



When To Be Concerned About College Related Stress

College, although often described as some of the best years of one's life, can also be very challenging and stressful. Prevalent issues include depression, anxiety, suicide, eating disorders and addictions. Research conducted by the National Alliance on Mental Illness regarding mental health on college campuses indicates that:

- One in four students have a diagnosable mental illness
- 40% do not seek help
- 80% feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities
- 50% have been so anxious they struggle in school

Although we all struggle at times, a cluster of these symptoms which present for a couple of weeks may require attention. Signs to watch out for include:

- *significant changes in eating / weight or sleeping patterns*
- *loss of interest in pleasurable activities*
- *decrease in motivation / energy / grades*
- *withdrawal from others and skipping classes*
- *feelings of sadness / unhappiness or increased tearfulness*
- *overwhelming feelings of anxiety / fear / rapid heartbeat / shortness of breath / lightheadedness / dizziness*
- *physical symptoms such as muscle pain and tension, headaches, stomach issues or diarrhea.*
- *feelings of hopelessness / helplessness / despair*
- *thoughts of self harm or suicide*
- *trouble concentrating, slowed thinking and decision making*
- *decreased accomplishments*
- *increased anger / irritability / frustration or guilt feelings*
- *self-medicating with alcohol, drugs, gambling or sex*

If these symptoms persist, seek help from your campus counseling center or consult your student health center to learn more about student wellness. Speak with your primary care

physician. Inform your close friends, teachers, coaches and family. Consider joining a support group. Seek individual therapy and possible medication options through your primary care physician or ask for a referral to a mental health prescriber. Sometimes, students need to take a break from school. If this is the case, an Intensive Outpatient Program is often very helpful to learn effective coping skills that put you on the path to wellness.

In conclusion, know the signs that you or someone you care about is struggling beyond the typical stressors of college life. Reach out and don't suffer or watch others struggle in silence. Know that there is effective help. There is hope!

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