



# Student Guide:

## How to Support Peers in Distress

The University of Tampa  
Office of Student Care and Advocacy

# Table of Contents

1	.....	What is Trauma
2	.....	Examples of Distressing Events
3	.....	How to Help a Friend Through a Distressing Event
4	.....	Ways to Manage Effects of Trauma
5	.....	How Trauma Can Impact Relationships
6	.....	How to Help a Friend Who is Having Suicidal Thoughts
7	.....	Self-Care Activities
8	.....	Campus Resources
9	.....	Off-Campus Resources
10	.....	Further Readings and Resources

# What is Trauma?

**Any incident that causes physical, emotional, spiritual or psychological harm.  
A deeply distressing or disturbing event.**

## Normal Reactions to Trauma

Nightmares	Difficulty falling or staying asleep	Difficulty focusing
Avoidance of triggers of the event	Changes in mood and appetite	Flashbacks to the event
Worsening of existing medical conditions	Anger	Physical symptoms such as headaches, nausea and fatigue

# Examples of Distressing Events

Difficulty adjusting to college, being away from home, missing family and friends

Difficulty with change in daily routine

Loss of a friend or loved one

Physical or sexual assault

Natural disasters

Car accident

# How To Help A Friend Through A Distressing Event

## Signs To Look For

Grades slipping	Flashbacks of the event
Mood and appetite changes	"Zoning out" or difficulty focusing
Difficulty falling or staying asleep	Difficulty managing emotions. Increase in frequency or intensity of crying spells.

## How You Can Help

Make time for the person. They may not want to talk about what happened but having someone who cares about them may be comforting.	Learn to be okay with uncomfortable topics and feelings. Know you don't have to "fix" things, just be supportive.
Reassure them that their reactions and emotions are normal.	Remember that everyone processes and heals differently.
Offer practical support such as walking them to class, eating a meal or studying with them.	Offer a nonjudgemental ear if they want to talk, and don't give advice unless asked.

# Ways to Manage Effects of Trauma



## Increase feelings of safety and control

Change routine, take a self-defense class, request trusted friends to spend time with you, share meals and walk with you to class.



## Increase self-care behaviors

Exercise, meditate, seek out new hobbies, set aside time for soothing music or spend time outside. Prioritize sleep and fuel your body with a variety of foods.



## Seek Social Support

If you choose, tell trusted friends and family what happened. It is always your choice to share your story. Keep in mind that well-intentioned loved ones may not know how to respond. Don't take their response personally or let it deter you from seeking support.



## Seek Professional Support

Confidentially speak with a trained University advocate to explore options and receive support by calling (813) 257-3900. Confidentially speak with a trained University counselor to process thoughts and feelings by calling (813) 253-6250.

# How Trauma Can Impact Relationships

**Every person will have a unique response to dealing with their trauma. This list below contains some common responses to trauma but it is not comprehensive.**

---

After an individual has endured a traumatic experience they may have an assumption of danger, betrayal or potential harm within new or old relationships.

---

Trauma can put emotions in a state of fluctuation, which can lead someone to be conflicted. They may want to be close and connected to people but also feel the need to push them away for fear of being harmed or betrayed.

---

The person may be experiencing extreme vulnerability and reluctance about what thoughts, statements and behaviors are safe. This could negatively affect their ability to trust within relationships.

---

Trauma can put a person's body into a state of "fight or flight" in order to survive the event. Sometimes this state can linger on and lead a person to feel on edge and on high alert.

---

Particularly in cases of sexual trauma, physical intimacy with a partner may be extremely difficult for the survivor, or in some cases, something they're not comfortable with at all.

---



# How to Help a Friend Who is Having Suicidal Thoughts

If a student expresses thoughts of suicide or indicates that they have a plan for suicide, stay with them and connect them to resources immediately.

