

TRANSITIONS

Making the most of your campus experience

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1

Introduction

Congratulations!

You're ready to begin university or college. Whether you just graduated high school or you're returning to school after a period in the work force or some other life experience, your life is about to change a lot.



The first few years on campus can be a time of rapid transition and new experiences. This can be both an exciting and challenging time. You may breeze through this period of your life or you may struggle a bit. At times you may need some information to help you successfully solve the problems you encounter and perhaps help others who need your assistance. This is normal and expected as you transition from one part of your life to another.

We created this resource as a way to help you and your peers address some important things that aren't usually talked about, but are important to think about at this transition point in your life. We know that not all life's lessons need to be learned the hard way. Sometimes knowing what to expect and getting some tips on what to do can go a long way to helping a person find their own way. *Transitions*, the book that you are now reading, was designed to help you do just that!

Transitions is the result of feedback from a large number of students who told us that they wished a resource like this was available when they started their first year of university or college. They said that these years brought them face-to-face with issues that they had not previously addressed, or maybe had not even thought about it at all. These were issues ranging from learning how to live independently, how to get along with roommates, how to manage their own finances, how to deal with expected increases in stressful situations, how to deal with Depression and other mental illnesses, what to do when faced with sexual assault, and more. These are not things that you have to address on your own, and having some information and tips about what you could do can help. That is what *Transitions* is for, to provide a single source that you can reach for when you need that information or could use some tips.

You might not need to know what is on every page of this book and that's okay. But we hope that you'll keep it in on hand, as there is likely something in here that will be helpful to you, or to a friend, at some point over the next few years. We hope that this book will help you adapt to and become resilient in your new life as a post-secondary student.



For more information, check out http://www.teenmentalhealth.org/transitions.



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Academics

School

How is university or college different than high school?

You are likely going to notice that campus life will be quite a bit different than high school or work life was. Understanding what to expect can help you prepare for the excitement and challenges that lie ahead.

Academic workload

Your workload might increase quite a bit compared to high school – and your professors or instructors will often not be aware of (or concerned with) the workload you have in your other classes. This means that you might end up with multiple exams, papers, and assignments, all due in the same week, or even the same day. Occasionally, your professors or instructors might be willing to accommodate deadline changes, but more often than not, they won't. Your best course of action is to plan ahead – review each class' syllabus at the start of the semester, map out all of your due dates in a planner, and figure out how soon you need to start studying, writing, and researching for each task in order to get them done in time. Leaving things to the last minute or planning to do an all-nighter is not a sustainable long-term strategy.



Set your "due date" for assignments 24 hours in advance of when it really is. Try to hit the date you set. This gives you a bit of wiggle room in case something unexpected comes up.

Expectations

In university or college, the expectation is that you are now an independent adult. That means that you are in charge of your own behavior. You are responsible for you! Professors and instructors likely won't notice if you're not in class and they won't be calling you to check up on any papers or assignments you didn't hand in. It is up to you to keep track of what you need to do and to motivate yourself to do what needs to be done. This can be a challenge for some students. Taking classes that match your interests, finding a friend in class to attend classes together or to be a study partner, or even just reminding yourself how much money you're paying to be in class might help you focus on your personal responsibilities and help motivate you to do what you need to do.

Pace

Rather than having classes on a subject every day; in university or college, you often have class just once or twice a week (although some classes may be more frequent). This means that you will likely be covering *a lot* of material in class, and moving through the material quite quickly. Many students find this difficult at first. Class sizes can be large, which can make it difficult for you to ask questions when you don't understand something. That can lead you to feeling left behind. You may be required to complete a number of readings in between classes – some of which will be talked about in class and some of which might just be background information. Even if you're not required to do extra reading, reviewing your notes and doing independent research into the areas you don't understand can help you keep up. Also, remember that every professor or instructor should have

office hours – times you can go into their office and ask questions. Just make sure you arrive prepared with a list of questions and don't expect them to teach the entire class to you over again one-on-one.



Give yourself 3-4 hours of work per course outside of class time to work on assignments or just to keep up with what is being taught. It may help you to think about college or university as a job. The classes are only a small part of your "work". Much of what you need to do happens outside of class.

Feeling unprepared

Some students feel as if high school didn't prepare them enough for university – whether it's the independence, expectations, structure, work load, or competencies (such as writing and study skills) that they need. They experience campus expectations as "stress" or "overload". However, these campus challenges are completely normal and actually expected! It helps to think about them as a new challenge that you will have to meet by developing some new skills and changing your expectations toward a more realistic perspective. If you label the "stress" that you are feeling as a signal that you are getting ready to rise to a challenge, you will create a much healthier approach to campus life. If you interpret the "stress" that you are feeling as negative and try to avoid the challenge, you will experience less joy and excitement about your new environment.



For more information, see our section on managing stress (on page 53).

Students are different, high schools are different, and each university or college is different – meaning that there are almost always going to be at least a few people who may feel overwhelmed by their new situation. If this feels like you, remind yourself that you are the person in charge of your college or university experience.

Go to the campus writing/study center or make an appointment with your professor/instructor or tutor to ask for extra help. Consider starting a study group with people from your class. Reach out to people in your residence, classes, extracurricular activities, or elsewhere to create your own support system. And remember – just because your friends and family may be far away, it doesn't mean they can't still support you from afar. If you're feeling overwhelmed, don't keep it to yourself. Reach out for help; there are many things that can be done to help you, help yourself.



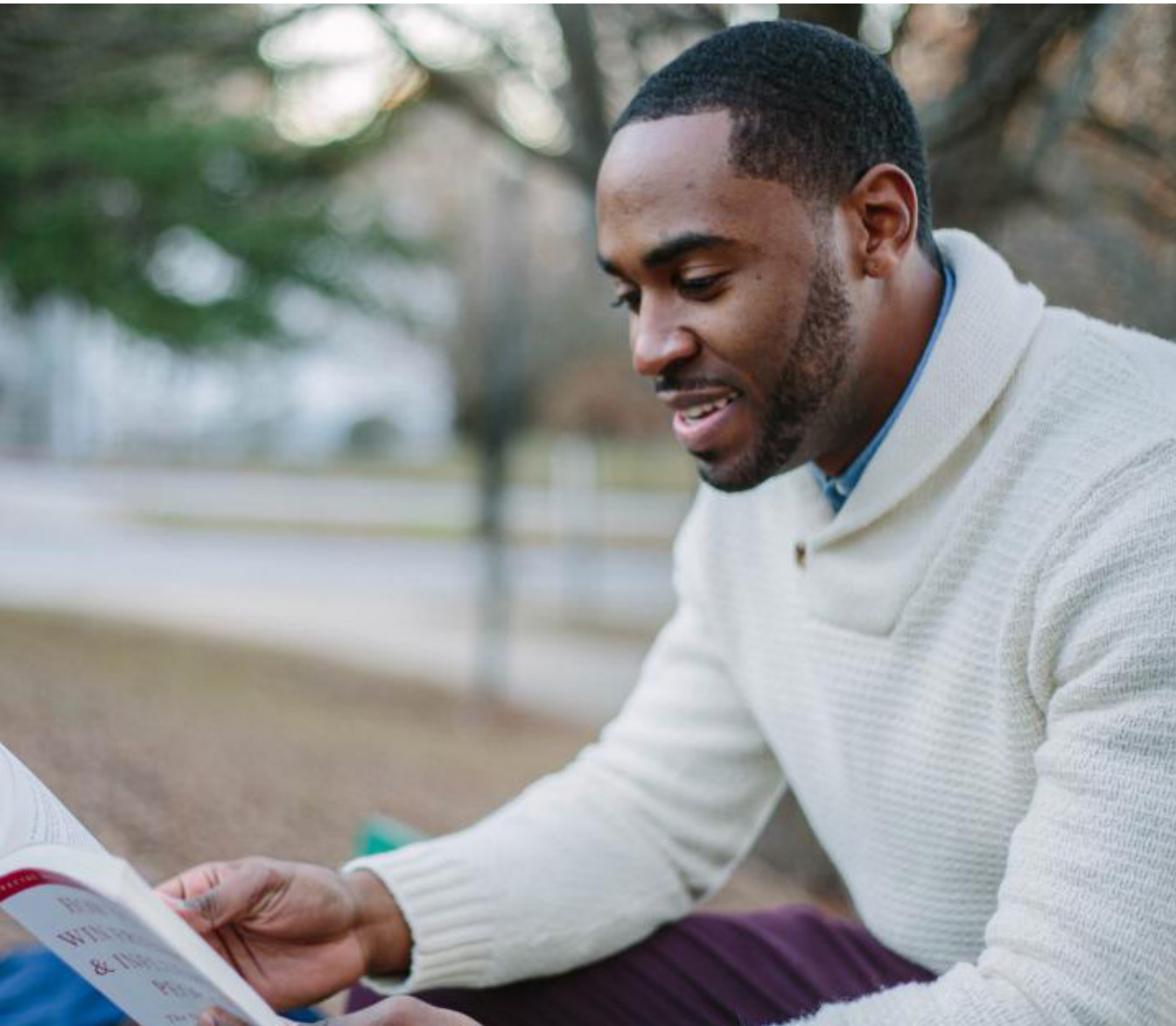
For additional campus resources, please visit www.teenmentalhealth.org.

How do I know which classes to pick?

Questions to ask

There will be some degree requirements that you'll probably want to get out of the way in your first year. If you have the option to take electives, keep in mind that part of figuring out what you WANT to do is learning what you DON'T want to do. Many students have found their future career accidentally by loving an elective course they chose simply because it fit in their schedule. If you can't decide, ask to sit in on a few classes so you can get a sense of the instructor, the course outline, and your instructor's expectations before you make your final decision. Remember, you usually don't have to decide your major in the first year. In fact, many students change their major two or even three times before graduating.

Ask yourself what interests you most. What are your hobbies? What courses did you enjoy most in high school? These are important questions to keep in mind and may help you decide what courses



to take. Talk to friends who have taken those courses and don't be afraid to get advice from your family, high school teachers, or other people you trust. There may be pressures from family to take a specific course or program but ultimately your choices are up to you.

1. Read the course calendar thoroughly. Each course listing will provide some information on what will be involved in the specific course.

2. How is the course graded? Make note of whether or not the course is based on written assignments or exams. Some people do better in courses with just exams compared to those based on written assignments or vice versa. Usually you will have to take some courses that involve both but it's good to know this ahead of time to help you make your course selections. If it's not listed, feel free to contact the instructor to inquire.

3. How big is the class? You may have to contact the instructor or the registrar's office if this information is not listed in the calendar. Sometimes it's helpful to be in smaller classes. Smaller classes often allow for class discussions and give you more opportunity to get help and ask questions.

4. Is the class a lab, a seminar, or a lecture? Lectures tend to be large classes. In some schools, this may mean hundreds of students. Because they are so large, they usually do not allow much discussion or interaction with your professor or instructor. Many common introductory classes are lectures, but some may also include a lab component. Labs and seminars are usually small classes and give you more opportunity for hands-on work.

5. What time is the course? If you are not a morning person, scheduling your more challenging courses for later in the day, when possible, may make the most sense.

If you still have questions and would like further help selecting your courses, most universities and colleges have academic advisors or counselors to help answer questions you may have.

For more information, check out the Getting Help section (on page 134).

Here are some thoughts from first-year students:

I always thought I wanted to be a nurse until I started studying nursing and realized how much it grossed me out.

I'm not really sure what I want to do later in life so I will take courses that interest me and see what happens.

I'd rather do classes with all exams and less writing assignments. If I talk to the professors of each course I'm interested in they will likely be able to tell me how the course is structured.

I wanted to have a job working outside. I tried horticulture and landscape and now I know what I want to do.

I feel like I only do well learning something I can do hands on, I always daydream if I have to sit through a lecture. I'll have to visit a school advisor to help pick appropriate classes.

I am fascinated with history and computers – I'll probably be more likely to get a job in computers but just for fun I'm going to take history – who knows maybe I'll learn something new and change my career path.

I can't decide between radio and television production or interactive game design- so giving both a try makes sense.

Career planning

Not yet knowing what kind of career you want can feel like one of the biggest barriers to choosing your courses. After all, how can you know how to prepare for your career when you don't yet know what that career is? Taking a variety of courses in your first year, if possible, is a great way to explore your options and get a sense of what you do and don't like. Remember that you don't need to have all the answers right away – usually, you can take a little time to figure out which courses you like and then explore the career options within that field. As you take different courses, here are some things to consider:

1. What kind of careers exist in this field?
2. How available are these jobs? Are they common with frequent job postings? (Check a job bank in a few cities to see!)
3. Where are those jobs? Are they available in the places you want to live? (E.g., you're less likely to find Marine Biologist jobs in the prairies than you can find on either coast.)
4. How much do these jobs actually pay? Is it enough for you to live the kind of life you want or the kind of life you are used to?
5. Are there people working in those careers locally to whom you can reach out? Asking someone working in that field to coffee (your treat!) can be a great way to learn more about what it's actually like to work in that particular job, as well as a great way to make connections in your field of interest. Just make sure you come prepared with questions and a genuine interest for what that job looks like.

Maximize your learning

Understanding your personal learning style can help you to reach your goals and be successful in school.

There are four common learning types: visual, auditory, reading/writing, and tactile. You may be a combination of all four, but generally one or two learning styles will be more effective for you than the others.

What type of learner are you?

Use the chart on page 18 to help you determine which type of learner you are. In each row, circle the answer the best applies to you.

For more information, check out the Getting Help section (on page 134).



Quiz!

For each item that you circled, add one point. Then, add up the total for each column. The column with the highest total is your strongest learning style.

WHEN YOU ...	VISUAL	AUDITORY	READING/ WRITING	TACTILE
...get together with friends	Do you enjoy going to a museum or maybe an art gallery?	Do you prefer chatting and discussion over coffee?	Do you prefer going to poetry readings or book clubs?	Do you prefer to get together and play a sport or do other physical activity?
...meet someone	Do you tend to remember faces better than names?	Do you remember what you talked about but forget what they looked like?	Do you remember names better if they have name tags on or when they give you their business card?	Do you remember what you did with the person and how you felt about them?
...talk	Do you often use phrases such as picture this, and imagine if ...?	Do you prefer to explain using words such as hear and think?	Do you make notes for yourself as you talk on the phone to help you refer back to the conversation later on?	Do you use gestures often while speaking and use words such as feel, touch and hold?
...are buying a new car	Do you consider how it looks to be the most important?	Do you prefer to go with what you hear on TV commercials and what the sales person says the best features are?	Do you prefer to read up on the car's features and reviews?	Do you prefer to drive it first and see how it feels?
...contact people	Do you prefer to meet in person?	Do you prefer to talk on the phone?	Do you enjoy communication through e-mail or text?	Do you prefer to talk to them while engaging in an activity together?
...are learning	Do you prefer a teacher who uses colorful charts and images?	Do you prefer class discussions?	Do you prefer when the teacher assigns readings and gives you handouts?	Do you prefer demonstrations and hands-on trial experiments?
...try something new	Do you prefer demonstrations or diagrams as explanation?	Do you prefer verbal instructions?	Do you prefer detailed written instructions you can read through to follow?	Do you prefer to jump right in and figure it out?
...are deciding what to order off a menu	Do you look for pictures of the food on the menu or look around the restaurant at other people's food?	Do you prefer to ask the waiter what they recommend and to describe the food?	Do you prefer to read the menu and details about how the food is cooked and what is in it?	Do you prefer to try something new or order something different from everyone else so you can taste test everyone else's food?
	VISUAL TOTAL	AUDITORY TOTAL	READING/WRITING TOTAL	TACTILE TOTAL

Adapted from Colin Rose (1987) Accelerated Learning

Study tips for your learning style

Visual Learners:

- The more pictures, charts and diagrams, the better. Turn written or verbal explanations into diagrams or pictures.
- Study alone and highlight the key points.
- Use different coloured highlighters.
- Doodle in your notebooks to emphasize important information. Find a way to make the information visually stand out. The more graphic images in your notes, the better.
- Use sticky notes to mark off important phrases in your notebook.
- Watch instructional videos on YouTube or elsewhere.

