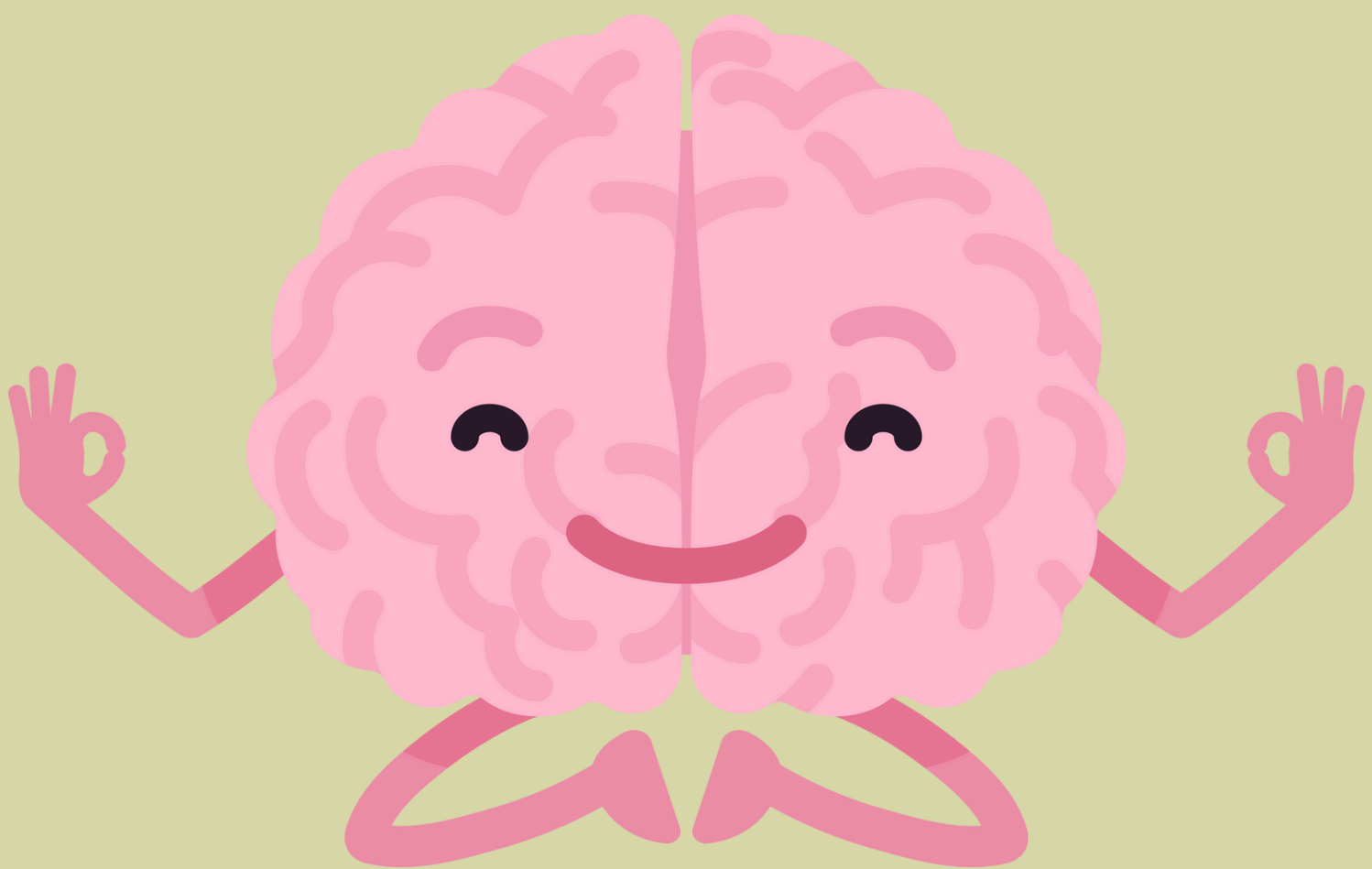


A GUIDE TO MENTAL HEALTH FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS



INFORMATION AND RESOURCES FOR
SUPPORTING MENTAL WELLNESS
DURING COLLEGE



ART TRUITT, BRIDGET FERRIS, LIZA
OWENS, OLIVIA BURGESS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 3 |
| CHAPTER 1 - The Significance..... | 4 |
| CHAPTER 2 - Risk Factors..... | 11 |
| CHAPTER 3 - Stress..... | 17 |
| CHAPTER 4 - Sleep..... | 22 |
| CHAPTER 5 - Physical Activity..... | 27 |
| CHAPTER 6 - Time Management..... | 32 |
| CHAPTER 7 - Coping Strategies..... | 36 |
| CHAPTER 8 - Access to Resources..... | 40 |
| CONCLUSION | 44 |

INTRODUCTION

WHO IS THIS FOR?

THIS GUIDE IS FOR ANY COLLEGE AGED INDIVIDUAL. IT FOCUSES ON STUDENTS WHO ARE STRUGGLING WITH MENTAL HEALTH, BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO THIS POPULATION. THIS GUIDE IS MEANT TO INFORM ALL COLLEGE INDIVIDUALS IN ORDER TO SUPPORT THEM IN THEIR MENTAL HEALTH JOURNEYS.



HOW TO USE

THIS GUIDE CONSISTS OF NINE CHAPTERS, AND IN THESE CHAPTERS, NUMEROUS THINGS ARE DISCUSSED IN ORDER TO INFORM PEOPLE ABOUT COLLEGE STUDENTS MENTAL HEALTH. A TABLE OF CONTENTS IS INCLUDED ABOVE TO HELP LOCATE CERTAIN CHAPTERS.



CHAPTER 1: THE SIGNIFICANCE

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health encompasses many things, one of the large roles of mental health is that it is the state of someone's wellbeing when they are¹ dealing with external stressors.



Wellbeing can be described as a person's emotional, physical, and social state. It affects everything a person does or how they act.² When a person's wellbeing is off so is their mental health.

IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is very important to pay attention to. It can change how a person behaves or performs. It can affect cognitive function, physical wellness, and relationships.³



College is a time where there are a lot of stressors which can lead to mental health struggles and poor mental health. This can cause issues in a student's experience and well-being. Taking care of brain is very important in order to have the highest level of thinking capable.

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide's main purpose is to inform people about how mental health affects college students. It goes into detail on the risk factors of mental health, coping strategies, and resources to help improve mental health. Although this guide just focuses on college students, many of the things stated in it can pertain to anyone. Through reading this guide it is hopeful that it helps someone find resources or think about their mental health in a new light.



HOW ARE COLLEGE STUDENTS AFFECTED

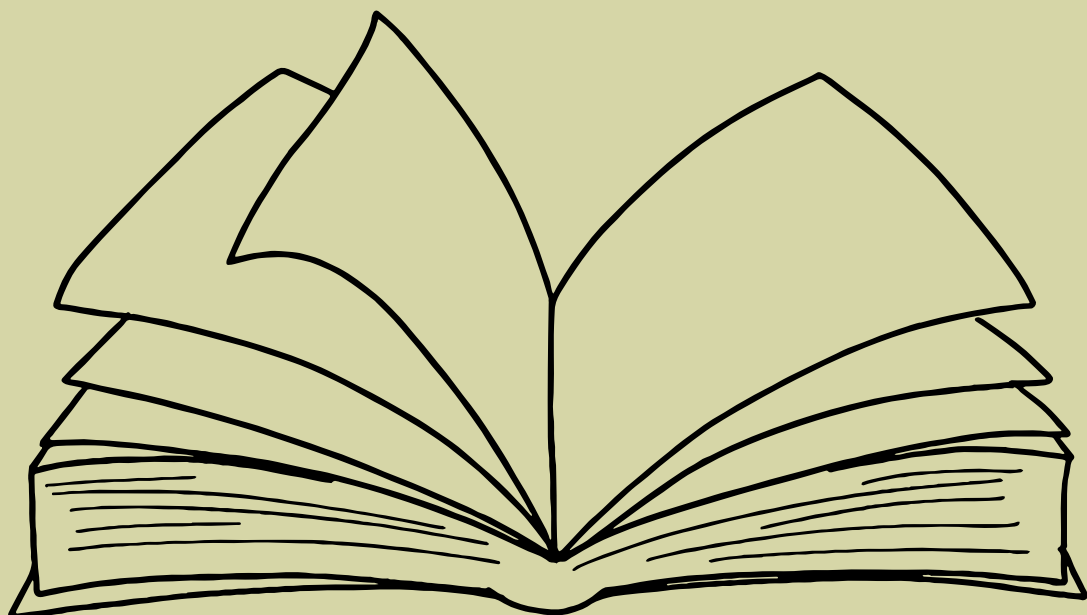
Mental health plays a large role on college students today. The majority of college students are diagnosed with at least one mental illness.⁴



Many students experience high levels of stress while in school and these stress levels cause mental health problems.⁴ Which then affect how well a student can do their work.

OTHER CHAPTERS

Throughout this manual different topics will be talked about. In chapter two, a brief overview of all of the risk factors will be discussed, as well as how important noticing these risk factors are. Chapters three through six will go into further detail on some of the biggest risk factors. Chapter seven will give coping strategies when dealing with mental health. Finally, chapter eight will provide resources to help a student struggling with mental health. Together these chapters will allow for the reader to understand mental health among college students and ways to help improve it.



REFERENCES

1. World Health Organization. Mental health: Strengthening our response. WHO website. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>. Published April 13, 2022. Accessed December 3, 2024.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. About mental health. CDC website. <https://www.cdc.gov/mental-health/about/index.html>. Reviewed July 11, 2023. Accessed December 3, 2024.
3. Cleveland Clinic. Why mental health is so important. Cleveland Clinic website. <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/why-mental-health-is-so-important/>. Published May 10, 2022. Accessed December 3, 2024.
4. National Education Association. Mental health crisis on college campuses. NEA Today website. <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/mental-health-crisis-college-campuses>. Published September 16, 2022. Accessed December 3, 2024.

CHAPTER 2: RISK FACTORS



NUMEROUS RISK FACTORS

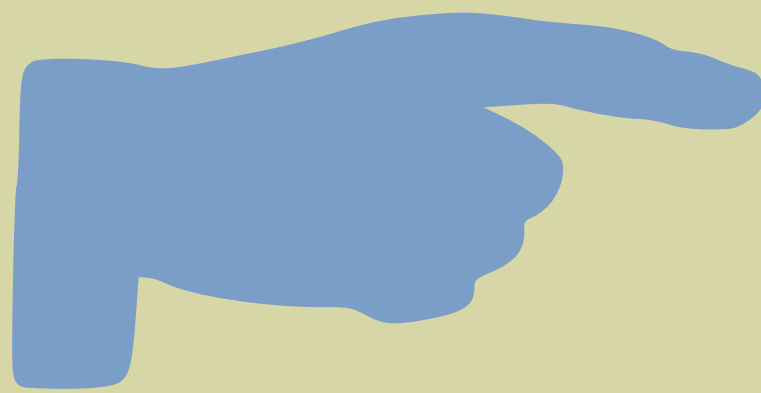
When talking about mental health among college students many different factors increase risk among them.

Depending on the genetics of a person their risk may be increased. In addition to this many other external factors can increase the chances of suffering from mental health problems. These problems can be anxiety, depression, eating disorders, OCD, and many more. Depending how a person reacts to an external stressor can effect what mental illness is more prominent for them.

