Helping Skills

One of the most important and rewarding things you’ll do as a staff member is act as a listener or adviser to your residents. Doing this successfully requires the use of effective counseling skills. This section is designed to provide you with some skills that will help you counsel residents.

This section covers:

- Confidentiality
- Attending
- Active Listening and Questioning
- Advising and Problem Solving
- Conflict Resolution
- Mediation
- Crisis Counseling
- Dealing with a Crisis
- Referrals

Although you are not a professional counselor, you are in a position to be an effective helper for residents. Because you share the same living area and you know the individual students, your residents may feel comfortable talking with you. However, remember that you are not working alone. Your RD, the Counseling Center, Residence Life, and the Dean of Student’s Office all provide you with an inherent support network. Thorough knowledge of institutional, academic, and personal resources available to you and the person you are counseling will also be helpful to you in many situations (for more information on campus resources available to you, see the “Campus Resources” section of this handbook).

Confidentiality

There is an understanding between you and the person you are counseling that your conversation is sacred, and will stay between you. There is a “covenant” formed, a trust, that puts the best interest of the person you are listening to first. Confidentiality is part of this understanding. This allows the other person to be confident that, as the old line says, “what is said here, stays here.” If you were to tell someone else something that was said to you in confidence, you would break down that trust, and the person’s best interest would most likely not be served. They would be careful about what they told you in the future, or would stop telling you things completely. They are trusting you to try to help them deal with difficult feelings or situations. Confidentiality is part of that trust.

However, sometimes by not telling other people, you break the same covenant. You break the trust because the person’s best interest is not being served by keeping your knowledge between just the two of you. If the situation is one that could result in self-harm, or harm to others, not telling has even more harmful consequences. If the person’s situation goes beyond your training or ability to be an effective helper, not telling will cause more harm than good. You should seek help in these situations.
Confidentiality is a very difficult issue, but here are some hints to help you with it:

- **ALWAYS BE HONEST.** If put in a situation where the other person says, “You have to promise not to tell anyone,” do not make that promise. Explain that you assume you won’t tell anyone, and that you would never tell a friend or bring up what they said in a casual fashion, but there may be situations where you would have to tell a professional. Get them to understand that you are obligated to protect them from harming themselves or others.

- **IF YOU NEED TO TELL SOMEONE, ALWAYS MAKE SURE THEY ARE AN APPROPRIATE RESOURCE.** Your RD would be a great place to turn, and you should keep him or her informed of the issues at hand. If they can’t be a direct source of help, they will know where to look. Do not tell other RAs or friends in hopes that they will keep it to themselves (unless your RD suggests that you do so). Know your campus professionals so that you will feel more comfortable using them as resources as well.

- **IF ANOTHER RA TRIES TO TELL YOU ABOUT A CONFIDENTIAL CONVERSATION, STOP THEM.** In a gentle way, remind them that they should either keep it confidential, or talk with their RD or a campus professional.

- **IF THE SITUATION IS NOT EXTREMELY SERIOUS, BUT YOU WANT FEEDBACK (FROM AN APPROPRIATE RESOURCE), DON’T USE A NAME.** Describe the situation, what was talked about, or how you plan on helping, without naming the person with whom you are dealing. If the situation is not serious, the person you are seeking advice from should honor this agreement. This also works well if you are not sure whether or not you should tell someone. Describe the situation, without using a name, and ask what you should do. They can let you know if the situation requires you to disclose who and what you were talking about.

- **IF YOU ARE GOING TO TELL SOMEONE, ALWAYS LET THE PERSON KNOW.** Never do it secretly. The only time you would tell someone is when you have legitimate reasons. Explain these reasons, and ask the person to understand. Maybe they will, maybe they won’t, but your primary responsibility is to their health and safety, or to the health and safety of others (including yourself!).

