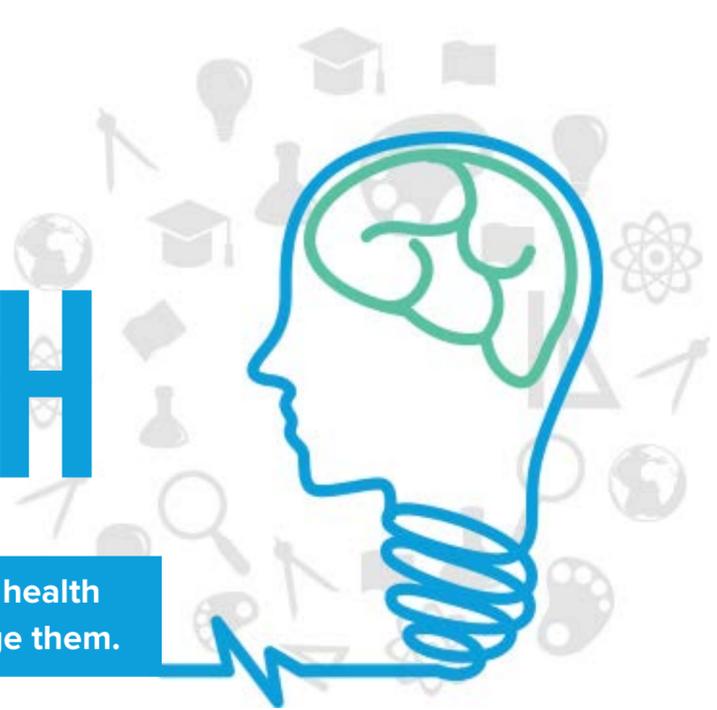


GUIDE TO COLLEGE STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH



A comprehensive guide to help college students identify common mental health disorders, their warning signs, when to seek treatment and how to manage them.

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INTRODUCTION

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, some four million students enroll in college for the first time every year. For many of these students, the transition to college life can be overwhelming. From newfound freedom to the rigors of college-level coursework and everything in between, the pressure and stress can take its toll. On top of that, many mental health issues tend to emerge during an individual's early or late twenties. Experts say that mental health disorders among college students are on the rise, which has made the mental and emotional well being of young adults a growing concern within higher education. More students are seeking help for various types of mental health issues, from eating disorders to emotional problems to self-injury. Awareness and treatment are essential if schools want to prevent crises that result in failing classes, dropping out, severe emotional issues or far worse, suicide.

The following guide is designed to help college students identify and address mental health issues by:

- Reviewing the most common mental health disorders affecting college students
- Explaining what to do if you or someone you know is affected
- Outlining the treatment options and ongoing health maintenance requirements
- Providing additional resources for help and assistance

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES, SYMPTOMS AND DISORDERS AFFECTING COLLEGE STUDENTS

Below are some of the most common mental health issues that college students face:

STRESS

Eight out of ten college students experienced stress in the previous three months.
- Associated Press and mtvU study (2008)

The pressure that comes with being a college student is intense. In addition to the high financial cost of a college education, there is increased competition among students when it comes to academics. The college years are also a time of considerable change and growth; add that to the social pressures students face and it's no wonder students are feeling more stressed than ever before.

Stress Symptoms

Stress affects the body physically and emotionally. In fact, it's easy to confuse signs of stress with signs of physical illness because they are so deeply connected. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), the most common signs of stress are:

- Increased heart rate
- Headaches, muscle tension, neck or back pain
- Upset stomach
- Dry mouth
- Chest pains, rapid heartbeat
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite or overeating "comfort foods"
- Increased frequency of colds
- Lack of concentration or focus
- Memory problems or forgetfulness
- Jitters
- Irritability
- Short temper
- Anxiety

Stress Treatment and Prevention

Many schools are taking a wellness approach to stress management. The major components of this approach include:



- **Nutrition:** In addition to keeping you physically healthy, eating a balanced diet increases mental and emotional stamina. Contact campus nutritional services to find out if your school offers nutritional counseling, which can include weight management, vegetarian lifestyle support and blood pressure and cholesterol regulation.



- **Physical Fitness:** It takes just 20-30 minutes of exercise each day to boost your mood and improve sleep. Most campuses have a fitness center with cardio machines, strength training equipment and aerobics classes. Sign up and get moving!



- **Relaxation Techniques:** Daily meditation and visualization exercises combined with progressive muscle relaxation are proven ways to lower blood pressure and improve nighttime sleep. If your school does not offer training in relaxation techniques, look online for programs you can follow at your own pace.



- **Time Management:** Learning how to manage your time is an essential skill and can help alleviate stress. Make an appointment with Tutoring Services to learn about what time management programs are offered on campus.

There are also a number of colleges and universities that offer creative ways to help student relieve stress. For example, during a recent finals week, Broward College partners with the Florida Humane Society for a “Pet De-Stress” event. Volunteer dogs came to campus to interact with the students and help them relax.

If you are feeling stressed, it’s important to talk to someone who can help. Set up an appointment at your college counseling center to get support and to find out what kind of stress relief programs are available at your school.

Helping a Stressed Friend or Roommate

Sometimes it is a friend or roommate who shows warning signs of stress. In that case it is important to:

Be supportive. Don’t dismiss his or her feelings. Instead, show you understand by offering to listen without judgment.

Spend time together. Find relaxing activities that you can both enjoy.

Talk. Suggest that he or she talk to a trusted adult or make a counseling appointment to discuss how he or she is feeling.