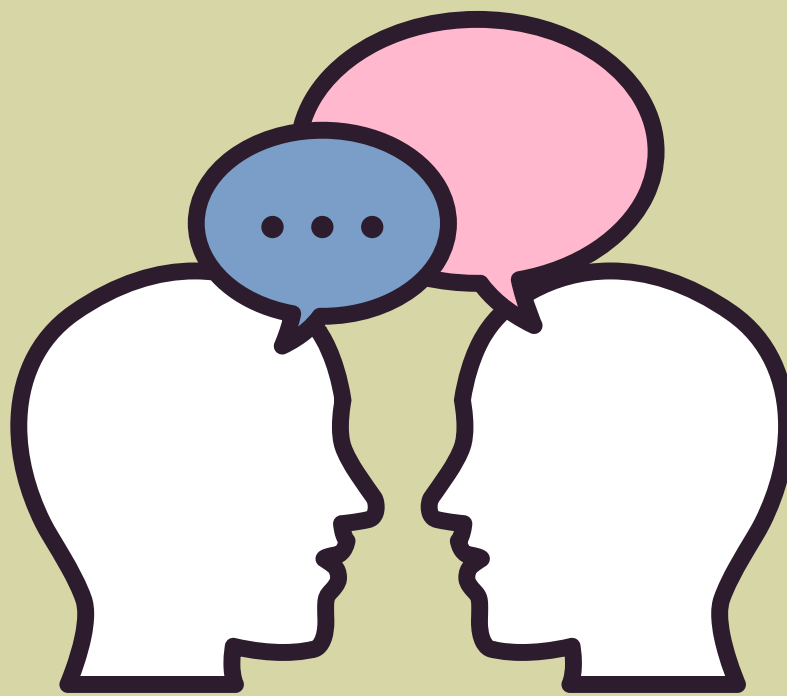


STIGMA

The topic of mental health is a relatively new topic of conversation among college students, because of this a stigma around the topic has been created.



This stigma results in people not wanting to talk about mental health problems and instead keeping the problems they are experiencing internally.



There are three main types of stigma found when dealing with mental health. They consist of public, self, and structural.²

THREE TYPES OF STIGMA

SELF

Personal stigma is when a person blames themselves for the mental problem. They ask questions like “what is wrong with me?” They think about themselves when discussing their mental health problems.³

PUBLIC

A public stigma may consist of how people view people with mental health problems, an example of this is not wanting to hire someone based off of this. Which then goes into how people struggling with mental health may be scared of public judgement.²

STRUCTURAL

A structural stigma has to do with laws and policies that are set in place against people with mental illness. It causes many of them to lose out on opportunities for things they cannot change.²

EXAMPLE RISK FACTORS

Due to the number of risk factors for mental health, our manual only goes in depth on four, but other examples of risk factors are listed below in order to help people gain a better understanding of how many different ways a person can be at risk



- **Leaving family**
- **Academic pressure**
- **Peer pressure**
- **Substance abuse**
- **Substances become easier to get**
- **Excess stress**
- **Sleep**
- **Time management**
- **New environment**
- **Financial concerns**¹

REFERENCES

1. Ferrari AJ, Charlson FJ, Norman RE, et al. Burden of depressive disorders by country, sex, age, and year: Findings from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2010. PLoS Med. 2013;10(11):e1001547. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001547.
2. American Psychiatric Association. Stigma and discrimination. American Psychiatric Association website. <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/stigma-and-discrimination>. Accessed December 3, 2024.
3. Rüsçh N, Angermeyer MC, Corrigan PW. Mental illness stigma: Concepts, consequences, and initiatives to reduce stigma. Eur Psychiatry. 2005;20(8):529–539. doi:10.1016/j.eurpsy.2005.04.004.

CHAPTER 3: STRESS



WHAT IS STRESS?¹

Stress is a state of mental tension caused by a difficult situation. It is a natural response that shapes how we address challenges in our lives.

Everyone experiences stress, but our responses to stress influence our levels of success and overall well-being.



Although stress helps us respond to challenges, too much stress can lead to long-term mental and physical health problems. Therefore, it is important to know the signs of stress and how to manage it.

CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF STRESS

CAUSES

There are numerous sources of stress for college students including academic demands, finances, relationships, increased responsibilities, and changes in lifestyle.²



SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

Immediate consequences of stress include anxiety, irritability, lack of concentration, headaches, stomach issues, and trouble eating or sleeping.¹



LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Consequences of long-term stress include anxiety disorders, depression, substance use, and chronic illnesses.¹



COPING WITH STRESS²

BALANCE WORK AND PLAY

Schedule regular breaks during study time.

EXPRESS YOUR STRESS

Talk to someone about your stress or express your worries through writing or art.

EAT HEALTHY

Try to eat regularly and avoid fried, processed, and fast foods.

STAY HYDRATED

Try to drink plenty of water and limit caffeine consumption.

STAY ACTIVE

Make time for physical activity, preferably outdoors. Staying active improves both physical and mental health.

PRIORITIZE SLEEP

Try to get 7–9 hours of sleep and engage in behaviors that improve quality of sleep (see chapter four).

TRY RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Relax your mind and body by engaging in activities like meditation and diaphragmatic breathing.

REFERENCES

1. Stress. World Health

Organization. February 21, 2023.

Accessed December 4, 2024.

<https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/stress>.

2. College stress. The Learning

Center. November 25, 2024.

Accessed December 4, 2024.

<https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/managing-college-stress/>.



CHAPTER 4: SLEEP

WHY IS SLEEP IMPORTANT?

Sleep is very important when discussing mental health. Sleep correlates to a person's mental, physical, and overall quality of life. Sleep supports healthy brain function, so when a person does not get enough sleep their brain cannot function normally.¹



Sleep deficiency can cause people to have lower decision making abilities, causing them to question things they would not normally question.

Increasing depression and suicide rates.²

DETERMINANTS AND EFFECTS OF SLEEP

Short Term

Short term effects of sleep deprivation can consist of mood swings, immune system issues, physical strength reduction, and emotional distress.