### Attending

*Being an attentive listener is important in all aspects of your job that require communication – being present in staff meetings, giving feedback to a fellow RA, and talking with or counseling a resident. Good listening will establish you as someone your residents and peers will want to talk to about a variety of things. You no doubt have some basic skills in this area, but it takes serious concentration and practice to develop the ability to do it well.*

**Attending:** Demonstrating that you are engaged and available to the person with whom you are interacting. Attending to someone involves being a good listener and setting an appropriate atmosphere for communication or counseling.
Tips for Creating an Attentive Listening Atmosphere

The first step in being an effective listener is to set a time and space for the conversation that is conducive to listening and communicating:

 BE AWARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT. Try to create an atmosphere that will help the person feel comfortable and relaxed. Try to minimize distractions, interruptions and outside disturbances. A messy room, music playing in the background, or an open door may discourage someone from really talking to you about an issue.

 BE HONEST ABOUT YOUR TIME. If you don’t have time to listen, set up another time to talk soon.

 BE CONSCIOUS OF YOUR ABILITY TO FOCUS. If you can’t concentrate and focus on verbal and nonverbal cues or resist physical and mental distractions at this time, set up another time to talk. It’s okay to say, “I care about you and this issue but right now can’t give you my full attention so let’s set a time when I can be fully present for you.”

 ENCOURAGE THE PERSON TO TALK ABOUT FEELINGS AND BEHAVIOR WITH MINIMAL WORDS AND COMMENTS YOURSELF. Sometimes a gesture, nod, or simple word is most effective.

 PAUSES AND SILENCES CAN BE USEFUL. Practice waiting. Sometimes your comments may cut off something important that the person may be getting ready to say. Conscious practice of waiting will develop a sense of when pauses are most productive.

Here are three hazards to avoid when setting up an effective listening environment:
1) Don’t automatically judge a speaker or subject as uninteresting by tuning-out or daydreaming.
2) Don’t fake attention and pretend to be getting the message while your mind has made a mental detour.
3) Control your emotions: whatever you’re feeling about the speaker or the subject, hear the speaker out first. Work at being empathetic, not aggressive or worked up.

Tips on Physically Attending

Physically attending shows that you are interested and willing to listen through your own body language:

 IMITATE THE PERSON’S BODY LANGUAGE.

 MAINTAIN GOOD EYE CONTACT. Look directly at the person without staring them down. Communicate in a warm way through eye contact that you are genuinely interested and involved.

 BE AWARE OF THE DISTANCE BETWEEN YOU AND THE OTHER PERSON. Determine the optimum distance comfortable for both of you.

 HAVE AN OPEN POSTURE. Crossed arms and legs might make you seem unapproachable or unwilling to get involved. Be aware of what your gestures are conveying.

 LEANING OR MOVING TOWARD THE PERSON, at least at appropriate times, may indicate to the other your presence, warmth, interest, and willingness to be there.

 BE RELAXED AND COMFORTABLE (YET STAY ALERT). This will help put the other person at ease also.
Tips on Verbal Attending

Monitor and perceive what the person is saying verbally:

- **Try to remember in detail what was said.** Track the content of the conversation in your mind.
- **Look for common themes.** Often the person will make the same points in different ways.
- **Pay attention to unusual words or words that are repeated.** They may be particularly significant. What is said immediately after the word “but” is often important: contradictions, confusion and anxiety may be found in the phrase that follows this word.
- **Be alert for why you are there.** What does the resident need from you? Sometimes the real reason for listening is not apparent until the conversation has been going for several minutes.

