

Tips On Dealing With Depression in College

Sometimes the multitude of life's changes that occur during your college years can trigger serious depression. At this vulnerable time, the smartest thing you can do for yourself is to seek help. If your feelings of constant stress and sadness go on for weeks or months, you may be experiencing more than just difficulty adjusting to life's changes.

Depression is common and treatable problem. More than 19 million Americans experience depression each year. Studies show that more 80 percent of people who seek treatment show significant improvement.

Too many people resist treatment because they believe depression isn't serious, that they can treat it themselves or that it is a personal weakness rather than a serious medical illness. Seek assistance from your doctor or mental health professional, counseling service, or the student health center. While in treatment, there are a number of steps you can take to help you cope on your way to recovery.

Common Signs of Depression:

- **Poor appetite or overeating**
- **Insomnia or excessive need for sleep**
- **Low energy or fatigue**
- **Loss of interest or pleasure in activities**
- **Difficulty concentrating**
- **Feelings of hopelessness**
- **Thoughts of suicide or death**

What you can do about it

- **Carefully plan your day.** Make time every day to prioritize your work. Prioritizing can give you a sense of control over what you must do and a sense that you can do it.
- **Plan your work and sleep schedules.** Too many students defer doing important class work until nighttime, work through much of the night, and start every day feeling exhausted. Constant fatigue can be a critical trigger for depression. Seven or eight hours of sleep a night is important to your well-being.
- **Participate in an extracurricular activity.** Sports, clubs, the student newspaper – whatever interests you – can bring opportunities to meet people interested in the same things you are, and these activities provide welcome change from class work.
- **Seek support from other people.** This may be a roommate or a friend from class. Friendships can help make a strange place feel more friendly and comfortable. Sharing your emotions reduces isolation and helps you realize that you are not alone.
- **Try relaxation methods.** These include meditation, deep breathing, warm baths, long walks, exercise – whatever you enjoy that lessens your feelings of stress and discomfort.
- **Take time for yourself every day.** Make special time for yourself – even if it's only for 15 minutes a day. Focusing on yourself can be energizing and gives you a feeling of purpose and control over your life.
- **Work towards recovery.** The most important step in combating depression and reclaiming your college experience is to seek treatment. Remission of symptoms should be your goal. Your physician or a mental health professional can work with you to determine whether psychological counseling, medication or a combination of both treatments is needed.