Long Term

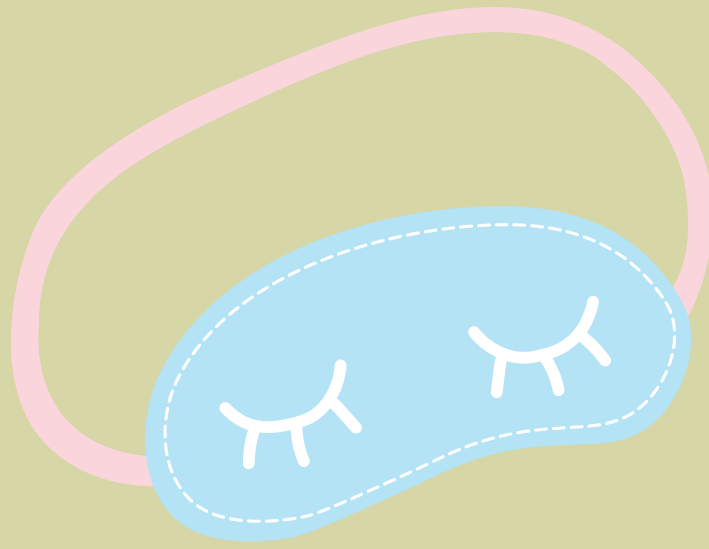
The long term effects of sleep deprivation can cause heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, obesity, depression and suicide.³

The short term and long term effects can cause people mental health issues.

Even though many of these are not directly correlated with mental health, the secondary effects of these diseases can cause increased anxiety and depression.³

IMPROVING SLEEP

There are steps a person can take in order to improve their sleep cycle.



- Have a daily routine
- Set a bedtime each night
- Limit the use of electronics before bed
- Exercise during the day
- Avoid drinking alcohol or eating right before bed

A fix does not happen immediately. Depending how long a person's body has been experiencing sleep deprivation can change how long it takes to get back to normal. Typically short term is resolved in one to two nights while long term can take around a week.⁴

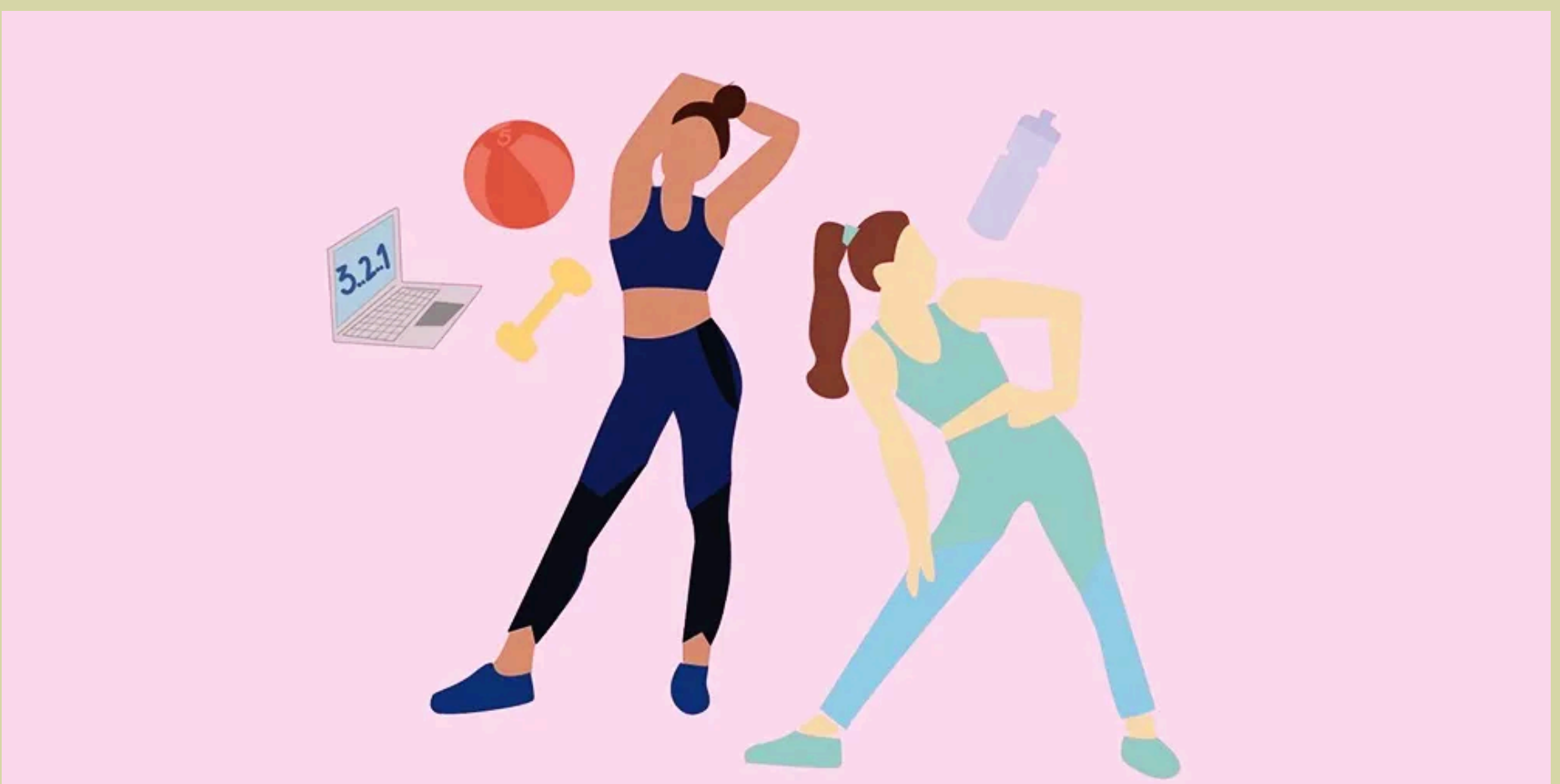
REFERENCES

1. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. What are the health effects of sleep deprivation? NHLBI. Updated October 17, 2022. Accessed December 5, 2024. <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/sleep-deprivation/health-effects>
2. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. What are the health effects of sleep deprivation? NHLBI. Updated October 17, 2022. Accessed December 5, 2024. <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/sleep-deprivation/health-effects#:~:text=Studies%20also%20show%20that%20sleep,%2C%20and%20risk%2Dtaking%20behavior.>
3. Medic G, Wille M, Hemels MEH. Short- and long-term health consequences of sleep disruption. Nat Sci Sleep. 2017;9:151-161. doi:10.2147/NSS.S134864
4. Cleveland Clinic. Sleep deprivation. Updated November 1, 2023. Accessed December 5, 2024. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/23970-sleep-deprivation>