Whether you are in crisis or you have a friend in crisis, you can’t handle it alone. Check with the student counseling center for information about crisis intervention support.

Resources

[Stress Takes Its Toll on College Students](#)

Businessweek.com article about the prevalence of mental health disorders on campus. Article includes information about Cornell University’s “Let’s Talk” program.

[Managing Stress: A Guide for College Students](#)

University of Georgia published this guide about stress management. Guide focuses on wellness.

[Coping with Stress or Crisis](#)

Carleton University published this booklet about dealing with stress in college. The guide includes a comprehensive list of tips.

[Stress](#)

A Washington University guide for handling school stress. The guide includes a section on changing from distorted thinking to a more accurate thinking style.

[Stress and Anxiety](#)

Thrive (UNC’s campus health services) provides steps for handling stress and anxiety. Website includes directions for progressive muscle relaxation and time management tips.

ANXIETY DISORDERS

Anxiety disorders are one of the most common mental health problems on college campuses.

-Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Everyone feels anxious at times. Anxiety is a feeling of fear and unease about something that might happen. Sometimes it can be a helpful response. For example, if you feel anxious about an upcoming test, you will spend more time preparing for it. Anxiety, however, can become a problem when it interferes with your daily life. Research suggests that people with an anxiety disorder run a higher risk of experiencing health problems.

Anxiety is an umbrella terms that includes the following:

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD): Excessive unrealistic worry about things such as family, work, finances, and other daily pressures, affecting 6.8 million adults in the U.S.

Panic disorder and panic attacks: Unexpected and debilitating panic attacks associated with frequent anxiety, affecting 6 million adults in the U.S.

Social anxiety disorder: Fear of being judged by others in social situations, affecting 15 million adults in the U.S.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): Physiological responses and behaviors associated with anxiety after exposure to a psychologically traumatic event, affecting 5.2 million adults in the U.S.

College students can develop anxiety due to academic pressure, problems with friends, significant others and family, and worries about life after graduation.

Symptoms of Anxiety Disorders

The following symptoms are associated with anxiety disorders:

- Nervousness and tension
- Difficulty sleeping
- Loss of appetite
- Knotted stomach
- Problems breathing
- Dizziness
- Pounding heart
- Compulsive eating
- Trembling
- Pounding heart
- Compulsive eating
- Difficulty concentrating

Anxiety Treatment and Prevention

If you are suffering from symptoms of an anxiety disorder, it is important to see a mental health professional for treatment. Mental health professionals treat anxiety with psychotherapy to identify negative thoughts and behaviors and replace them with positive ones. They also prescribe medications, if needed. Make an appointment at your school counseling center or with a private therapist to discuss treatment.

Medications used to treat anxiety include:

- **Anti-depressants:** Affect the neurotransmitters that are believed to play a role in anxiety disorders and include Paroxetine (Paxil), sertraline (Zoloft) and venlafaxine (Effexor).
- **Buspirone:** An anti-anxiety medication that may take several weeks to become effective and often causes lightheadedness.
- **Benzodiazepines:** Sedatives for short-term relief of anxiety symptoms. Benzos include lorazepam (Ativan), diazepam (Valium), chlordiazepoxide (Librium) and alprazolam (Xanax). People usually take them for short-term relief because they can be habit forming.

There are also several ways you can manage anxiety on your own.



- **Talk:** Share your anxiety with trusted friends and family members who can give you support. Having someone to turn to when your anxiety is escalating can help you get control.



- **Relaxation techniques:** Practice meditation and exercises such as progressive muscle relaxation to quiet your mind. Your campus counseling center may offer classes. If not, check out programs that you can do on your own online or off campus.



- **Get moving:** Exercise is a great way to relieve both stress and anxiety. Find a way to add exercise to your routine 20-30 minutes a day, even if it's just a walk around campus at a brisk pace.

Helping a Friend or Roommate with Anxiety

If your friend or roommate is showing signs of anxiety:

Be supportive. Things may be difficult at times and accepting will make it easier.

Express concern. Ask how you can help and listen carefully.

Encourage treatment. Offer to help set up an appointment with student services and go with him or her for emotional support.

Whether you are in crisis or you have a friend in crisis, you can't handle it alone. Check with the student counseling center for information about crisis intervention support.

Resources

[Anxiety and Stress Management Training Session](#)

Thrive (UNC's campus health services) provides tools for handling stress and anxiety.

This site contains four relaxation audio files for practicing relaxation and stress management skills.

[Dealing with Anxiety at College](#)

Red River College offers advice about identifying and coping with anxiety. The guide includes suggestions for handling panic attacks.

[Dealing with Anxiety Disorders at College](#)

Coastal Center for Anxiety Treatment provides tips for handling anxiety disorders. The website includes resources and workshops.

[Dartmouth College Academic Skills Center](#)

Dartmouth College published these stress and anxiety fact sheets. Tips include deep breathing exercises and access to videos.

[Understanding Academic Anxiety](#)

Cornell University answers questions about anxiety for college students. The article includes tips for managing anxiety.

SELF-INJURY

Seventeen percent of college students report that they have cut, burned, carved or harmed themselves in other ways.

-Survey by Cornell and Princeton University researchers

Self-injury is when an individual deliberately harms his or her body without the intent to commit suicide for purposes not widely socially acceptable or ornamental. The consensus among mental health providers in college settings is that incidents of self-injury have increased over the past several years, possibly because of the lack of coping mechanisms and more stressful situations young people face.