Auditory Learners:

- Make sure you attend class to hear the professor or instructor speak.
- Record class sessions when possible and listen to them again later.
- For some auditory learners, taking notes in class is distracting. If your memory is strong (or you are recording the class session), consider just listening instead of taking notes.
- Repeating information out loud can help you remember key points when studying.
- Discuss your ideas and understanding of the material with someone else, such as a classmate.
- Summarize your material into a song, phrase, or story.

Reading/Writing Learners:

- Write lists of important information/categories/ headings/etc.
- Always take notes – whether it's in class from your instructor or when you're reading your textbook. Writing the information down will help solidify it in your brain.
- Use your notes later to elaborate on the information, writing it out in whatever way is easiest for you to understand. Putting concepts into your own words is a great way to check if you understand the material.
- Read sentences over and over until the information "sticks." Just make sure that you're able to recall the information (and what it means!) when you no longer have the sentences in front of you. Reading without understanding doesn't help anyone!
- Translate a diagram into a readable format. Turn the pictures into stories.

Tactile Learners:

- Hands-on learning is the best. If you can find a way to try out the technique/concept you're studying, you'll remember it much better. Look for opportunities in your life and in your community to explore the concepts you're learning. (E.g., Trying to understand the impact of exercise on mood? Go for a run and see how you feel.)
- Get on the stationary bike while studying. Walk around as you elaborate on your ideas for a paper or review your understanding of class materials. Keep it moving!
- If you can't move around when studying, take breaks often to get up and stretch. You'll be much fresher when you return to the material and be able to absorb more information.
- Jump right in! Trial and error is one of the ways you learn best.

TIP *Whatever your preferred study style, remember that repetition is a very helpful way to increase how much of the material you remember. Also, testing yourself or with your study group friends can help you get a deeper understanding of the material and help you determine where your strengths and weaknesses lie.*

Procrastination

Are you constantly putting things off and making excuses? Procrastination can lead to challenges in getting your work done on time. Some people, however, procrastinate just the right amount to put them into their sweet spot for getting work done. We know that too much stress can get in the way of getting things done but we also know that too little stress makes it harder to get things done. You need to find your own sweet spot – just the right amount of stress for you.



TIP *Remember that the amount of work you have now will likely be much more than you had in high school. You will likely need to recalibrate where your sweet spot is when you reach campus so that you don't over procrastinate and get overloaded with deadlines.*

Why do some people procrastinate too much?

1. **Too challenging** – Sometimes we avoid a task because we know it will be difficult and it can be hard to figure out where to begin.

→ What to do: Break the task down into smaller, easier steps. This makes it seem less overwhelming and gives you the satisfaction of checking things off your 'to do' list sooner.

2. **Feeling unprepared** – Sometimes the task requires complex skills or knowledge. We may hold off starting the task, assuming it would be easier to wait until we have more knowledge and know exactly what to do to avoid failure.

→ What to do: Make a list of unanswered questions about the task that you think might be holding you back. Do a little research on your unanswered questions because sometimes the answer is much simpler than you thought! If you can't find the answer on your own, schedule time to talk to your professor or instructor about your questions.

→ What to do: Think of failure as a learning opportunity. If you jump in, you may be surprised at what you learn simply by trying.

3. **Not enough time** – The task seems overwhelming and may require a lot of time and energy.

→ What to do: When you break the task down into smaller chunks (see #1), give each one a reasonable time frame. You can get a lot done in just 15 minutes if there are no interruptions. It might be helpful to set a timer for each segment to help keep yourself focused.

4. **Distractions** – Sometimes it's hard to focus because we're in our comfortable everyday environment with all the distractions of daily living.

→ What to do: Take control of the situation. Turn off the phone, internet, and television and find a private study space. If you need to listen to music to block out other sounds, try listening to classical (or something without words) in your headphones as it's less likely to distract you.

5 **Too many projects on the go** – Often we put off tasks because we are swamped. It's easy to get bogged down in little details and forget about the big picture.

→ What to do: Try to focus on the most important assignments first. Remember not everything that feels urgent is important.

→ What to do: Remember that doing something is better than doing nothing. If you feel totally overwhelmed by a big project, it is okay to work on the little things first (e.g., title page, bibliography), as long as you don't forget about the big picture.

6 **Feeling guilty** – Sometimes we put off tasks because we feel guilty for not spending enough time with friends or family, or not participating in an activity. It can be hard to find a balance, especially at first.

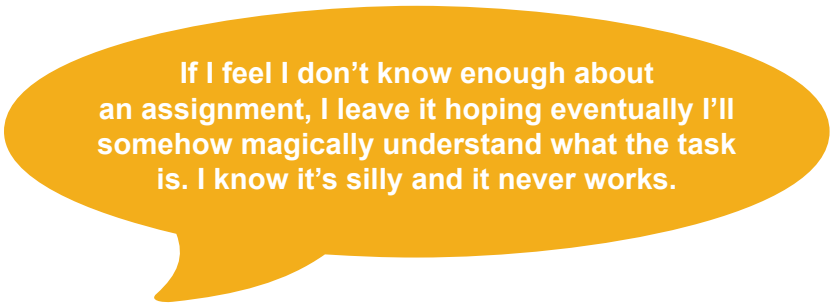
→ What to do: Consider rewarding yourself for a few hours of work by meeting a friend for coffee – you may be able to help motivate each other!

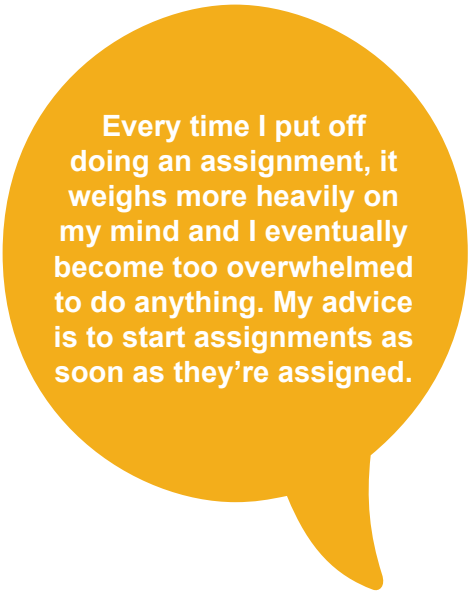
→ What to do: Try scheduling your days in an agenda. Having allocated hours for schoolwork and for socializing can help you ensure you're keeping a balance between the two.

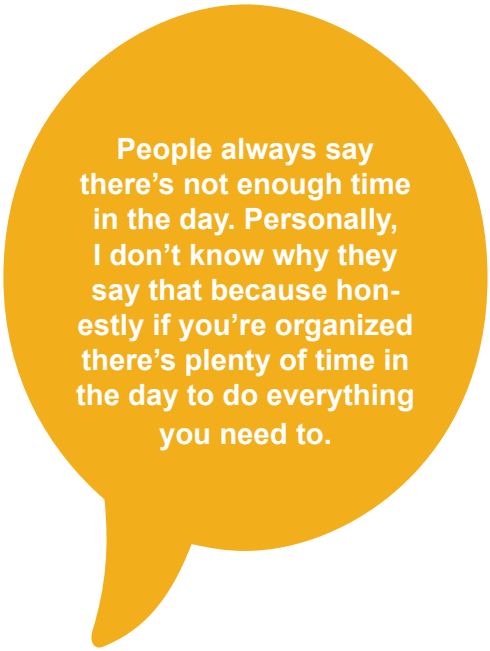
7 **Needing the stress to perform our best** – Sometimes, we put off a task not because of anything negative, but because we know that we perform best under pressure. That "amped up" feeling when a deadline is nearing can help some people produce their best work.

→ What to do: If this is you, do your best to prepare any background information or prep work you need to do in advance, so that when crunch time hits and the pressure increases, you've got everything you need to perform your best.

What students are saying:







Papers and assignments

Writing your first university or college paper can feel intimidating. Papers and assignments often follow a different format than you are used to in high school and it can be hard to know where to start. The key to doing well on papers and assignments is to understand what's expected, allow yourself enough time to properly research and write, and make sure you edit well.

Assignment tips:

- Review your syllabus for each class at the beginning of the semester. Take note of any papers or assignments, review their requirements, and mark their due dates in your agenda.
- Schedule time to complete each paper or assignment in your agenda as well. Allow yourself time to think of a topic, do research, write your paper or assignment, and edit at the end. Blocking these times into your agenda from the start of the semester can help you see where tasks for different classes might overlap and help ensure that you start early enough to avoid last-minute stress.

- Talk to your instructors or professors about what is expected. Sometimes this information will be in the syllabus so make sure you check that first. Ask about length, type of content, grading scheme, and format. (Some papers have to be in specific formats – like APA, which has guidelines for how to reference the material you researched and more. You can often take a workshop on reference formats at your school's library. Information on the use of different formats is also available online.)

- If you struggle with writing, schedule a meeting with your campus' writing/study center. Most, if not all, schools will have one staffed with experts who can help you learn how to better plan your paper or assignment.

- Your school library will likely offer a number of different workshops on the research tools available to you (i.e., journal databases) or different formats/styles that are commonly used. Check the library website or ask a librarian for more information on what's available. They often don't take more than a couple of hours and can provide you with invaluable help.

- Remember that the language you use when writing a paper or an assignment is more formal than the language you would use in everyday conversation. If this feels confusing to you, make sure you check out your school's writing center for advice.

- Before you start actually writing, it can be helpful to make an outline of what you want to include in your paper or assignment. Briefly detail each argument you want to make, any research you have to support that argument, and anything else that is necessary to include. These notes will help you stay focused as you write.

- Break your paper down into segments. Then, schedule time to work on each segment individually before putting them all together at the end.

- Make sure you allow yourself time at the end of your writing to proof read or edit. Often, you'll catch mistakes that you missed the first time around because you were so immersed in what you were doing. A well-edited paper or assignment can make a big difference in how well you do.

- It might be helpful to read your assignment out loud as you edit. Often, speaking the words aloud helps you determine what parts don't flow or make sense – and will also help you catch typos.

- Ask a friend or family member to read through your paper or assignment when you're finished. This can help ensure that your arguments make sense to someone who isn't in your head. Often, we think that we've explained something fully because we have all of the information in our head, but to someone who is unfamiliar with the topic, it might not be so clear. Your friend or family member can let you know which areas were confusing so you can tweak them as necessary.

Exams

Your first on-campus exams might feel pretty stressful because they can be very different from the exams you had in high school, with higher expectations and less support. The best way to deal with exam stress is to know your material well and give yourself enough time to study. Starting to study

the night before is never a good idea but constant studying can be mentally and emotionally exhausting. You need to find your balance. Make sure you schedule time for studying and time for recharging. You don't want to burn yourself out before the exam! Just make sure you're getting a balance of both. Getting enough sleep, eating healthy, and exercising are also important. You'll absorb information better and faster if you're feeling your best.

Prior to an exam, be sure to ask the instructor about the exam format (e.g., multiple choice, essay questions) and what is expected. This will help you better prepare and plan your review. It is important to do more than memorize the information. Rephrasing the material so it's in your own words can help you better understand it. If you really want to know how well you understand something, try and teach it to a friend or have a friend quiz you.

Exams can also be a great opportunity to learn. After you receive your results, it's a good idea to spend time reviewing to see where you went wrong so you can do better next time. Many professors, instructors, and teaching assistants are willing to discuss your exam results with you afterwards. Just make sure that you have thoughtful questions to ask when you approach them and aren't just looking to vent. Venting is best saved for your friends, not your professors or instructors!

Study tips:

- Ask questions. Ask your instructors which areas are most important to review.
- Test yourself early. Often, textbooks have review questions at the end of each chapter. Try answering those before you really get started studying. It's a good way to figure out which areas you need to study most.
- Make a learning plan. Give yourself time to review all material and more time for the areas you have identified as more difficult.
- Get organized. Put sticky notes on the pages you need to study more carefully and lay out the material so you can easily review. Creating an outline of all the information you need to cover can also help.
- Highlight key points. This will help you to focus in on the most important information without getting distracted by less relevant details. It also allows for quick scanning of the material when you're doing your final exam review.
- Don't rush. Try not to move on to new topics until you feel confident with the material you just covered. That said, if you're having difficulty grasping one section and it's making you feel upset, put it aside and try studying another section for awhile. Sometimes a break is all you need to see things differently.
- Take scheduled breaks. Go for a walk and get away for just 10 or 15 minutes every hour or two.

- Sleep. If you're tired, nothing is really going to sink in, so be sure to get a good night's sleep. Take a short nap if necessary. Don't study binge! You'll retain more by getting a good sleep and briefly reviewing in the morning.

- No distractions. Study where you know you won't be interrupted. Shut off the TV, put your phone away and on silent (or even in airplane mode!) and avoid studying around other distractions.

- Join a study group. Joining a group can help you with difficult areas and challenge you to keep up with your classmates.

- Caffeine in moderation. Coffee, colas and energy drinks should be consumed in moderation. Sure, caffeine helps you stay awake, but too much caffeine can increase feelings of tension and restlessness. If you are getting tired, take a short nap.

- Try not to procrastinate. If you feel overwhelmed with material you need to study, break it down into manageable steps. Start with the area you know best to help build confidence. Just don't spend too long studying information you already know well.

- Create study sheets. Write down the major concepts in point form for quick reference (like flash cards for reviewing).

Find real-life applications. When possible, think about how the different concepts you are learning might apply to real life. Real-life examples are great for helping you remember the information.

Plan your answers. Sometimes it helps to think of questions that might be on the exam and create an outline of the answer. End-of-chapter review questions can be helpful when formulating your own questions.

Remember that studying is more than reading. Studying is active and requires more concentration and critical thinking.

Reduce your stress levels. Studying can sometimes stress you out, especially when the material is difficult or you feel like you don't have enough time. If you start to feel overwhelmed, taking a few deep breaths can slow down your heart rate and help you relax. Try the Box Breathing or Progressive Muscle Relaxation exercises found on the next page. You'll be a much more effective studier when you've had a chance to calm down.



Check out this website for a nice way to do the box breathing exercise described below. This is what the Navy Seals do to help themselves stay calm in crisis situations. http://quietkit.com/box-breathing/



Box Breathing

Box Breathing can help your heart rate return to normal, which helps you to relax.

Here's how you do it: If possible, sit and close your eyes. If not, just focus on your breathing.