Tips on Non-Verbal Attending

Monitor and perceive what the person is not saying in words:

- **Be alert to the way, manner, or style in which the voice and words are used.** This can be crucial. Listen for the tone of voice, loudness, pitch, inflection, spacing of words, stumbling over words, emphasized words, and pauses.
- **Be aware of facial and body movements.** These can be extremely communicative, particularly of the emotions and feelings of the other person.
- **Watch for how non-verbal cues can confirm, emphasize, or modify what is said in the verbal message.** They sometimes contradict the verbal content entirely and convey the true message. A verbal “yes” may really be “no”, as reflected by facial expression, tone of voice, etc. Studies have demonstrated that if facial behavior and verbal delivery contradict verbal behavior, the facial expression will dominate the impact of the total message (Mehabrian, 1971).
Active Listening

So now that you know to be aware of your physical presence and the atmosphere of listening, let’s work on figuring out what you are going to say. This is the skill of active listening.

**The Three Steps of Active Listening:**

1) Listen for content AND feeling.
2) Give a short paraphrased statement about the feeling that was expressed and heard; for example, “What I hear you saying…” or “It sounds like…”
3) Make sure that they agree with your stated perception of their situation. Ask open and closed-ended questions as necessary.

**Active Listening:** a way of listening that involves more than just hearing someone’s words. It includes seeking to understand the speaker’s situation and emotions.

In spite of their potential importance, be sure not to overemphasize the meaning of body language or non-verbal behavior. Giving exaggerated attention to this can be as deficient as not monitoring it at all.

What are some other ways you can be an attentive listener?

Here are a few things to be cautious of while being an active listener:

1) Some people use the word “feel” as synonym for “think” in everyday language. For example, “so you feel that inflation is going to stay with us for a long time.” Be conscious of using the word “think” when the word “feel” may be more appropriate. The statement might sound like empathic listening, but it won’t have the same effect on the other person because it deals only with thoughts, not the feelings associated with those thoughts. For comparison, consider the statement: “You’re really worried about what continued inflation is going to do to you.”

2) Listen for words in the scene of the dialogue, not just the feeling and emotion.
Active Listening Techniques

- **ENCOURAGE**: don’t agree or disagree, use neutral language and varying voice intonation to convey interest and keep the other person talking
- **CLARIFY**: ask questions and restate according to your interpretation to get more information or help the speaker see other points of view
- **RESTATE**: reiterate facts and ideas in your own words to check your interpretation and show that you understand
- **REFLECT**: show that you understand how they are feeling and help the person evaluate their emotions
- **SUMMARIZE**: restate ideas and feelings to review progress and as a basis for further discussion
- **VALIDATE**: acknowledge the worthiness or value of the other person, their efforts and actions, issues and feelings

Examples of Good Active Listening

- **Open-ended Questions**: are questions that allow the other person to talk with great detail, elaboration, length, emotion and content. They encourage participation and make the person think and look deeper into the situation. For example, “What did you feel like?” or “How did you deal with this?”
- **Closed-ended Questions**: are questions that can be answered in a few words like “yes,” “no,” or “I don’t know.” They do not allow the other person to explain or elaborate, though they can be useful to obtain specific information or details. Some examples are, “Were you scared?” or “Did you have a fight?”

“Why” questions are open-ended, but tend to make people feel defensive, so these questions should be asked very carefully.

Roadblocks to Communication

- Ordering
- Threatening
- Preaching
- Lecturing
- Providing Answers
- Judging
- Excusing
- Diagnosing
Speaker: “I miss my family. It’s like I’m just walking around in a daze and nobody even notices or cares.”
Listener: “That sounds hard.”
Speaker: “Yeah… I like it here, but sometimes I wish I was home.”
Listener: “Can you tell me how that makes you feel?”
Speaker: “Every time I walk in the room, he’s staring at me.”
Listener: “How does it make you feel?”
Speaker: “I’m so behind in my classes. I thought that I could keep up with everything, but maybe I just can’t handle this many credits.”
Listener: “Tell me about your time commitments.”
Speaker: “My parents just called and told me that they probably couldn’t afford to pay for next semester. They want me to get a job, but I don’t think I can handle work and all my classes.”
Listener: “What are some options that you see?”