Incidents of self-injury are increasing rapidly among young adults. Individuals who practice self-injury behaviors routinely cut their skin with razor blades, scissors and other sharp objects until they bleed. Sufferers explain that causing physical pain is a release—that it's a way to break through the numbness felt with depression and the pain from self-loathing, emptiness, rage and guilt.

Unfortunately, the release is temporary, because it doesn't address the underlying issues. In addition to the physical scars, the act of cutting is isolating, which perpetuates many of the emotional issues. It is also easy to accidentally cause serious injury by misjudging the depth of a cut. Not treating the wounds properly may also lead to infection. On top of those issues, cutting can become an addiction.

Cutting isn't the only self-injury behavior. Other ways individuals intentionally hurt themselves without trying to commit suicide include:

- Burning or scalding
- Head banging
- Throwing body against walls
- Sticking objects in skin
- Preventing wounds from healing
- Swallowing poisonous substances

Symptoms of Self-Injury Behavior

People who harm themselves often hide scars, cuts and bruises with clothing, making it difficult to notice. In addition to unexplained wounds or scars, flags to look for include:

- **Isolation:** You may observe frequent disappearances to bedroom or bathroom for long periods of time.
- **Irritability:** They may get angry quickly and snap at you for what seems like no good reason.
- **Frequent “accidents”:** They use stories about accidents to explain physical marks and wounds.

- **Blood stains:** You may find stained clothing and bedding, along with bloody tissues and towels.
- **Covering Up:** They may wear long sleeves and pants despite warm weather.
- **Sharp Objects:** You may notice the sudden appearance of cutting tools such as razors, bottle caps, straightened paper clips and needles.

Self-Injury Treatment and Prevention

If you are practicing self-injury behavior, the first thing you need to do is get help. Admitting your problem can be scary, but it's important to find an adult you can trust. Contact your campus counseling center. If you're not sure where to turn, call the S.A.F.E. Alternatives information line in the U.S. at **(800) 366-8288** for referrals and support for cutting and self-harm.

Counseling also allows individuals to get to the root of what is causing the pain in the first place before it leads to major depression, substance abuse and suicide. Anti-depressants are prescribed to help with depression, if needed. Therapy can also help you find out what your triggers are so you can avoid them.

In addition to addressing the root of the problem, treatment for self-injury also involves finding replacement behaviors to stop the cutting and learning new coping mechanisms. Some people find wearing a rubber band to snap when they get the urge to cut can be helpful. Drawing on the skin in red felt tip marker and applying ice to mimic the cutting sensation are other replacement behaviors.

Other healthy replacement behaviors include:

- Keeping a journal
- Listening to music
- Taking a bath
- Vigorous exercise such as kick boxing
- Punching a pillow
- Tearing up a magazine

Helping a Friend or Roommate Who Self-Harms

Finding out that someone you care about is harming himself or herself can be quite a shock.

If your friend or roommate is self-harming:

Acknowledge your own feelings. It is normal to feel disgusted or scared but don't judge. Your friend is probably already feeling guilt and shame.

Express concern. Ask how you can help and listen carefully.

Encourage treatment. Offer to help your friend set up an appointment with student services and to take him or her.

Whether you are in crisis or you have a friend in crisis, you can't handle it alone. Check with the student counseling center for information about crisis intervention support.

Resources

[Self-injury Article](#)

Cornell Chronicle published this article about the prevalence of self-injury on college campuses. The article includes a link to Cornell Research Program on Self-Injury and Recovery.

[Cutting & Self-Harm](#)

Helpline.org published this guide about finding self-injury, support and treatment. The guide includes myths and facts about cutting and self-harm.

[The Cornell Research Program on Self-Injury and Recovery](#)

This program advances the understanding of self-injury among youth and adults. The website includes a blog and a comprehensive list of resources.

[Cutting](#)

U Lifeline is an online resource for college mental health. The website includes a self-evaluation tool and ideas for helping people who cut.

[SAFE Alternatives](#)

SAFE Alternatives is a nationally recognized treatment approach, professional network and educational base. They are committed to helping people put an end to self-injurious behavior.

MOOD DISORDERS

DEPRESSION

30 percent of college students reported feeling “so depressed that it was difficult to function” at some time in the past year.
-American College Health Association–National College Health Assessment (2011)

Depression is a mental illness marked by prolonged sad or anxious feelings. Many people experience the first signs of depression while in college. Although it’s normal to feel sad or anxious occasionally, depression does not pass easily and affects your life on a daily basis. Untreated depression is also one of the leading risk factors for suicide.

There are three common types of depressive disorders:

- **Major depressive disorder:** Involves disabling symptoms that make it difficult to eat, sleep and study. Some people have one major depressive episode in their lifetime but it can be a chronic disorder.
- **Dysthymia:** Mild, chronic depression with symptoms that last at least two years. It is not as severe as major depression but is still a serious disorder. Having dysthymia puts you at risk of experiencing major depressive episodes later on.
- **Minor depression:** This form of depression is less severe and shorter-lasting than major depression and dysthymia. However, untreated minor depression can lead to major depressive disorder.

Depression Symptoms

There are a wide range of symptoms associated with depression including:

- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Hopelessness
- Guilt
- Irritability
- Restlessness
- Tired
- Sleep difficulties
- Loss of appetite
- Suicidal thoughts
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Tearfulness

Depression Treatment and Prevention

Treatment for depression includes medication, psychotherapy or a combination of the two. Therapy can give you the tools to cope with your depression and prevent it from getting worse. If you are feeling depressed, make an appointment with a physician or mental health professional to determine what will work best in your situation.

There are ways to help manage your depression.