1. Inhale your breath (preferably through your nose) for 4 seconds.
2. Hold your breath for 4 more seconds. You're not trying to deprive your self of air; you're just giving the air a few seconds to fill your lungs.
3. Exhale slowly through your mouth for 4 seconds.
4. Pause for 4 seconds (without speaking) before breathing in again.

Repeat this process as many times as you can. Even 30 seconds of deep breathing will help you feel more relaxed and in control.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation can help to release tension that you may be holding in your body. It's a quick, easy, and subtle way to calm yourself down.

1. While taking deep breaths, clench your right fist tightly for approximately 5 seconds.
2. Continuing to breathe deeply, slowly release your fist over the course of about 15 seconds while concentrating on the way your hand feels.
3. Repeat with your left hand.

Although not as easy to do in public, you can also do Progressive Muscle Relaxation with your whole body, starting with your toes and working your way up to your face, one section of your body at a time. This is a great technique to use if you're having trouble falling asleep.

Exam day

1. Try to get a good night's sleep before the exam. Feeling rested will help you much more than pulling an all-nighter. Sleep helps consolidate what you have learned and prepares your brain for working the next day.

2. Eat the kind of breakfast most suited to you, but try to take in some calories if you usually don't. You are feeding your brain. If you have difficulty eating in the morning, try to eat something small (e.g., yogurt, an apple) so that you aren't distracted by hunger in the middle of the exam.

3. Review your study sheets but don't try to learn new material; it will only confuse you and stress you out. Do the best with what you've got.

4. If you're feeling tense, follow this prescription. First, remember that the tension or stress that you feel is a signal that your brain and body are getting ready to take on a task. That is a good thing. Second, remember all the studying that you have already done to prepare yourself. That is a good thing. Finally, take a few deep breaths (see Box Breathing exercise on page 28). This will slow your heart rate and help you calm down. If possible, go outside to get some fresh air or go for a brisk walk.

5. Go to the bathroom before going into the exam room.

6. Before starting to answer questions, it is a good idea to scan through the entire exam and decide how much time you will need to spend on each section. This will help ensure that you don't run out of time before you're finished.

7. Take your time and pace yourself. Read questions twice and beware of tricky wording. Underline key words like "don't" and "not" (E.g., "Which one of these options is not an example of…?").

8. If you don't know the answer to a question, don't struggle with it. Flag it, move on, and go back to it later. The answer may come to as you read through the rest of the exam. Sometimes later questions can give you clues about earlier ones.

9. Answer the questions you know the answers to first. That way, if you're short on time, you've at least answered all of the questions you definitely know.

10. Don't second-guess yourself. Your first idea is often the right one.

11 When writing multiple choice exams, consider hiding the answer choices as you read the question. Because multiple choice exams use something called recognition memory, you could get confused because you 'recognize' more than one of the answers from when you were studying. (Sometimes instructors or professors use other concepts from class as possible answer choices. They're the right answer to something, just not the question you're currently reading!) If you cover up the possible responses, you'll be able to consider what you think the answer to the question might be, without the distraction of potentially wrong responses. Then, when you have an idea about the answer, check the possible response options and choose the one that fits best.

12 For essay questions, try taking a few seconds to create a mini-outline of what you want to say before you get started. Even if it's just a few words, it can help you organize your thoughts. This makes it easier for you to answer the question adequately and helps ensure that the person marking your exam understands what you are trying to say.

13 If you know that you have a history of extreme exam-related stress, get help before the exam period starts. Remember, counseling services can help you improve your study habits, your exam writing ability, and give you tips to deal with your stress response. But don't wait till the week before exams to get the help you need!

Good luck!



The tension you might feel before an exam is actually the normal stress response to writing an exam. It has a purpose – to get your brain and body ready to achieve and to be successful. That rapid breathing is not a bad thing; it's how your lungs bring more oxygen to your brain so it can work better. That feeling of butterflies is not a bad thing; it's your gut shutting down so more energy can go to your brain instead of digestion. That tension you are experiencing is not fear; it's courage. When you start to think about your stress response this way, you set yourself up for success.

What students are saying:

I never go into the exam room too early- if I do, then I just end up stressing about what will be on the exam and talking to other people who are nervous. I try to go just a few minutes before.

I always study with friends the last day before an exam so we can test each other. It's fun and really helps. It also makes me feel competitive to study harder to keep up with my friends.

Before exams I never pick up my notes and study – I figure if I don't know the materials, now it's pointless. So instead, I relax and go for a run beforehand.

I used to completely freeze before an exam and my mind would go blank. But I took a little course on taking exams that the counseling center offered and now I know how to study, how to help myself relax, and I am doing better.

The worst feeling is sitting through an exam when the person sitting next to you is distracting you with a constant growling stomach. So my advice is eat before your exam – it's better for you and people around you!



Don't get discouraged if your first few assignments don't turn out the way you expected. Remember that learning to research and write coherently are some of the skills that you are in university/college to learn. Use the feedback you receive to improve your next submission.

Talking to professors/instructors and administration

There will be many times throughout your time in school when you need to speak to your instructors and to professors or the administration of your school. Knowing how to approach them in a professional way can help ensure that your concerns are heard and help you feel less stressed while doing so.

Things to consider:

- Schedule an appointment or visit during office hours. Showing up unexpectedly can often mean that you will not get the time you need.
- Address the person by their title and last name (e.g., Dr. Brown or Ms. Chu) unless they've specifically told you that it's okay to use their first name.
- Use proper email technique – see below for more detail.
- Come prepared. Educators and administrators are far more likely to offer assistance when you present them with rational concerns or potential solutions for a problem you are facing rather than just venting (save the venting for your friends and family).
- Stay calm. Even if you feel upset about something that has happened, becoming angry is not likely to help the situation. Take a few deep breaths (try the Box Breathing Exercise we mentioned in the exam study skills section) and remember you are there to accomplish a goal, not to share your emotions.
- Thank them for their time. This is especially important if someone agreed to see you at the last minute or you had to reschedule. .
- Follow through. If your professor or instructor offers concrete suggestions, make sure you follow through. Try the things they suggest. If they work – make sure to send a quick email thanking them for their help and letting them know how things worked out. If their suggestions don't work, document what you did and see if you can schedule another meeting to find a new way to move forward.

Proper email technique:

- Always start your email with a greeting (e.g., "Hello Dr. Brown," or "Good morning, Ms. Chu").
- Use complete sentences and spell out full words. Never use shorthand or abbreviations that aren't widely understood.
- Use professional language. How you text your friends is not how you should be emailing your professors or your instructors.
- Give context. Don't assume the person knows who you are or what you're emailing about. Explain what class or program you're in, the issue about which you're emailing, and the request you're making to them.

- Thank the person for their time. Even if they haven't done anything for you (yet) – they've taken the time to read through your request and that deserves acknowledgement.

- End with an appropriate closing statement and your full name (e.g., "Sincerely, Jennifer MacDonald" or "Best Wishes, Muhammad Abdullah".)

Other issues that may affect learning

Students with learning disabilities

Having a learning disability is not about intelligence – many people with learning disabilities have an average or above average IQ. Learning disabilities affect how a person processes or applies information. If you have a learning disability, you're probably well aware that school can be challenging. The good news is that today's universities and colleges have programs in place that can be of help to you.

If you have a learning disability, make sure you check out what resources exist on campus when you're making your decision about which institutions you will apply to and access those resources as soon as you register. You may also need to provide information about your disability to the office that has been designated to help you. Make sure you have all the reports, assessments and documentation required. It may also be a good idea to let your professor(s) or instructor(s) know that you have a learning disability. This is an issue that you should discuss with your counselor.

I think I have a learning disability – now what?

Although learning disabilities may be diagnosed in primary school, sometimes they go undiagnosed and untreated for years. If you suspect you have a learning disability that is interfering with your ability to succeed at school or at work, you should seek help from a psychologist or medical doctor to determine what kind of evaluation may be required to determine the presence of a learning disability. Your school's counseling services office or student health clinic may also be able to help.

Students with pre-existing health conditions

If you have a preexisting health condition (physical or mental) that requires follow-up or ongoing care with a health provider, make sure that your current health provider links you to an appropriate professional where you will be going to school. This could be someone on campus or someone who practices in the community. Make sure that you have this discussion with your current provider as soon as possible after you have decided where you will be going to school. Remember that it can take a few months to get this kind of referral in place.

Once you have arrived, make an appointment to meet your provider, even if you are well at that time. It is much better that you begin this relationship when you are not in a crisis. Ask your new provider for a list of resources in the community that may be of help to you. You should also visit your campus health center to find out what resources are available on campus.

If you have been prescribed medication, bring enough of your medicines with you to tide you over until you can meet your new provider and can be prescribed medication by them. Be careful not to overmedicate yourself in times of stress or during exams. Also be aware that mixing medications with substances such as alcohol or drugs can lead to problems.

If you are actively engaged in psychotherapy when you move to attend your new school, make sure you have a transition plan in place as it may be a few weeks or longer before you can begin with your new therapist. This plan may include brief telephone check-ins with your current therapist that will stop once you have engaged with your new therapist. Discuss with both your current and new therapist what continued contact, if any, you will have with your current therapist after you leave. For some students, checking in with their current therapist when they return home at holiday times can be helpful in the short term.

Students with ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder)

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that can affect academic success. People with ADHD have difficulty sustaining attention and can be hyperactive, easily distracted, disorganized and impulsive. They also have a number of challenges with what are called “executive functions” – such as planning and organization. ADHD affects about 3-5% of the population. Approximately 30% of people diagnosed with ADHD also have a learning disability.



Symptoms of ADHD (must be severe and persistent):

- Difficulty with sustained attention or concentration.
- Starting projects but having difficulty finishing them.
- Acting or speaking without thinking.
- Forgetfulness.
- Getting distracted easily by stimuli in the environment.
- Daydreaming most of the time.
- Constantly on the go.
- Disorganization.
- Impatience/difficulty waiting.
- Feeling very fidgety.
- Being overly talkative.

There are a number of strategies people with ADHD can use to improve their academic success. The learning resource center at your school should be able to help with specific techniques. Medications are helpful and must be prescribed by a medical doctor. If you have previously been diagnosed with ADHD or if you think you might have ADHD, visit your health clinic to discuss your concerns. With the right combination of learning strategies and medication, most people with ADHD are able to succeed and thrive in postsecondary education.



For more information on learning disabilities, visit: http://ldac-acta.ca

Self-advocacy

If you have ADHD, a learning disability or a pre-existing medical condition, here are a few things you may want to do:

- Register with the disabilities services office; they may be able to help you with learning strategies and set up helpful accommodations for your classes.
- Tell your academic advisor, professor, or instructor about your disability so he/she can help make the best academic plan for you.
- Find out about tutoring services available on campus.
- Take medications as prescribed and make sure that a doctor is monitoring your medication use.

- Keep important paperwork, such as your course schedule, student loans, and scholarships in a folder and store it in a safe place.
- Keep workload in mind when selecting courses. Be careful not to overload yourself with back-to-back classes requiring a heavy amount of reading and writing.
- Educate yourself. Understand what it means for you to have your condition and how it's likely to impact your life.
- Study difficult material when your energy level is at its peak and take frequent short breaks.
- Write down assignments, exams, meetings, and 'to do' lists in an agenda, instead of trying to remember everything in your head.
- Sit at the front of the classroom to minimize distractions.

Can I succeed if I have ADHD or a learning disability?

YES, ABSOLUTELY! You may need to work extra hard in some areas or study a little differently, but with a plan, preparation and perseverance, you can do just as well as your classmates.

For more information on ADHD, visit: http://teenmentalhealth.org/learn/mental-disorders/adhd/ and https://www.caddra.ca/

Checklist!

TRANSITIONING WITH A PRE-EXISTING MEDICAL CONDITION	CHECK
• Let my current health care provider know I will be moving to continue my education.	
• Have identified a health care provider in my new location.	
• Have filled in a consent form to allow my records to be sent to my new provider.	
• Have made an appointment to see my new provider.	
• Have enough medications to last me until I seen my new provider.	
• Have a list of my medications (including dose information).	
• Have made a psychotherapy transition plan.	
• Have checked out what resources may be of help to me in my new location.	
• Have a good understanding of my medical condition and self-help strategies.	

Building resilience

Things in life don't always go your way. Nobody lives a life that's completely stress-free – nor should they expect to or even want to. Most stress that we experience in our day-to-day lives is actually good for us. The stress-response is how we know when we have to do something to adapt to our environment. And when we have succeeded in this adaptation, the stress response goes away and we have learned a skill we can use in the future. This is called adaptation or building resilience.

Sometimes your stressor is fairly minor: you are late for work because you slept in; you have an assignment to hand in or an exam to write; you are getting ready to ask someone out on a first date. At other times, it's more intense: you fail an exam; you break off an intimate relationship; you're cut from the basketball team. Sometimes your stress is even more intense: someone you care about dies; you lose your job; you immigrate to a new country.

Regardless of the type of the stressor, they all create a stress response. The stress response varies in intensity from the rare "fight or flight" that happens when you are faced with a life-threatening situation to the common "excite and delight" when you are faced with opportunity. The stress response is the emotional, physical and thinking components of what we often use the shorthand term "stress" to describe. And as much as it can be a challenge to experience these stressors, they actually can make you a stronger person. Sounds pretty cliché, right? Well, research has shown that people who experience adversity and adapt to it are actually more resilient in the long-run, and have healthier, longer lives than people who experience very little adversity. Experiencing set-backs teaches you how to recover from them; how to get back on your feet. Some people find this easier than others but that doesn't mean you can't learn to be more resilient. This section will focus on resilience to academic failure, as it affects many college and university students. More information on the stress-response can be found on page 52 as well as helpful strategies of how to make everyday stress your friend instead of your enemy, and how instead of avoiding stress, learning to engage with it helps you grow into a healthier person.



Our brains are designed to help us adapt to our environments. A key part of this adaptation is the stress response, which lets our brains know that something needs to change. When we make a successful change, the stressful feeling goes away and we are left with a new skill to apply in the future. Stress makes us stronger.

Resilience to academic failure

Getting your first paper or exam back can sometimes be a shock. The expectations in college or university level courses are often much higher than those in high school and doing well often requires much more effort. Even people who were straight-A students in high school can be in for a surprise. It can take some time to become comfortable with this new reality. You should not take this reality as a negative outcome. On the contrary, it is likely a more realistic evaluation of where you sit in a much larger group of people. Use this experience as a challenge to learn more and improve your skills. Doing poorly on a paper or exam doesn't mean you're a failure as a person. It means that the academic techniques you are using need to be fine-tuned and maybe changed. Almost everyone has had a "wake-up call" at some point - use this experience as yours. Figure out what you did wrong and learn from it. You may not have understood the teacher's expectations before – now you do. Or maybe you actually didn't study enough/work hard enough – it happens. Now you have a better understanding of what's required to succeed in the course. Maybe your writing or study skills could use some improvement – visit the academic skills center on your campus for additional help. Early failures can pave the way for future success, but you need to use them as a springboard for self-improvement.

Tips for becoming more academically resilient:

- Think about what you have experienced and use this to plan for a better result in the future. What do you think could have been done differently and how can this be applied to other situations?



