

Suggestions for Helping Students with Problems



*“Doors of opportunities to help people surround us. The question is:
Do we see them?”*

-Unknown

- Avoid referring to your church leaders as “counselors”. In our culture this now denotes a certain amount of professional training. However, as a sponsor, you will most likely find yourself in “counseling” situations offering advice and spiritual help.
- No matter what the issue, always begin with the student’s relationship with the Lord. Whether or not a student is saved will affect everything they encounter in life. It’s okay to say, “I’m glad you want to talk about this but first I want to deal with something a bit deeper..Has there ever been a time in your life when you gave your life to Christ? If so, tell me about it...”

- Always “counsel” students in a public setting where you can be seen and others know what is going on. Never go “behind closed doors” to privately talk in a place where no one can observe what is happening.
- Always offer Biblical advice. “The Bible says...”
- It is usually best for ladies to talk to girls and men to talk to boys.
- If you offer your opinion, be clear in telling them that it is your opinion and not Biblical advice.
- Concerning life issues, avoid telling students what to do (i.e., “You need to...” It is far better to say, “This is what I would suggest...” Or, “This is my advice...”)
- You don’t have to have all the answers. It’s okay to say, “I don’t know but I’ll find out.”
- Be transparent. If you have faced similar issues, share your personal experience but remember, this is not about you. Be careful not to project too much of yourself and your emotions onto the person you are helping.
- Never promise, “I won’t tell anyone.” The best answer is to say, “I need you to trust me that I won’t tell anyone unless there is an important reason to.”
- Issues such as rape, abuse, etc., need to be taken beyond you to your pastor or church leader.
- Create opportunities to have meaningful conversations. It’s okay to ask if you can talk or go for a walk together. Toward the end of the week, students will also begin to run out of money for snacks. Offer to take them for a snack and while you’re getting it, bring up the issues you want to talk about—i.e., “In our small group discussion, you said...I was just curious if you could tell me more.” Or, “I’ve been wanting to ask you if you know for sure that you’re going to Heaven?”, etc.
- Create opportunities to share your salvation testimony (the story of how you were saved) and then ask the student to share their story with you. (To learn more about this, see additional resources on this website.)