CHAPTER 5: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

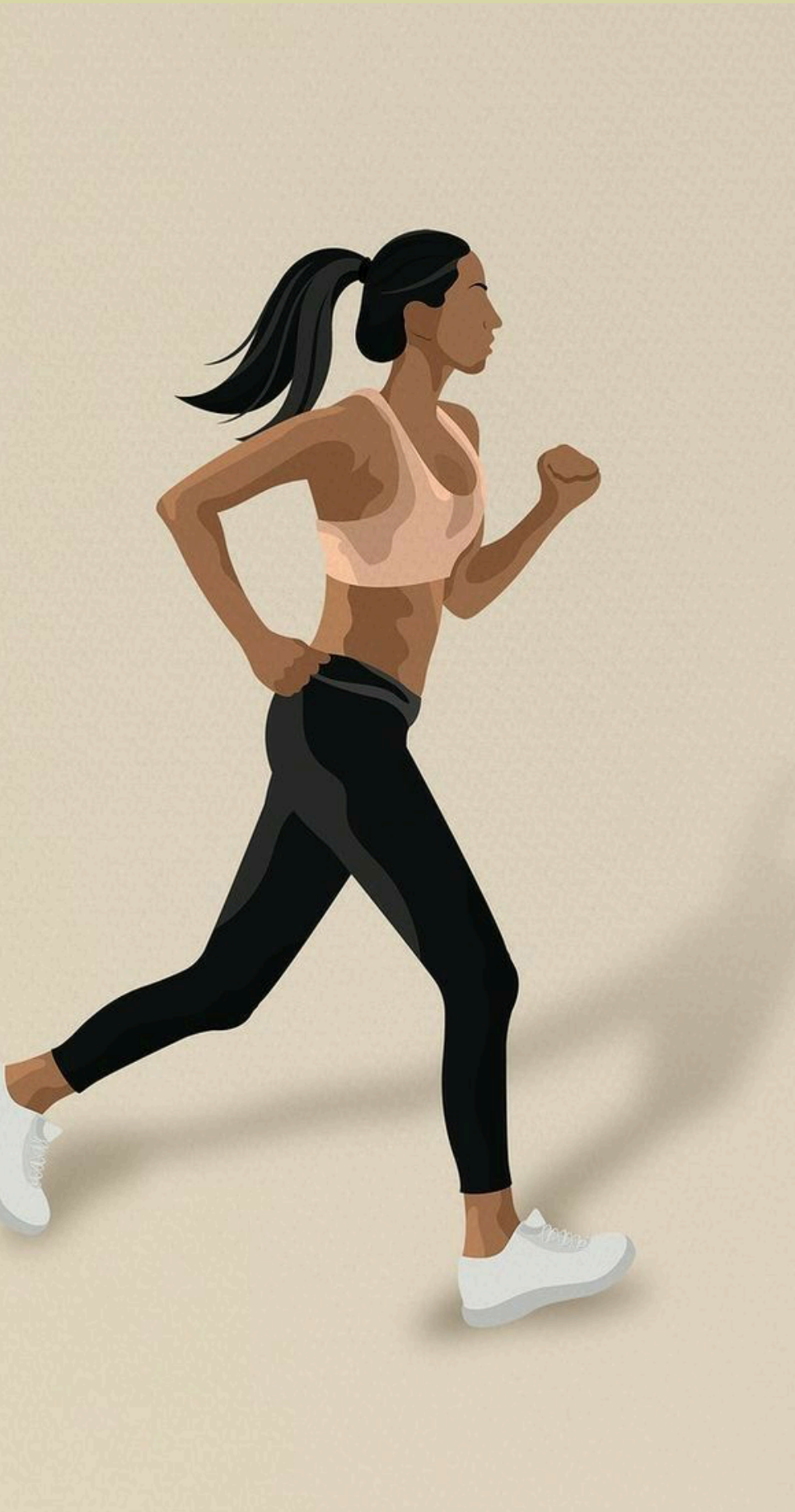


Physical activity helps college students' mental health by reducing stress and improving moods. Exercising releases feel-good chemicals called endorphins, which improve moods and make individuals feel happier and have more energy.²



Physical activity is a healthy outlet for managing anxiety and depression that is common among students, along with improving overall mental health and wellness.²

Staying active in college is a great way to boost energy, improve mood, and manage stress from the busy life of college students. Incorporating a regular exercise routine can help students maintain focus and feel more confident.¹



It is easy to fit exercise into college life. This could be walking to class, going to a local or university gym, joining an intramural sports team, or even doing short workout videos off a phone.¹

Even the smallest form of physical activity can make a big difference in the overall well-being of college students, helping them manage stress, practice mindfulness, and feel good.²

