

Non–Emergency Helping – General Strategies

****Non-emergency situations unfold more slowly and allow more careful planning of a helping response.**
(Also see specific Action Steps in Scenarios.)

Consider both **DIRECT** and **INDIRECT** ways to intervene.

Direct: You speak with the person directly.

Indirect: Talk to another person who you feel could be helpful or give guidance and direction – teammate, counselor, administrator, coach.

Note: If you do not act immediately, don't ignore the situation. Just because you don't act right then and there doesn't mean you can't do it later!

Whatever response you choose, remember the following:

- Consider *frequency, duration and intensity/severity* when evaluating a situation.
- Determine the barrier for the person if possible – motivation, ability or environment.
- Know your limits as a helper – engage others as necessary.
- Be sensitive, understanding and non-judgmental.
- Challenge misperceptions - Express your true feelings/beliefs.
- Identify the red flags; Anticipate problems.
- Determine the priority goal; Formulate a plan; Prepare/practice what you want to say.
- Interrupt/distract/delay a situation you think might be problematic – before it becomes an emergency!
- Set boundaries – do not make excuses for the person or otherwise enable them.
- Conduct conversations in a safe environment. Maintain **mutual respect** and **mutual purpose**.
- Remember the **Law of Delivery** – Who (person/s), What (content), When (timing), Where (location/privacy), Why (reasons) and How (tone).

Use The 5 Point Formula –

*Adapted from University of Massachusetts, Amherst Health Services,
Virginia Alcohol Safety Action Program and The BACCHUS Network*

- I Care** Let the person know you care about him/her and that because of the significance of the relationship you need to discuss something very important. Both starting and ending the discussion with an emphasis that you are doing this out of genuine concern, caring and respect for the person, sandwiches the difficult feedback between strong positives. Choose words you are comfortable with and fit your style.
- I See** Report/Review actual events with your friend, as you perceive them. Remember you are evaluating the behavior not the person. Try to limit your statements to observable, irrefutable facts. The more you have, the better.
- I Feel** Tell the person your own feelings using “I statements” to reveal your feelings.
- I Want** Tell the person what you would like to see happen.
- I Will** Specify what you will or will not do. Only set ultimatums if you can, and will, stick to them.

Sample Script:

- I Care** “John, do you have a minute? Because you’re such a good friend and I really care about you, I want to talk to you about something very important.”
- I See** “I’ve been noticing that you are not going to class as much and your practices haven’t been as productive lately. From my perspective, you really don’t seem to be yourself. I’ve seen you drinking more when we go out and it seems to be more frequent than in the past. You even got into that fight last weekend at the party and I’ve never seen that from you before.”
- I Feel** “I’m worried about how it is affecting you – personally, in school and on the team. To be honest I’m also scared about what could happen to you.”
- I Want** “John, I want what’s best for you and the team. I’d like to see you get some help – and sooner rather than later - at least talk to someone – either Coach Jones or even someone at our Counseling Center. You have so much to offer and the team really needs you! I’d really hate for something bad to happen because of a poor decision.”
- I Will** “I’d be willing to go with you if you want. I want to support you however I can because I respect you and you are very important to me - and to the team - but I will not lie for you and I will not watch you continue to make unhealthy choices. I’m really concerned John.”

Other possible phrases with which to confront a teammate or another person:

- ◆ “The team needs you and expects more from you.”
 - ◆ “This is (X school). That is not what we are about.”
 - ◆ “I know you are better than that.”
 - ◆ “You know that’s not OK.”
- Make the target goal inflexible but the process to reach it flexible.
 - Be curious/ask questions to understand from their point of view. (Perspective taking)
 - Use contrasting to clarify misunderstandings. (e.g. What I DON’T want is X, what I DO want is Y).
 - Ask permission if the topic is sensitive.
 - Avoid “absolutes” (always, never, etc.)
 - Avoid gossiping and rumor spreading.
 - Be ready for a negative reaction. People can feel attacked when confronted and can get angry and defensive. Assure them that you care about them and are concerned about their behavior.
 - Take care of yourself – it can be difficult on helpers as well.
 - Follow up.