- **Talk:** Try not to isolate yourself. Discuss your feelings with people you trust.



- **Relaxation techniques:** Practice meditation and exercises such as progressive muscle relaxation to quiet your mind. Your campus counseling center may offer classes. If not, check out programs that you can do on your own.



- **Nutrition:** In addition to keeping you physically healthy, eating a balanced diet promotes mental and emotional stamina. Contact campus nutritional services to find out if your school offers nutritional counseling.



- **Physical Fitness:** It takes just 20-30 minutes of exercise each day to boost your mood. Sign up with your school's fitness center or go for daily walks with a friend or on your own.

Helping a Friend or Roommate with Depression

If your friend or roommate is depressed:

Suggest a check-up. A doctor or mental health professional can make an evaluation.

Offer help. Help your friend locate a therapist and take him or her to the appointment.

Prepare together. Assist your friend in making up a list of symptoms to discuss with the doctor or therapist.

Whether you are in crisis or you have a friend in crisis, you can't handle it alone. Check with the student counseling center for information about crisis intervention support.

Resources

[Depression and College Students](#)

The National Institute of Mental Health published this guide for college students dealing with depression. The guide includes depression causes and treatments.

[Depression Symptoms and Warning Signs](#)

Helpguide.org published this guide about how to recognize depression symptoms and get effective help. The website includes depression causes and risk factors.

[National College Depression Partnership \(NCDP\)](#)

NCDP is a college health consortium that utilizes a high-impact, cost-effective professional development approach to help college health systems and clinicians provide optimal care through the use of outcomes measurements and collaborative learning. The website includes publications and other resources.

[Helping College Kids with Depression](#)

Child Mind Institute published this article about how to intervene when college students are dealing with depression. The article includes suggestions for college students looking for help.

[Screening for Mental Health](#)

Screening for Mental Health works for the prevention, early detection and treatment of mental health disorders and alcohol problems among college students. The website includes information about depression screenings.

BIPOLAR DISORDER

More than 2 million Americans have Bipolar Disorder.
-National Institute of Mental Health

Bipolar is an affective disorder involving unusual shifts in mood, energy and behavior. It is common to have dramatic fluctuations between a normal mood and depression or elation. Bipolar disorder makes it difficult for college students to perform academically and has a strong effect on personal relationships.

There are two types of bipolar disorder:

Bipolar I: Repeated episodes of depression and mania- a severely elevated mood state that causes disruption to the individual's functioning

Bipolar II: Recurrent depressive episodes with at least one episode of hypomania- less severe than a manic episode

Bipolar I and II Symptoms

Symptoms of manic and hypomanic episodes mania may include:

Excessively euphoric mood

Extreme irritability

Inability to focus
Rapid speech and jumping between topics
Decreased need for sleep
Aggressive behavior
Provocative behavior
Risky behavior
Denial that there is a problem

Symptoms of the depressed phase of bipolar disorder include:

Sadness
Social withdrawal
Lack of interest or pleasure in any activity
Loss of appetite
Physical complaints
Agitation
Fatigue
Hopelessness
Neglect of hygiene
Suicidal thoughts

Sometimes people with bipolar disorder experience a mixed episode, which includes symptoms of mania and depression at the same time. Feelings can include sadness and hopelessness together with agitation and high energy. If bipolar disorder becomes severe, it is possible to have symptoms of psychosis, such as delusions and hallucinations.

Bipolar I and II Treatment

There is no cure for bipolar disorder, but it is possible to manage your symptoms with treatment and lead a healthy productive life. Ignoring bipolar disorder will likely worsen symptoms and cause rapid-cycling between manic and depressive episodes.

Treatment of bipolar disorder involves medication and psychotherapy. Psychiatrists usually prescribe a class of medications called mood stabilizers, such as Lithium or Depakote. Anti-depressants may be used in conjunction with mood stabilizers but patients must be closely monitored to ensure they don't trigger a manic or hypomanic episode.

You can manage your symptoms by focusing on:



- **Nutrition:** In addition to keeping you physically healthy, eating a balanced diet increases mental and emotional stamina. Contact campus nutritional services to find out if your school offers nutritional counseling.



- **Sleep:** Lack of sleep is a trigger for manic and depressive episodes. There are so many social activities going on in the evenings when you are in college that it can be challenging to create a regular sleep routine, but it's very important.



- **Avoid alcohol and drugs:** Alcohol and drugs are also triggers for episodes of mania and depression. Avoiding them will help you to manage your symptoms.

Helping a Friend or Roommate with Bipolar Disorder

If your friend or roommate has symptoms of bipolar disorder:

Offer help. If your friend has not been diagnosed, help him or her find a therapist.

Be understanding. Regular sleep patterns and avoiding drugs and alcohol are an important part of managing bipolar disorder. Support your friend in these efforts.

Be patient. Manic and depressive episodes are difficult to deal with when you live with someone who has bipolar disorder. Make sure to find outlets for your own stress

Whether you are in crisis or you have a friend in crisis, you can't handle it alone. Check with the student counseling center for information about crisis intervention support.

Resources

[Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance \(DBSA\)](#)

DBSA provides hope, help, support and education to improve the lives of people who have mood disorders. The website includes wellness options and peer support information.

[Screening for Bipolar Spectrum Disorders](#)

A questionnaire designed to screen for the possibility of a disorder in the bipolar spectrum in individuals 18 and older, who have had at least one depression severe enough to have caused them distress.

[Depression and Bipolar Disorder](#)

Florida Institute of Technology published this brochure about depression and bipolar disorder treatment. It includes advice for seeking help.