Every situation and person is different. The above examples should be considered as only possible scenarios. You need to respond to each situation in the best way you can. Much of these conversations will require that you listen and not jump to assumptions about their feelings or try to find solutions for their problem.

How would you respond as an active listener to these situations?

“I’m just so tired. I can’t ever catch up. I guess I’ve just said yes too many times and I can’t see how I can drop anything half done. I just want to sleep.”

“That was some trip home last weekend. Seems like my parents are getting worse. I never know what to expect next. I’m tired of it!”

“I try to tell her that it’s important for me to get caught up, but she won’t listen! My work hours get in the way too. It seems like I’m always in labs and the little free time I have she’s at work in the cafeteria. We just go round and round. I don’t know what to do.”
The Role of the Staff Member: 
Advising

Now that you have learned about confidentiality and listening skills, we’ll show you how you will employ them through the: 

"Seven Steps to Effective Advising:"

1) Establishing Relationships  
   - Get to know your residents. Make sure they know you care.  
   - Be accessible, available, open, accepting, trustworthy, etc.

2) Building Rapport  
   - Uphold confidentiality  
   - Set an appropriate environment and time to talk  
   - Be conscious of your energy level, posture and eye contact, tone of voice.  
   - Pay attention to verbal and non-verbal messages from the person you are helping  
   - Show you are engaged and following both verbally ("uh-huh") and non-verbally (nodding)

3) Active Listening  
   - Listen for content as well as feelings  
   - “I’ve had it! I can’t handle this relationship anymore!”  
   - Give a short, tentative statement about the feeling you heard  
   - “It sounds like you have qualms about the relationship.”  
   - Listen/watch/ask for clarification  
   - Closed question: “Do you want to break up with her?”  
   - Open-ended question: “What do you want to do?”  
   - Accept negative feelings  
   - Allow silence and pauses

4) Clarifying the Problem  
   - Ask directly  
   - “What bothers you most about ________?”  
   - Ask open-ended questions
“How are you making your decision to end this relationship?”

**SUMMARIZE OR RESTATE**

“From what you’ve been saying, it seems you’re most upset about ________, is that right?”

**REFRAME THE PROBLEM INTO A TASK OR CHALLENGE**

“So now you want to think about how to talk to her.”

5) **Exploring Alternatives**

**ASK FOR HIS/HER IDEAS FIRST!**

“What do you think might work for you?”

**ADD SUGGESTIONS AS YOU BRAINSTORM TOGETHER**

“Would it help if you told me what it is you want to say?”

“How would you feel about trying ___________?”

**GIVE INFORMATION**

“It helps if you use I statements, like ‘When you say you’ll call me or stop by and don’t, I feel hurt and rejected.’”

**ASK FOR REACTIONS**

“How do you feel now about talking to her?”

**ACCEPT THE REACTIONS**

Don’t say, “Oh, that’s not a problem” or “It’s o.k., that won’t happen”, etc.

6) **Creating an Action Plan (and giving encouragement to carry it out)**

**CONFIRM THAT THE TASKS ARE UNDERSTOOD**

Listener: “So when do you think you’ll have a chance to talk?”

Student: “I’m going to try to see if I can do it tonight.”

**END WITH A STATEMENT OF ENCOURAGEMENT OR CONFIDENCE AND AN INVITATION TO TALK AGAIN**

Listener: “It will feel good to say it now that you know what you want to get across. Let me know how it turns out.”

Listener: “Good luck tonight. I’d really like to hear how it goes. Could you call me tomorrow night if I don’t see you before?”

7) **Following Up (Over the next couple days and then check in again a little later)**

**ASK THEM HOW IT WENT AND WHAT THEY ARE GOING TO DO NOW**

**FIND OUT IF THE CHOSEN PLAN WORKED OR HAD THE DESIRED EFFECT**

**ASK THEM IF THEY ARE FEELING BETTER ABOUT THINGS**

**MEET WITH THEM AGAIN TO MAKE A NEW OR ALTERNATE PLAN OF ACTION IF NECESSARY**

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**BE A HELPER, NOT A RESCUER!**

When you take over someone else’s problem and give him/her a solution, the person learns nothing. Although the person may feel relieved at the time, he/she becomes dependent on you for solutions and doesn’t develop his/her own skills. When you find yourself continually “rescuing” other people from their problems, ask yourself if you are trying to make the world depend on you.

