them know that their situation is (still) important to you. But don’t put any pressure on them. It often takes some time before people acknowledge their own problems and realise they need professional help.

Possible steps:
1.) Take any warning signs seriously and listen to your own “gut feeling” if you have the impression that the student is struggling.
2.) Take your time and initiate contact in a personal and sympathetic way in quiet, safe and private surroundings.
3.) Be open and direct with the individual and tell them that you are concerned about certain patterns of behaviour and what you have observed.
4.) Ask questions in a friendly and approachable way in order to better understand the individual’s personal circumstances. It is important that: You let them speak, don’t make judgements (“Oh, it’s not so bad”), don’t give advice (“You just need to ...”) and refrain from using platitudes (“time will tell”).
5.) Ask the individual how they feel about their current situation and whether they have any support.
6.) Tell them about the professional support that is available (see flyer appendix) or about Studentenwerk Leipzig’s psychosocial counselling service website and the psychosocial counselling service for employees of the university.
7.) Arrange another meeting with them to find out if they have sought professional help. Let them know that their situation is (still) important to you. But don’t put any pressure on them. It often takes some time before people acknowledge their own problems and realise they need professional help.
What are the warning signs that some-one may be suffering from mental health problems?

- Increasing disengagement: Social isolation, withdrawal, apathy, avoiding eye contact, mono- syllabic answers, tactlessness, lack of facial expressions, as if "turned to stone" or "lost in their own world", inability to engage the student in conver- sation, student stops attending lectures, defensive behaviour.

- Peculiar, inappropriate, aggressive behavio- ur: Bizarre reactions to surroundings, aggres- siveness/irritability, threatening behaviour, unusual posture, stereotypical physical movements, delayed or no reaction to being spoken to and attempts at contact, paranoia, thoughts have been contrac- tuated or there are indications that the individual is planning to harm themselves (cuts, burns) or to take their own life? If in doubt, ask whether and to what ex- tent they have definite plans to harm themselves or take their own life and to what extent they are planning to follow through with those plans - what would happen then? If your suspicions that there is an acute danger are confirmed, call the police on 110 or the emergency co-ordination centre on 112. Assistance will be provi- ded immediately.

- Depression: Feeling down, subdued and sad, slow to react, loss of interest, joylessness, lack of drive, speaks in a low voice, expresses feelings of hopelessness and futility, brooding, the student per- ceives themselves and/or life as a burden.

- Mania: Elation, hyperactivity, exaggerated feelings of self-worth, restlessness, overestimation of one’s own abilities, several ideas and a desire for action, agitation and obsessiveness, also observed as alter- natively extreme, inappropriate sadness.

- Pronounced exam anxiety/fear of failure: Extreme physical and mental stress during exams or even in the run-up, visibly anxious, pronounced trembling, crying, blocking out during exams, “nervous breakdowns”, visible “blocks” when recal- ling exam material, avoidant behaviour (cancelling exams, repeated postponement), fails exams despite otherwise good performance, psychosomatic compla- ints (stomach problems, e.g. vomiting, nausia prior to or during an exam, sudden stammering/stuttering).

- Strain: Feeling stressed, tense, exhausted, fearful, depressed, makes excessive demands, difficulty concentrating, unable to switch off, lack of energy and stamina, unable to rest and relax, insomina.

Danger to oneself or others

Do you believe that the individual concerned could harm or even kill themselves and/or others? For instance, because suicidal thoughts have been contrac- tuated or there are indications that the individual is planning to harm themselves (cuts, burns) or to take their own life? If in doubt, ask whether and to what ex- tent they have definite plans to harm themselves or take their own life and to what extent they are planning to follow through with those plans - what would happen then? If your suspicions that there is an acute danger are confirmed, call the police on 110 or the emergency co-ordination centre on 112. Assistance will be provi- ded immediately.

Self-preservation comes first: Sometimes other people’s distress can make you feel helpless, which is why you should stick to your own boundaries and only help as much as you can.

What can you do?

As a general rule:

- Let them know that you are interested and willing to help them improve their well-being or circumstances. Do not be discouraged by a defensive attitude. Talking about mental health issues is difficult and usually asso- ciated with feelings of shame.

- For further information and who to contact: E-mail: studienderenberatung@studienwerk-leipzig.de Tel.: 0341 97 – 188 48

Counselling services for students and doctoral candidates

All of the following services are provided free of charge and on a confidential basis for members of Leipzig University.

Topics covered:

- Doubts about choice of degree programme
- Difficulties studying and how this affects academic performance, such as problems with concentration, motivation, orientation and making decisions.
- Exam nerves, procrastination, problems finishing exams, anxiety, restlessness, overestimation of one’s own abilities, self-doubt, difficulty making contact, feelings of depression, discrimination, fear of failure, violence or sexual assault incidents, problems with alcohol or drugs, emotional crises and other topics.
- Information on psychotherapeutic procedures as well as targeted-oriented search for psychotherapy.

Counselling centres

Studentenwerk Leipzig’s psychosocial counsel- ling service for students in cooperation with Leipzig University’s Faculty of Medicine, represented by the Klinik und Poliklinik für Psychosomatische Medizin und Psychotherapie (clinic and outpatient depart- ment for psychosomatic medicine and psychother- apy) Leipzig.

Types of counselling:
- Individual (50 minutes) subject to prior arrange- ment.
- Group counselling and workshops

Counselling provided by the Student_innenRat [Student Council]

Types of counselling:
- Individual counselling by appointment
- Drop-in counselling

For further information and who to contact: E-mail: ps.i@stu.uni-leipzig.de

Nightline – telephone support and information line, offering a sympathetic ear on everything that may be bothering you. We are availa- ble Monday to Friday between 8 p.m. and midnight during the semester period. Tel.: 0341 197 – 377 77
E-mail: leipzig@nightlines.eu