[College and Bipolar](#)

Bipolar Magazine published this article about the prevalence of bipolar disorder on college campuses. It includes information about peer programs.

SUICIDE

There are more than 1,000 suicides on college campuses per year.

-Emory University Suicide Statistics

The number of students with undiagnosed mental illness is increasing. Untreated depression is the leading cause of suicide. People with depression often feel helpless in solving their problems, which often leads to hopelessness. On top of that many students resist treatment because of the stigma associated with it so for some suicide may feel like the only way out.

High levels of stress as well as high levels of alcohol and drug use—all of which are typical on many college campuses—are contributing to the problem. Some experts feel technology is also a contributing factor because it serves as a distraction from developing emotional skills or may feed insecurities. Students need to be educated about recognizing the signs that someone is suicidal and how to help.

Suicide Risk Factors

Risk factors for suicide include having major depressive disorder and a past history of attempted suicide. Impulsivity is another danger sign. Suicide usually follows a precipitating event such as the end of a relationship, a job loss, or even failing an important class or exam. Males are three times more likely to commit suicide, although females are more likely to attempt suicide.

Suicide Warning Signs

Although not everyone who commits suicide shows warning signs, here are some things to look for:

- Frequent sadness and depression
- Social withdrawal
- Displaying anger or rage
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Impulsivity
- Loss of interest in most activities
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Change in eating habits
- Poor academic performance
- Recklessness
- Writing a will
- Giving away prized possessions
- Writing about suicide
- Frequent mood swings

Suicide Intervention

If you are concerned that someone you know is considering suicide:

Talk to them. Express concern, listen and show support.

Ask important questions. Ask if they are considering suicide or as what you can do to help.

Get help. Ask your RA or contact your counseling center for immediate help and follow-up.

Whether you are in crisis or you have a friend in crisis, you can't handle it alone. Check with your college's counseling center for information about crisis intervention support. Never leave a person alone if you think they may be suicidal.

If you are feeling suicidal or notice signs that someone is an immediate risk for suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Resources

[Suicide.org](https://www.suicide.org)

Suicide.org is a non-profit organization. The website includes articles and resources about college students and suicide.

[What You Need to Know About College Students and Suicide](#)

University Health Services at UC Berkeley published this handout, which includes facts, risk factors and warning signs of college suicide.

[Suicide Prevention Resource Center \(SPRC\)](#)

SPRC promotes a public health approach to suicide prevention. The website includes suicide prevention basics and a comprehensive list of resources.

[Suicide Statistics](#)

Emory University published this guide about suicide prevention. It includes statistics and resources.

[Jed Foundation](#)

The Jed Foundation is an organization that works to promote emotional health and prevent suicide among college students. The website includes resources for parents, students, campus professionals and supporters.

PSYCHOTIC DISORDERS/SCHIZOPHRENIA

Schizophrenia affects approximately 2.4 million Americans.

- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services statistics

Schizophrenia is part of a group of psychotic disorders that alter the ability to think, respond, communicate and behave clearly. Psychotic disorders are usually treatable. There are a number of mental illnesses considered psychotic disorders in addition to schizophrenia, including:

Schizoaffective disorder: Symptoms of schizophrenia and a mood disorder

Brief Psychotic disorder: Short periods of psychotic behavior usually triggered by a stressful event

Delusional disorder: Delusions that involve real-life situations that could be true (i.e. being followed, having a disease, being conspired against) for an extended amount of time.

The exact cause of psychotic disorders is unknown. Some experts believe the nerve cell receptors in brains of people with schizophrenia do not work properly when interacting with a brain chemical called glutamate, which can lead to abnormal thinking and perception.

Researchers have also discovered several factors that play a role. Many psychotic disorders run in families, which suggests that there is a genetic tendency. There are also many environmental factors that are involved, including major life changes such as going away to college, stress and drug abuse.

Symptoms of Psychotic Disorders

Symptoms can be severe enough to make meeting the ordinary demands of life impossible. Students with a genetic risk for schizophrenia are at risk for triggers because of the stress associated with being in college, such as being away from home for the first time and the increased academic demands. Symptoms of psychotic disorders vary and may change over time. The two major symptoms are delusions and hallucinations.

Delusions are persistent organized beliefs that remain despite evidence to the contrary. For example, a person with schizophrenia may believe they are being followed around campus, even though there is no reason to believe so and no evidence.

Hallucinations are sensory perceptions of things that are not really there in real life. Examples include hearing voices, feeling like you are being touched, smelling odors or funny tastes in your mouth.

Other examples of psychotic symptoms include:

Mood swings and mood symptoms such as depression or mania

Confused thinking

Disorganized speech

Poor personal hygiene

Slowed movements

Strange or dangerous behavior

Inability to express emotion

Treatment of Psychotic Disorders/Schizophrenia

If you are having symptoms of psychosis get help immediately. There are no tests for psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia. If symptoms are present, doctors will first rule out a physical reason. Mental health professionals trained to diagnose and treat mental illnesses use interview and assessment tools designed for making a diagnosis.

Unless people with psychotic disorders are in danger of hurting themselves or others, or need stabilization, mental health professionals treat them as outpatients. Treatment includes antipsychotic medications and psychotherapy. Antipsychotics are not a cure, but can help manage symptoms such as delusions and hallucinations.

Helping a Friend or Roommate with a Psychotic Disorder

If your friend or roommate has symptoms of a psychotic disorder:

Talk. Express concern, listen and support.

Get help. Early intervention is important. Help them find a therapist and set up an appointment.