---

**8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday:  
call the Counseling Center at  
(813) 253-6250**

**After hours, call Campus Safety at  
(813) 257-7777**





## PHYSICAL

- Sleep
- Shower
- Exercise
- Yoga



## EMOTIONAL

- Positive affirmations
- Treat yourself kindly
- Explore a hobby



## PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Journal
- Reach out for support
- Connect with family or friends



# SELF-CARE ACTIVITIES

## PERSONAL

- Drink water
- Listen to your body's hunger and fullness cues
- Treat yourself
- Unplug from technology



## SPIRITUAL

- Spend time in nature
- Meditate
- Self-reflection



## PROFESSIONAL

- Read a book
- Keep up with classwork
- Record your wins
- Take a break



*Self-care should be seen as wholistic. You may not hit all of the sections everyday, but aim for a balance in these areas.*

# Campus Resources

Victim Advocacy (813) 257-3900

[ut.edu/victimadvocacy](http://ut.edu/victimadvocacy)

-Provides a number of services for students who have been the victim of a violent crime.

Spartan Support Program (813) 257-3901

[ut.edu/spartansupportprogram](http://ut.edu/spartansupportprogram)

-Provides support to students and connection to resources to address the student's unique needs.

Dickey Health and Wellness Center (813) 253-6250

[ut.edu/campus-life/student-services/dickey-health-and-wellness-center](http://ut.edu/campus-life/student-services/dickey-health-and-wellness-center)

-Provides confidential medical services and mental health counseling.

Campus Safety (813) 257-7777

[ut.edu/about-ut/university-services/campus-safety](http://ut.edu/about-ut/university-services/campus-safety)

-Provides a safe and secure environment for the campus.

LASER Team (813) 257-4515

[ut.edu/campus-life/student-services/safety-escort-service](http://ut.edu/campus-life/student-services/safety-escort-service)

-Provides transportation assistance whether due to injury, disability, adverse weather (not including severe storms with lightning) or for general safety.

International Programs Office (813) 258-7433

[ut.edu/international-programs/international-student-and-scholar-services](http://ut.edu/international-programs/international-student-and-scholar-services)

-Provides support for documentation, regulations, cultural adjustments, academic issues and other concerns for international students.

Residence Life (813) 253-6239

[ut.edu/campus-life/residence-life](http://ut.edu/campus-life/residence-life)

-Provides inclusive residential community and dynamic learning experiences that promote student development and academic success.

Bias Education Resource Team

[ut.edu/about-ut/university-services/office-for-operations-and-planning/bias-education-resource-team-\(bert\)](http://ut.edu/about-ut/university-services/office-for-operations-and-planning/bias-education-resource-team-(bert))

-Provides support and resources to those individuals who have been targeted or impacted by an act of bias.

Title IX

[ut.edu/about-ut/university-services/human-resources/title-ix/](http://ut.edu/about-ut/university-services/human-resources/title-ix/)

-Provides grievance procedures and supportive measure options in compliance with federal law prohibiting discrimination based on sex.

# Off-Campus Resources

Crisis Center of Tampa Bay 211 or (813) 264-9961

[crisiscenter.com](http://crisiscenter.com)

-Provides support for sexual assault survivors, domestic violence survivors, general trauma or distress.

-Provides forensic exams up to 5 days after a sexual assault.

The Spring of Tampa Bay (813) 247-7233

[thespring.org](http://thespring.org)

-Provides support for domestic violence survivors.

RAINN National Hotline (800) 656-4673

[rainn.org](http://rainn.org)

-Provides information about sexual assault and sexual abuse.

BayArea Legal Services (800) 625-2257

[bals.org](http://bals.org)

-Provides civil legal services to low income Tampa Bay residents.

Florida Council Against Sexual Violence (850) 297-2000

[fcasv.org](http://fcasv.org)

-Provides resources and legal services to survivors of sexual assault in the state of Florida.

FL Department of Children and Families Abuse Hotline

(800) 962-2873

[myflfamilies.com](http://myflfamilies.com)

-Provides resources to Florida families.

-Any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect that someone under 18 years old is abused, abandoned, neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare is a mandated reporter [FL statute 39.201 (1)(a)].

# Further Readings and Resources

SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW:



[tinyurl.com/UTTraumaResources](https://tinyurl.com/UTTraumaResources)