

## THE VIOLENT OR PHYSICALLY DESTRUCTIVE STUDENT

Violence due to emotional distress is very rare and typically occurs only when the student is totally frustrated and feels unable to do anything about it. Prevention is the best course, but when confronted by an angry, threatening student, the following may be helpful:

### **DO:**

- Call University Police at 9-911 or dial 972-2093 if you or others are in imminent danger.
- Prevent total frustration and helplessness by quickly and calmly acknowledging the intensity of the situation, e.g., “I can see you really mean business and have some critical concerns on your mind.”
- Explain clearly and directly what behaviors are acceptable, e.g., “You certainly have the rights to be angry, but hitting or breaking things is not O.K.”
- Get necessary help (other staff, University Police, Counseling Center, Student Health Center Personnel).
- Stay in an open area.
- Divert attention when all else fails, e.g., “If you hit me, I can’t be of help.”
- Refer to Counseling Center. When making an emergency referral, it is helpful to escort the student to the Counseling Center to ensure that they receive appropriate assessment and treatment.

### **DON'T:**

- Delay seeking assistance.
- Ignore warning signs that the person is about to explode, e.g., yelling, screaming, clenched fists, statements like, “You’re leaving me no choice.”
- Threaten, dare, taunt, or push into a corner.
- Touch.

\* Adapted from: Helping the Emotionally Distressed Student. Organization of Counseling Center Directors in Higher Education; 1999