

Unit 35: Supporting Individuals who are Distressed

Unit reference number: R/616/7346

Level: 2

Unit type: Optional

Credit value: 3

Guided learning hours: 21

Unit summary

The causes of distress are many and differ from person to person, with some causes not always immediately obvious or identifiable. Something that has little or no impact on one person can reduce another to tears. Distress will often have a much deeper, psychological influence, which affects the way people respond in different circumstances. Whatever the reason for an individual's emotional state, it is important that they are given appropriate support when it is needed, in order to reduce or alleviate their distress.

This unit will give you the knowledge, understanding and skills you need to be able to support individuals through periods of distress, taking into account any communication changes due to their anxiety. This unit will enable you to identify and manage triggers of distress. It will also help you to explore the effect that an individual's distress may have on you, such as causing you anxiety, upset or stress. Also, importantly, you will learn where you can access support.

Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

To pass this unit, the learner needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria outline the requirements the learner is expected to meet to achieve the unit.

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
<p>1 Understand the causes and impact of distress on individuals</p>	<p>1.1 Identify causes of distress</p> <p>1.2 Describe signs that may indicate an individual is distressed</p> <p>1.3 Describe signs of distress that indicate the need for specialist intervention</p> <p>1.4 Explain how distress may affect the way an individual communicates</p> <p>1.5 Describe the potential impact of distress on individuals</p>
<p>2 Understand potential impacts on own wellbeing when supporting an individual who is distressed</p>	<p>2.1 Explain how supporting individuals who are distressed may impact on own wellbeing</p> <p>2.2 Identify sources of support to manage own feelings when supporting individuals who are distressed</p>
<p>3 Be able to support individuals who are experiencing distress</p>	<p>3.1 Demonstrate communication which provides empathy and reassurance to the personal beliefs and preferences of the individual</p> <p>3.2 Demonstrate ways of working that alleviate immediate distress</p> <p>3.3 Demonstrate that support given is adapted in response to the individual's reactions</p> <p>3.4 Demonstrate how to involve others in supporting an individual who is distressed</p> <p>3.5 Describe where to access information and advice in relation to supporting an individual who is distressed</p>

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
<p>4 Be able to support individuals to reduce distress</p>	<p>4.1 Demonstrate that the individual is supported to express thoughts and feelings about troubling aspects of their life</p> <p>4.2 Work with an individual and others to identify triggers or causes of distress</p> <p>4.3 Work with an individual and others to reduce distress</p> <p>4.4 Demonstrate working with the individual to review ways of coping with distress</p>
<p>5 Be able to record and report on an individual's distress</p>	<p>5.1 Record information relating to an individual's distress and the support provided using agreed ways of working</p> <p>5.2 Report on periods of distress in line with agreed ways of working</p>

What needs to be learned

Learning outcome 1: Understand the causes and impact of distress on individuals

Individual

- An individual is someone requiring care or support.

Causes of distress on individuals

- Causes, e.g. internal to the individual, external to the individual, related to support needs, related to support provision, related to loss, related to change.
- Transition.
- Illness/injury/disability.
- Interpersonal relationship problems.
- Environmental adjustments.
- Trauma.
- In response to the behaviour of others.

Signs of distress

- Signs, e.g. anxiety, lethargy, marked changes in personal dress and hygiene, crying, emotional, inability to cope with instructions/change, looking pale, perspiring excessively, breathing difficulties, fainting, muscular spasms, obvious intense pain, extreme fatigue, sleep problems, or falling asleep in unexpected circumstances, reddening of face, dilated pupils, change of facial expression, change of body language, voice may be raised or at a higher pitch.

Signs of distress that indicate the need for specialist intervention

- Self-harm.
- Depression.
- Change in mood.
- Physical symptoms.
- Withdrawal from others.
- High-risk behaviours.
- Intense grief about significant loss.
- Lack of response to interventions/support in place.

Effect of distress on communication

- Effects, e.g. forgetfulness/may forget words, names, sentences, distraction, agitation impacting on speech, speaking too quickly, introverted, confusion, may control the conversation and do all the talking, raised voice.

The potential impact of distress on individuals

- Impact, e.g. anxiety, illness, problems sleeping, low self-esteem, lack of interest in appearance, panic, confusion, headaches, chest pain, withdrawal from interactions/communications with others.

What needs to be learned

Learning outcome 2: Understand potential impacts on own wellbeing when supporting an individual who is distressed

Own wellbeing

- Possible impact, e.g. role/responsibilities, increased emotion, trauma, headaches, stress/anxiety, own distress, raised blood pressure, breathing difficulties, chest pain, irritability, tiredness at work, impact on relationships, lowering of self-esteem.

Sources of support

- Sources, e.g. Formal support, informal support, supervision, appraisal, within the organisation, beyond the organisation.