- Humour helps. A positive attitude helps you to see humour in stressful situations. Instead of getting angry or frustrated, laugh it off.

- Accept that the world does not necessarily need to change to accommodate to you. Sometimes you need to change how you are dealing with it.

- Be realistic. Put things into perspective and don't sweat the small stuff. Not every stressor is the end of the world. Indeed, most are growth promoting. Ask yourself if you'll remember this moment in two years' time. Most likely the answer is – NO.

- Take action when you need to. Instead of feeling helpless, get out there and find solutions. If something is wrong, speak up. Be polite about it, but speak up.

- Relationships matter. Having a good support network provides a buffer for stress. Take time to nurture yours - friendships take time and effort but are worth it.

- Trust yourself and trust in your work ethic. Hard work often leads to good results. It's not how smart you are but how you work that usually counts most.



If you need help, seek it out. Go when you first realize that you need help. Don't wait until there is a crisis.

Money

Once school starts, your life will get busy fast. That's why it's worth taking the time to make sure you've got your financial plan for the year covered. Start by making sure you've covered these basics.

Figure out what it's really going to cost

Budget planning may not seem like a fun summer activity – but it's something that can make all the difference once the school year starts. And it doesn't have to be that difficult or complicated.

1. Start by figuring out what all your costs are going to be. Don't just think about the big cost items, such as tuition and books. Think about all the little things that you have maybe never had to pay for before. Items such as: that morning coffee, or public transportation, or clothing and entertainment. It all adds up fast if you aren't prepared for it.

   Where will you live? If you're planning to live in residence, find out what is covered and what isn't. If you're living at home make sure you know exactly what transportation costs you'll encounter. If you're living off-campus make sure you know all the costs (rent, utilities, etc.) as well as how much you'll need to put aside for food and transportation.

2. Then add up all your sources of money coming in. This includes money you've saved, money from your parents/family, income from any jobs, and money from things like scholarships and student loans. Sort it into two categories: "sure thing" and "maybe." Be conservative and underestimate how much money you will have.

3. Now decide if you need to make any adjustments. If you have more money than you expect to spend – great. You should consider setting up a savings account to keep the difference as a reserve fund for any emergencies or unexpected expenses.

   If you have less money than you plan to spend – it's time to take a look at what is a "need to have" vs. what is a "nice to have" and what cuts you can make. Or you can look at how to make up the shortfall on the revenue side. Maybe you could get a part-time job while you're in school? If so, how will that fit with your academic demands?

   Either way – it's better to go into the school year with a very clear picture of exactly what it's going to cost.

Get your banking needs dealt with now

Don't run around in the fall trying to set up your banking logistics at the last minute – make sure your needs are covered before the school year starts. A few things you'll want to consider are:

1. A Chequing (Everyday Banking) account. If you don't have a chequing account, get one. Check out student account options at your bank. The details of these can vary. Some may come with a fixed number of free debit transactions, or unlimited accounts for a nominal monthly fee. Pick the option that best matches your needs. If you use debit regularly, that "free" account could cost you more than one with a fixed monthly fee.

2 A separate Savings account. When it comes to bank accounts, two is better than one. A savings account can be a convenient way to separate your savings from your spending. It's a great place to keep money for things you don't need to pay for right away, and earn interest as well. So when you need to pay for those second semester books, or that trip home for the holidays, the money is more likely to be there.

3 A credit card. Used wisely, credit cards can be very handy for helping to manage unexpected purchases and emergencies, as well as a convenience for online purchases. Some credit cards have bonus points that you can use now or in the future. And, since your credit card statement keeps track of all your purchases, you can check it against your budget at the end of the month. This can be a big help when you are trying to see how much money you actually spend each month. If you are over the age of majority in your province, you can apply for a credit card online. If you aren't yet old enough, note that Virtual Visa Debit is a convenient alternative for using your bank account to make purchases online, but use your credit cards wisely. Don't get into debt!

4 Online/Mobile Banking. Take the time to set up and start using online and mobile banking. It's an easy way to monitor your accounts, transfer money and pay your bills.

By getting these basics dealt with ahead of time, you'll start the school year in control of your finances. Then you'll be able to relax and focus on getting the most out of your school experience.

Five ways to pay for school

If you've started – or you're about to start – your post-secondary education, you may be in the middle of figuring out just what your costs are going to be, and how you'll cover them. Research has shown that paying for school has become an exercise in pooling money from a variety of sources, and finding the most effective – and inventive – ways to fund an education.

Here are 5 options to consider when paying for college or university. Keep in mind – you can use just one option, or all 5 combined!

1 Personal Savings. Many students start thinking about paying for school early, and save their money to do so. Many take on a part-time or summer job during high school to help build their college or university fund.

Plus, some parents set up an RESP when their children are young. The savings in these plans can really add up over time. If your parents set one up when you were young, it may be a useful contributor to your education fund. Check with your parents to see if this is an option for you.

2 Employment during school. If your course load allows it, getting a part-time job while in school can help ease some of the financial pressure you may have. It also is a good way of developing "job skills" and getting to meet other people. Depending on your school and field of study, there may be on-campus and off-campus opportunities that pay you while also giving you practical work experience (which means you're beefing up your resume at the same time!).You can also look for job sites that cater to students and new grads such as TalentEgg.ca and jobpostings.ca.

Did you know that 48% of first-year students are employed? This number rises to 64% of students by their fourth year!

3 Scholarships, Grants or Bursaries. Or as some people call it, "free money." Scholarships are typically based on merit, while grants and bursaries are often awarded based on financial need (but other criteria may be considered). Either way, it's money you usually don't have to pay back once you graduate.

Talk to your guidance counselors, and financial aid offices at the schools you're thinking of attending, as they might have lists of scholarships, grants, or bursaries available for you.

There are also some very helpful websites (such as scholarshipscanada.com and studentawards.com) that provide a database of scholarships, and match you to those that you may qualify for. They're basically doing the work for you!



Did you know that scholarships are not just based on grades. Many consider athletic skills, extra-curricular involvement, or special abilities.

- Government Loans & Support. All levels of government in Canada offer some kind of financial assistance to post-secondary students, and there are many options to consider.

- Grants: Every year, the federal government provides approximately a quarter of a million grants through its Canada Student Grants Program.

4 Student Loans: Government student loans are based on financial circumstances, and often require you to keep up a certain course load and academic average.

- Internships: Internships, co-operative education and apprenticeships offered by the government let you gain valuable work experience while studying – and sometimes pay you for your work as well! Learn more about government assistance at Canlearn.ca.

TIP *You can apply for anything and everything that you qualify for, which can maximize your opportunity for increased financial support.*

5 Lines of Credit from Financial Institutions. Most financial institutions offer special lines of credit for students. A Student Line of Credit offers flexible credit limits with low interest rates and easy repayment options. Remember that you will need to pay down your line of credit according to your contract. Make sure you understand how your line of credit works!

Video: How might a student line of credit help you? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1yhPG5zFsEM

For more information, check out the infographic available on http://www.teenmentalhealth.org/transitions.

Budgeting: Future you says thanks!

The idea of setting up and managing a budget can seem daunting, boring or not worth the time – particularly when you're living as a student.

But it really doesn't have to be a painful or difficult exercise. At its simplest level a budget is really just looking at what money you have coming in, what you have going out, and figuring out the best way to match your expenses with your income.

Your budget doesn't have to be some elaborate spreadsheet and you can also take advantage of a wide array of online tools that make setting up a budget easier (Try this one: https://www.rbcroyalbank.com/student/budget-calculator/).

These few simple steps will help you create a budget that works with you and helps you avoid unplanned debt.

Step 1 - Figure out where your money is actually going

As a first step in coming up with a budget it's a great idea to track your spending for a week or two – not trying to make any changes, but just giving you a very clear picture of where your money is going. Keeping your spending to debit or credit card transactions during this period is a very simple way to get an itemized detailing of your spending – alternatively you can easily do this manually in a notebook. Just make sure you capture everything. A budget that isn't based on your real world spending isn't going to be realistic or something that you'll be able to manage successfully. So make sure you capture that daily $4 coffee, or the Uber you had to take because you slept in.

Step 2 - Figure out what money you have coming in

Itemize your income from all the sources you can think of. Sort it into two categories: "sure thing" and "maybe." Be conservative and underestimate how much will be coming in (a.k.a. your revenue).

Step 3 – Add up all your expenses

List all the expenses you can think of – this is where the list of your spending for a week or two really comes in handy. Sort your expenses into two categories: "must have" (like tuition, books, rent, food) and "want to have" (including entertainment, eating out). Be conservative and overestimate costs. Try to include an amount for savings or a contingency fund – even if it's a very small amount.

Step 4 - Add it all up and adjust as needed

When you add up the money coming in and compare it to your expenses you'll have one of two results: a deficit, which means you have more money going out than coming in (i.e., you have too many expenses) or a surplus, which means you have more money coming in than going out (i.e., you have more than enough income.)

If you have a deficit it's time to consider making adjustments. Start by looking at what you can change to stay out of debt or save money. There are three main ways to adjust:

- Do without some of the costly "extras."
- Reduce some of your expenses where you can.
- Find ways to boost your income.

Budgeting is really just about setting priorities. That means asking questions like: What's really

important to me? What can I live without? Can I still have fun with my friends without breaking the bank? Am I comfortable accumulating debt while I'm at school?

Everybody's answers will be different – the important thing is to come up with a budget plan that is realistic and works for your needs.

How to expect the unexpected when little things add up

Life as a student can be challenging, fun and full of the unexpected. While a life spent living on the edge might make for some great stories upon graduation, when it comes to your budget, limiting the unexpected will give you more peace of mind. And, help reduce your day-to-day stressors!

In a recent Royal Bank of Canada Poll, nearly half of students surveyed say social outings and eating at restaurants cost more than they anticipated, followed by groceries and tuition. Interestingly, students who receive financial support from their parents are more likely to say that they didn't anticipate certain costs would be so high.

It's important not to confuse "needs" with "wants" when you are planning your budget. These are very different. Make sure you have your needs covered first.

Learn from Laura's story

I was one of those students who didn't get the financial thing right the first time. I supplemented my summer earnings with a little financial help from the Bank of Mom and Dad. Seemed like a great idea at the time — hey, who doesn't want "free" money! But the inevitable "catch" was that I had to face the dreaded "Oops, I need more money" conversation. I sweated over which parent to ask. Who is going to be the least judgmental? Who is least likely to drill me on where the money went? How do I convince them that I really am responsible? I felt like a failure. I hadn't prepared myself adequately for the realities of balancing my academic and social life. An important part of first-year post-secondary studies is the new connections, friendships and networks we build that will last us a lifetime. Surprisingly, small indulgences — and don't get me wrong, treats are important — like caramel whipped non-fat lattes can become a big cash flow drain when you (like me) aren't keeping track.

How to reduce financial stress

During your first few weeks of school, one of the most important things that you can do is talk to others who have been through this and do research to figure out what the school year is really going to cost. This would have helped me better figure out what my “real” costs were likely to be. Here are some tips that I now wish I had considered to help stay on top of the little things so that I would have had a better handle on my finances.



1. Making Time to Plan (Read: Budget!) I had not done a good job of separating my needs from my wants. This is really important. Spending on the wants can take money away from spending on the needs. I could have used an online budget calculator to help me with this.

2. Staying Alert. One thing I could have done is signed up for electronic banking. There are some systems that send alerts when a payment is coming up and lets you know when your account balance is low. That would have saved me some headaches for sure.

3. Thinking About Hidden or Unanticipated Costs. You may be surprised how many little things can add up. Soon those expensive coffees, phone bills and gourmet sandwiches at lunch add up to much more than expected. I also for got to add the costs of some apartment essentials – such as cooking utensils. Guess what? Tongs, soup ladles, dish washing detergent, and can openers all cost – and those costs add up!

4. Making Your Smartphone Your Wallet. There are some great online financial tools you can use. You can even pay back a friend who covered dinner last night. Sharing expenses with friends is a great way to save money and using free eTransfers to split the bill is quick and convenient. Or use a mobile wallet to manage your accounts, credit card and gift cards.

Budgeting is both a science and an art, and sure I strayed from it from time to time, but once I learned how to do it better, it was really helpful. Putting my plan on paper also inspired me to get a part time job to help with that extra pocket money so that I could enjoy my new social life, and rely less on my parents. It was a big life lesson for me, and a big step forward in my independence.

Special thanks to RBC Royal Bank for their assistance with this section.

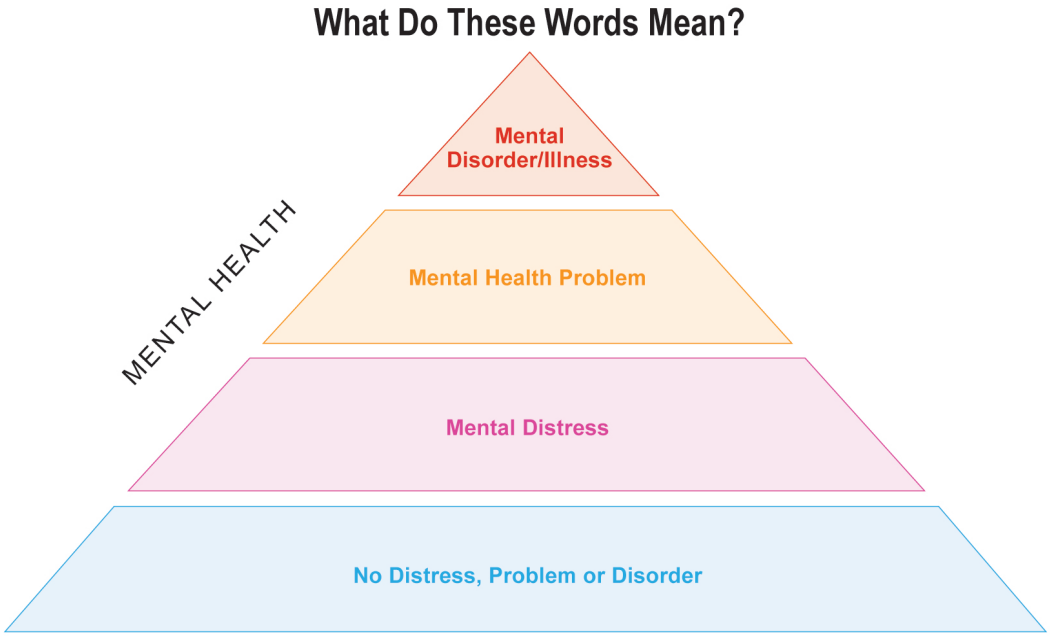



3
Health

Mental Health, Stress, Mental Illnesses & Other Areas of Concern

Most Canadians today understand that mental illnesses are more common than once thought – 1 in 5 people will develop a mental illness each year. Awareness is at an all-time high; however, this awareness is not always coupled with knowledge and understanding. Knowing about something is not the same as knowing something. People know mental illness can be a problem – but many people do not understand what mental illnesses actually are. Nor do they know how to distinguish between the symptoms of a mental illness and the expected emotional and cognitive challenges that come with being a human being and being exposed to the ups and downs of life. Given that this period of transition in your life is a time when many students are at higher risk of developing a mental illness, it's important to understand what constitutes mental health and what constitutes a mental illness and what to do if you suspect you (or a friend) may be experiencing a mental illness.

