



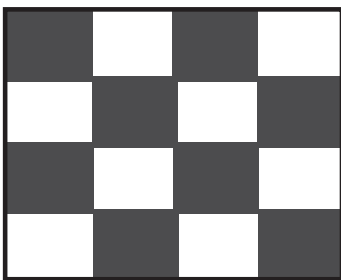
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# The FSAP Update

a newsletter from the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program

Spring, 2008

*The Faculty and Staff Assistance Program provides assessment, brief counseling, and referral services for all faculty and staff regarding any personal or health-related problem which affects an individual's life and work. FSAP services are free to faculty, staff, and family members and are completely confidential. The staff also provides consultation to supervisors when an employee's personal problems are affecting work performance or relationships. For more information or to make an appointment, call 545-0350.*



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## Tense Times, Worrisome Changes: Watching for Red Flags

by Elizabeth Holtzman, Director, Faculty and Staff Assistance Program

**T**hese aren't the easiest of times. The country is at war, our economy is shaky and troubling stories are filling the news; the upcoming presidential election adds another layer of uncertainty. As a result, many of us may feel insecure, anxious, or even helpless.

People who feel this way can become irritable and more susceptible to aggressive behaviors – acts that might not have happened in different circumstances. Being mindful of our behavior, and that of others, is key to helping protect ourselves from danger.

While some situations occur without warning, it's wise to be aware of "red flags" – signs that something may not be right. You may be most sensitive to these changes in your family, workplace, school or in a small community, where people are familiar with each other.

When you know someone, you have a sense of their personality and behavior; changes in that characteristic behavior are something to be aware of. For example, a productive, cheerful worker starts missing work, coming in late, or picking fights with co-workers. A colleague who's been social begins to isolate, seeming withdrawn and worried. They may become paranoid, suggesting that others are plotting against them.

If you notice such red flags, what can you do? You're concerned you may be overreacting and don't want to be intrusive – but taking appropriate action is important.

While some situations may not be clear-cut, always call 911 if you feel there's an immediate danger.

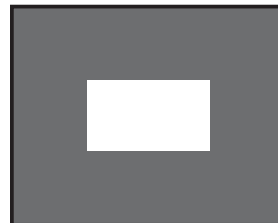
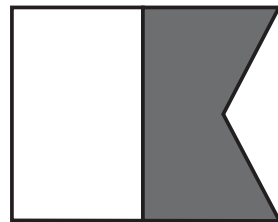
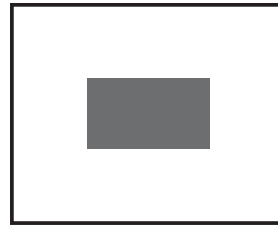
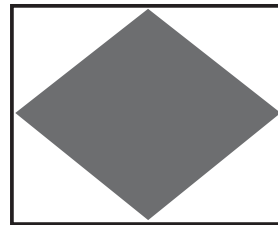
Otherwise, it can be helpful to involve the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP). The FSAP's licensed clinician can give feedback and help determine what to do next. Your manager might call after talking with you, or you can call on your own.

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The clinician may suggest the person be evaluated by the FSAP. Once evaluated, there are a number of options available, depending on the severity of the situation. It may be that the person is in a crisis and needs a counseling referral. Perhaps they've gone off psychotropic medications and need a nudge to see their psychiatrist and get back on medication.

Early intervention is always preferable to waiting for a situation to escalate. Even if you're not sure whether a problem exists, it's a good idea to contact the FSAP for a consultation. Services are free and confidential for employees of UMass Amherst, Amherst College, Five Colleges, Inc., and the UMass Five College Federal Credit Union.

*The FSAP is located on the ground floor of University Health Services, 150 Infirmary Way. Hours are by appointment, Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. For information or an appointment, call (413) 545-0350.*



## **CONTEST: Find the messages in the flags**

*Can you identify the messages signalled by the nautical flags on the front and back of this issue? The first three correct answers will receive a prize! Email your answers to: [contact@uhs.umass.edu](mailto:contact@uhs.umass.edu). **Good luck!***



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The FSAP UPDATE is a publication of University Health Services, UMass Amherst