THE AGGRESSIVE STUDENT

Description:

Aggression can take many forms from very subtle passive acts to violent outbursts. Aggression is the result of being frustrated and feeling out of control. Some aggressive people express hostility immediately without regard for their circumstances or the people around them. Other aggressive students express their hostility through explosive outbursts and the rest of the time denies their anger and frustration. Many times students who are verbally or physically aggressive feel inadequate and use the hostile behavior as a way to build up their self-esteem. Often they feel that you will reject them so they become hostile and reject you first to protect them from being hurt. They may see you as attempting to control them and lash out to try and gain a sense of control.

It is important to remember that the student is generally not angry with you personally, but is angry at his/her world, and you may be the object of the pent-up frustrations.

Response:

The following may be helpful guidelines in dealing with the aggressive student:

1. Acknowledge their anger and frustration (e.g., “I hear how you are feeling.”)
2. Rephrase what they are saying and identify their emotion (e.g. “I can hear how upset you are and how no one will listen.”)
3. Reduce stimulation; invite the person to a quiet place if this is comfortable.
4. Try to prevent total helplessness by quickly and calmly acknowledging the intensity of the situation. Continue rephrasing what they say keeping your voice volume down.
5. Focus on diffusing the situation rather than seeking resolution right away.
6. Allow them to ventilate, get their feelings out, and tell you what is upsetting them.
7. Call for help when necessary (Campus Safety, co-workers, psychological counselor).

The following will not be helpful:

1. Getting into an argument, becoming hostile or punitive.
2. Pressing for explanations for their behavior.
3. Not dealing with the situation or ignoring warning signals.
4. Touching the student.
5. Making threats, dares or taunts.

If a student’s behavior is disruptive or appears to be threatening or dangerous:
Call Campus Safety at 242-7910 or dial 9-911.