

DISCUSSION GUIDE



At-Risk Mental Health  
for Faculty and Staff

# Thank you for implementing Kognito's At-Risk Mental Health

Faculty & Staff have a leading role in fostering a supportive school culture through building a connected campus. This facilitation guide is designed to provide a framework for using this resource with your campus community.

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In this resource you will find a step-by-step guide to discuss each of the 5 modules. The goal is to take the critical content shared by Kognito and make it applicable to your campus and the experience of those you are working with. We will discuss each module and provide an opportunity to localize the content. The discussion guide is set up to leverage personal experiences, dialogue, and campus resources. This guide can be used in a multitude of fashions, and we suggest you consider one of the following two approaches. Regardless of approach, our guide is divided into modules for streamlined planning and facilitation. The guide also corresponds to the slide deck provided to you by the Kognito Team.

## First, decide how you want to facilitate the program:

- 01 Asynchronous:** Assign all modules to be completed ahead of the in-person discussion. To ensure content is fresh in learner's minds, we recommend modules are taken, no more than 2 weeks in advance of the in-person workshops. We also strongly suggest you watch Module 1 together to begin the workshop and Module 5 to conclude the discussion.
  - a. This approach will require approximately two hours for you to work through the full discussion guide.
  
- 02 Synchronous:** Work through each module as a team in a space together. Each individual working through the content on their own computers with headphones, with facilitated discussion to follow.
  - a. This approach allows you to work through and engage in the content as a team and will take approximately 2.5 hours to facilitate the full workshop.

## You do not have to be an expert on the topic to lead this discussion.

The goal is to make room for others to share and have opportunities to share specific examples they have seen, heard, or experienced on campus (leaving out names for confidentiality).

In preparing to facilitate there are a few things you will need. Please find the short list below.

- Make sure that faculty and staff know where to refer students by printing out a completed “Refer @ (Your Institution Name) Guide that you can hand out at the end of your session.
- Suggest – make sure the room has a white or chalk board.
- Post-it notes
- Pens for each participant.

However, you choose to use the guide, we look forward to seeing the way this training impacts your group and organizational culture. If you ever have any questions or concerns, please reach out to the Kognito team!