What is mental illness?



Mental distress is normal, expected, and happens to everyone - usually daily! It is a signal that you need to solve the problem causing the distress; so you adapt by changing yourself or your surroundings. For example: you are late for your morning class so you take a bus instead of walking and next time you get up a half hour earlier. Mental distress is not an illness. It is your adaptation signal. You don't need treatment for mental distress.

What is mental health?

There are many different definitions of mental health. Many of them are vague and use words that mean the same thing as mental health to define mental health. Not very helpful. Here is one that is more clear:

"Mental health is a state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with people and the ability to change and cope with adversity."

- Surgeon General USA (1999)

Having good mental health does not mean not feeling sad, unhappy, annoyed, angry, etc. Often these negative emotinal states are actually a sign of good mental health.

A mental health problem is a substantial emotional, thought, or behavioural difficulty (or all three) that causes you significant life challenges and that usually requires you to get help from friends, family or people you trust. An example is the grief that you experience if someone close to you dies, or the period of adjustment following moving to an unfamiliar place. A mental health problem is not an illness. It is a sign that you are having difficulty adapting, but that is to be expected given the magnitude of the stressor. You will need more support from family and friends and may find additional help from a counselor or religious/spiritual leader useful. You don't need medical treatment for a mental health problem.

A mental illness occurs when a person is unable to function in their everyday life due to the way their brain is controlling their thoughts, emotions and behaviours. It is diagnosed the same way all illnesses are diagnosed and if you have a mental illness, rapid access to effective evidence-based treatment delivered by a qualified health care provider is what you need.

As you can see in the diagram, these four categories are separate components and are all part of having mental health. They are not mutually exclusive. A person can experience mental distress, a mental health problem, and a mental illness all at the same time. A person can have good mental health and a mental health problem at the same time! A person can have good mental health and a mental illness at the same time, just as a person can have good physical health and an illness at the same time. Understanding the differences between these components is crucial to getting the right kind of help if you need it (for example, treatment if you have a mental illness). Mental distress only requires that you understand and successfully manage the stress response, develop healthy and adaptive coping skills, which you learn by embracing and not avoiding the challenges of life. Mental health problems often require additional help and support; however, support from family and friends is often enough. Sometimes a counselor or religious/spiritual leader is helpful. Mental illnesses, however, require treatment from a qualified health care professional.

The following pages include information about a few common types of mental illnesses more often diagnosed at this point in your life. If you have a better understanding of mental illness, it will help you to recognize possible symptoms in yourself or in others. Seeking help early is a key part of getting better.

Stress

We use the word stress as short hand for the stress response, which is the way your brain and body let you know you have a challenge or problem that needs to be addressed. This is the signal that underlies adaptation and is key for the building of resilience.

Understanding and managing the stress response

The stress response is the way our brain tells us that there is a problem in our environment that we need to deal with. This is the signal that causes us to adapt and become more resilient. The word "stress" has been used as short-hand for the concept of the stress response, but it has taken on a negative connotation that leads to unhelpful ways of thinking about and managing our stress response. Using clear language to describe our experiences helps us learn how to use the stress response to promote, instead of reduce, our health and mental health. People also often substitute the word "anxiety" when they mean the stress response; however, anxiety (which is a constant state of hyper arousal) is not the same thing as the stress response.

The myth of evil stress

Until recently, most people believed that the stress response was bad for you and consequently, was something that should be avoided whenever possible. We have been bombarded by media and product marketing that has made us believe that stress is our enemy and that our focus needs to be avoiding or decreasing the stress response. Just type the words "avoiding stress" into Google and you will see how common this perception is and how many products sell themselves as



essential for stress relief! The reality? Most stress that we experience daily is actually good for us and avoiding it could be harmful. The only stress that can really cause us harm is toxic stress – like abuse, neglect, violence, poverty; especially if we are experiencing it for a prolonged period of time. Regular everyday stress? That actually makes us stronger. Each time you a) experience a stressful situation and b) successfully cope with that situation, you're making yourself stronger and more resilient. You are learning how to better cope with the challenges of life and developing skills that you can use in the future. The next time a similar stressor comes along, you're better equipped to handle it and it likely won't feel as stressful as it did this time. The key is not just reducing the amount of stress you experience, but learning how best to deal with the stress that comes along with being alive. A caution about avoiding stress or expecting someone to change your environment so that you do not experience the stress response – both of those can actually be harmful to you. If you avoid stress or expect someone else to resolve the problem your stress response has identified, you don't learn the skills you need to take on the daily challenges of life. Over time, these can lead to you feeling helpless and constantly "stressed out". You've traded developing long-term resilience for short-term relief. Not a good trade.



Check out this TedTalk by Kelly McGonigal to learn more: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcGyVTAoXEU



Most people don't have exam anxiety. Instead, they're experiencing the normal stress response to writing an exam. It's is a signal that you need to develop solutions in order to succeed at that task. How are you going to prepare to do the best that you can do? What skills do you need to develop to help yourself take on this challenge?

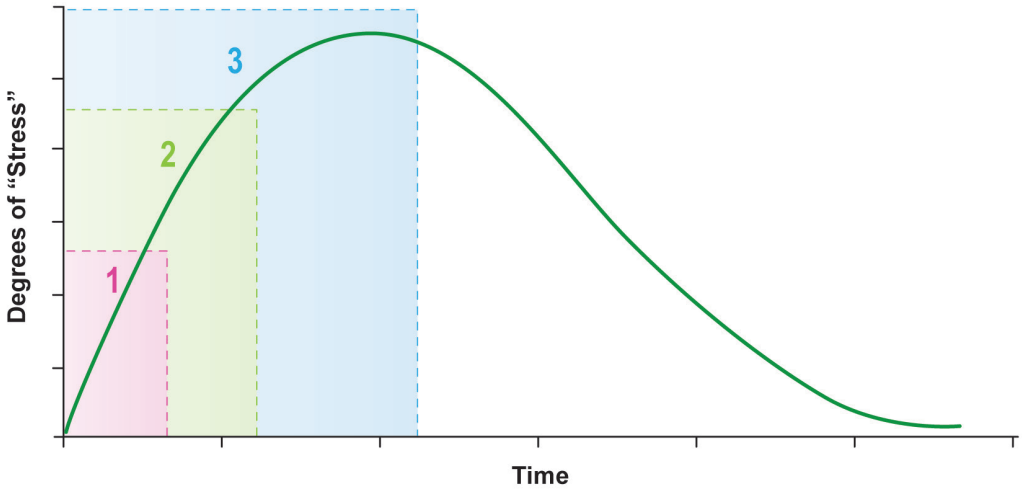
The good news is that even if you've become a stress avoider or have learned to feel overwhelmed or helpless when experiencing stress, you can reverse that and develop health-promoting ways to manage your stress. You can turn your stress from your enemy to your friend.

Three steps to healthy stress management

You can figure out how to manage your stress response in a way that is healthy, promotes adaptation and helps build resilience. Check out this diagram of the typical daily stress response curve. As you can see, in response to a challenge arising in your environment (called a stressor; for example: an exam, getting cut from the team you were trying out for, getting a poor grade, fight with a friend or intimate partner, etc.), your brain and body respond with the signal that tells you that you have a problem that needs to be solved. Notice that the stress response curve goes up, peaks, and then gradually goes down. On that curve are three stress management points, each of them should be used to help you successfully manage the situation.

Three Things To Do: The Curve

STRESS RESPONSE CURVE



1 At this point, the focus is on how you are thinking about your stress response experience. Research shows that if we see this signal as negative (such as: I feel stressed out; I can't handle this; I feel overwhelmed), our body's response is unhealthy, leading us to avoid the situation or expecting others to solve the problem for us. However, if we see the signal as positive (such as: I am being challenged to solve a problem; my brain and body are getting ready to help me tackle an important challenge; etc.) our body's response is healthy, leading us to prepare to adapt and change like the stress response intended.

2 At this point, the focus is on determining what the problem is and developing solutions for solving it. For example: the stress response to having to write an exam may lead you to seek out study skills help or meet with your professor or instructor to review some concepts you do not fully understand. When you solve the problem the stress response has identified, it goes away. And, you are left with a new skill that you can use in the future. You have successfully adapted.

3 At this point, the focus is on the intensity of your stress response. Sometimes our stress response can feel quite intense (especially if our previous pattern has been to avoid stress) and at this point, techniques designed to decrease our stress response may be helpful. This is the time to bring in the technique of box breathing. It uses your control of your diaphragm to decrease the stress signal. You can learn how to do it and then practice until it becomes second nature to you. Once you have mastered the technique, you can apply it in situations where your stress response is intense and you can do it in a way that no one else will notice. And guess what? Many of the fancy and costly stress reduction products and programs use this technique as part of what they are selling. But you can just learn this and use it – for free!

Check out this website for an excellent description of the technique and an interactive practice tool that you can use to learn how to apply it.

http://quietkit.com/box-breathing/

In addition to the techniques described above that you can use when faced with a stressor, there are a number of different things that you can do to help yourself relax and enjoy life. These techniques are often marketed as “de-stressors” and you can pay a pretty penny to someone else or you can figure out what works best for you and do those things yourself. One important thing to remember: Figuring out what works best for you is not a static, one-time process. Don’t be afraid of trying out alternatives. Your brain will quickly tell you which things that you are doing work best for you.

The table on the following page will show you different ways to help you manage your day to day challenges.

For more information on how to get help, check out the Getting Help section (on page 134).



HELPFUL STRATEGIES	WHY?
Figure out what the problem really is	Take some time to think through the situation that is causing you stress. What about the situation is bugging you the most? What is the real problem? Identifying the problem is an important step to being able to develop a solution.
Consider the solutions	Is there a solution to the problem? Remember that even a difficult solution is still a solution. Solving the problem, even when it's difficult or when it takes a lot of time is always the best coping strategy. Ask people for help. After all, that is how human beings have solved problems for centuries.
Accept what you can't change	If there isn't a solution and you can't change the situation, you may just need to accept that and move on. Consider that door closed and start looking for another one that you may be able to open.
Be realistic	Try to put things in perspective. Not every stressor is the end of the world. Consider whether you're really going to be concerned about this in a week's time, a month's time, or a year's time. If this situation was happening to your friend, would you see the situation differently? What advice would you give them?
Acknowledge your feelings	It's OK to feel angry or upset once in a while. You don't have to bottle up your feelings. Admitting that something is really bugging you can often make you feel a lot better. But don't stop there. How can you mobilize your energy to help you meet the challenge? Move from feeling to thinking. Move from experiencing the problem to solving it.
Build healthy relationships	Anytime you're experiencing stress, talking to friends and family can make a big difference. Developing healthy relationships with people you can count on is an important part of preparing to deal with stress. Plus, many people have gone through what you are experiencing and can not only be supportive but can also suggest strategies that might help you solve the challenges you're facing.
Limit or avoid drugs and alcohol	Drinking too much or doing drugs will not solve the problem They affect your ability to make good decisions and are only a temporary fix. When the substance wears off, your problems are still there and your stress may end up being much worse. Too much drinking or drug use can also lead to numerous physical and mental health problems.
Eat a healthy diet	A well-balanced diet makes you mentally and physically stronger. It gives your body the fuel you need to succeed. Limit foods that are high in fat or sugar, or that are highly processed. This isn't always easy to accomplish – especially if you're living off of cafeteria food or boxed mac and cheese. For help with healthy eating, check out: https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/healthy-eating.html
Be active	One of the best ways to relax and de-stress is to get active. Exercise is good for the brain and body. Research shows that for the biggest impact, 30 minutes of vigorous exercise per day (e.g., going for a run, playing soccer, spin class, or aerobics) is key. If you're not there yet, start out by making simple decisions, like: • walking to class, or to meet friends when possible. • getting off the bus a stop early or two, or parking further from campus and walking the rest of the way. • taking the stairs whenever available. • taking a walk with a friend instead of going for coffee or drinks. • *Remember that exercise is not about losing or maintaining weight - it's about keeping your body/ heart/lungs/brain strong for now and for the future.*
Sleep	A good night's sleep is necessary for optimal mental and physical health. 8-9 hours of sleep per night is ideal for most people, but you'll know how much is right for you. Although pulling all-nighters seems like an essential college or university experience, binge studying is less effective than getting a good night's sleep and reviewing key points in the morning. If you're having trouble sleeping, you may need to work on your "sleep hygiene". This includes things like going to bed and waking up at a similar time each day, having a consistent routine to prepare yourself for sleep, and avoiding screens (e.g., phone, tablet, TV or computer) for at least an hour before bed. For help developing good sleep hygiene, check out: http://teenmentalhealth.org/product/healthy-sleeping/.
Time Management	Learn how to schedule assignments and other daily responsibilities - it will help you be more productive and keep you from feeling overwhelmed. When you know that you have time to do everything you need to do, it makes your day easier to manage.



Mental illness

At some point, most people have said something along the lines of, “I’m so depressed,” “that’s my anxiety talking,” “she’s so OCD,” “you’re giving me PTSD” or “I am so traumatized” when referring to totally normal everyday events. Although these comments are sometimes meant to be lightheartened, they can actually be harmful to people’s ability to understand what these disorders actually involve and to separate out the difference between the range of normal and expected emotions and the symptoms of a mental illness. When we use clinical terms to describe normal emotions or behaviours, we weaken the words, making it more difficult for someone with that disorder to feel they are being taken seriously. Conversely, when we use these clinical terms for something other than their intended purpose, we also run the risk of pathologizing totally normal emotions – making people think they’re experiencing a mental illness when they’re not. Being careful with the language we use, and choosing any of the numerous, more specific and non-clinical words that exist to describe our emotions and behaviours is one way that you can become more mental health literate.

For each mental illness in this section, there is a brief overview of the common symptoms so you understand how the illness is different from the normal life experience and you know when you should be concerned. If the symptoms for a mental illness sound like something you (or someone you know) are experiencing, make sure you visit the accompanying link for more information (including possible causes and evidence-based treatments) and make sure to talk to your doctor or a qualified mental health professional about what you’ve been experiencing.

Note that this is not a comprehensive list of all mental illnesses, but rather the mental illnesses most likely to emerge around this time in your life.

Depression

Depression affects approximately 7% of people in the course of a year and often starts during adolescence. It is NOT the same as having negative emotions, even if those emotions persist over time. Depression is always characterized by significant challenges in daily functioning (such as isolating from friends, doing poorly in school work, etc.).

Symptoms:

A Major Depressive Episode must last at least 2 weeks, where you’ve felt sad or depressed most of the day, almost every day.

You might also experience most of the following symptoms:

- Eating much more or much less than normal.
- Sleeping much more or much less than normal.
- Moving restlessly or barely moving at all.
- Feeling really tired and lacking energy.
- Losing feelings of pleasure or enjoyment.

- Feeling worthless, hopeless, or guilty.
- Having trouble concentrating or making decisions.
- Losing interest in activities you usually enjoy.
- Having thoughts of death and dying, including suicidal thoughts and plans.
- Attempting suicide.

These symptoms need to be substantial and persistent (for example: feeling tired means so tired that you have to push yourself to function, not the kind of tired you feel when you have been working long hours and have not had enough sleep). These symptoms prevent you from being able to do well at school, at work, or in your relationships and are not due to an obvious cause.