Learning outcome 3: Be able to support individuals who are experiencing distress

Support

- Sources of support, e.g. formal support, informal support, supervision, appraisal, within the organisation, beyond the organisation.

Preferences

- Personal preferences, e.g. beliefs, values, culture.

Communicating empathy and reassurance

- Unconditional positive regard.
- Respect.
- Assessment.
- Communication.
- Review.
- Reflective listening.
- Positive use of body language.
- Person-centred approaches.

Work in ways to alleviate immediate distress

- Calm approach.
- Active listening.
- Demonstrate respect.
- Prioritisation of needs/issues.
- Request peer/mentor support if needed.

Adapting support

- Review approaches.
- Adjust approaches to the support provided.
- Review outcomes.
- Monitor progress.
- Use of communication approaches.

Working with others

- Others may include family, friends, advocates, line manager, other professionals, team members, other colleagues, those who use or commission their own health or social care services, others who are important to the individual's wellbeing.

What needs to be learned

- Collaboration.
- Partnership.
- Support available.
- Resourcing.

Information and advice

- Sources, e.g. online, family/friends/carers, manager/supervisor, peer support networks, mental health crisis team, advocate, interpreter, local support services, helplines, counselling.

Learning outcome 4: Be able to support individuals to reduce distress

Support

- Effective communication.
- Time.
- Privacy.
- Dignity.
- Use of questioning techniques.
- Monitoring.
- A trusting relationship.
- Planning.
- Risk management.
- Review.

Manage triggers or alleviate causes of distress

- Review of stressors/situations.
- Address immediate triggers, if possible.
- Person-centred approach.
- Care planning.
- Use of effective communication.
- Interventions.
- Lifestyle.
- Collaboration.

Encourage the individual to review ways of coping with distress

- Triggers.
- Acceptance of things which cannot be changed.
- Planning.
- Monitoring.
- Stressors.
- Review.
- Reflection.
- Assessment.
- Approaches to management.
- Monitoring.
- Stress-reducing activities.

What needs to be learned

Learning outcome 5: Be able to record and report on an individual's distress

Maintain records

- Confidentiality.
- Consistency.
- Legibility.
- Statement of facts.
- Level of detail.
- Currency.
- Agreed records.
- Updates.
- Reviews.

Reporting

- Agreed approaches.
- Continuity.
- Consistency.
- Data protection legislation and policy.
- Confidentiality.
- Format.
- Frequency.
- Terminology.
- Timing.
- Monitoring.
- Observation.

Information for tutors

Suggested resources

Books

Cromby J et al – *Psychology, Mental Health and Distress* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) ISBN: 9780230549562

Tew J – *Social Approaches to Mental Distress* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) ISBN 9780230545076

Watkins T – *How to Help: A guide to helping someone manage mental distress.* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013) ISBN 9781492392873

Websites

www.communitycare.co.uk/2012/07/26/how-social-care-staff-can-improve-their-communication/	Community Care – article on improving communication within care.
www.mind.org.uk	Mind – charity giving advice and guidance in relation to mental health.
www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Teaching-resources/Teacher-briefings/Emotional-support	British Red Cross – advice and guidance on the action to take when a person is distressed.
www.samaritans.org	Samaritans – confidential support to discuss issues causing anxiety or distress.
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Search-Results.aspx?search_keywords=distress&SearchResultsExtended_SearchResults_List_GoToPage=3	Skills for Care – positive behavioural support competence framework.
www.together-uk.org	Together for mental wellbeing –provides services to meet the different needs of people with mental health issues.

Assessment

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the associated qualification specification for this unit.

This unit is internally assessed. To pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment must demonstrate that they have met the required standard specified in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria, and the requirements of the assessment strategy.

To ensure that the assessment tasks and activities enable learners to produce valid, sufficient, authentic and appropriate evidence that meets the assessment criteria, centres should follow the guidance given in *Section 8 Assessment* of the associated qualification specification and meet the requirements from the assessment strategy given below.

Wherever possible, centres should adopt an holistic approach to assessing the units in the qualification. This gives the assessment process greater rigour and minimises repetition, time and the burden of assessment on all parties involved in the process.

Unit assessment requirements

This unit must be assessed in accordance with the assessment strategy (principles) in *Annexe A* of the associated qualification specification.

Assessment decisions for learning outcomes 3, 4 and 5 (competence) must be made based on evidence generated during the learner's normal work activity. Any knowledge evidence integral to these learning outcomes may be generated outside of the work environment, but the final assessment decision must be within the real work environment. Simulation cannot be used as an assessment method for learning outcomes 3, 4 and 5.

Assessment of learning outcomes 1 and 2 may take place in or outside of a real work environment.