# Curriculum Key

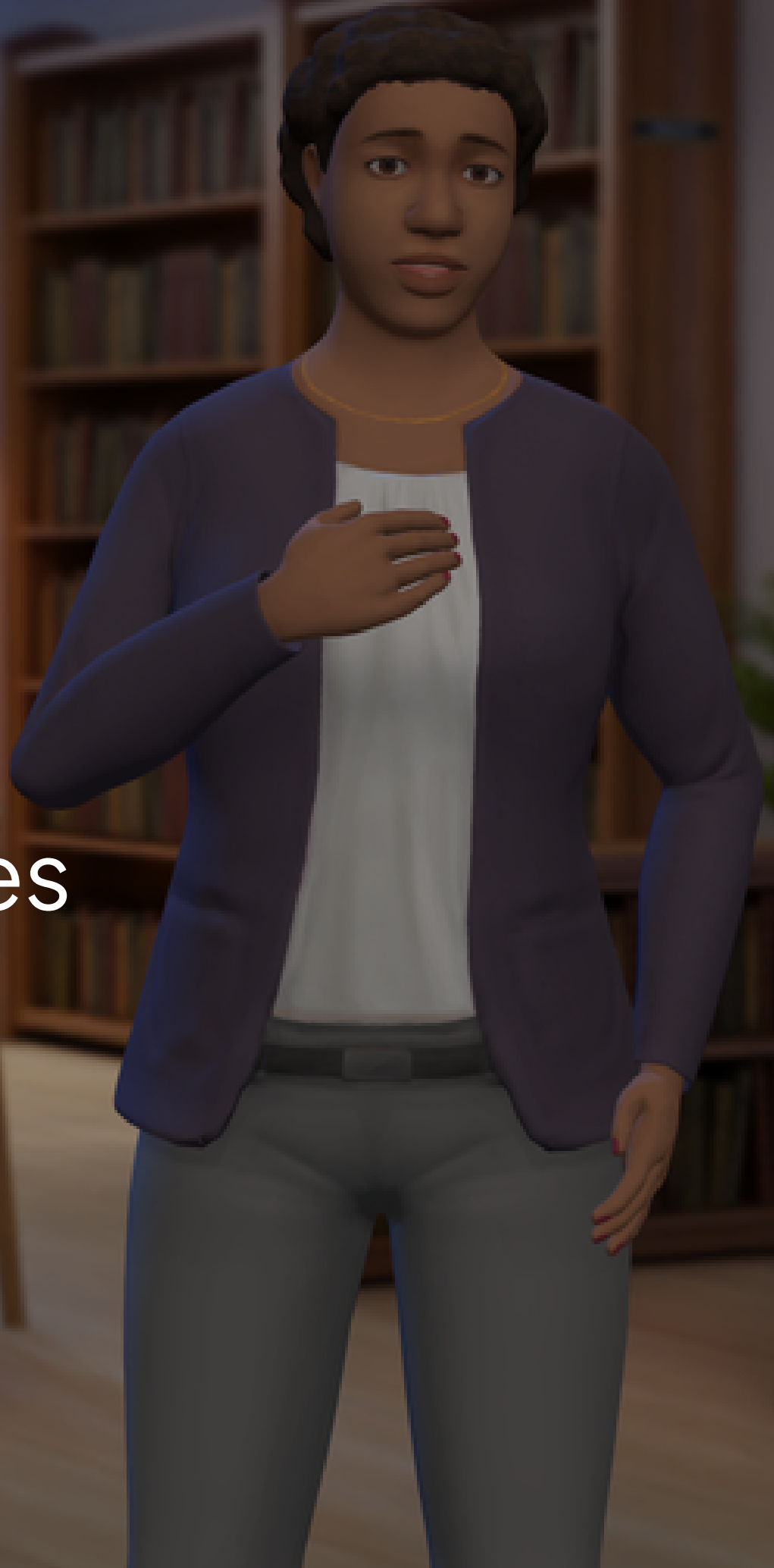
HEADING	DESCRIPTION
Time	<p>This is the general amount of time you have for each portion of the discussion. Some sections might take more, some might take less, but this will give you a general idea as you are mapping out your session.</p> <p>You will see times listed like this: 15 min (35/90). That means that the section itself should take 15 minutes and, when you have finished that section you have facilitated 35 minutes of the 90 minutes total for the program.</p> <p><b>Facilitation tip:</b> <i>Once you know your program start time, go back through this facilitation packet and create a time-roadmap making note of what time each section should begin and end.</i></p> <p><b>Pro tip:</b> <i>As you are doing that, remember that if the program is slated to begin at 7pm ET you are not really going to begin at 7pm. Give yourself some flexibility in your time-roadmap</i></p>
PowerPoint slide #	<p>This identifies the PowerPoint slides that will be used during each section. It will be listed like this (PPT 1-3).</p> <p><b>Facilitation tip:</b> <i>After you are comfortable with the curriculum go back through it and make a mark or add a sticker at the point in your facilitation that you need to advance the slide.</i></p> <p><b>Pro tip:</b> <i>Then, practice facilitating the entire program while advancing slides. A remote clicker will help you be able to move freely around the room.</i></p>

## Curriculum Key cont.

HEADING	DESCRIPTION
<i>Facilitator notes or Facilitation Instructions</i>	This section provides context for the section you are facilitating and will always be in <i>italics</i> . Think of them as your information stops along the way. Please pay special attention to each of these sections as they can be rich with helpful information.
Facilitator talking points	These are the talking points that need to be conveyed for each section. The facilitator talking points are not to be used as a script that you read verbatim, but instead should be used to frame the message you share.
Text that is in <b>BLUE</b>	<p>Text in <b>BLUE FONT</b> refers to text found on the PPT slides.</p> <p><b>Facilitation tip:</b> <i>It's often helpful to underline or highlight the main points in each section. That way, as you are facilitating you can glance down at your notes and you will see those key words standing out on your page.</i></p> <p><b>Pro tip:</b> <i>Please deliver each section in your own way or in your own words – make the curriculum yours but please <b>do not add content.</b> Throughout this discussion guide you will see sections noted as “optional” which can be included based on your time and/or session goals.</i></p>

DISCUSSION GUIDE

# Modules



**Module 1** serves as an introduction to the ideas. Facilitating this module is focused on creating a shared understanding of the importance of this topic and baseline data to engage your team.

