

Mental Health Wellness Tips for College Students

1. **Take responsibility for your own learning.** In college, there is little handholding. No one's going to remind you when your papers are due or hold you accountable for doing your homework every night. **Come to class.** This is the most basic good study habit needed to succeed in college. Come to class *every single day* unless you have an extremely good reason not to go. Sure, now that you're no longer forced to be in class, it's tempting not to go. But if you don't go, you're not going to do well.
2. **Party in moderation.** The freedom of going off to college is as intoxicating as the alcohol! But if you overdo it, your grades will suffer and you can hurt yourself physically and emotionally. **Know your limit** when it comes to drinking. And avoid **binge drinking**, which is very dangerous.
3. **Be careful about sexual relationships.** Aside from the risk of pregnancy and STDs, casual sex can have emotional repercussions that you might not be prepared to deal with. Use condoms, always!
4. **Meet new people.** If you have high school friends on campus with you, avoid the temptation to hang out with them all the time. Take advantage of **freshman orientation week and ongoing student activities**. **Open your mind.** You are going to meet lots of people who see the world much differently than you. You're also going to hear a lot of ideas that go contrary to what you learned at the kitchen table growing up. This may be uncomfortable, but it's an important part of the college experience that will teach you quite a bit. Keep an open mind, and try to understand where other people are coming from even when you do not agree with them.
5. **Be careful with money.** Even if you're lucky enough to have parents who can help you out financially, you need to learn to spend money wisely. Be careful with **credit cards**.
6. **Take care of your health.** It's difficult to be 100% healthy, but do the best that you can and you'll feel much better emotionally and physically. Try to eat well (and avoid the **Freshman Fifteen**), exercise a reasonable amount (walking around campus counts), get medical checkups, and get enough sleep. Here's more information about college student health:
 - **Sleep.** Many college students skimp on sleep. Late night studies, parties and finally worries chip away at sleep until insomnia can become a problem. Without sleep, any human being unravels, so improve healthy sleep habits. (see article on getting a good night's sleep on this page)
 - **Nutrition.** Good nutrition may be the first thing to go when you are busy with classes and school work. Try to make sure to eat 3-5 small, healthy meals each day. You can carry something as simple as PB&J or an apple in your backpack and they will provide your brain with the nutrients it needs to work well.

- **Exercise.** Nothing is more important in combating depression and anxiety than regular exercise. Just taking walks 3 or more times a week will improve mood, appetite and sleep and will reduce your stress.
7. **Seek out help if you need it.** Academic and psychological help is available on campus, but you need to take the responsibility to get the help you need. Don't be afraid to ask professors for help. If you are feeling depressed or overwhelmed, take advantage of student counseling services:
 - **Plan Proactively.** Store the number for student counseling services in your phone. If you wait until you are depressed to find out where you can get help, oftentimes you won't have the energy to figure it out. Here is a number for a 24-hour helpline to use if counselors are not available and you're not feeling safe: 1-800-873-TALK.
 - **Know the Signs of Depression.** The National Institute of Health provides a simple guide to these signs at: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>.
 8. **Work hard, but don't be too hard on yourself.** Yes, you should hold yourself to high standards and do the best you can. But don't expect to get straight A's every semester. Remember, you're learning to be a student on top of everything else, so don't beat yourself up if it doesn't come as easy as high school did for you.
 9. **Allow time for Introspection.** Call this prayer, journaling, meditation, or chill time. Most of us do best when we spend some time by ourselves, offline, to breathe and think about the world that extends beyond our own bodies and needs. Giving our brains a rest will make our studying more effective too!