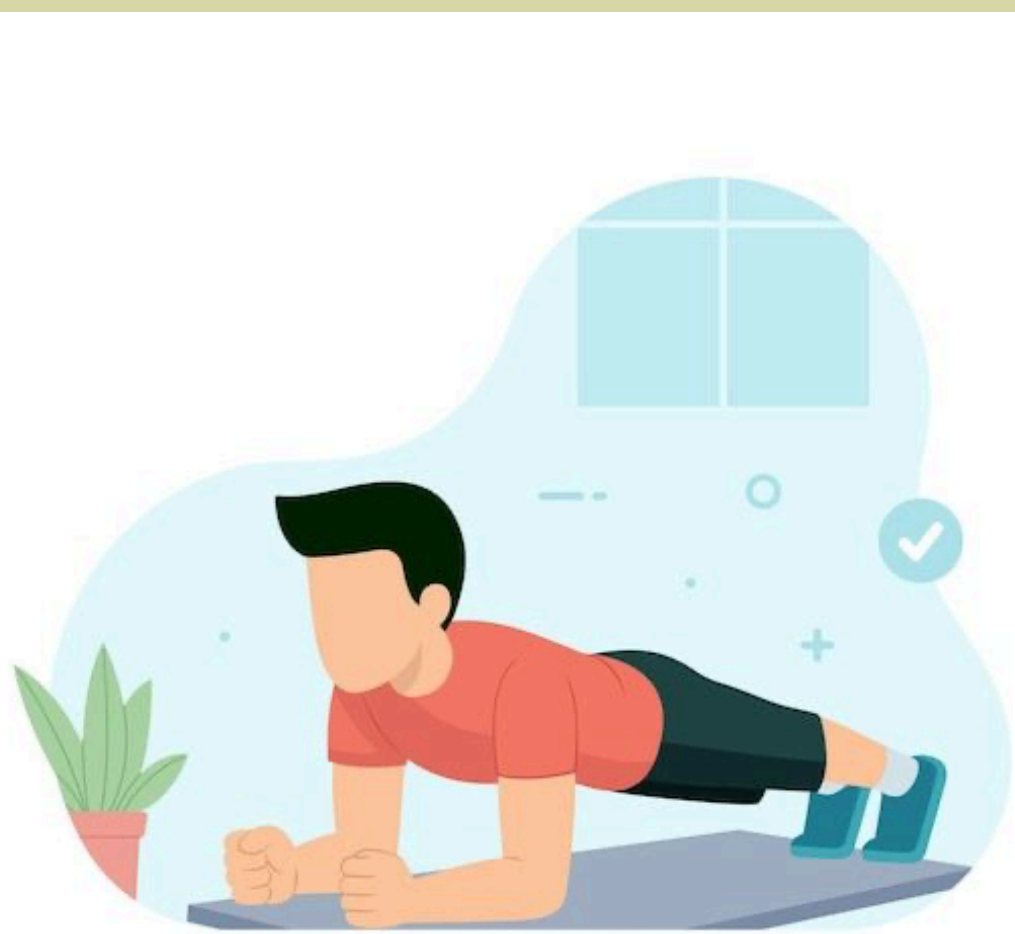


THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION

There is a proven mind-body connection that explains that the higher total physical activity an individual engages in, the better their mental health scores.³

It is important for students to use physical activity to stimulate the mind-body connection in order to enhance mental health and overall well being. This connection affects many key aspects of life of a college student.³

Activating the mind-body connection can improve mood, stress management, quality of sleep, and brain function. Starting a routine to keep this connection a priority in college can help make it a lasting habit that can benefit a student now, and in the future.³



REFERENCES

1. Condos, S. W. (2024, August 29). How to stay fit while going to college: Summerwood Student Housing. Summerwood Student Housing Orem - Private Living Meets Student Life. <https://mysummerwood.com/blog/summerwood/ways-to-stay-fit-in-college/>
2. Physical Health and Mental Health. Mental Health Foundation. (2022, February 18). <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/physical-health-and-mental-health>
3. Rodríguez-Romo, G., Acebes-Sánchez, J., García-Merino, S., Garrido-Muñoz, M., Blanco-García, C., & Díez-Vega, I. (2022, December 23). Physical activity and mental health in undergraduate students. International journal of environmental research and public health. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9819335/#:~:text=The%20higher%20the%20total%20physical,with%20better%20mental%20health%20status.>

CHAPTER 6: TIME MANAGEMENT





Time management is crucial for improving everyday life and enhancing the mental health of college students. Having these skills can reduce stress and give students sense of control over academics and responsibilities.¹

Maintaining a balanced schedule, having an organized calendar, and completing tasks can help students manage their responsibilities. It is also vital for college students to take time for themselves to do self-care activities and relax in order to prevent burnout.² 33



Feeling like there is not enough time to complete necessary and everyday tasks can build anxiety that affects a student's overall mental health.²



The feeling of being overwhelmed can influence productivity and even affect relationships. Effective time management strategies can help take care of these stresses and lead to time for personal things.¹



REFERENCES

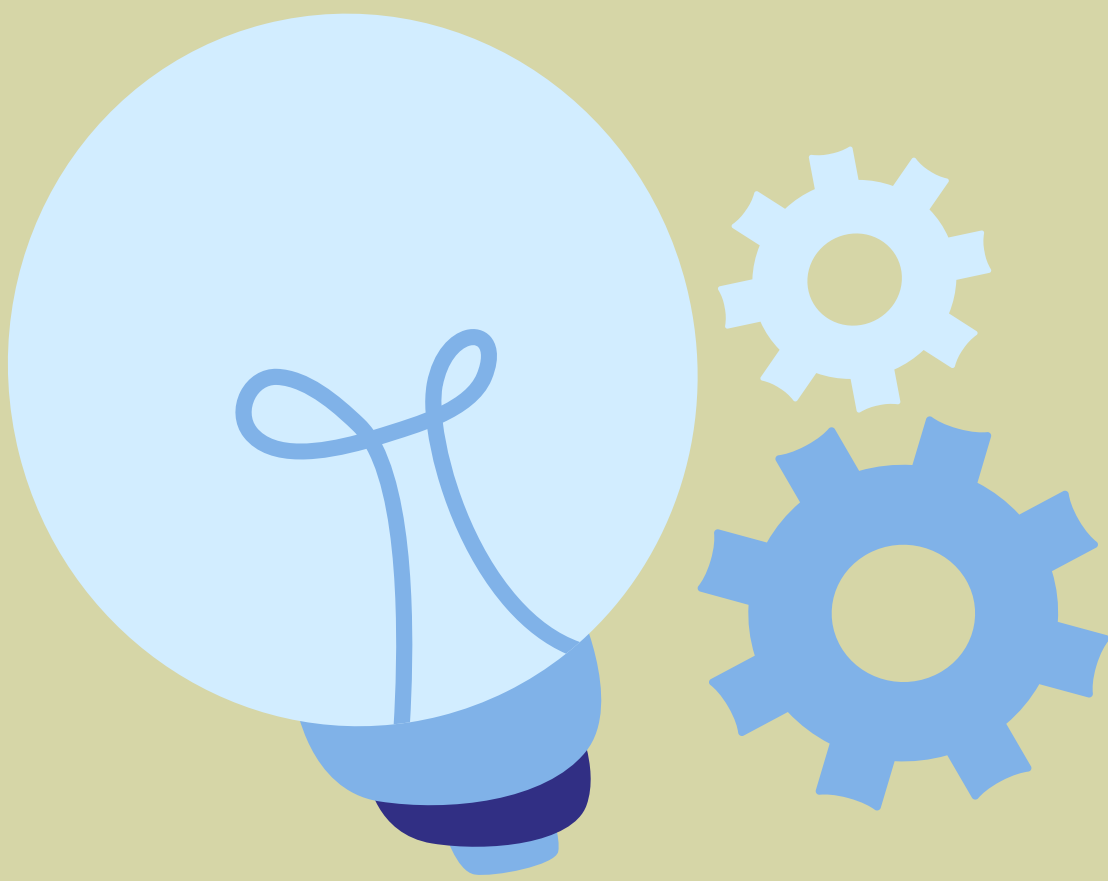
1. Onuonga, E. (2019, December 10). Emilia Onuonga: The “work hard, play harder” mentality is deeply flawed. The Daily Pennsylvanian.