“A REAL HELPER DOESN’T SOLVE OTHER PEOPLE’S PROBLEMS FOR THEM – HE / SHE HELPS THEM FIND THEIR OWN SOLUTIONS!”
A Helper...  
Listens for requests  
Presents offers  
Gives only what is needed  
Checks in periodically with the person  
Checks results: Is the person...  
  Functioning better?  
  Meeting goals?  
  Solving problems independently?  
  Using suggestions successfully?  

A Rescuer...  
Gives when not asked  
Doesn’t check if offers are welcome  
Gives beyond what is needed  
Omits feedback  
Doesn’t check results  
Feels good if accepted  
Feels bad when turned down  
Doesn’t teach skills

Some cautionary notes about helping others with their problems:

✦ Everyone faces problems throughout their lives, some big, some small…
  ✦ NOT ALL PROBLEMS CAN BE SOLVED
✦ We each own our personal problems and are responsible for our actions. No one else can solve our problems for us.
✦ When someone talks to you about a problem, listen to what they are asking for. They may just want the opportunity to talk things out or vent. Not everyone is looking for help solving a problem; many will just want you to listen.
✦ Believe in people! We all have wonderful potential for finding and getting what we want and need.
  ✦ NOT ALL PEOPLE WANT HELP
Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is difficult therefore it is beneficial to work with problems before they become serious. Unfortunately, people often avoid conflict, making it necessary to engage in some sort of formal conflict resolution process. Several resolution processes are available including:

- Negotiation
- Mediation
- Arbitration

Negotiation

**Negotiation:** Two or more people in conflict discuss the issues involved. Through listening, trying to understand each other, and compromising, they decide upon ways of behaving that resolve their differences.

Negotiation should be used when issues have not reached crisis proportions and the people involved are not emotionally distressed. Negotiation can settle minor disagreements and misunderstandings by allowing each person to state their feelings and needs. The RA or SR’s role in negotiation is to encourage residents to speak to each other and/or help the parties involved to determine or practice what they will say or do.

Mediation

**Mediation:** A neutral, outside party participates in the negotiation process as a “referee,” helping the people in conflict deal with their emotions. The mediator keeps strong feelings from interrupting the process, and insures that the rules and skills (as delineated later in this section) are used so an agreement can be reached. A mediator facilitates a process by which disputing parties find solutions themselves. It is often helpful to facilitate the design of a contract that each person signs.

Mediation might be necessary if negotiation has failed, the issues have reached crisis proportions, or the people involved are emotionally distressed. Though steps in the actual negotiation process remain essentially the same during mediation, working with a mediator (such as an RA or SR) is a very different experience than negotiating alone. Through mediation, people who were once extremely upset, had stopped talking to each other, or had come to dislike each other are sometimes able to reach agreements.

Arbitration

**Arbitration:** A third party, after meeting with each person involved in a conflict and determining each person’s complaints, feelings and wishes, decides on a set of rules governing everyone’s behavior in the area of conflict. In binding arbitration, the parties in conflict agree to abide by the decision of the arbitrators.

Arbitration should be used only when negotiation and/or mediation have failed to produce an agreement or one or more parties failed to abide by agreements reached through other methods. It is unlikely that as an RA you will employ this method of conflict resolution.
Before working through a mediation session, you should set a few ground rules to help keep things calm and fair, and to help everyone involved feel safe:

**Ground Rules for Mediation**

- Each person deserves a chance to speak without interruption.
- No profanity, name calling or shouting is allowed.
- Everyone is to remain seated at all times.
- Body language needs to be appropriate.
- Keep focused on issues (avoid personal attacks).
- Remember you agreed to this and we are working together to find a solution.

