

A STUDENT GUIDE

# Future-Proof Your Wellness: Balancing Mind, Body, and Ambition

Managing stress and finding real mental health support on campus

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# What we'll cover

## 01 Where you're at

The real numbers on student stress and mental health

## 02 Coping that works

Daily habits and in-the-moment tools you can use today

## 03 Who's on campus

The offices, what they're called, and what they actually do

## 04 Paying for it

Campus costs, free options, and low-cost care off campus

# You are genuinely not the only one

37%

of students report moderate to severe depressive symptoms

32%

report moderate to severe anxiety symptoms

1 in 4

say they feel isolated from other people

**And some good news:** severe depression among students fell from 23% in 2022 to 18% in 2025, and suicidal ideation from 15% to 11% — the third straight year of improvement.

*Source: Healthy Minds Study, 2024–2025 Data Report — 84,000+ students at 135 colleges and universities.*

# Stress isn't the enemy – overload is

## Useful stress

- Short-term and tied to a specific thing
- Sharpens focus before a test or presentation
- Fades once the deadline passes
- You still sleep, eat, and see people

## Distress

- Constant, with no clear off switch
- Focus, memory, and motivation drop off
- Sticks around after the deadline is gone
- Sleep and appetite take hits

*The question isn't "am I stressed?" It's "is this stress still working for me?"*

# What stress actually looks like

## In your body

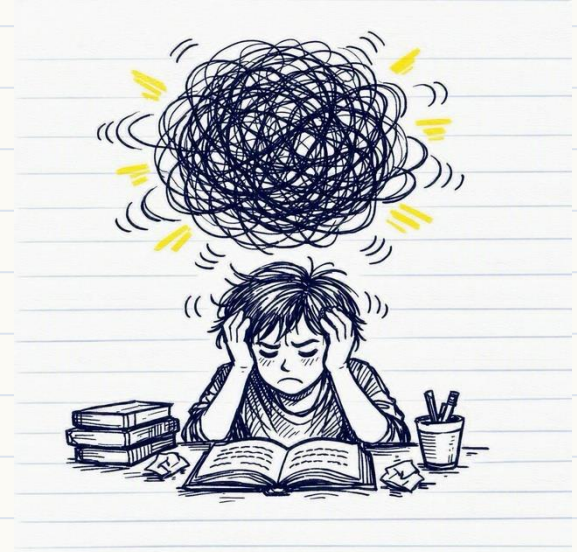
- Headaches, tight jaw, stomach trouble
- Wired but exhausted; trouble sleeping
- Getting sick more often than usual

## In your head

- Racing thoughts, blanking during exams
- Everything feels urgent and impossible
- Irritability or numbness

## In your behavior

- Skipping class, assignments piling up
- Isolating from friends and family
- Drinking, vaping, or scrolling to cope



# Signs it's time to talk to someone

- It's been two weeks or more, not two bad days
- You've stopped going to class or turning things in
- Sleep is wrecked — too little, too much, or upside down
- You're using substances to get through the day
- Friends have said they're worried about you
- Things you used to enjoy do nothing for you now

**If you're having thoughts of harming yourself, that's not a "wait and see."**

Call or text 988 any time, day or night. It is free, confidential, and you do not need insurance or a reason.

# The unglamorous stuff that actually works

## Sleep on a schedule

Same wake-up time, even weekends. It beats catching up.

## Move for 20 minutes

A walk counts. The campus rec center is already paid for.

## Eat and hydrate on purpose

Skipping meals reads as anxiety in your body.

## Protect one social contact a day

One text, one meal, one class friend.

## Give your phone a curfew

Doomscrolling at 1 a.m. is not rest.



# When it hits: five-minute resets

## ● Box breathing

In for 4, hold 4, out for 4, hold 4. Repeat four rounds.

## ● 5-4-3-2-1 grounding

Name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, 1 you taste.

## ● Cold water

Splash your face or hold something cold. It resets your nervous system fast.

## ● Name it to tame it

Say the feeling out loud: "this is panic, not danger."

## ● Change the room

Step outside for ten minutes. Motion breaks the spiral.



# Catch the thought, then check it

## The trap

## Sounds like

## Try asking

### Catastrophizing

*"I bombed this exam, I'm going to fail out."*

One test is one data point. What's the actual worst case, and could I survive it?

### All-or-nothing

*"If it's not an A, it's worthless."*

What would 'good enough to move forward' look like here?

### Mind reading

*"Everyone thinks I don't belong here."*

What's my evidence? Most people are busy worrying about themselves.

### Should statements

*"I should be handling this better."*

Better than whom? Swap 'should' for 'I'd like to' and see how it lands.

## PART TWO

# Who's already on your campus

Names vary school to school — the services rarely do.



# The counseling center

## Often called

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) · Student Counseling Center · Counseling & Wellness Services · University Counseling Center

## What they typically offer

- A free first appointment or brief screening
- Short-term individual therapy, plus group therapy
- Same-day or walk-in crisis appointments
- 24/7 after-hours phone line staffed by counselors
- Psychiatry or medication management, or a referral for it
- Referral coordination for longer-term care off campus



Group therapy usually has the shortest wait — and students often rate it as the most helpful thing they did.