<https://www.thedp.com/article/2019/12/work-hard-play-hard-upenn-ivy-league-mental-health-college-partying>

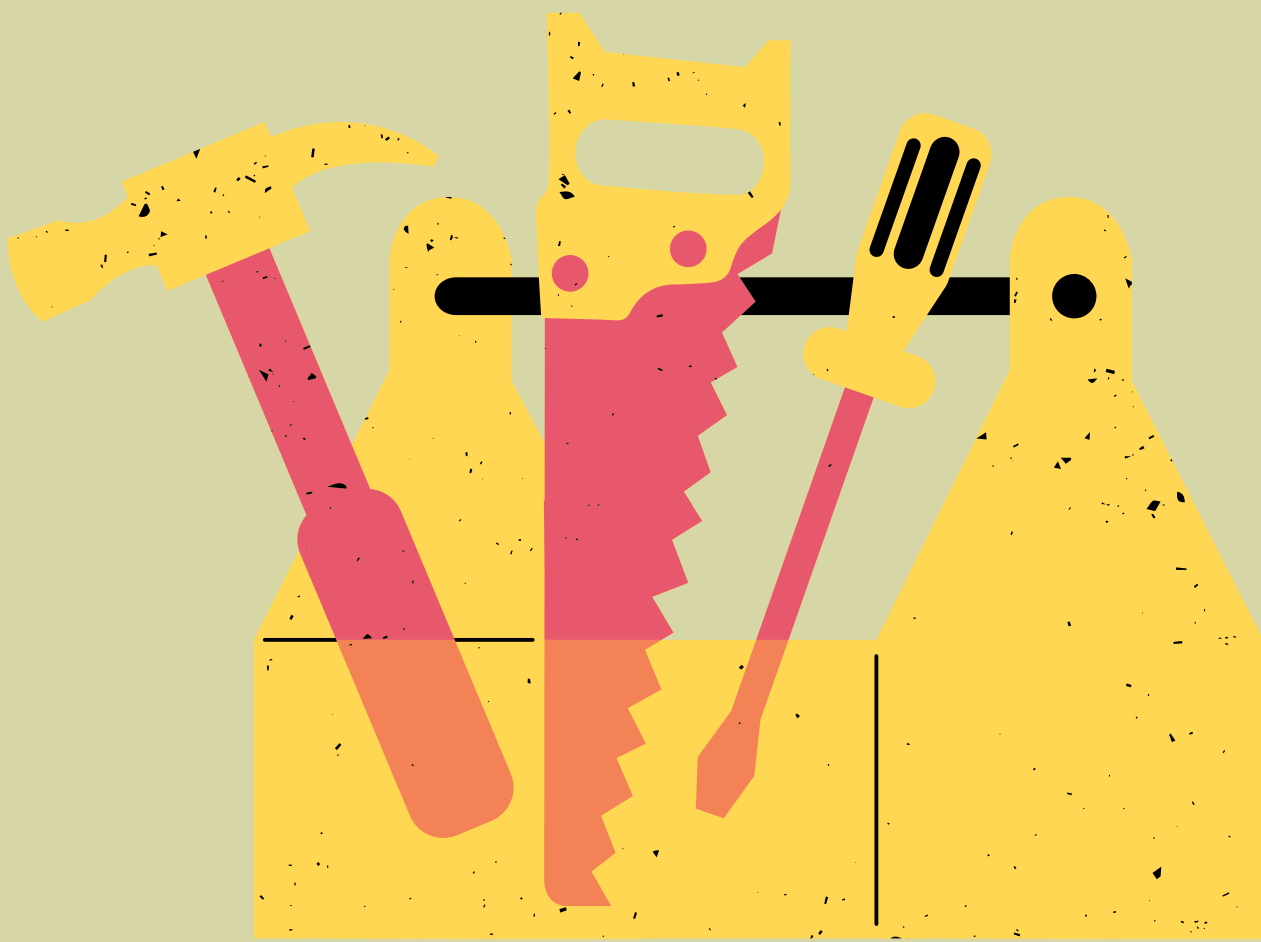
2. Time Management. Illinois Extension. (n.d.).

