

## Tips to try when students are struggling

When students are struggling, it might be in one of two areas.

Cognitive problems	Behavioral and/or professional problems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ They have a weak knowledge base</li> <li>→ They have underdeveloped clinical skills</li> <li>→ They have difficulty problem solving</li> <li>→ They have difficulty organizing information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ They are unaware of expectations</li> <li>→ They have little or no motivation</li> <li>→ They seem to have a persistent negative attitude</li> <li>→ They seem overconfident to the point that they are unsafe</li> <li>→ They have increased anxiety or lack of confidence</li> </ul>

In order to assist the student in a positive, productive manner, ask yourself:

- What is the problem?
- Whose problem is it?
- When did you decide it was a problem?
- How did you make this decision?
- Have you identified the student's learning style?

Then, gather data to support your decision by:

- Talking to the student
- Observing the student in different situations
- Reviewing and discussing the student's cases
- Talking to other members of the team
- Talking to the faculty member from the educational institution

It is advisable to document the assessment and other pertinent information including:

- A detailed description of problem
- The student's perception of problem
- The student's strengths and weaknesses in their knowledge base, attitudes, and skills
- The student's relevant life history
- The student's performance on previous placements
- The preceptor's and other colleagues' perceptions, feelings, expectations, and assumptions

When developing a plan, be sure that you and the student have clear expectations. Ask yourself:

- What problem are you trying to address?
- How will you address the problem?
- Who should be involved in the intervention?
- What is your time frame?
- How will you document your intervention?
- How will you evaluate the outcome?
- How will you involve the student?
- How will you assure confidentiality and follow due process?

Some intervention options that might be considered are:

- More time in the placement
- Student and faculty discussions
- Further assessment
- Increased observation and feedback
- Changes in schedules for increased practice and skill acquisition
- Peer support
- Specific skill training
- Remedial program
- Counseling and/or therapy
- Revision of the student's learning expectations to more achievable results
- Consideration of a change of placement area in order to meet the student's learning needs

Some placements will be unsuccessful regardless of the preceptor's and student's best efforts. When this happens, the school faculty member is there to support the preceptor in the decision making process. Sometimes preceptors and students are not able to work out differences and it is in the best interest of both to consider reassignment. The key is to identify potential issues and then address these issues early in the placement assignment.