# Student health services

## Often called

Student Health Center · Student Health Services · Health & Wellness Center · Campus Health

### What they do

- Primary care visits for illness and injury
- Medication management and prescriptions
- Sleep, ADHD, and anxiety symptom evaluation
- Substance use screening and support

### Why start here

- Physical symptoms often are the stress
- Frequently co-located with counseling
- Can refer you internally, same day
- Usually covered by your student health fee

*Ask one question at the front desk: "Who on campus handles this, and can you walk me over?"*

# Dean of students and case management

## Often called

Dean of Students Office · Student Affairs · Student Care & Case Management · CARE Team · Student Advocacy

### Academic breathing room

Notifying professors of a documented crisis, negotiating extensions, incompletes, or a medical withdrawal.

### Case management

One person who maps your situation and connects you to campus and community resources so you're not calling six offices.

### Emergency support

Emergency grants, food and housing insecurity help, and hardship funds at many schools.

### Reporting concerns

Where you go if you're worried about a friend — most schools have an online "student of concern" form.

# Disability and accessibility services

## Often called

Disability Services · Student Accessibility Services · Office of Accessibility · Disability Resource Center

### Mental health conditions can qualify for academic accommodations

- Extended time on exams, or a reduced-distraction testing room
- Flexible attendance and deadline policies tied to symptom flare-ups
- Note-taking support, recorded lectures, or priority registration
- Housing accommodations, including single rooms and emotional support animals

*You usually need documentation from a provider — the counseling center or student health can often supply it. Register early; accommodations are not retroactive.*

# The rest of the campus map

## Wellness / Health Promotion

Workshops, peer health educators, mindfulness and stress-management programming

## Campus recreation

Free gym, fitness classes, intramurals — already paid for by your fees

## Identity and cultural centers

Multicultural, LGBTQ+, veterans, international, and first-gen student centers

## Chaplaincy / spiritual life

Confidential, no-cost conversations regardless of faith background

## Basic needs and food pantry

Food, emergency funds, and help applying for benefits

## Title IX and victim advocacy

Confidential advocates for interpersonal violence, harassment, and stalking

# What actually happens when you walk in

- 1 You make contact**  
Online form, phone call, or walk in. Most centers hold same-week intake slots.
- 2 A short intake**  
20–45 minutes. What's going on, how long, what you've tried. No one is grading you.
- 3 You get a plan**  
Individual sessions, a group, a workshop, teletherapy, or a referral off campus.
- 4 You can change it**  
Not clicking with your counselor? You are allowed to ask for a different one.

**Counseling records are confidential and separate from your academic record. Grades, advisors, and parents don't see them.**

# What campus care costs you

## Usually already paid for

Counseling center visits are typically covered by the student health fee in your tuition bill. Many schools charge students nothing at all.

## Watch the session limits

Some centers cap you at 6–12 sessions per year, then refer out. Ask about the limit at your first appointment.

## Free 24/7 teletherapy

Many campuses contract with services like TimelyCare or Uwill — unlimited or generous free virtual visits, including nights and weekends.

## Think twice before waiving insurance

The student health plan often has the lowest out-of-pocket cost for off-campus therapy and psychiatry.

*Demand is up nationally and wait times are real — ask about groups, workshops, and teletherapy while you wait.*

# Affording care beyond campus

## Open Path Collective

Nonprofit network of vetted therapists at \$40–70 a session, in person or online, after a one-time membership fee.

## Community mental health centers

Federally funded, required to serve you regardless of ability to pay; sliding scale down to \$0. Find one at [findtreatment.gov](https://findtreatment.gov) or by calling 211.

## University training clinics

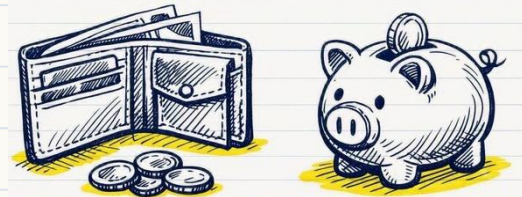
Psychology and social work graduate programs run supervised low-cost clinics, often on your own campus.

## Sliding scale and Medicaid

Many private therapists reserve reduced-fee slots — ask directly. Students with low income may qualify for Medicaid in their state.

## Free peer and family support

NAMI runs free support groups nationwide; its helpline is 1-800-950-6264.



# Free, confidential, right now

**988**

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline — call or text, 24/7

**741741**

Crisis Text Line — text HOME, 24/7

**1-866-488-7386**

The Trevor Project — LGBTQ+ young people, 24/7

**Your campus line**

Most counseling centers have a 24/7 after-hours number. Save it tonight.



*You don't have to be in danger to call. "I'm overwhelmed and I don't know who to talk to" is reason enough.*

# Support doesn't only come from clinicians

## Active Minds

500+ student-led chapters changing how campuses talk about mental health. Start one if yours doesn't have it.

## The Jed Foundation (JED)

Free guides and tools built specifically for students navigating college mental health.

## NAMI on Campus

Student clubs plus free peer-led support groups for students and their families.

## Your people

Roommates, teammates, RAs, coaches, advisors. Support is a network, not a single appointment.



**A.S.K. — Acknowledge, Support, Keep in touch.  
That's how you help a friend who's struggling.**

# One small step this week

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- Save 988 and your campus after-hours line in your phone tonight
- Look up your counseling center's intake page and note the hours
- Pick one daily basic — sleep, movement, or food — and protect it
- Text one person you trust and tell them how you're actually doing



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**Asking for help is a skill, not a symptom.**

**Thank you — Laura Luetzger**  
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