THE PARANOID/SUSPICIOUS STUDENT

Description:

Usually, these students complain about something other than their psychological difficulties. They are tense, cautious, mistrustful, and have few friends. These students tend to interpret minor oversights as significant personal rejection. Often many overreact to insignificant occurrences. They see themselves as the focal point of everyone’s behavior and everything that happens has special meaning. Usually, they are overly concerned with fairness and being treated equally. They project blame onto others and will express anger in roundabout ways. Many times they feel worthless and inadequate.

Response:

The following may be helpful in dealing with a suspicious/paranoid student:

1. Send clear, consistent messages regarding what you are willing to do and what you expect.
2. Express compassion without intimate friendship. Remember, paranoid students have trouble with closeness and warmth. It would not be helpful to be overly warm or nurturing or to assure the student you are his/her friend. Let him/her know that you can still be concerned, without being intimate.
3. Be aware of personal boundaries and space when interacting.
4. Be aware of your own anxiety.

The following actions may not be helpful:

1. Be overly warm or too friendly with student.
2. Flatter the student, laugh with him/her or be humorous.
3. Assure the student that you are his/her friend or advocate.