Sometimes you need help, sometimes you are the one that can help.

### A person is experiencing distress.

**Signs of Distress Include:**
- Nervousness, agitation or irritability
- Infrequent work attendance
- Changes in routine behavior
- Changes in personal or work relationships
- Deterioration of hygiene
- Undue aggressive or abrasive behavior
- Bursts of anger and blaming
- Fearfulness
- Avoidance or withdrawal
- Frequent alcohol and/or drug use, smoking
- Frequent gambling
- Excessive crying, sleeping

### Express your concerns to the distressed person.

**Point out your observations and ask about his/her situation.**
- I heard you say your meeting with the banker was a disaster. Can you tell me about it?
- I've noticed you haven't come to coffee for a long time and I'm concerned about you.
- I've seen you angry a lot lately and noticed you were harsh with the kids. How can I help?
- I noticed you came to work late again and you look like you haven't slept. I'm concerned.

### Are you worried about the person's safety or do you see possible warning signs?

**Warning Signs Include:**
- Has prolonged periods of distress/overload
- Talks about or threatens suicide
- Makes statements such as “I want this all to end” or “I can’t go on anymore”
- Exhibits significant confusion, isolation
- Shows behavior that is bizarre, alarming and/or dangerous
- Makes statements about hurting or killing others
- Has marked change in behavior, mood and/or hygiene
- Appears depressed (frequent crying, insomnia, oversleeping, weight loss/gain, loss of pleasure)
- Appears/reports hopelessness or helplessness
- Engages in self-harm

### Yes, imminent danger is clearly present.

**Examples**
- Person found unconscious or unresponsive
- Person tells you he/she has ingested pills beyond the recommended dose
- Person is threatening immediate danger to him/herself (e.g., threatening to hurt others, ingest pills, shoot him/herself)
- Person attempts to cause physical harm to someone else (or to people in general)
- Your gut tells you this is serious

**Directly ask about your concerns and/or warning signs.** (Have you thought about hurting yourself or others?)

**Directly ask about suicide and/or homicide as it relates to the displayed warning sign(s).** (Do you have a plan?)

**IMMEDIATELY CALL 911**

Stay with the person until help arrives unless you do not feel safe. Talk to him/her and gather any information possible.

If the person becomes violent or has a gun, leave and call 911.

If this happens in a work setting, contact your supervisor and inform him/her of the situation.

Write down:
- Relevant details about the situation (who, what, when, where)
- Any background information you have about the person’s difficulties
- A number where you can be reached

### Unclear about whether imminent danger is present.

**Examples**
- Person reports a history of concerning behavior (e.g., drinking, drugs, gambling, self-harm) and now states a desire to engage in this behavior again
- Person is found intoxicated or appears to be under the influence of substances
- Person makes statements suggestive of suicidal/homicidal thinking that are not overtly indicative of imminent danger (e.g., “I don’t know if I can keep going.”)
- Person appears agitated/emotionally distraught and does not respond to your attempts to calm him/her
- Person experiences a sudden stressful event (e.g., death, divorce, job loss) and seems emotionally unstable/insolable, or the person’s response appears unusual
- Uncontrollable crying over a minor setback, or conversely, no reaction over a major loss.

Stay with the person. Call the Montana and National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-8255, and ask for help in making a plan of action. Help the person move forward in the next step of the plan. If the person leaves and you are concerned for his/her safety or others, call 911.

Ask the person for permission to call a family member for extra support.

If this happens at work, contact your supervisor and inform him/her of the situation.

### No imminent danger is present.

**Examples**
- You observe a person furious or crying after getting off the phone, and she/he reports being sad or worried about the market and the loss in farm income in recent weeks, but you see no other warning signs.
- You observe a co-worker or family member who is dealing with a major illness in the family and is struggling to manage, but you see no other warning signs.
- You observe any number of life difficulties happening to someone but no signs of imminent danger or failure to cope in a safe manner.

As much as you are comfortable, listen and provide support, but do not become the counselor/therapist. Reflect the feelings you hear behind the words. Ask clarifying questions and make plans to check in again.

Discuss counseling services and/or other resources that might be helpful and address any concerns the person might have about these resources. If you need assistance in determining appropriate resources or about how to refer a person to get help, call 211 from anywhere in Montana, or the Montana Warm Line 877-688-3377.

### NOTE:

If at any point you believe the person’s “Imminent Danger” status has changed, return to the “Imminent Danger” steps outlined in this decision-making tree.

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Adapted from “Responding to Distressed People,” a publication of NDSU Extension, 2016. Revised and adapted by Michelle Grocke, MSU Extension Health and Wellness Specialist, and Alice Burchak, MSU Extension Agent, Toole County.