

MANAGING CONCERNING STUDENT BEHAVIORS



BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

Disruptive behaviors are often the result of various stressors a student is experiencing, not all of which are actually related to the academic setting. Instances of social, academic, personal, and mental health stressors are the most common catalysts for students displaying disruptive behaviors. Being able to recognize early signs of distress can provide an opportunity to reach out to the student with appropriate resources, ideally preventing both classroom disruptions and factors that might hinder student success.

STEP ONE: PREPARE FOR A WELCOMING AND ENGAGING CLASSROOM

As the instructor, you play a crucial role in creating a safe, welcoming, and engaging classroom environment. This is the first step in handling classroom disruptions and ensuring effective teaching and learning. For more information about establishing a productive learning space, refer to the Maintaining Effective Learning Environments Guide at boi.st/effective-learning.

STEP TWO: SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Communicating clear expectations at the outset of the class is imperative for minimizing disruptive behavior. An excellent way to communicate your expectations regarding student behavior is to include them in the class syllabus as well as reiterate them on the first day of instruction. Additional strategies to make behavior expectations meaningful for students include activities that ask students to read and engage with the syllabus.

STEP THREE: DETERMINE THE TYPE OF STUDENT DISRUPTION

Disruptions in the classroom can come in many forms. Boise State University has organized student behavior into three categories. Below are example indicators by level. This guide focuses on distressing behaviors. Students in distress are more likely to exhibit disruptive behaviors in the classroom. Below are some indicators that could suggest a student is in distress and may need additional support.

Please review Guidance on Maintaining Effective Learning Environments for how to prevent and respond to disruptive behavior.

Academic Distress	Behavioral/Emotional Distress	Physical Distress
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeated absences• Written or artistic expression of suicide, morbidity, or despair• Overblown response to grades or evaluations• Disorganization or erratic performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Direct statements indicating distress• Angry or hostile outbursts• Expressions of hopelessness or worthlessness• Expressions of severe anxiety or irritability• Excessively demanding or dependent behavior• Lack of response to outreach from course staff or peers• Shakiness, tremors, fidgeting, or pacing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deterioration in physical appearance or personal hygiene• Excessive fatigue, exhaustion• Noticeable cuts, bruises, or burns• Frequent or chronic illness• Disorganized speech, rapid or slurred speech, confusion

STEP THREE: DISTRESSING BEHAVIOR ACTION PLAN

If you've noticed any of the above distressing behavior in a student, the first step is identify the level of concern:

1. **Lower concern** - oftentimes a brief episode and/or situational (i.e. upset because of a breakup or failed an exam) having a low impact on the student's course performance and/or other students' classroom experience.
2. **Moderate concern** - multifaceted issue; significant and long-lasting change in behavior which is impacting the student's and/or other students' ability to be successful in the course.
3. **Heightened concern** - dramatic and sharp change in behavior which may be impacting other students and/or you are worried about the potential safety of this individual (i.e. talking about completing suicide).

Once the level of concern is identified you can decide how best to respond. Appropriate action steps will vary on a case-by-case basis but, should always include validation of students' feelings and referral to campus resources. Follow the action plan provided to address distressing behavior.

Addressing the Behavior During Class	Addressing the Behavior After Class
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a professional and calm demeanor when responding to the student. • Briefly remind the student of the classroom norms and ask them to end the disruptive behavior. • If the behavior persists, let the student know they must stop the behavior or leave the class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the student to stay after class. • Respectfully ask the student to end the behavior. • Use active listening and encourage the student to explain their perspective. • Work with the student to identify alternative solutions to address the issues they are facing.

STEP FOUR: WHAT TO DO AFTER DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR OCCURS IN YOUR CLASSROOM

If a disruption occurs in your course, please document and report the incident to your department chair. They can provide additional guidance or refer you to the appropriate unit on campus. You can also address the situation with the students who witnessed the incident if appropriate. Depending on the situation, students may need emotional support and access to campus resources to help cope with their emotions. Boise State provides email examples that may be helpful when reaching out to students to address behavioral concerns observed in the classroom at boi.st/email-communication-examples.

Responding to disruptive behavior can be challenging and stressful for you as well. Be sure to give yourself the time and space to process the experience and take advantage of campus resources designed to support faculty and staff at boi.st/faculty-staff-support.

In addition to those recommendations:

At any time, if the behavior escalates to a threatening situation, you may choose to dismiss students from class or end the conversation and contact the Department of Public Safety at boisestate.edu/publicsafety.

Be mindful of students who have a disability or may have a suspected disability. If you have questions about supporting students with disabilities, contact the Educational Access Center (EAC) at eacinfo@boisestate.edu or (208) 426-1853. Learn more at boisestate.edu/eac.

Students who are exhibiting challenging behavior in the classroom may be experiencing distress. It is helpful to ensure that students have access to campus resources. Visit boisestate.edu/deanofstudents/help-and-support.

All direct, indirect, and implied threats should be reported immediately to the Department of Public Safety.

Boise State Campus Faculty and Student Resources

- Advising and Academic Support: boisestate.edu/aasc
- Center for Teaching and Learning: boisestate.edu/ctl
- Counseling Services: boisestate.edu/healthservices/counseling
- National Behavioral Health Crisis Line: **Text or Call 988**
- Dean of Students: boisestate.edu/deanofstudents
 - Student Code of Conduct (Policy 2020): boisestate.edu/policy/student-affairs/code-of-conduct
 - Student Outreach Program Overview and Skills Training Presentations: boi.st/deanofstudents-presentations
- Report Concerns: boisestate.edu/report-concerns
- Department of Public Safety: (208) 426-6911, boisestate.edu/publicsafety
 - Download Rave Guardian App: boisestate.edu/publicsafety-security/home/rave-guardian
- eCampus Center: boisestate.edu/ecampus-center
- Educational Access Center: boisestate.edu/eac
- Campus Food Pantry: boisestate.edu/campusfoodpantry
- Here For You Suicide Prevention Training: boisestate.edu/suicide-prevention/training

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The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and Dean of Students (DOS) can offer in-person and hybrid workshops on this topic. Please contact CTL at ctl@boisestate.edu to set up a workshop for your department.



Scan the code for more resources or visit boisestate.edu/deanofstudents/faculty-resources

OFFICE OF THE DEAN OF STUDENTS
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