Be patient. Living with someone who has psychotic disorder can be challenging.

Whether you are in crisis or you have a friend in crisis, you can't handle it alone. Check with the student counseling center for information about crisis intervention support.

Resources

[Fighting Stigma: A College Student Living with Schizophrenia](#)

A personal story about attending college while battling schizophrenia.

[Schizophrenic Harvard Student Pens Cry for Help](#)

An article about a student at Harvard seeking support for schizophrenia.

[Helping a Person with Schizophrenia](#)

Helpguide.org published this guide about supporting people with schizophrenia. The guide includes tips for monitoring medication.

About the First Episodes of Psychosis

National Alliance on Mental Illness published this article about the onset of psychosis. The article includes warning signs and risk factors.

Early Signs of Psychosis

Center for Early Detection, Assessment and Response to Risk published this guide for understanding early signs of psychosis. The guide includes answers to common questions about psychosis.

EATING DISORDERS

Nearly 20 percent of the more than 1,000 college students surveyed – both male and female – said they had or previously had eating disorders.

-National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) survey (2006)

Untreated eating disorders can result in permanent physical damage including heart damage, infertility and osteoporosis. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric disorder, with a suicide rate 50 times higher than the general population. Early intervention is essential.

Eating disorders affect both women and men. They are often triggered by major life transitions, such as going away to college. The three most common eating disorders are:

Anorexia nervosa: Distorted image of the body that leads to dieting even when severely underweight.

Bulimia nervosa: Bingeing on large amounts of food in a short amount of time followed by forced vomiting.

Binge-eating disorder: Uncontrollable, obsessive eating followed by extreme feelings of shame and guilt. Does not usually involve purging and college students who have this disorder are typically overweight.

“Drunkorexia”: Though not an official disorder, this is a growing college trend that involves skipping meals during the day to save calories for drinking large amounts of alcohol later at night.

People with eating disorders may have higher incidences of substance abuse and are more likely to have a psychiatric illness.

Eating Disorder Symptoms

Anorexia

Rituals for preparing food and eating

Social withdrawal

Irritability

Depression

Anxiety

Bulimia

Excessive exercise

Taking laxatives or diet pills

Eating Disorder Treatment

The majority of people with eating disorders do not seek treatment. Reasons tend to include embarrassment, lack of information about where to get help and not realizing there is a problem.

Treatment for eating disorders involves therapy. Many people respond well to outpatient therapy combined with support groups, nutritional counseling and, in some cases, psychiatric medications. Families play an important part in the treatment process. Severe eating disorders may require hospitalization and/or residential care to address the underlying issues.

If you think you may have an eating disorder, get help. Confide in a trusted adult who can help you find a mental health professional for treatment.

Helping a Friend or Roommate with an Eating Disorder

If you suspect a friend has an eating disorder, look for the following signs:

Excessive talk about calories, fat and carbs

Anxious around food

Skips meals regularly

Panics if unable to work out

Intervention is important. Don't worry about your friend getting mad at you for saying something.

Talk. Be gentle but firm.

Express support. Listen and be patient. Most importantly, don't judge.

Be positive. Encourage him or her to eat but don't turn it into a conflict.

Whether you are in crisis or you have a friend in crisis, you can't handle it alone. Check with the student counseling center for information about crisis intervention support.

Call or email ANAD 630-577-1330 anadhelp@anad.org

Resources

[Hidden Health Crisis on Campus](#)

Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAN) is a non-profit dedicated to the prevention and alleviation of eating disorders. The website includes recovery resources and insurance information.

[How to Help Someone with an Eating Disorder](#)

ANAN published this comprehensive guide on eating disorders. It includes warning signs and tips for dealing with eating disorders.

[Eating Disorders Among College Students](#)

Walden Behavioral Health published this article about college students and eating disorders. It also includes advice on talking to friends about your concerns.

[Eating Disorders: Tips for College Students](#)

University of Evansville published this information about eating disorders on their school website. It includes symptoms of anorexia, bulimia and binge-eating.

[Eating Disorders in College](#)

The Eating Disorder Center published this guide to identifying and seeking treatment for eating disorders in college. It includes advice on approaching a friend with an eating disorder.

ALCOHOL /DRUG ABUSE

About four out of five college students drink alcohol. About half of college students who drink, also consume alcohol through binge drinking.

-National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

Alcohol and drug abuse at college has become a significant public health problem, resulting in injuries, assaults, deaths and sexual abuse. In addition, drinking and drug use is often associated with academic issues, unsafe sex and drunk driving.

Drinking:

Drinking alcohol at college is a ritual that many students automatically associate with higher education. Drinking affects everyone on a college campus, even non-drinkers. Most of the problems, however, are associated with binge-drinking—a drinking pattern that brings blood alcohol concentration levels to 0.008 g/dL or the equivalent of four drinks for men and five drinks for women in one hour.

Drug Abuse:

The biggest drug problem on college campuses is prescription drug abuse. They are easy to buy and many students take them out of family medicine cabinets. In many cases, people argue that taking prescription drugs is harmless because the medication was prescribed by a doctor. Use of opioids such as Vicodin, Oxycontin and Percocet increased 243 percent from 1993 to 2005 and use of stimulants such as Ritalin and Adderall increased by 93 percent. Studies show that students who abuse drugs are more likely to suffer from depression.

