

Mental Health Resources

for College / Post-HS Grad Students

With the pressures facing most people today, it is essential to take your mental health seriously. This is especially true for college students and young people, whose lack of experience in the real world could lead to major mental health issues resulting from stress, overwork, fatigue, or even the onset of a more serious mental illness. In fact, up to [75 percent of college students](#) with possible mental health issues do not seek help for what ails them.

This resource will provide college students and post high school students with quality information on maintaining good mental health and identifying their own mental health issues. That said, it is not meant to take the place of a proper evaluation or counseling from a qualified mental health specialist. For those who wish to learn more about their mental health should consider taking this [mental health assessment](#) before deciding next steps.

Common Mental Health Issues Facing College Students and New High School Graduates

Here is a list of common mental health issues known to affect young people:

- **Depression:** While it might be easy for a busy college student to imagine their depression is a result of school-induced stress, depressive feelings can be symptoms of more serious mental health issues. In fact, a recent study reported that [44 percent of college students](#) have one or more symptoms of depression. This statistic shows that depression affects nearly half of all college students and could lead to more complex mental health issues without the proper counseling to help them identify the source of their depression.
- **Anxiety:** Most young adults [experience some degree of anxiety](#). As you might expect, juggling assignments, exams, and part-time jobs can lead to serious levels of anxiety, which could then escalate into a major mental health issue. Students who feel like anxiety is having a profound impact on their functioning should schedule some time to speak with a counselor in order to better identify the source of anxiety and figure out solutions to overcome it.
- **Suicide:** The worst possible outcome of an untreated mental illness is suicide. Even for new high school graduates without a serious mental disorder, the stress of a new environment can lead to suicidal thoughts. Anyone who has seriously considered suicide should seek

professional help immediately. [Suicide hotlines](#) staffed by specialists are usually the quickest and most confidential option for people to get the care and attention they need.

- **Bipolar Disorder:** This is a major mental health disorder often characterized by extreme bouts of depression followed by periods of manic activity. With the stress and workload many college students face, it's easy to pass off symptoms of bipolar disorder as mood swings. According to WebMD, severe enough mood swings will [interfere with a person's functioning](#) could be related to an underlying bi-polar disorder. Young people who find that their mood swings are causing difficulties in their personal or academic life should seek counseling from a mental health specialist immediately.
- **Eating Disorders:** According to the [National Eating Disorders Association](#), approximately 20 percent of women and 10 percent of men in college struggle with an eating disorder. For some, the pressure of losing weight and "looking good" might be enough to trigger the beginning of an eating disorder. For others, the stress of a busy social, academic and work schedule may make it difficult for them to find time to eat properly, which could also lead to a serious eating disorder down the line. While there are several different eating disorders, anorexia and bulimia are two of the most common. Eating disorders are serious and could lead to devastating consequences for a young person's health without immediate treatment from a mental health specialist.
- **Addiction:** For individuals of any age, addiction can lead to significant and life threatening health issues without proper treatment. Addiction can be especially devastating for young people, who may turn to drugs, alcohol, or food to deal with general stress or an underlying mental health disorder. Binge drinking is an especially common form of addiction found on American campuses. According to the [National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#), of the 61 percent of surveyed colleges students that drank, 40.5 percent binge drank and 16.3 percent were heavy drinkers. For many who struggle with addiction, often the hardest hurdle for them to overcome is admitting that they have a problem. If you or a young person you know is struggling with addiction, counseling from a mental health specialist or admission to a substance rehabilitation center are two viable treatment options.
- **Self-harm:** Unlike other mental health issues, the underlying reason behind why young people choose to physically harm themselves still eludes researchers. Moreover, people who do harm themselves tend to do so in private and on areas of the body that may not be visible to others. Some estimate that up to 15 percent of college students have engaged in some form of self-harming behavior. Self-harm is a serious mental health issue that should be monitored by a trained mental health specialist.
- **Struggles with Identity:** U.S. society has gradually come to accept the many disparate identities found within its borders. That said, in certain areas of the country, there is still a significant amount of intolerance directed towards people who identify themselves in a certain way. While a given identity will not necessarily indicate mental health struggles, [the pressures of withstanding a hostile social environment](#) could lead to severe stress and anxiety. Anyone struggling with extreme social pressures due to their lifestyle or identity should immediately seek help from a qualified specialist at their school or workplace.