For more information: http://teenmentalhealth.org/learn/mental-disorders/depression/

Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar Disorder affects approximately 1% of people over the course of their lives and often begins before age 25.

Someone with Bipolar Disorder has both major depressive episodes and manic or hypomanic episodes.

Symptoms:

A Major Depressive Episode that lasts at least 2 weeks, where you've felt sad or depressed most of the day, almost every day.

You might also experience most of the following symptoms:

- Eating much more or much less than normal.
- Sleeping much more or much less than normal.
- Moving restlessly or barely moving at all.
- Feeling really tired and lacking energy.
- Losing feelings of pleasure or enjoyment.



For more information on how to get help, check out the Getting Help section on page (on page 134).

- Feeling worthless, hopeless, or guilty.
- Having trouble concentrating or making decisions.
- Losing interest in activities you usually enjoy.
- Having thoughts of death and dying, including suicidal thoughts and plans.
- Attempting suicide.

A Manic Episode that lasts at least one week, where your mood has been extremely elevated or irritable and you are much more active and energetic than usual.

You will also experience most of the following symptoms:

- Feeling really confident, like you can do anything (even if it's impossible).
- Feeling like you don't need to sleep, and not getting much sleep.
- Feeling super talkative, like there's a buildup of words inside you that need to get out, and speaking much more and more quickly than usual.
- Feeling like your thoughts are racing and jumping from one idea to another really quickly.
- Feeling easily distracted by small and unimportant details.
- Feeling motivated to move around and get things done, often without accomplishing goals.
- Feeling like nothing can go wrong, even when you do really risky things, like having unprotected sex, using drugs, speeding, or blowing all your money.
- Experiencing delusions and (fixed false beliefs) and/or hallucinations.

These symptoms need to be substantial and persistent, preventing you from being able to do well at school, at work, or in your relationships and are not due to an obvious cause.

Sometimes people have hypomanic episodes, which are a less severe form of manic episodes. People with Bipolar I Disorder experience Manic Episodes and people with Bipolar II Disorder experience Hypomanic Episodes.



For more information: http://teenmentalhealth.org/learn/mental-disorders/bipolar-disorder/



Social Anxiety Disorder

Social Anxiety Disorder affects approximately 4% of people between the ages of 15 and 24.

Symptoms:

Intense fear of social situations where people could judge you or you could feel embarrassed that lasts at least 6 months

- Avoiding these social situations whenever possible.
- Fear or anxiety is much stronger than it should be for the type of threat.

These symptoms need to be substantial and persistent, preventing you from being able to do well at school, at work, or in your relationships and are not due to an obvious cause.



For more information: http://teenmentalhealth.org/learn/mental-disorders/social-anxiety-disorder/

Panic Disorder

Panic Disorder affects approximately 2% of people between the ages of 15 and 24.

Symptoms:

Intense uncontrollable panic attacks that occur for no obvious reason. Panic attacks are intense feelings of fear that are at their worst for about 10 minutes. They may include:

- Racing heart.
- Sweating, chills, or hot flashes.
- Trembling or shaking.
- Feeling like you can't breathe or like you're choking.
- Pain in your chest.
- Nausea.
- Feeling dizzy or faint.
- Feeling like you're not in your own body, like you're watching yourself freak out.
- Numbness or tingling.
- Fear that you're going to lose control, go crazy, or even die.

You may worry about having another panic attack and avoid places that would be difficult to escape

from if you had a panic attack (e.g., crowds, buses). These symptoms need to be substantial and persistent, preventing you from being able to do well at school, at work, or in your relationships and are not due to an obvious cause.



Having panic attacks does not mean you have Panic Disorder.



For more information: http://teenmentalhealth.org/learn/mental-disorders/panic-disorder/

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Generalized Anxiety Disorder affects approximately 9% of people over their lifetime, affecting twice as many women as men.

Symptoms:

Excessive and persistent worry about many different things that lasts for at least 6 months.

You will also experience most of the following symptoms:

- Restlessness, feeling on edge.
- Difficulty swallowing.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Trouble falling asleep.
- Trembling or twitching.
- Hot flashes.
- Nausea.
- Lightheadedness.
- Going to the bathroom often.
- Being easily startled.
- Anticipating the worst outcome for any situation.
- Excessive concerns and worries about usual daily activities.

These symptoms need to be substantial and persistent, preventing you from being able to do well at school, at work, or in your relationships and are not due to an obvious cause. But remember – anxiety is not the same as the stress-response.

For more information, see our section on managing stress (on page 53).

For more information: http://teenmentalhealth.org/learn/mental-disorders/generalized-anxiety-disorder/

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) affects approximately 1-2% of Canadians in their lifetime. It often begins in late childhood for boys and slightly later for girls.

Symptoms:

Someone with OCD experiences obsessions, compulsions, or both, which can cause a lot of distress, take up a lot of time, and prevent you from being able to do well at school, at work, or in your relationships. These symptoms need to be substantial and persistent and are much more than being tidy, careful, precise and super-organized.

Obsessions are frequently-occurring thoughts that feel out of your control and cause you significant distress and anxiety. They may or may not be realistic. Some examples include:

- Contamination by germs.
- Doubt about whether a particular action was performed (e.g., was the front door locked?)
- Having things in a particular order.
- Impulses to commit a violent act.
- And more.

Compulsions are repetitive and frequent behaviours or rituals. Although compulsions are performed as a way to decrease the anxiety caused by an obsession, they actually make the obsession worse in the long-term. Compulsions are very difficult to resist. Some examples include:

- Washing or cleaning.
- Checking if something was done.
- Putting things in a specific order.
- Counting objects.
- Repeating actions.
- Asking for reassurance.



For more information: http://teenmentalhealth.org/learn/mental-disorders/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd/

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Approximately 5 – 7% of people in Canada will develop Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in their lifetime, with women affected more often than men. If you live in a dangerous environment (such as a war zone) you are more likely to develop PTSD than if you do not.

Symptoms:

These symptoms need to be substantial, persistent, and have occurred as a result of a serious or life-threatening event, experienced or witnessed. These symptoms should not be confused with the acute stress response that naturally occurs after an intense and threatening stressor. PTSD is not the result of common challenging circumstances, such as the death of a loved one, parental divorce or loss of a job. It has become fashionable to label almost any difficult negative life situation as "traumatic", which is not true.

Note that you cannot develop PTSD without experiencing or witnessing (or to a lesser extent, learning about) a traumatic event; however, the majority of people who experience or witness a traumatic event like this will not develop PTSD.

Experiencing intrusive symptoms, such as:

- Recurring, involuntary, and intrusive memory of the event.
- Recurrent upsetting dreams related to the event.
- Flashbacks to the event.
- Intense or prolonged emotional and/or physical distress when exposed to something that reminds you of the event.
- Avoidance of anything that reminds you of the event.
- Difficulty remembering aspects of the event, distorted and unrealistic thoughts and beliefs about the event, feeling detached or disinterested, excess negative emotions and lack of positive emotions.
- Angry outbursts, reckless or self-destructive behaviour, hyper-awareness of your surroundings, and difficulty concentrating or sleeping.

These symptoms are severe and last more than a month and make it difficult for you to function at school, at work, and in your relationships.



For more information: https://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/index.asp

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia affects approximately 1% of people over the course of their lifetime and usually begins prior to age 25.

Symptoms:

These symptoms need to be substantial and persistent and fall outside of usual daily experience:

- Delusions: Belief in something that is not true, even when confronted with proof.
- Hallucinations: Hearing, seeing, or otherwise sensing something that is not actually happening.
- Other symptoms:
  - Disorganized thinking or speech that is difficult to understand or follow.
  - Abnormal movement (repetitive or strange movements) or lack of movement (completely rigid).
  - Lack of emotions or blunted emotions.
  - Decreased goal-directed or purposeful activity.
  - Decrease ability to experience pleasure.
  - Decreased interest in social interaction / emergence of unusual interactions.

These symptoms often develop slowly over time, and prevent you from being able to do well at school, at work, or in your relationships and are not due to an obvious cause.



For more information: http://teenmentalhealth.org/learn/mental-disorders/schizophrenia

Eating Disorders

Eating Disorders affect approximately 3% of Canadians during their lifetime and include Anorexia Nervosa (AN), Bulimia Nervosa (BN), Binge Eating Disorder, and other Specified and Unspecified Eating Disorders. Although much more common in women, eating disorders can also affect men.

Symptoms:

Becoming so focused on your weight and eating habits that it interferes with your emotions, your thoughts, your behaviour, and all aspects of your life.

Depending on the particular disorder, you might:

- Use unhealthy strategies to try to reduce your weight.
- Feel out-of-control when you eat.
- Base most of your self-esteem and self-worth on how you look or how much you weigh.
- Feel depressed and unhappy most of the time.



For more information: http://keltyeatingdisorders.ca/

Drug and Alcohol Misuse

Drugs and alcohol are misused by many people, which can impact not only you but the other people in your life. If someone in your family struggles with alcohol or drug abuse, you may be at risk for misuse.

Symptoms of a Substance-Use Disorder:

Use of alcohol or drugs that interferes with your ability to do well at school, at work, or in your relationships.

In a one-year period, at least two of the following:

- Craving alcohol or drugs.
- Drinking more alcohol or taking more drugs than you meant to.
- Difficulty reducing the amount of alcohol or drugs that you use.
- Spending a lot of time trying to get, use, or recover from alcohol or drugs.
- Not doing what you're supposed to do at home, school, or work because of alcohol or drug use.
- Continuing to drink or do drugs, even when it causes or worsens social, physical, or psychological problems.
- Consistently choosing alcohol or drug use over other social, work, or entertainment activities.
- Using alcohol or drugs in situations where it could cause you harm.
- Needing to drink more alcohol or take more drugs than you used to in order to get the same effect.
- Experiencing withdrawal from alcohol or a drug.

For more information: http://www.ccsa.ca/

Other Areas of Concern

Self-Harm

Self-Injury or Self-Harm is an unhealthy coping strategy often used to deal with overwhelming emotions. It is not an attempt to die and it is not a suicide attempt, however, self-harm may lead to unintentional death. Someone who self-injures usually needs to learn new healthy coping strategies (often in counseling or therapy) before they are able to stop self-harming.

Warning signs:

- Unexplained or poorly explained cuts, burns, bruises, or scratches, especially on the arms, legs or stomach.
- Clothing that isn't appropriate for the weather or situation but covers most of their body (for example, long sleeves and pants on a very hot day).
- Hoarding razors/knives and other objects that could be used for self-injury.

For more information: http://teenmentalhealth.org/understanding-self-injury-self-harm/ and http://sioutreach.org/ and http://insync-group.ca/for-youth/

Suicide

Although suicide is rare (about 5/100,000 Canadian teenagers), it is one of the leading causes of death in young people. Most people who attempt suicide have a mental illness and effectively treating that mental illness is one of the most important steps in reducing the risk of dying from suicide.

Warning signs:

- Intense and persistent hopelessness or sadness.
- Preoccupation with death and dying.
- Loss of interest in regular activities.
- Withdrawal from family and friends.
- Talking about what it will be like when they're gone.
- Giving away valued possessions.

For more information: http://teenmentalhealth.org/learn/suicide/ and http://rightbyyou.ca/ and http://suicideprevention.ca/

If you or someone you know are having persistent thoughts about suicide, this is a signal that help is needed. Confide in a family member, trusted friend or mentor and seek help as soon as possible from your student health service. If you or a friend are feeling overwhelmed by suicidal thoughts, go (or take your friend) to a hospital emergency room immediately. Remember that most people who have severe and persistent thoughts of suicide do not die by suicide because help is available.

Gambling

Although many people are able to gamble without experiencing problems, some students are gambling dangerous amounts of money – both in casinos and online.

Warning signs of a gambling problem:

- Ongoing money problems because of gambling.
- Constantly borrowing money from friends.
- Acting secretive or lying about gambling.
- Choosing to gamble instead of spending time with friends or family.
- Nervousness or anxiousness, usually about money.
- Avoiding friends to whom you owe money.
- Constantly talking about gambling or money.
- Relationship problems because of gambling or money losses from gambling.
- Neglecting your responsibilities due to gambling.

For more information: https://www.problemgambling.ca

Grief/Loss

Everyone experiences loss at some point in their life. Although grief can be very painful, it is a natural and normal part of life. There is no right way to grieve – everyone grieves in their own way. For some people, the grieving process may last a few weeks or months until they have time to adjust and adapt to the loss. Other people may not show any outward signs of grief, and appear to move on quite quickly. Still others may grieve for much longer periods of time and need professional help to move on.

For more information on how to get help, check out the Getting Help section (on page 134).

If you are grieving a loss and the pain that you feel doesn't weaken or diminish as time goes on, consider talking to your doctor about how you're feeling. You may benefit from talking to a trained mental health professional.



For more information: http://www.cmha.ca/mental-health/your-mental-health/grief/

Treatment



Feeling sad, worried, stressed, or any other negative emotion is not the same as experiencing a mental illness. These types of mental distress (see page 50 for a refresher on the difference between mental distress, mental health problems, and mental illnesses) do not require treatment. Instead, seek support from your family and friends and refer to the section on Managing Stress to learn some healthy and adaptive coping and self-care strategies.

What is the purpose of treatment for a mental illness?

The purpose or goal of treatment for a mental illness is usually not to cure the illness, as that's not always possible. Instead, treatment has three goals:

- Decrease the symptoms the person is experiencing.
- Improve the person's functioning in their daily life (e.g., at school/work, at home, in relationships).
- Prevent the symptoms from coming back.

Why are some treatments recommended more than others?

Treatments fit into three broad categories depending on the research and scientific evaluation that has been conducted:

- Standard Treatments: These are treatments that have undergone rigorous research and have good scientific evidence to support their use with a specific disorder. For example, Cognitive-Behavior Therapy (CBT) or Selective-Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) are standard treatments for Depression because the rigorous research conducted on them supports their use for Depression.



For more information: http://teenmentalhealth.org/product/evidence-based-medicine-patients/

- Complementary Treatments: These are treatments that have not undergone rigorous research evaluation but are often used alongside standard treatments. For example, Omega-3s may be used together with CBT to treat Depression, even though they have not received support from good quality research.



- Alternative Treatments: These are treatments that have not undergone rigorous research evaluation and do not have good scientific evidence to support their use. However, unlike complementary treatments, alternative treatments are used instead of standard treatments. For example, using Omega-3s or essential oils to treat Depression, even though neither has received support from good quality research.

What are the different types of treatment?

There are three broad types of treatment, all of which act on the brain by helping to restore brain function: Psychological (e.g., CBT or Interpersonal Therapy [IPT]), Social (e.g., Supported Housing or Social Skills Workshops), and Medical (e.g., Medications). These treatments can be used on their own or in combination, depending on the specific disorder and the person being treated.

How do I make an informed decision?

The type of treatment you receive will depend on you and the disorder being treated. Your doctor should discuss with you the different evidence-based options but you should come prepared with a list of questions to ask to ensure you're making the right decision for you.

Check out this list of questions to help you get started: http://teenmentalhealth.org/product/communicating-health-care-provider-every-person-ask/

Remember, different disorders have different evidence-based treatments. Just because something works well for one mental illness does not mean it works for all mental illnesses. For evidence-based treatments for specific mental illnesses, check out the link in that section.