Once you’ve explained the ground rules, you’re ready to begin working through the eight steps of effective mediation:

1) **Let Each Party Talk**

Have each student tell what he or she believes happened while the other listens.

*Comments like “Who is to blame?” or “Who started it?” and “Why did you do it?” will bog down the process. Redirect students past their fighting roles to help them perceive the problem as something they have to solve together.*
2) Check the perceptions of each party
   ➢ Have each involved party repeat what the others said to see how they are interpreting what the others are saying.
   ⇐ Are they hearing only what they want to hear or gaining an understanding of where the other person is coming from?

It is important that both sides see where they disagree or how they interpret things differently, but don’t allow too much argument and discussion on a single point.

3) Summarize the situation yourself
   ➢ Summarize what you think each side is saying and make sure that each person understands how the other person perceived the problem.
   ➢ Restate what was said in neutral language avoiding absolutes, and separating behaviors from people so that all parties feel they have a ‘safe’ place to discuss their conflict and so that all parties can respond to what is being said and not the language used.

   ⇐ Don’t agree privately with either side on a point in dispute between them.
   ⇐ Try to avoid personal identification with the position of either party or any of the issues in dispute.
   ⇐ Don’t make statements or ask questions that imply you have made a judgment on the issue.

4) Explore the feelings of everyone involved
   ➢ Ask each student how they feel.
   ⇐ It is important for students to know that both are hurting.

5) Identify common ground
   ➢ Find any points of agreement, no matter how small
   ⇐ They both have the problem.
   ⇐ They both hurt.
   ⇐ They both want to solve it.

6) Solicit suggestions from all parties
   ➢ Ask all sides to offer suggestions on how an agreement can be reached.
   ⇐ Have them brainstorm possible solutions and compromises.
   ⇐ Offer other choices only if necessary.

7) Help form an agreement or compromise
   ➢ Help both sides come to a fair agreement. What choices can they live with?
   ➢ You may want to encourage them to write a contract or “mediated agreement.”
     ⇐ You and/or the RD should determine the severity of the issue and then decide if this is necessary.
     ⇐ Sometimes it might be necessary for you to help them write out such an agreement.
   ➢ Tell them you will check with them soon to see how their agreement is working.
8) Re-mediation
   If either side fails to live up to the agreement, repeat the process (re-mediation), and have them sign a new statement of agreement, if each is willing.

A Mediator is:
A good listener
A good team worker
A fair person (doesn't take sides)
A helper
A dependable person
A person you can trust

A Mediator is NOT:
A disciplinarian
A person who interrupts
A judging person
A person who gives orders or advice
A person who talks about others
Crisis Counseling

Possible sources of a crisis

Student crises are often associated with a shaken sense of identity or developing a new identity as an adult. The onset of the crisis state is almost always linked with the perception that a major feature of the person’s world is out of control.

Events such as these may trigger a crisis:

- Receiving disturbing news (death of a loved one, news of family troubles, news of financial or academic problems, etc.).
- The sudden breaking off of a meaningful relationship.
- Being faced with different value systems or cultural practices than those with which they are familiar.

Signs that someone is experiencing a crisis

The feelings of unusual change or threatened loss of control during a crisis is accompanied by anxiety and other signals of distress. A student might talk about uncertainty: they don’t know why they are at Whitman, or they don’t know why they do what they do. This behavior suggests that the person is searching for new techniques of problem solving. The individual in a state of emotional upset is ready to learn new ways of dealing with problems.

Crises are normal reactions to sudden change or sudden stress. Ordinarily, the behavior of the student in crisis reverses when it’s over and there are no residual effects. It is clear that personality changes may take place during a crisis, and it is important to understand that at such times there is both the opportunity for healthy personality change and the hazards of unhealthy personality change.

