

Parent Resources

Mental Health



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Mental Health Resources

Did you know that one out of every four college students was diagnosed with a mental health disorder in the last year? (This is a pre-covid statistic. Most believe that mental health issues have been exacerbated for college students since the outbreak of the pandemic.) College students are experiencing mental health issues at alarming rates in a landscape of growing academic, social, and financial pressures. These mental health issues can manifest or be exacerbated by alcohol or drug abuse.

Mental health issues can range from mood disturbances to more serious problems such as eating disorders, addiction, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), or psychotic disorders. Mental health professionals stress the importance of talking about such issues, but there is still substantial societal stigma surrounding mental health issues. Students tend to consider stress a normal part of college life. They may lack the time, energy, will, and/or money to seek the support they need on their own.

Here are a few tips for parents to prevent, respond to, and treat common campus challenges. Remember the five Ts: Tell, Test, Teach, Talk, Take Action.

- 1. Tell your student they can come to you with any problem.** Your student may avoid sharing problems with you because they think they should be independent or they worry about burdening you. Explain that you can help them handle any problem they present to you. They can come to you day or night.
- 2. Test their academic health by checking their end of semester grades.** At the start of college, request your child sign a FERPA waiver form allowing you to view grades. Students may not tell parents that they are doing poorly or failing, thinking they should be able to solve academic problems on their own. Struggling academically could indicate mental health or lifestyle issues. Likewise, when grades continue to slide, students can develop symptoms of depression and anxiety. If you're aware of their academic struggles early on, you can help to link your child to campus resources such as advisors, tutors, professors, success coaches and therapists.
- 3. Teach them how to recognize substance abuse.** You can teach your student the skills required to lead a healthy lifestyle and to self-monitor for the [warning signs](#) of substance abuse issues. By reminding your student that these are common and

treatable conditions, you can help remove the stigma attached to health issues. With this knowledge, they may seek help more quickly.

- 4. Talk with them more often or visit if they are in distress.** Some students will inform their parents that they are in distress and ask for help, while others won't tell parents until the situation is more serious. Keep in touch using video conferencing apps, so that you can both see their face and hear their voice. Ask about friends, clubs and social outlets, activities and their classes. If they tell you that they are in distress or are using substances, encourage them to speak with a counselor and help them to locate university or local resources. You can also call more often or visit if you are concerned. A visit might provide them with enough support to work through a problem and continue to keep up with schoolwork. A visit during the fall of freshman year, either at parents' weekend or another time, can be particularly valuable since the first semester of college is a time of high stress.
- 5. Take action if your student is experiencing high-risk mental health issues.** If your child is experiencing severe symptoms of substance abuse such as it's essential to ensure they're actively engaged in treatment. If you feel your child's safety is at immediate risk, contact campus police, administration, and mental health services.

Because mental health issues are so prevalent on college campuses, it is important for you to request that your student sign a HIPPA waiver and medical power of attorney prior to leaving for college. These forms are crucial in allowing a parent to review information, speak with a mental health provider, or direct other required care.

For more information or resources, go to one of the following sites:

<https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/December-2018/A-Parent-s-Guide-to-Mental-Health-for-College-Students>

<https://www.bestcolleges.com/resources/top-5-mental-health-problems-facing-college-students/>

Seek expert information and resources to help young adults navigate life's challenges. You can find more information from our partner's website [here](#).