Symptoms of Alcohol and Drug Abuse

The following symptoms can be a sign that someone has a substance abuse problem:

- Attending class drunk or high
- Tremors
- Neglecting personal hygiene
- Excessive sleepiness
- Mood swings
- Lack of motivation
- Bloodshot eyes/dilated pupils
- Significant weight loss or weight gain
- Poor judgment
- Isolation
- Unusual smells on breath, body and clothing

Other signs include:

Using drugs or alcohol to help manage stress, anxiety, depression and uncomfortable feelings

Needing to use drugs or alcohol first thing in the morning

Changing friends to those who regularly use drugs or alcohol

Developing a high tolerance (the body requires more of a substance to achieve the same results over time)

Blackouts

Withdrawal symptoms upon stopping use

Neglecting responsibilities

Substance Abuse Treatment

Prevention, early detection and timely intervention of college substance abuse issues are vital if students want to reduce the number of alcohol and other drug-related problems they have on campuses today. Many colleges and universities have campus programs that address substance abuse including:

Counseling for students in a safe, non-judgmental environment

Peer counseling

Hotlines

The AlcoholEdu for College program, available on college campuses around the country, empowers all students—even those who don't drink alcohol—to make well-informed decisions and link their choices about drinking/not drinking to academic and personal success as well as help them better cope with the drinking behavior of peers.

Treatment for substance abuse comes in a variety of forms. Some students benefit from in-patient treatment while others have success with an out-patient treatment plan involving therapy and 12-Step meetings. If you have a substance abuse problem, make an appointment with a mental health professional on or off-campus to get help.

Helping a Friend or Roommate with a Substance Abuse Problem

If your friend or roommate has symptoms of substance abuse:

Talk. When they are sober, tell them about your concerns and offer support without being judgmental.

Express support. Listen and be patient but be prepared for denial.

Help them find treatment. If your friend is ready to find treatment, help them make an appointment and offer to go with them.

Resources

[College Drinking Prevention](#)

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) created [Collegedrinkingprevention.org](#) as a one-stop resource for comprehensive research-based information on issues related to alcohol abuse and binge drinking among college students.

[College Drinking](#)

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism published this guide about alcohol abuse on college campuses. It includes a comprehensive list of the consequences of underage drinking.

[Drug Abuse & Addiction](#)

HelpGuide.org published this guide about identifying and treating drug abuse and addiction in college. It includes detailed warning signs of commonly abused drugs.

[A Rising Problem on College Campuses: Prescription Drug Abuse](#)

The Clinton Foundation published this article about the rising use of prescription drugs on campus. It includes information about how colleges around the country are handling the problem.

[Get the Facts: Prescription Drug Abuse on College Campuses](#)

The National Council on Patient Information and Education published this resource kit to provide facts about prescription drug abuse among college students. It includes the signs of prescription drug abuse to look for in friends and family members.

ADHD

ADHD diagnoses have increased 3 to 5 percent per year since 2003.

-Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The transition from high to college is challenging for all students, but especially for those with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Multiple distractions, high academic expectations and a new independence are difficult to manage when you have ADHD, which involves the inability to focus or control behavior out of the normal range for a person's age and development. There are three types of ADHD:

ADHD Hyperactive-Impulsive Type: Individual has hyperactivity and impulsivity

ADHD Inattentive Type: Individual only has attention issues

ADHD Combined Type: Individual has hyperactivity, impulsivity and inattentive

Although researchers don't know what causes ADHD, there appears to be genetic links. Prenatal issues such as smoking and alcohol-use during pregnancy and prematurity may also contribute to ADHD.

While ADHD is not a learning disability, it can still interfere with learning and behavior. However, some people with ADHD also have a learning disorder.

Symptoms of ADHD

Symptoms of Hyperactive-Impulsive Type ADHD include:

- Inattention to details
- Careless mistakes
- Daydreaming
- Not listening when spoken to
- Not following directions
- Failure to complete activities
- Poor organizational skills
- Loses things needed to complete tasks (notebooks, uniforms, textbooks)
- Forgetfulness

Symptoms of ADHD Inattentive Type include:

Fidgeting
Unable to sit still during class
Restlessness
Difficulty being quiet
Always “on the go”
Excessive talking
Blurts out answers
Difficulty waiting
Interrupting

ADHD Treatment

ADHD is treated with therapy to address time management and organizational skills. Therapists also help people with ADHD to handle emotional issues such as anxiety and depression.

Some people with ADHD find medication works well to manage their symptoms. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved two types of ADHD medication: stimulants and non-stimulants.

Some ways you can manage your ADHD symptoms include:

- Study at the same time each day
- Wear earplugs to tune out distractions
- Use a daily planner
- Use a smartphone or tablet to remind you of appointments and tasks throughout the day
- Play a white noise machine to block out distracting noises
- Develop a strict eating, exercise and sleeping schedule
- Manage transitions by setting aside extra time to prepare for tasks
- Break large projects into smaller tasks that are easier to manage
- Contact your campus disability center or counseling center to find out whether you qualify for accommodations
- Sign up for study skills programs and other academic support services offered at your college or university

Helping a Friend or Roommate with ADHD

Living with someone who has ADHD involves certain challenges. It is important to deal with these issues when they first arise instead of waiting for them to build up. In addition:

Set physical parameters. Define which space is yours and which is your roommates.

Discuss any changes to routines. For example, if you will have visitors or overnight guest, let your roommate know ahead of time.

Keep common areas organized. Try to keep shared spaces free of clutter and keep loud music to a minimum.

Resources

[Attention Deficit Disorder Association](#)

The Attention Deficit Disorder Association is a non-profit organization that provides resources and support for people with ADHD. The website includes information and networking activities.