Watch for the following when identifying a crisis period:

- Anxiety and/or heightened emotions
- Changes in usual behavior patterns
- Increases or decreases in activity
- Drop in school performance
- A need to talk
- Doubt and perplexity
- A shortened attention span
RAs and SRs can help someone through a crisis by offering resources and support, helping them see the big picture, and working towards solutions. There are a few general guidelines involved in handling a crisis situation:

**DEFINE, LIMIT, AND PLACE THE PROBLEM IN TIME AND PLACE**
- Most crises last four to six weeks.
- Focus on what has happened to the student and what connections there might be between recent events and their feelings at the time.
- Ask the student about positive areas of his or her life. In this way, the student is able to experience the limits of his or her distress and to gain some control and knowledge.

**PARTICIPATE WITH THE STUDENT IN ORGANIZING THE PROBLEM**
- What can be changed, and what are some ways and techniques for effecting the desired change?
- Are there other alternatives?

**LIMIT THE DURATION OF THE ENCOUNTER AND FOCUS ON THEIR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**
- During the time of mutual problem-solving, indicate time limits on working together.
- Also, indicate that you will not intervene in the problem directly unless it is necessary.

**AVOID REMOVAL OF THE STUDENT FROM THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF DAY-TO-DAY LIVING**
- Acknowledge their feelings, including their wish to withdraw, but endorse responsible action.
- This is often a powerful influence on maturation and problem solving.

**BE A STRONG ROLE MODEL**
- By working with the student, having them see how you analyze the situation and surveying potential problems and various solutions, he or she may begin to identify with you as a model and in this way gain greater control.

There are some situations in which a crisis will precipitate a more severe disorder; this is especially true when there is a history of previous difficulty, either in a school or work situation or in relationships within the student’s family or close friends. Some of the most common severe problems are depression, bi-polar disorder, self mutilation, suicide, substance abuse, rape and sexually transmitted diseases, crises of sexual identity, culture shock, and eating disorders. (For more information on dealing with these situations, see the “Problems and Challenges” section of this handbook.)
The Role of the Staff Member: Referral

Students will often come to their RAs or SRs for help with serious issues. Similarly, RAs and SRs will often be the first to notice that someone is struggling with these issues. RAs and SRs can provide support and aid for some residents; however there are times when it is important to refer them to professionals. Here are some guidelines to help you determine when referral is the appropriate course of action and how to refer gracefully.

When to Refer:

 WHEN NOTHING IS CHANGING.
   ⇐ The person comes to you with the same problem time after time…

 THE PERSON IS EXPERIENCING PAIN THAT IS GETTING WORSE.

 YOU FEEL AN INCREDIBLE URGE TO SOLVE THE PERSON’S PROBLEM FOR THEM.
   ⇐ You have to fix it right now and feel scared to death to let the person solve it for themselves.

 YOU FEEL HELPLESS OR TRAPPED OR OVERWHELMED.
   ⇐ You may experience these feelings first as tenseness in your muscles, stomach, headaches, an anxiousness that you can’t attach to anything.

 THE PERSON DOESN’T MAKE SENSE TO YOU.

   For example she/he:
   • makes impossible plans
   • has wild and bizarre behavior
   • hears things you don’t hear
   • sees things you don’t see
   • has boundless energy that could end up hurting someone
   • has no future orientation at all
   • is unwilling to make plans or commitments no matter how small
   • has little if any contact with others
   • mentions suicide, no matter whether it is clear or vague

Referral Guidelines

1. Refer to a person, not a place.
2. Have the person make their own appointment whenever possible. When not, make the appointment for them and walk with them to the appointment.
3. Check back with the person to see if they followed through with the referral.
   a. If they did, ask what their experience was like.
   b. If not, find out why not and look for another solution (offer to make their appointment, take them, offer a new reference, etc.).