State Social and Health Services Site

Each state in the U.S. maintains their own health and social services department. Some states even have departments entirely dedicated to mental health. These resources can be helpful for state residents who struggle with their mental health, or know someone who may need help. Below is a list of links to health and social services departments organized by state.

Alabama	Alaska	Arizona
Arkansas	California	Colorado
Connecticut	Delaware	District of Columbia
Florida	Georgia	Hawaii
Idaho	Illinois	Indiana
Iowa	Kansas	Kentucky
Louisiana	Maine	Maryland
Massachusetts	Michigan	Minnesota
Mississippi	Missouri	Montana
Nebraska	Nevada	New Hampshire
New Jersey	New Mexico	New York
North Carolina	North Dakota	Ohio
Oklahoma	Oregon	Pennsylvania
Rhode Island	South Carolina	South Dakota
Tennessee	Texas	Utah
Vermont	Virginia	Washington
West Virginia	Wisconsin	Wyoming

National Organizations that Sponsor Support Groups

In addition to the government resources listed above, there are also many recognized national organizations that sponsor or host mental health support groups. These support groups offer those who struggle with their mental health an opportunity to listen and be heard in a community setting. Below is a list of some of the most respected mental health organizations in the United States.

- [Anxiety and Depression Association of America](#)
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance](#)
- [National Eating Disorder Association](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#)

- [Network of Care](#)
- [Alcoholics Anonymous](#)
- [American Association of Suicidology](#)
- [Attention Deficit Disorder Association](#)
- [Emotions Anonymous](#)
- [Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health](#)
- [Narcotics Anonymous](#)
- [Obsessive Compulsive Foundation](#)
- [Self Mutilators Anonymous](#)
- [Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays \(PFLAG\)](#)
- [TARA National Association for Personality Disorder](#)
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

General Online Resources

Below is a general list of links to websites and portals that deal specifically with issues related to mental health.

- [ULifeline](#)
- [SAMHSA Treatment Locator](#)
- [MentalHelp.net](#)
- [MentalHealth.gov](#)
- [NICHY's State Search Tool](#)
- [MentalHealth.gov](#)
- [UCLA's Center for Mental Health in Schools](#)
- [The Balanced Mind Foundation](#)
- [Hazelden.org's Resources for Family Members](#)
- [The Dart Foundation's Gateway to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Information](#)
- [University of Michigan's Mental Health Resources](#)
- [The Brain & Behavior Research Foundation](#)
- [National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism](#)
- [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#)
- [Healthy Placeu: America's Mental Health Channel](#)
- [Choices in Recovery](#)
- [ACHA's Mental Health Resources](#)
- [Active Mind's Mental Health Resources](#)
- [The Jed Foundation's Programs & Research](#)
- [McLean Hospital's College Mental Health Program](#)
- [Behavior Online](#)
- [NACADA's Mental Health Issues in Advising](#)
- [The Checkup: Meltdown U. and Mental Health Tips for Parents of College Kids](#)
- [Caltech's Online Mental Health Resources](#)
- [LawLifeline.org](#)
- [The National Association for the Dually Diagnosed](#)

In addition to these resources that are created to help young adults find resources, support, or a counseling referral, each college campus has on-site counseling support through their wellness center. Over the last few years as the demand has increased, campuses have been increasing staffing to accommodate those in need. When your student arrives on campus, stop into the

wellness center, student services, or visit their page on the school website and familiarize yourself or your student with the services available and how to access them. A student does NOT have to be in crisis to benefit from counseling. Having a neutral and confidential person to speak with during one of life's biggest transitions is a luxury and great prevention during this scary and exciting transition.