## Module 1

**30 min (30/120)**

HEADING	DESCRIPTION
<p>Introduction &amp; Welcome (Slide 1)</p>	<p><i>It will be important to establish a set of ground rules or “shared understandings” to guide how the group speaks to and with each other. The content of this product can lead to a wide range of emotional responses. Here are some suggested guidelines to read out loud to the group and display:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It’s important that participants are given the time to express the full range of thoughts and/or ideas before responding.</li> <li>• Share from your own experiences.</li> <li>• Give everyone who wants time to speak.</li> <li>• It’s important that the group agrees to confidentiality. What is said in group remains in the group.</li> </ul> <p><i>Ask the group if there are anything else they would like to add. If possible, keep these on display during the discussion in case they need to be referred to throughout.</i></p>
<p>The “Why”</p>	<p><i>Once you have established a shared understanding of how to proceed, it’s important to share the “why” behind use of the program. A few key items to highlight in this area are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty &amp; Staff have a key role in fostering a supportive culture where their students thrive and succeed both on campus and in their careers that follow.</li> <li>• Supportive environments promote better mental health, increased satisfaction, and a sense of belonging.</li> <li>• Over 70% of college students have experienced “overwhelming anxiety” and over 40% experienced moderate to severe psychological distress.</li> </ul>

HEADING	DESCRIPTION
<p>The “Why” <i>continued</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many times, Faculty &amp; Staff are the trusted adult that a student will turn to in distress, or they are the first to notice that a student may be struggling. This presents an opportunity to help students feel heard and connect them with the resources offered by the school.</li> </ul> <p><i>But sure to include any specific language your institution uses. You might also include your institution’s values, mission, and/or stated commitment to mental well-being and belonging.”</i></p>
<p>Initial Reflections (Slide 2)</p>	<p><i>Use the two questions to open-up discussion about the topic and what it means to each participant.</i></p> <p><b>Q1: What surprised you about the information shared?</b> ENCOURAGE EACH PERSON TO SHARE 1 ITEM</p> <p><i>Once people have shared for Q1, please pose Q2</i></p> <p><b>Q2: Can you share any real-life examples of students that you have seen in distress (no names)? If so, what signs referenced in the modules stood out for you?</b></p> <p>As we go through these discussions we will think through how we can work together as a team to support our students and empower them to thrive.</p>
<p>Final Note</p>	<p><i>Ask each participant to write down 1 item they hope to learn through this training.</i></p> <p><i>Emphasize the value this will bring to campus in helping create a safe and supportive campus where all students can thrive.</i></p> <p><b>If you had one question about helping students in distress or this resource, what would it be?</b></p> <p><i>If participants are comfortable doing so, invite them to share responses. Once everyone has shared, thank them for their participation.</i></p>



**Module 2** serves as an introduction to the strategies that can be used to support students. In this module a student comes to you as a trusted adult.

## Module 2

**30 min** depending on your team **(60/120)**

HEADING	DESCRIPTION
Stressors	<p><i>Introduce this section and remind participants that we never know what students are dealing with but with the right tools and questions, we can support them when they come to us. To begin talking about this topic, make it personal.</i></p> <p><i>Ask each participant:</i></p> <p>What resource on campus can your students turn to when stressed?</p> <p>How about you, what sources would you turn to?</p> <p><i>Once the participants have responded, discuss that we all develop our personal strategies to cope with stressors and the students we work with are likely trying to figure that out for themselves. For each of us our strategies will be unique, and it is important to give students ideas of potential resources while giving them agency as they determine what will work best for them.</i></p> <p><i>(We will discuss an in-crisis situation in a later module, here we are not talking about any situation that would need crisis intervention)</i></p>

HEADING	DESCRIPTION
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Helping Students Open-up

*Discuss the value of open-ended questions and remaining non-judgmental when supporting a student in distress.*

*Lead a discussion on the differences between questions in Column A are compared to Column B.*

**Option A**

- How are things going for you?
- How do you feel about what happened in class?
- How do you unwind?
- What have you been doing for fun?
- What are you finding challenging?

**Option B**

- Are you okay?
- Are you OK with what happened in class?
- You'd tell me if something was wrong, right?
- Don't you think you should be addressing that?

Which of these questions would you use to help a student open up? Why?

*After the activity, ask the participants to reflect on a time when they were made to feel like someone was genuinely listening to them and invested in what they were saying. Have participants write down what characteristics of that conversation stood out for them. Ask if anyone would like to share.*