<https://extension.illinois.edu/everyones-mental-health-matters/time-management#:~:text=Feeling%20that%20there%20is%20not,mood%2C%20relationships%2C%20and%20productivity.>

CHAPTER 7: COPING STRATEGIES



Coping strategies are ways to manage stress and improve mental health. It is crucial to have an array of strategies handy to cope with the stress, pressure, and busyness of college.¹



Having effective coping strategies can help students through the ups and downs of colleges, whether that be stress and mental health effects from academics, social life, or personal responsibilities.² Using coping strategies allows students to maintain their emotional equilibrium and positive self-image.¹

COPING STRATEGY IDEAS³

- Exercise on a regular basis
- Engage in fun or relaxing activities
 - ie. reading, painting, dancing, watching a movie
- Get adequate, quality sleep
- Eat a nutritious diet
- Get outside
- Call a friend or family member
- Practice gratitude
- Use positive self-talk
- Take breaks and vacations if possible
- Practice yoga, meditation, or mindfulness
- Use a journal
- Avoid the use of substances like caffeine and alcohol



REFERENCES

1. Cleveland Clinic. Stress: Coping With Life's Stressors. Updated April 21, 2021. Accessed December 5, 2024.
<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/6392-stress-coping-with-lifes-stressors>
2. University of New Hampshire. Academic Stress and Coping Strategies. Accessed December 5, 2024.
<https://www.unh.edu/pacs/academic-stress-coping-strategies>
3. Purdue University Global. A College Student's Guide to Stress Management. Accessed December 5, 2024.
<https://www.purdueglobal.edu/blog/student-life/college-students-guide-to-stress-management-infographic/>

CHAPTER 8: ACCESS TO RESOURCES



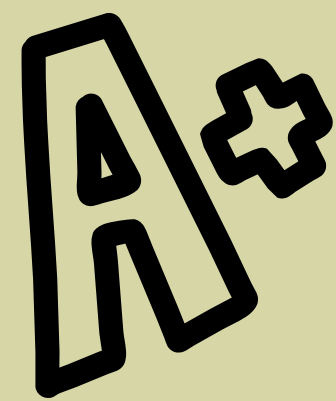


Having support and resources in college is crucial because it can significantly improve a student's mental health, academic success, and help them navigate challenges.¹

College is a time with unique stressors such as academic pressures, financial concerns, social adjustments, and living away from home for the first time.² Many college students are experiencing a variety of change which can be overwhelming and isolating, as well as have negative effects on their mental health and overall well being.¹



Knowing what mental health support and resources are available to college students is critical as it can lead to promotion of academic success, improvement of well being, reduction of stigma, prevention of severe mental issues through early intervention, and increased retention and graduation rates.³



MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AND RESOURCES⁴

Counseling centers on campus - many colleges have counseling centers dedicated to providing free or low-cost services to students



Peer support programs - other students provide support to their peers, which can offer relatable and helpful support

Mental health hotlines - colleges provide access to 24/7 mental health crisis hotlines for immediate support



External support - finding a therapist or psychiatrist off-campus can be very beneficial for individual counseling work

Online Resources, Apps, and Portals - many colleges provide students with online resources featuring self-help tools, directories, and subscription to apps like Calm and Headspace



REFERENCES

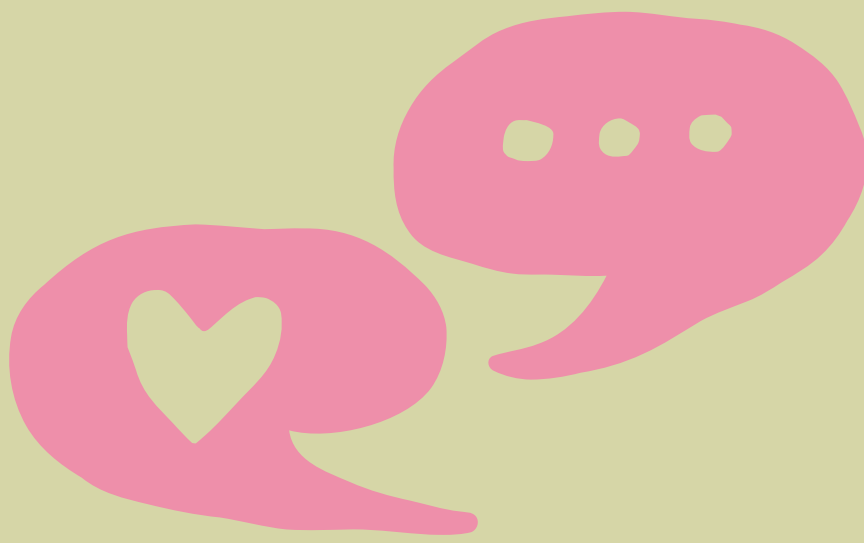
1. American Psychological Association. Prioritizing Mental Health on College Campuses. Monitor on Psychology. Published October 2022. Accessed December 5, 2024.
<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/10/mental-health-campus-care>
2. Zivin K, Eisenberg D, Gollust SE, Golberstein E. Persistence of mental health problems and needs in a college student population: a prospective cohort study. Psychol Serv. 2022;19(3):237-246.
doi:10.1037/ser0000651. Accessed December 5, 2024.
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9210532/>
3. National Alliance on Mental Illness. Mental Health in College. Accessed December 5, 2024. <https://www.nami.org/your-journey/kids-teens-and-young-adults/young-adults/mental-health-in-college/>
4. The Mental Health Coalition. College Mental Health Toolkit. Accessed December 5, 2024.
<https://www.thementalhealthcoalition.org/college-mental-health-toolkit/>



CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

Mental health is important for all individuals to understand and prioritize as it directly affects emotional, psychological, and social well-being. College students are susceptible to mental health issues due to a variety of stressors and pressure. Mental health in college students influences their academic success, relationships, and overall well being. Promoting awareness and understanding of mental health helps reduce stigma, encourages help-seeking behavior, and creates environments where college-aged individuals can thrive academically and personally.



Recognizing the signs of mental health challenges and seeking timely support ensures that individuals maintain a balanced and fulfilling life. Due to the amount of risk factors that can influence mental health it is important to stay aware of yourself and others. Sometimes a friend may notice differences in a person before they notice it themselves.



Additional Resources

Talk Space

This is an online therapy website that allows licensed therapists to talk with patients through call, text, or video.

Student Care and Outreach

At many universities, student care and outreach programs provide resources for students who are struggling with mental health or who need support.

Reaching out to a professor or advisor

University staff members want to help students. Many of them have additional resources to provide students when they are experiencing mental health problems or need help.

Hotlines

988 - Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

1-800-715-4225 - Georgia Crisis & Access Line

1-800-950-6264 - National Alliance on Mental Illness Helpline