[National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#)

NAMI is a grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for Americans affected by mental illness. This fact sheet includes signs and symptoms of ADHD.

[ADDitude](#)

ADDitude magazine provides information and advice from leading experts and practitioners. The website includes answers to questions about ADHD, a community of individuals who share tips and experiences and first-person life stories.

[A Student's Guide to Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder](#)

The Counseling Center at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign provides this guidebook to understanding ADHD among college students. It includes information about academic accommodations.

[ADDvance: Answers to Your Questions about ADD \(ADHD\)](#)

ADD.com is a website that provides resources about ADHD. This guide includes information and advice for young people and college students with ADHD.

SLEEP ISSUES

There are so many benefits to sleep. Sleep restores energy, fights physical and emotional illnesses and strengthens memory. It is also necessary for normal motor and cognitive function. Unfortunately, college students are getting less sleep than they need. Most students get an average of six hours of sleep a night, or even less. The college years are often a time of sleep deprivation. Lack of sleep affects your health and mood as well as your safety.

The average adult needs 6-10 hours of sleep a night, but the amount varies. If you find yourself sleeping an extra two hours per night on weekends, it can be a sign you aren't getting enough sleep during the rest of the week.

Consequences of sleep loss for college students include:

Feeling stressed

Weight gain

Illness

Increased risk of depression and anxiety

Automobile accidents

Lower GPA

Decreased athletic performance

The Connection between Sleep and Mental Illness

Depression

People with depression tend to feel fatigued on a regular basis, unable to engage in daily responsibilities without feeling burdened. They either get too much sleep as a way of escaping or too little sleep from insomnia.

Anxiety

Sleep is also difficult for people who have anxiety. Persistent, racing thoughts make it difficult to fall asleep. Even if they are able to fall asleep, it can be impossible to go back to sleep if they wake up during the night.

Sleep Disorders

There are several types of common sleep disorders:

Primary Insomnia: Being unable to fall asleep 30 minutes after going to bed, three or more nights per week for four weeks. If you suspect you may have primary insomnia, see your physician.

Narcolepsy: An inherited condition of excess sleepiness that causes temporary loss of muscle control and/or uncontrollable sleep attacks. Physicians treat narcolepsy with medication but there is no cure.

Obstructive Sleep Apnea: This is when the soft tissue of the upper airway collapses repeatedly during sleep and cuts off breathing for short periods of time before the airway opens abruptly and noisily. Since your sleep is constantly interrupted, it leads to excessive sleepiness throughout the day. People don't usually know they have sleep apnea until someone else tells them.

Signs of a Sleep Disorder

You may have a sleep disorder if:

- It is difficult to fall asleep and you wake up during the night for several weeks
- You fall asleep at inappropriate times, even after a good night's sleep
- Nightmares and night terrors frequently interrupt your sleep
- Sleep-walking is an issue
- Someone has told you that you stop breathing while you are asleep

Make an appointment with a physician to rule out a medical reason. If you suspect your sleep problems are related to anxiety or depression, visit the school counseling center.

Setting a Sleep Routine

To manage any sleep disorder, it helps to establish a sleep routine. By creating a ritual that helps your mind and body wind down at the end of the day, you prepare yourself for sleep. Some things you can do to create a sleep routine are:

- Go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day—even on weekends—to get control of your circadian rhythms
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol 3-4 hours before bedtime

- Don't eat within 2-3 hours of your bedtime
- Exercise each day but complete your workout at least 2 hours before bedtime
- Take a hot bath each night before going to bed
- Make sure your sleep environment is dark, quiet, cool and comfortable
- Invest in a comfortable mattress and pillows

Resources

[National Center on Sleep Disorders Research](#)

The National Center on Sleep Disorders Research is located within the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) of the National Institutes of Health. The website includes public and patient information about sleep disorders.

[National Sleep Foundation](#)

The National Sleep Foundation is a membership organization. The website includes sleep articles, tools and tips.

[Sleep Rocks!](#)

The University Health Center at the University of Georgia published this guide about the importance of sleep in college. It includes reasons why people need sleep and suggestions on how to get more sleep.

[Hot Topics! College Students and Sleep](#)

The State University of New York at Geneseo published this article about college students and sleep. It includes strategies for combatting insomnia.

[Sleep](#)

Brown University's Health Services published this article about sleep and college students. It includes advice on getting more sleep and a list of resources.

CONCLUSION

If you or someone you know shows signs of a mental health disorder, it is important to find help as soon as possible. There are many treatments available that can help people with mental illness lead happy, healthy lives while managing their symptoms. Contact your school's counseling center for more information.

General Resources

[APA](#)

The American Psychiatric Association provides information about mental health issues affecting college students. The website includes advice about seeking help.

[Transition Year](#)

Transition Year is a partnership between The Jed Foundation and the American Psychiatric Foundation. It is an online resource center that helps students and their families focus on emotional health before, during and after the college transition.

[ULifeline](#)

ULifeline.org is an anonymous online resource for learning more about your thoughts and feelings and how to reach out for help if necessary. It includes screening information and details about mental health conditions.

[Active Minds](#)

Active Minds is an organization that empowers students to change the perception about mental health on campus. The website includes information about how to start a campus chapter.

[StrengthofUs.org](#)

NAMI created this social networking website and online resource center for young adults. It includes free, downloadable resources on issues many young adults face in college, including building relationships, making friends, setting and achieving goals, gaining independence, managing money, increasing self-esteem, dating and much more.

[Helping a Friend Who is Struggling](#)

NAMI published this article for individuals who have friends struggling with mental illness. It includes intervention suggestions.t