HEADING	DESCRIPTION
<p>Refer to Resources</p>	<p><i>Use this time to discuss referring to resources. These slides will require preparation and customization.</i></p> <p><i>Walk through the resources of tangible places to support students whether it's the Recreation Center, Counseling, or even community resources.</i></p> <p><i>Divide participants into pairs and distribute a note card with one of the scenarios below on it. Each group will then use the resources on slides or that they know on campus to determine 2 resources that can assist students.</i></p> <p><b>Scenarios:</b></p> <p><b>Faculty</b> - A student in your class is normally on time, engaged, and active. The student begins missing class and doesn't show up for a quiz. You reach out to the student and ask them to come to your office. When they arrive, they are disheveled, have red eyes, and appear to have been crying. The student shares they broke up with their partner and have been struggling to cope with the loss.</p> <p><b>Staff</b> - One of your student employees has started to miss deadlines and didn't show up for one of the programs they oversaw planning. This is not normal behavior. You reach out to the student and ask them if it's ok to talk. When they arrive, they are disheveled, have red eyes, and appear to have been crying. The student shares they broke up with their partner and have been struggling to cope with the loss.</p>
<p>Final Reflection</p>	<p><i>At the end of discussing each module we always want to return to why we are talking about this and why it matters. Grounding everything in this lens allows participants to better connect with not just what they can do, but why they are doing it in the first place. We also want to return to a focus on helping our students thrive and achieve their goals.</i></p> <p><i>Take a moment to think about an element of this discussion that really matters to you personally. Write a key takeaway and an action item for yourself and discuss it with your partner (make it part of the above exercise).</i></p>

**Module 3** expands on the communication strategies to support students in distress and covers warning signs of distress, how to start a conversation with a student who you are concerned about.

## Module 3

**30 min** depending on your team **(90/120)**

HEADING	DESCRIPTION
Let's Talk	<p><i>Use this section to work with the participants in helping them navigate the process of reaching out to students they may be concerned about. This involves Identifying the need, how to support the student, and refer them to support services. Remind participants that referral is an important part of supporting the student.</i></p>
Identify & Outreach	<p>We have discussed some of the signs of students in distress we need to be looking out for in our students, selves, and peers. The big flag of concern is changes in behavior. We might not always know the reason for the change, but if we have any concerns, it is better to reach out and check in then do nothing.</p> <p>What are some of the ways we can reach out that will make others feel supported and more likely to open up?</p> <p>Let's work through a scenario in teams and discuss how we would reach out to a student we were concerned about.</p> <p><i>Split participants into groups of 2-3. Have each group review the scenario.</i></p> <p><b>Faculty</b> - During an in-class group assignment, one of your students raises their voice towards another student in their group. Their tone and level of frustration is abnormal for them and makes you concerned. You acknowledge the disagreement and redirect the class. As the class ends, the student who had the outburst has the head on their desk.</p> <p><b>Staff</b> - During a meeting, a student responds with frustration and aggression to a suggestion made by another student. Their tone and level of frustration is abnormal for them and makes you concerned. You acknowledge the disagreement and redirect the meeting. After the meeting ends, the student who had the outburst is just sitting at their table on their phone.</p>

HEADING	DESCRIPTION
<p>Identify &amp; Outreach <i>continued</i></p>	<p>The first task is to determine how you will reach out to the student (email, in-person, phone) and draft your outreach. Remember to use specific neutral observations and avoid judgmental statements.</p> <p><i>Review Slide examples before the groups begin.</i></p> <p><b>Slide Examples:</b></p> <p><b>Faculty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I noticed that you fell asleep in class yesterday. (Specific Neutral Observation)</li> <li>• Falling asleep in class is disrespectful. (Judgmental)</li> </ul> <p><b>Staff</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I noticed that you’ve missed our last few volunteer opportunities. (Specific Neutral Observation)</li> <li>• Don’t you care about the community anymore? (Judgmental)</li> </ul>
<p>Review Open-ended Questions</p>	<p>Through the conversation there are some key techniques participants can use to help drive the conversation forward, the first technique using open-ended questions.</p> <p>You can establish a welcoming tone by asking open-ended questions. Questions that invite more thoughtful and complete responses, and help you better understand their behavior. As opposed to close-ended questions that are usually answered in one word, like yes or no.</p> <p>Be sure to ask with an open mind, without judgment or assumption. And there isn’t one right question or answer. But asking shows you’re willing to listen and are genuinely seeking to understand.</p> <p>In your small group, write three open-ended questions you might use with your students and discuss them</p>

HEADING	DESCRIPTION
<p>Reflections</p>	<p><i>It's important to point out to participants that silence doesn't mean you are listening. We need to show someone that we are truly hearing what they have to say.</i></p> <p>Reflections are how we show we are listening and that we understand. They echo back what a person is saying. Reflections are an important part of active listening.</p> <p>In your small group, try practicing reflections. Give each person a chance to practice. Start with one person in the group describing a stressful situation they might encounter (can be real or made up) and have the rest of the group state how they would use reflections to empathize and show they are listening.</p> <p><b>Example:</b></p> <p><b>Person 1</b> - Today has been crazy, I had 15 new emails from students in my inbox this morning before I even had a chance to get a cup of coffee.</p> <p><b>Person 2</b> - with reflection: That is a lot of incoming demands the first thing in the morning, I can only image that was stressful...especially without that first cup of coffee.</p>
<p>Suicidal Ideation and Referral</p>	<p><i>In this section we will cover responding to concerns about suicidal ideation. It will be important to have information ready for participants on what referral options are available and what to do if a student is in-crisis.</i></p> <p>If you are ever concerned that a student may be having thoughts of suicide or self-harm it is always okay to ask. Asking will not put the idea in their head. In fact, they might be relieved that someone asked them, and they can talk about it.</p> <p>It is okay to be direct, but important to be non-judgmental. Asking a student if they are thinking about suicide is direct and does not imply any judgement.</p>