Healthy Habits to Stay Mentally Well

For college students and young people who do not struggle with significant mental health issues, there are steps to take in order to relieve stress and anxiety. Here are some suggestions to take into consideration:

- **Physical Activity:** Physical activity releases "happy chemicals" in our brain known as endorphins that can have an almost immediate impact in balancing our mind and body's negative reaction toward stress and anxiety. Physical activity can also boost self-confidence and increase our ability to think clearly, focus, and inspire others to do the same.
- **Sleep and Diet Changes:** Major changes in diet or sleep habits can also lead to elevated levels of stress or anxiety in a college student. Consistently staying up late to study for exams or finish assignments can mean some degree of sleep deprivation, which could lead to poor academic performance or more **serious mental health issues**. Sleep deprivation and poor diet often go hand in hand. Dramatic shifts in diet will also impact a young adult's academic performance and mental health.
- **Psychiatric Care:** If a student finds that the amount of stress they face is becoming too much to handle on their own, obtaining psychiatric care should be given serious consideration. Inpatient or outpatient care may be pursued depending on the severity of the mental health issues faced by the individual in need of care. Mental health specialists are there to help you navigate stress, anxiety, and many other issues impacting your mental health. Remember that seeking psychiatric care should never be thought of as weakness. Asking for help is an act of maturity and growth.
- **Relaxation Exercises:** No matter how stressed or anxious students become, there should always be something to count on as a source of positive relaxation. That said, many young people may not be able to find the opportunity to relax in the way that they prefer. There are several quick and easy **relaxation exercises** to try. Taking a few breaks each day to stretch, meditate, or even just breath or take time to practice gratitude.
- **Counseling:** Even if you feel that the stress in your life is not affecting your mental health, getting counseling to understand how to better manage anxiety can still be very helpful. Students may feel they have an exceptionally high tolerance for stress and anxiety, but that failing to learn new and better ways to **manage their stress** could rapidly lead to more serious mental health issues. Going to counseling is often the healthiest and most effective way to get personal and confidential advice before stress becomes a much less manageable.

Your Right to Mental Health: Understanding Confidentiality and Insurance

As the public's awareness about the importance of mental health grows, more attention is being directed toward insurance and confidentiality solutions for people struggling with mental health issues. The stigma of mental health as being less important than maintaining good physical health has led to a [crisis of mental health](#), which can only be corrected as more and more citizens recognize the power of quality mental health treatment.

A major trend bringing attention to the mental health of college students is the fact that more student than ever before is seeking mental health care. As with any rising demand for an important health service, institutions that work closely with students – like their colleges and universities – are incorporating mental care into the health care offered to students. Moreover, people who are [26 years old or younger](#) are now able to be covered by their parent's health insurance policy as a result of the 2010 Affordable Care Act (also known as "Obamacare").

On top of providing young people with more health insurance options, the Affordable Care Act has also introduced some great provisions regarding mental health care. Supporters of the health law recognize mental health care as an important part of physical health care. As such, the ACA makes it easier for young people to [afford health insurance](#) and expands Medicaid to help more people that struggle daily with mental health issues. The law also ensures that certain mental health services and treatments that may have traditionally been declined by private insurance companies or Medicaid must now be covered.

Confidentiality is also a major roadblock discouraging people from seeking out the mental health treatment they need. Even though mental disorders are becoming more understood and accepted by the public-at-large, students may still feel embarrassed of their own mental health issues. Everyone should understand that the [professional mental health community](#) employs many safeguards to help keep information about your mental health confidential and only shared when coordinating a patient's care.

While the Affordable Care Act should ensure that all young Americans have access to affordable, high quality health care, there are still many young people today that remain uninsured. Young people who find themselves uninsured, however, should remain vigilant about obtaining mental health care the minute they need it. To help uninsured people find proper mental health treatment,

Mental Health America has compiled an [extensive list of options](#) both on campus and in the community that should be kept handy in the event of a mental health crisis.