



Special Needs information leaflet: Mental Crisis

1. Studying despite a mental crisis

Most people experience at least one mental crisis in the course of their lives, i.e. the loss of mental equilibrium which human beings feel when they are confronted with events and circumstances that exceed their immediately available resources and defence mechanisms. Particularly in the course of studying, the many-faceted demands can cause or aggravate a crisis. Particular challenges include performance pressure, the necessity to get one's bearings in a strange environment or culture alone for the first time, or the need to have to organise one's (academic) everyday life oneself.

A number of symptoms can appear in connection with the loss of one's inner equilibrium in a mental crisis. Besides psychological symptoms such as difficulty going to sleep and sleeping through the night, internal unrest, nervousness, strong feelings of anxiety, negative thoughts going round and round in one's head, resignation and listlessness, there can also be psychosomatic reactions. Students frequently have headaches, stomach aches, abdominal pain and back pain, are exhausted in spite of sufficient sleep, and experience vertigo or ringing in their ears.

What is important in a mental crisis is to reactivate adequate resources to ensure that the crisis can be mastered; failing that, there is a threat that the crisis could worsen and that the symptoms could become chronic. Professional help should therefore aim to activate social, mental, cognitive and material resources, thus enabling the person concerned to cope with life's demands on their own as quickly as possible.

Important: even small offers of support, if sought in good time, can have a great effect.

2. Possible support options (particularly in examination situations)

Please note:

- Make use of or refer to support options provided by the University (Counselling and Psychological Services, Special Needs Advice Center, University Pastoral Care) and make information brochures available.
- Ask students to discuss their symptoms with their own GPs.
- In the case of an acute crisis, make use of or refer to the *Dargebotene Hand* or the Crisis Intervention Centre. If necessary, also involve the Care Team HSG.
- Adaptations of prolonged duration and repeated deadline extensions, for instance for seminar papers, should be carried out in consultation with the Special Needs Advice Center to ensure that comprehensive support can be guaranteed.
- Generally the following principle applies: trying instead of impeding, tackling instead of avoiding, providing a sense of security, mobilising existing resources, generating new ones and providing support and advice.
- It is important that professional advice and support are sought early on.
- If you should be uncertain concerning the course of action or if you would like to receive advice about dealing with a difficult situation, please contact the Special Needs Advice Center and the Counselling and Psychological Services.
- The persons concerned will be notified in writing of any adaptations to examination situations after consultation. The procedure is described on the Special Needs website:
www.unisg.ch/de/universitaet/hsgservices/beratung/beratungsstellen/special+needs/nachteilsausgleich

3 Contact

If you have any questions and concerns, please contact the Special Needs Advice Center:
Special Needs Advice Center; specialneeds@unisg.ch; +41 71 224 31 91