How to tell someone you have a mental illness

If you have been diagnosed with a mental illness, finding your support system in your new postsecondary life can be a crucial part of getting and staying well. The people that make up your support system will differ for everyone but can include:

- Family and friends from home.
- New friends at school.
- Support staff/Disability services at school.
- Professors, instructors, and teaching assistants.
- Residence advisors and academic counselors.
- Doctors, psychologists, and other mental health professionals.

You may be lucky enough to have a support system already in place, or you may need to focus on developing these relationships over the next few months. Choose people you trust and who have demonstrated that they can be there for you. Remember that not all friends or family members need to be part of your support system; you should never feel obligated to tell someone about your mental illness just because they're in your life. This decision is entirely up to you.

How to have the conversation

Choose a time and place where you can have some privacy.

Give yourself time to share and the other person to react. Don't expect the conversation to last only 30 seconds (although it might!).

Start the conversation by telling the person why you are telling them. For example, "I learned something about what I've been experiencing lately and I wanted to share it with you to help you understand where I've been coming from these past few weeks."

Remember that the other person may not know much about mental illness and may have some stigma about what it really means. Do your best to educate calmly (and it's a good idea to do a little of your own research first). You can also share where they can find out more. For example: teenmentalhealth.org

Let the person have some time to think (and do their own research, if they're so inclined) after your conversation. Don't expect them to understand right away, especially if they're not familiar with mental illness.

For more information on how to get help, check out the Getting Help section (on page 134).

Sexual Health

University or college may be a time when you choose to explore, or further explore, your own sexuality. Making safe and informed decisions about how you engage in sexual activity can help increase the likelihood of positive experiences and decrease your risk for negative experiences.

Consent to sexual activity

Consent, where all parties involved are safe from emotional, social, and physical harm, is an essential part of positive sexual encounters. Consent is critical not just to sexual intercourse, but to all sexual acts, including sharing or posting sexual images and videos with others.

What is consent?

Consent is when all people involved agree to a sexual encounter and have the freedom to decide at any moment that they are no longer interested and want to stop the sexual activity. If someone is coerced, intimidated, or threatened into having sex, they have not given consent (even if they have not said “no”). If someone is incapacitated (e.g., due to alcohol/drugs or some other factor), they cannot provide consent. Consenting to one act (e.g., kissing) does not mean the person has consented to other acts (e.g., oral sex or sexual intercourse). Likewise, consenting to an act at one point in time (e.g., having sex this week) does not mean the person has consented to that act in the future (e.g., having sex tomorrow, next week, next month, or next year). Consent means that at this exact point in time, you are agreeing to participate in this particular sexual act. If you are initiating sexual activity, it is your responsibility to obtain consent.

Age of consent

Not all people are able to provide consent. Children, teenagers up to a certain age, and many people with intellectual or developmental disabilities are not able to provide consent, because they are unlikely to understand the consequences of what they are consenting to. Note that this includes the sharing of sexual images and videos (see the Technology section for more). The legal age of consent in Canada is generally 16, but there are some exceptions.

For more information: http://www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca/en/no_means_no

How to give consent

You can give consent by openly saying “yes” or using another expression that indicates you are interested in trying or participating in a sexual activity.

How to know if you’ve received consent

The only way to be certain is to ask someone if they would like to engage in whatever sexual activity you’re proposing and they say yes. When the degree or type of sexual activity changes, you can also check that your partner continues to consent by asking “is this okay?” What someone wears

or their past behaviour does not imply consent.

- You have not received consent if your partner is drunk, high, or unconscious.
- You have not received consent if your partner is under the legal age of consent.
- You have not received consent if you have used force, intimidation, manipulation, or your authority to have sex with someone – even if they do not explicitly say no.
- You have not received consent if your partner says no (in any respect), pushes you away (or any other action that implies they are not agreeing to the act), or resists in any way.
- You have not received consent if a partner who previously agreed to sexual activity is no longer interested in participating.
- You have not received consent if your partner is silent or unresponsive.

Consent within a relationship

Consent is still required in a relationship. Each partner has the right to decline sexual activity whenever they choose. Consent is never waived in a relationship.



For more information: http://www.srhweek.ca/healthy-sexuality-healthy-relationships/navigating-consent/

Choosing a method of protection

There are many different types of protection you can use to ensure safer sex. Making sure you have all of the necessary information (and discussing with your doctor, where appropriate) can help you make the right decision for you. Remember that birth control and protection from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are two different things. If you are not using condoms, you will not be protected against STIs. And even using a condom does not guarantee you 100% protection against STIs, so make a plan to keep yourself safe and keep sex fun.

The next couple of pages contain information about various types of birth control available.



For more information, check out the Getting Help section (on page 134).



METHOD	HOW IT WORKS	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Birth Control Pill (Females) *Requires Prescription	• Pill taken every day. • Affects hormone levels, prevetnts egg from being released; thickens cervical mucus so sperm can't easily get through.	• It is 99.7% effective against pregnancy if you take it correctly. • 92% effective with typical use. • Reversible. • Makes periods more regular. • Decreases acne. • Reduces risk of certain cancers.	• Doesn't protect against STIs. • Have to remember to take it every day. • May experience spotting, nausea, tender breasts, moodiness, headaches and weight gain. • Some other medications may interfere with the pill's efffectivenss.
Birth Control Patch (Females) *Requires Presciption	• Thin patch that is placed on your skin. • Patch changed each week, with 1 week off after 3 weeks on. • Affects hormone levels, prevents egg from being released, and thickens cervical mucus so sperm can't pass.	• Same effectiveness as the pill. • Reversible. • Only need to remember to change once a week, rather than taking a pill every day. • Makes periods more regular.	• Doesn't protect against STIs. • May experience spotting, headaches or breast tenderness. • Patch may irritate skin or detach from skin. • Not as effective for women over 198 ibs.
Vaginal Ring (Females) *Requires Presciption	• A flexible 2-inch ring that is inserted into the upper part of the vagina once a month for 3 weeks. • It releases hormones that prevent an egg from being released.	• Same effectiveness as the pill. • Reversible. • Easy to use and you don't need to remember to take a pill every day. • Makes periods more regular. • Doesn't affect intercourse.	• Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections. • May be uncomfortable to insert. • May cause vaginal discomfort or irritation • May experience nausea, moodiness, headaches or weight gain/loss.
Birth Control Shot (Females) *Requires Prescription	• Injection from healthcare professional 4 times a year. • Affects hormone levels, prevents egg from being released, and thickens cervical mucus so sperm can't pass.	• 99.7% effective against pregnancy when used correctly. • 97% effective with typical use. • No estrogen-related side effects. • Injections are only needed 4 times a year. • Improves endometriosis symptoms. • Decreases risk of endometrial cancer.	• Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections. • May cause irregular bleeding, decreases in bone mineral density (which return to normal after stopping shot), weight gain and delays in getting pregnant after stopping shot.
Intrauterine Device (Females) *Requires Prescription	• T-shaped device that is inserted in the uterus by a doctor (and can remain there for up to 5 years). • Made of either copper or plastic with added progestin (Mirena). • Blocks sperm from fertilizing egg; causes changes in uterine lining and cervical mucus.	• 99.2-99.4% effective against pregnancy. • Can last up to 5 years. • Contains no estrogen. • Doesn't interfere with sex. • Copper IUDs can also be used as emergency contraceptives when inserted by a doctor within 7 days of unprotected sex.	• May increase menstrual bleeding and cramping. • Perforation of uterus is rare but possible at time of insertion. • Falls out in 2-10% of women. • Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections. • Must be inserted and removed by a medical doctor.

METHOD	HOW IT WORKS	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Condoms (Females) *Available Without Presciption	• A pre-lubricated pouch that lines the walls of the vagina. • Prevents direct genital contact and exchange of fluids by lining the vagina.	• 95% effective against pregnancy if you use it correctly. • 79% effective with typical use • Can be used by people with latex allergies. • Reduces risk of some sexually transmitted infections.	• They can be uncomfortable to insert and are usually pricier than male condoms. • Not reusable • Makes noise during sex • Can slip or break
Condoms (Males) *Available Without Presciption	• Latex or polyurethane sheath that fits over an erect penis. • Like female condom, prevents direct genital contact and exchanging of fluids.	• 98% effective against pregnancy if you use it correctly. • 85% effective with typical use • Best form of protection against sexually transmitted infections. • Easy to obtain and are often free. • Available in a variety of sizes, shapes, thicknesses, colours, and flavours	• Sometimes condoms may reduce the sensation for either partner. • Some people are allergic to the latex but non-latex condoms are available • Not reusable • Can slip or break
Withdrawal (a.k.a. Coitus Interruptus) (Males)	• When the man pulls his penis out of his partner before ejaculation.	• No cost and easy. • Approximately 73% effective. • No hormones or barriers	• Significant risk of pregnancy if used incorrectly • Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections or pre-ejaculation, which contains some sperm. • Requires self control, experience and trust. Male must be absolutely certain of when he is going to ejaculate. • Not widely recommended
The "morning after" pill (Females) *Most are available without prescription in Canada	• For emergency use only. • Must be taken within 5 days of unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy. The sooner it is taken, the better it works.	• Does not affect future fertility and is easy to use. • Can prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex	• Doesn't protect against sexually transmitted infections. • May experience nausea. • Less effective than preventative birth control (prevents 3 out of 4 pregnancies) • Not for regular use

Cervical cap, diaphragm, and sponge are less commonly used methods of female-controlled contraception. For more information on these methods, speak to a physician. Resources: http://www.sexualityandu.ca/

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Sexually transmitted infections can cause serious health problems if left untreated. When you enter into a sexual relationship, however brief, it's important to decide together how to best avoid the likelihood of contracting an STI. Your risk of contracting an STI increases when you don't take protective measures, particularly when drug and/or alcohol use impact your ability to make safe decisions.

The following pages list information about many STIs you should be aware of.

STI	WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS	HOW IS IT TRANSMITTED	HOW IS IT TREATED	LONG TERM
Chlamydia	Most people show no symptoms. If symptoms do occur, they usually appear between 2 days and 2 weeks of infection. **Women** - Vaginal discharge, painful intercourse and urination; as well as bleeding between periods. **Men** - Painful urination and discharge/itching from the penis. Pain and swelling in the testicles may occur.	Spread through unprotected oral, anal, or vaginal sex.	Antibiotics (one dose) Both partners must be treated. Avoid sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, and oral) during treatment. Chlamydia cannot be diagnosed from a blood test, but you should have a blood test done in 3 months to check for any infections you may have contracted at the same time.	**Women** – Can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which can cause permanent damage to the fallopian tubes and uterus, chronic pelvic pain, infertility, and potentially fatal ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside the uterus). Also, women infected with Chlamydia are more likely to become infected with HIV if exposed. It can also be transmitted to infants during childbirth. **Men** – Can become sterile.
Genital Herpes	Painful pink bumps appear within 2-20 days of exposure and may itch and/or burn. May be mistaken for insect bites or another skin condition. Other symptoms include: swollen glands, flu-like symptoms, fever, muscle aches, burning urination, vaginal discharge and pain during intercourse.	Transmitted by coming into contact with sores or an infected area (incl. kissing someone with an active cold sore). Sexual contact is not necessary. Transmission can also occur during oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse from an infected partner who does not have a visible sore or may not even know that he or she is infected.	There is no cure but antiviral medication can be used to lessen the outbreaks or the pain associated with outbreaks. Sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal and oral) should be avoided during an active outbreak. Condoms should always be worn, including for oral sex, given that the Herpes virus can be transmitted even when not in an active outbreak.	Rarely are there long-term worsening effects. Sometimes it is transmitted to an infant during childbirth and if it is, it may lead to severe brain damage or death of the infant. Open sores associated with Herpes increase vulnerability to HIV.

STI	WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS	HOW IS IT TRANSMITTED	HOW IS IT TREATED	LONG TERM
Gonorrhea	Symptoms are similar to those of Chlamydia. Symptoms show up 1-14 days after exposure. The infection can happen in rectum, penis, cervix, or throat. **Women** – Mild symptoms. Painful or burning when urinating, vaginal or rectal discharge, bleeding between periods. **Men** - Greenish/ yellow discharge from penis, pain or burning with urination and sometimes painful or swollen testicles.	Spread through unprotected oral, anal, or vaginal sex. Ejaculation does not have to occur for male-to-female transmission to occur. Even if one partner's symptoms are not visible, they can still pass the infection on to someone else.	Both partners must be treated with oral antibiotics. Duration of treatment varies depending on the medication used and may be as short as one dose. Avoid sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal and oral) during treatment.	If left untreated, gonorrhea can leave both men and women infertile. **Women** - Common cause of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) which can cause permanent damage to the fallopian tubes and uterus, chronic pelvic pain, infertility, and potentially fatal ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside the uterus). It can also be transmitted to infants during childbirth and makes you more vulnerable to HIV, if exposed.
Hepatitis C	Chronic liver disease caused by virus. Approximately 21% of people with Hepatitis C are unaware they have it.	Spread through unprotected anal, vaginal, or oral intercourse; or through sharing needles, razors, or other personal products that may have come into contact with blood	Depending on how badly the liver is infected, Hepatitis C can be treated with medication.	In some cases, Hepatitis C may cause the liver to fail and a liver transplant may be necessary. 1 in 5 people with Hepatitis C will die from the disorder due to severe liver damage.
Hepatitis B	Not everyone shows symptoms of Hepatitis B. Nausea, tiredness, yellow skin or eyes (jaundice), loss of appetite, dark urine or light-colored bowel movements. An acute infection can last up to 6 months and 90% of people will recover and develop immunities. Other people will develop chronic hepatitis (long-term liver infection) and always be contagious	Spread through unprotected anal, vaginal, or oral intercourse; through sharing needles, razors, or other personal products that may have come into contact with blood, or from infected mother to child during birth.	There is no treatment for acute Hepatitis B. A preventative vaccination is the best protection against Hepatitis B. Hepatitis B is diagnosed with a blood test.	Most people recover completely within one or two months. Others cannot be cured and may suffer from long term liver problems and death.

STI	WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS	HOW IS IT TRANSMITTED	HOW IS IT TREATED	LONG TERM
Scabies	Parasitic mites that burrow holes under the skin and lay eggs, which spread the infection to different areas of the body after hatching. Usually seen in warm areas of body, like inner elbow, buttocks, back of knee, breasts, penis, under nails, etc.	Spread through close contact with person who is infected or clothes/bedding of someone who is infected.	Prescription lotion applied all over body. Wash all clothing/ bedding/towels with hot water. Vacuum or bag (at least 3 days) anything that can't be washed.	Possible bacterial infection from constant scratching.
Trichomoniasis (Trich)	Half of women and most men will not have symptoms. If they do, symptoms will appear within a week (most common) to 6 months after infection. **Women** - Redness, swelling and itching of the vulva. Painful urination and intercourse and/or pelvic discomfort. May have yellow-green vaginal discharge with a strong odor. **Men** - may have irritation inside the penis, mild discharge, slight burning after urination or ejaculation.	Trich is caused by a tiny parasite that is usually transmitted through sexual intercourse (penis to vagina or vagina to vagina) or the genital area outside the vagina. It may also be picked up from shared sex toys and underwear. It is not common for trich to infect other areas of the body, like the mouth or the anus.	Treatment will include an antibiotic that is taken orally in a single dose , in two doses 24 hours apart, or over several days. Avoid sexual intercourse until both partners have been treated. Although symptoms in a male may not be apparent or may disappear within a few weeks without treatment, men can continue to infect females until they are treated.	If untreated, Trich may lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), premature labor, low birth weight and increased risk for infection if exposed to HIV.

