

Mental Health During College: How to Help Yourself or a Friend



Expert review by Adam Zamora, PsyD

WHAT TO DO TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR COLLEGE

Adapting to life at college can be challenging, and having go-to skills can help keep you from becoming overwhelmed. Knowing what to do, and where and who to turn to, can be calming during difficult moments.

TIPS FOR MANAGING STRESS

- 1. Practice mindfulness:** Learning how to be present in the moment and to be nonjudgmental towards yourself and others can be incredibly helpful in cultivating a healthy mindset. Taking some deep breaths, a quick moment to assess your surroundings, or acknowledging how you're feeling at the present moment are all ways to be mindful.
- 2. Establish good self-care:** If you come up with a plan before you arrive at school, you'll be more likely to follow through with it. Start with basics like getting enough sleep, eating healthy, exercising regularly, and limiting alcohol. Sleep actually helps you retain more information when you study. Lack of sleep impacts your learning and can exacerbate feelings of anxiety and depression.
- 3. Learn to set your own goals and rewards:** Working all day, every day, will likely result in burnout. Having too much unstructured time can also generate stress. Set aside regular weekly times for studying and note-taking, and set specific goals for yourself during those periods. If you achieve those goals, reward yourself with something fun or relaxing. You earned it!
- 4. Plan ahead:** Spend time thinking about what organizational and study skills have worked for you in the past, what has not worked for you in the past, and what you might be able to improve on. Make a plan for how to cope when you're feeling overwhelmed that will allow you to focus on what's most important.
- 5. Keep in mind that procrastination is most often a result of anxiety and stress,** so if you find yourself putting tasks off, think about why, and identify ways to break the challenges up into more manageable pieces. The momentary relief we feel when procrastinating is what makes the cycle the most vicious. Find a friend or someone else to hold you accountable for getting your work done.
- 6. Get accustomed to campus:** Set aside time before classes begin to get to know your campus. Many schools have the option to attend a pre-orientation program, where you'll have the opportunity to get to know the campus and the surrounding areas. Print out a copy of your schedule and a map of the classroom buildings and do a mock "walk-through" before the first day of classes so you feel confident that you know where you're going.

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