

Responding to Students with Transition Issues

Facts about transitions

Transitions are times of change that usually involve both loss and opportunity.

Entering college is one of life's most demanding transitions and is arguably the most significant transitions since kindergarten.

College students face many challenging transitions, including graduating and entering the work force.

The changes inherent in a transition procedure stress and challenge a student's coping resources.

Students commonly experience a decline in functioning (academic, social, emotional) during transitions.

Transition stress can be compounded by counterproductive coping mechanisms such as avoidance of stress producing situations and people, excessive partying and alcohol abuse.

Transitions can pose greater problems to students who have existing psychological problems or difficult life circumstances.

Students going through a transition may benefit from counseling to enhance their coping efforts or to prevent the onset of serious problems.

Signs that a student is having transition problems include:

- Anxiety symptoms such as nervousness, irritability, tearfulness, and sleep problems.
- Depression, sadness, anger issues
- Difficulty managing responsibilities or relationships.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Convey to the student that transition stress is normal and often brings a temporary decline in performance.

Encourage student to use positive coping strategies to manage transition stress, including regular exercise, social support, a reasonable eating and sleeping regimen, and pleasurable activities.

Refer the student to the Counseling and Testing Center at (521-6202) if performance problems persist beyond a reasonable amount of time, if the symptoms are acute, or if the student feels s/he could benefit from talking with someone about it.

AVOID

Assuming that the student understands the impact of transitions and is aware of the source of stress.

Minimizing or trivializing the student's feelings and interactions.

Discounting or overlooking factors that put the student at risk of more problems.