HEADING	DESCRIPTION
<p>Suicidal Ideation and Referral <i>continued</i></p>	<p>This question is not always easy to ask but can make all the difference.</p> <p>A few warning signs to look out for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expressing a desire to kill themselves or be dead</li> <li>• Expressing feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, or futility</li> <li>• Expressing feelings of alienation or isolation</li> <li>• Looking for a way to end their life</li> <li>• Making verbal or written statements like “life isn’t worth living anymore”, or “people would be better off without me.”</li> </ul> <p>If a student shares they are, or have considered suicide, let them know you understand that things are hard and that a lot of students have the same thoughts and that it’s important to talk to someone even though they feel that nothing will help. Say, “let’s make an appointment with the counseling center.” You can also make a warm-handoff by offering to walk with the student to the support services, or if they are not in-person, staying on the phone/zoom with them until support arrives.</p> <p><i>You will need to work with your mental health team to edit this section to include the process and resources for your campus. Review the campus process and then have participants practice asking the question and making a warm handoff</i></p> <p>In groups of two, have each participant practice asking directly “Are you thinking about suicide?”</p> <p><i>They can put this in their own words if it remains clear what they are asking and is non-judgmental.</i></p> <p>And then practice making a warm handoff to support.</p> <p><b>Example:</b></p> <p>It might help to talk with someone about what you are going through. Let me walk with you over to the counseling center.</p>

HEADING	DESCRIPTION
Recap	<p><i>End this section by reminding participants of the key takeaways. Talk through each of the items and let participants share any aha moments they had from the online or in-person discussion.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Specific Neutral Observations</li><li>• Reflections</li><li>• Suicidal Ideation</li><li>• Connecting with Support</li></ul>



**Module 4 & 5** serve to introduce a Trauma-Informed approach to how students are supported. Reframing the view of behaviors of concern from a student being a problem to a student facing potential unseen problems under the surface of what we observe.

## Module 4 & 5

**30 min** depending on your team **(120/120)**

HEADING	DESCRIPTION
Inward Reflection	<p><i>Begin this section by discussing the bruise metaphor described in module 4.</i></p> <p>How can this metaphor help us to think differently about some of our students' behavior?</p> <p><i>Now have participants normalize this for themselves with a personal reflection question. You can have people share if they feel comfortable or just have them reflect personally to themselves.</i></p> <p>Has your behavior ever changed due to stress, loss, transition, etc.? If so, how might that behavior have looked to those who were not aware of the full story?</p> <p>It is important to remember that we cannot always see what is going on in someone's life. It can be easy to fall back into statements like "why are you acting like that." The strategies we covered in the program: specific neutral observations, open-ended questions, reflections, and empathy, can help us take a step back from a negative response to a specific action and instead help a student, peer or even ourselves explore what might be causing our behaviors.</p> <p><i>Ask if anyone is willing to describe a situation where they might react differently by using these skills.</i></p>

HEADING	DESCRIPTION
<p>Learning from Experience</p>	<p>In this section, use the vast experience of your participants to explore strategies they have used to support their students, themselves, and their peers.</p> <p>If you can, share a moment from personal experience where you have supported your students or peers experiencing distress.</p> <p>Are there any strategies you want to share that have worked well for you supporting all your students' well-being even those who you may not have identified as being in distress?</p>
<p>Proactive Approach</p>	<p><i>Remind participants that it is important to take a proactive approach. Learn what resources are available on campus, practice checking in with students and peers and connect with the mental health support team on campus to learn other ways you can help everyone on campus thrive.</i></p> <p><i>Take a moment to customize this section with some institution specific information with items such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Names and numbers of offices on campus that can act as crisis and non-crisis support</i></li> <li>• <i>Other learning opportunities and resources</i></li> </ul>
<p>Final Affirmations</p>	<p>Wrap up with a sincere thank you for their time, vulnerability in the session, and for sharing their experiences.</p> <p>Thank you for leading the session and all the work you do to have create an inclusive campus where everyone can thrive.</p>