STI	WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS	HOW IS IT TRANSMITTED	HOW IS IT TREATED	LONG TERM
Syphilis	Initial symptoms appear from 10-90 days after exposure on the genitals, anus, or throat 4 stages of symptoms. Primary and Secondary stages are most infectious. Latent and Tertiary stages are most harmful. Primary stage symptoms: Painless sore (called a chancre) – may heal on its own but doesn't mean infection is gone. Secondary stage symptoms: Flu-like symptoms, rash, swollen lymph nodes, muscle & joint pain. Usually lasts 3-12 weeks but infection is still present after symptoms disappear Latent stage symptoms: May last years, No obvious symptoms but bacteria are multiplying Tertiary Infection Symptoms: Causes major health complications that can lead to death. Occurs in 40% of untreated people.	Spread through unprotected anal, oral, or vaginal sex. Caused by bacteria.	Antibiotics. You can contract syphilis again, so avoid sexual intercourse until both partners have been fully treated. Diagnosis is made using a blood test.	Even if symptoms disappear, the infection will remain in the body until properly treated. May damage the brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones and joints. Symptoms of the late stage of syphilis include poor muscle coordination, psychosis, paralysis, numbness, blindness, and may cause death.
Crabs (a.k.a. Pubic Lice)	Small insects that look like crabs, live off human blood, and lay their egg sacks at the base of pubic hair. Symptoms include itchiness, insect bites that look like blue dots, and fine black particles in underwear.	Spread through intimate contact with another person (even without intercourse), or through contact with bedding/towels/ clothing of an infected person.	Over-the-counter shampoo is available at pharmacies. Usually only one dose is necessary. All bedding/towel/clothes should be washed and other items vacuumed or bagged for a week.	Without treatment, crabs will not go away. Possible bacterial infection from constant scratching.

STI	WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS	HOW IS IT TRANSMITTED	HOW IS IT TREATED	LONG TERM
Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) (Genital Warts and Cancers)	Most people infected don't even know they are infected. Pap smears are helpful to diagnose HPV on the cervix. Warts are caused by certain strains of HPV. They may appear anywhere in the genital area, once infected with the virus it takes 1-3 months to appear. Pink/white painless lumps or larger cauliflower shaped lumps. Certain types of cervical, anal and penile cancers have been linked to other strains of HPV. Although there is a vaccine for these strains of the virus, there is much we still do not know.	HPV is transmitted through skin-to-skin contact, usually through sexual intercourse.	There is no treatment for HPV that causes cervical cell changes, but most HPV infections go away without treatment. Antibiotics or other medicines do not treat HPV. Topical cream, lasers, freezing, or burning can be used to treat warts but are often quite painful. The HPV vaccine protects against some kinds of HPV and has been approved for use with female 9-26 year olds in Canada. Ask your doctor for more information.	It is estimated that 75% if Canadians will have an HPV infection in their lifetime. The strains linked to cancers are not the same strains linked to the presence of genital warts. It is important to remember that HPV is transmitted from skin-to-skin contact so if you are not engaging in intercourse, but still touching genitals, you can get it. Any form of skin-to-skin contact with someone infected with HPV can transmit the virus, including anal sex.
HIV/AIDS	It may take years after contracting HIV for symptoms to appear. Symptoms may begin 3-6 weeks after exposure including flu-like symptoms, fever, nausea, headache, fatigue, diarrhea, white spots in mouth, swollen lymph nodes. These symptoms usually disappear within 1-4 weeks and are often mistaken for the flu.	Spread through exposure to bodily fluids, including: • contact with semen or vaginal fluid via unprotected intercourse • Contraction through oral sex is possible but risk is much lower • sharing needles. • contact with infected blood or breast milk	There is no cure for HIV or AIDS. Medication can be taken that may slow down the disease and the deteriorating immune system. It is important to get a blood test to determine whether you have the virus. It may take up to 3 months (and occasionally up to 6 months) post exposure for tests to detect HIV.	HIV breaks down the immune system, which means it will eventually lead to AIDS and death. However, progression of HIV into AIDS is different for everyone. Some people with AIDS may live for only a few years, while some remain HIV+ and AIDS free for 30 plus years with proper treatment!

Unintended pregnancy

Vaginal intercourse may result in pregnancy, even when using birth control. If you find yourself or your partner pregnant unexpectedly, it is important for you both to know that there are options in Canada (presented below in alphabetical order) that can support decision-making about whether to continue with the pregnancy or not.

- Abortion: Abortion is the ending of a pregnancy and can be done at a hospital or at an abortion clinic. Abortions are safe and legal in Canada. If you choose to have an abortion, it should be done as early in your pregnancy as possible.

For more information on abortion, visit: http://www.nafcanada.org/

- Adoption: Adoption is when another person steps in to raise the child as their own. The adoption can be public (arranged through a public or government agency), private (any adoption not arranged through a public agency), open (when the birth parent(s) and adoptive parent(s) know/meet each other), or closed (when the birth parent(s) and adoptive parent(s) do not know/meet each other).

For more information on adoption, visit: http://www.adoption.ca/

- Parenting: If you choose to raise and parent the child, it is important that you visit your doctor to receive prenatal care as soon as possible.

For more information on things to consider when pregnant, visit: http://pregnancy.sogc.org/

Questions to consider when making your decision:

- Are you involved with the other person? Are you in a stable relationship? If not, does it matter to you?
- What are your responsibilities? (e.g., school, work, family, time)
- What are your goals in life?
- What kind of life will you be able to provide for a child?
- What are the financial realities? Can you afford to have a child? Are you able to find a job that pays what you'll need to make with your current qualifications/education?
- What are your personal beliefs and values (religious and otherwise)?





- Do you have the time to raise a child and study?
- Do you have the social support of family and friends? Is your family nearby and willing to help out?
- What are you willing to give up? (e.g., your current social life, living in a certain area, staying in school, etc.)

There are many aspects of your life that will have to be considered as you deal with this important issue. Trying to sort out everything on your own can be very difficult. You may want to contact your student health clinic and student counseling office to get unbiased help and support. Although avoiding the situation can be tempting, remember that some options are only possible in the early stages of your pregnancy. Avoiding the reality of the situation can result in you having to make a decision you're not comfortable with simply because there are no other options left.

Internet pornography and relationships

The rise of the internet in the past few decades has led to a boom in the popularity of commercial sexuality. Commercial sexuality is a term for the sexual products, services, or images that include an economic transaction. Even free pornography on the internet is an economic transaction as income is generated through advertisements on the website. Widespread consumption of internet pornography is a relatively new social phenomenon and there is much that we don't know yet about how this will impact the sexual experiences of your generation. Some research has shown that frequent use of internet pornography can become habitual and create difficulties in achieving intimacy with human partners. Other research suggests that use of Internet pornography can be a component of a healthy sex life. What is important is how use of Internet pornography affects you and your partner(s).

Ask yourself what your thoughts and feelings are about pornography and what role it should play (if any) in your intimate relationships. If you are in an exclusive relationship, discuss where you stand with your partner and trust your gut instincts. If it makes you feel bad, then it's not okay. If it is something that you choose to use, make sure that it's balanced with healthy relationships and openness to real people.

Sexual assault

Sexual assault is sexual activity that occurs without consent. This includes all unwanted forms of sexual activity, including the taking and sharing of sexual images or videos, verbal threats, and acts, such as grabbing/fondling, kissing, and rape. Although the media largely focuses on the sexual assault of women, men can also be sexually assaulted, as can people of any sexual orientation or gender identity.

If you think you've been sexually assaulted:

- Go somewhere safe.
- Tell a safe and trusted person in your life who can help you seek medical attention and/or help from the authorities.
- Seek help as early as possible and try to avoid showering or washing your clothes first, if you can.

- You can also seek help by calling 911 or visiting your local emergency department or clinic.
- Make a call to your campus health center or your community health hotline/sexual assault hotline.
- If you have text messages (or anything else that may be evidence) from the person who sexually assaulted you, do not delete them – you may be able to use them as evidence later.
- Consider calling the police. You do not have to press charges but calling them early ensures they have the information they need if you decide you want to press charges later.

If someone tells you they've been sexually assaulted:

- Be careful with your language. Avoid saying "I just can't believe that…" or making comments about how it seems out of character; this tells the person that you may not have been the right person to tell because you might not believe them. Instead, use statements like:
  - "I'm sorry this happened."
  - "I believe you."
  - "It's not your fault."
  - "You're not alone."
  - "What do you need? What can I do?"
- Stay calm. Panicking will not help the person feel better and may make them less willing to disclose anything else.
- Be supportive. Don't try to fix the problem or make promises that you can't keep. Remember that they're telling you because they trust you – respect that trust.
- Don't pry for details but listen if they're disclosed. Depending on your relationship and how much the person has been able to process what happened, asking for specific details about what happened may do more harm than good. The police may need to know this information but unless your friend chooses to tell you, you do not.
- Encourage them to seek help. Encourage the person to seek medical attention if the assault was recent and to report to the authorities, if they feel comfortable. If not, do not report what happened to the police without your friend's consent. The person may feel more comfortable if you accompany them to the ER or to the police station.



For information on the possible effects of sexual assault, visit: http://sassk.ca/about-sexual-assault/effects-of-sexual-assault



For sexual assault services in your area, visit: http://teenmentalhealth.org/transitions



4

Personal

Identity

Who are you anyway?

For many people, university or college is about much more than just academics. Yes, you're learning and training for your future career or careers, but you're also learning about who you are. University and college can provide you with tons of opportunities to explore new experiences and try on different identities: to see what fits and what doesn't. When we were younger, we often felt that we needed to fit a very narrow mold – e.g., "I'm a jock." "I'm artsy." "I'm smart." That was a normal part of our development. But that was then ...and this is now. By now, since you have been exposed to many different experiences and different people, you've likely realized that who you are is not a static and unchanging "me", but that who you are can change over time, and that even you can have many different identities all at once. You are not any one thing but a combination of many different identities. These identities integrate and emerge from your past experiences, your personal strengths and weaknesses, your preferences, upbringing, and so much more. It is important to realize that this changing in who you are continues over your entire life, and that each life stage helps set the person that you are and that you are becoming. Understanding your own identity can help you understand how you experience stress, why you react the way you do to certain situations, and what you need in terms of support and self-care as you encounter challenges throughout your life. Each section that follows has a few questions you can ask yourself to better understand your own identity.

Race and ethnicity

The race or ethnic group(s) with which you identify can influence your identity. This includes but is not limited to how you dress, how you speak, and how you interact with people who identify similarly or differently. Your race or ethnicity can create advantages for you or may create disadvantages and challenges – understanding how your race or ethnic identity affects you can help you understand yourself better and may help you successfully navigate the complex human interactions of your day to day life.

Questions to ask yourself:

→ Do I identify with a particular race or ethnicity?

?

→ How does my race or ethnic community influence who I am and how I act?

?

Gender

Your gender identity is your internal sense of being male, female, both, or neither. It may differ from your biological sex.

Your gender expression is the way you present or show your gender to the world. Society can often put pressure on people to define and express their gender in a particular way (e.g., boys should dress like boys and girls should dress like girls). This can limit how comfortable people feel expressing their gender.

Check out the section below on Figuring Ourselves Out for more information on gender identity.

Questions to ask yourself:

- How do I identify my gender?

- How do I like to express my gender?

- Do I feel that my gender expression is limited by society? If so how?

- What aspects of my life influence how I express my gender (e.g., family, friends, religion, social media, culture, ethnicity, etc.)?

Culture

Your culture includes many different components. Some of them are, values, ethics, ways of thinking about the world, geographic location, interpersonal relationships, music, dress and cuisine. Language, tradition and participation in rituals can all be part of how you define and act within your culutre. Cultural connection is not a static condition, so being aware of how your culture impacts you and how you impact your culture over time is important.

Questions to ask yourself:

What cultural group(s) do I identify with?

How does my cultural group(s) influence who I am?

How does my cultural group(s) influence my interests and values?

How do my cultural connections provide me with a sense of self and/or belonging?

Family and community

The people you consider to be your family and your community influence what you do, the way you think, the things you care about, and much more. Sometimes this can mean that we think and behave in ways that are similar to our family/community and other times, it can mean that we intentionally do things very differently. Understanding the role your family and your community play in your life will help you better navigate the different experiences that come your way.

Questions to ask yourself:

- How do I define my family and community?

- How do my family and community influence how I interact with other people?

- How do my family and community influence my values?

- In what ways am I similar to others in my family and community and in what ways am I different?

Personality

Your personality traits include your openness to experiences; how conscientious, extroverted and agreeable you are; how you experience and deal with your emotions; and much more. Your personality both exists at birth and is formed and reformed throughout your life.

Questions to ask yourself:

- How would I describe my personality?

- How do others describe my personality?

- How does my personality influence how I interact with other people?

Values

Your values are judgments you make about what is important to you and others. They can help shape your views and behaviors, as well as impact your personal growth and development. Our values come from our homes, parents, communities, schools, peers, culture, religion, people we respect, and society in general. Sometimes some of our values can clash with others and it can be challenging to figure out how to resolve this conflict.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What do I value?
- Where do my values come from?
- How do my values influence the way I view the world?

Personal strengths and challenges

We all have strengths and challenges – those things that feel easy or natural and others that seem to take way more work. Understanding how your own strengths and challenges are related to your identity can help you better navigate your path on campus and beyond.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What are my major strengths and challenges?

- How do these influence how I interact with other people, my life choices and how I feel about myself?



- How do my strengths and challenges shape me and what I can see myself doing with my life in the future?



Spirituality and faith

Spirituality is a sense of feeling connected to something bigger than yourself – it comes in many different forms and can help us understand how we relate to others and our environment.

Religion or faith is a strong belief shared by a community of people that helps provide meaning to different experiences.

Your spirituality and/or faith/religion can impact your identity to a significant degree. Even thinking that you are not spiritual or religious can still be a component of your identity.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Where do I find meaning in my life?



- What rituals do I follow?



- How do I decide what is right and wrong?



What do I believe and why?

Sexuality

Sexuality encompasses sex, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction. It is experienced and expressed in our thoughts, values, behaviors, fantasies, desires, beliefs, and attitudes. Our sexuality is personal but can be influenced by our family, culture, social group, religion, and/or spiritual beliefs – in both positive and negative ways.

Questions to ask yourself:

How do I understand my sexuality?

What has a strong influence on my sexuality and how I express it?

Are there aspects of my sexuality that I am uncomfortable with and if so, how can I deal with that?

Are there aspects of my sexuality that I want to enjoy and celebrate and if so, how can I do that?

Remember that you don't need to have answers to all of these questions right away. Your university and college years are a time for exploring different parts of who you are and figuring out what works best for you.

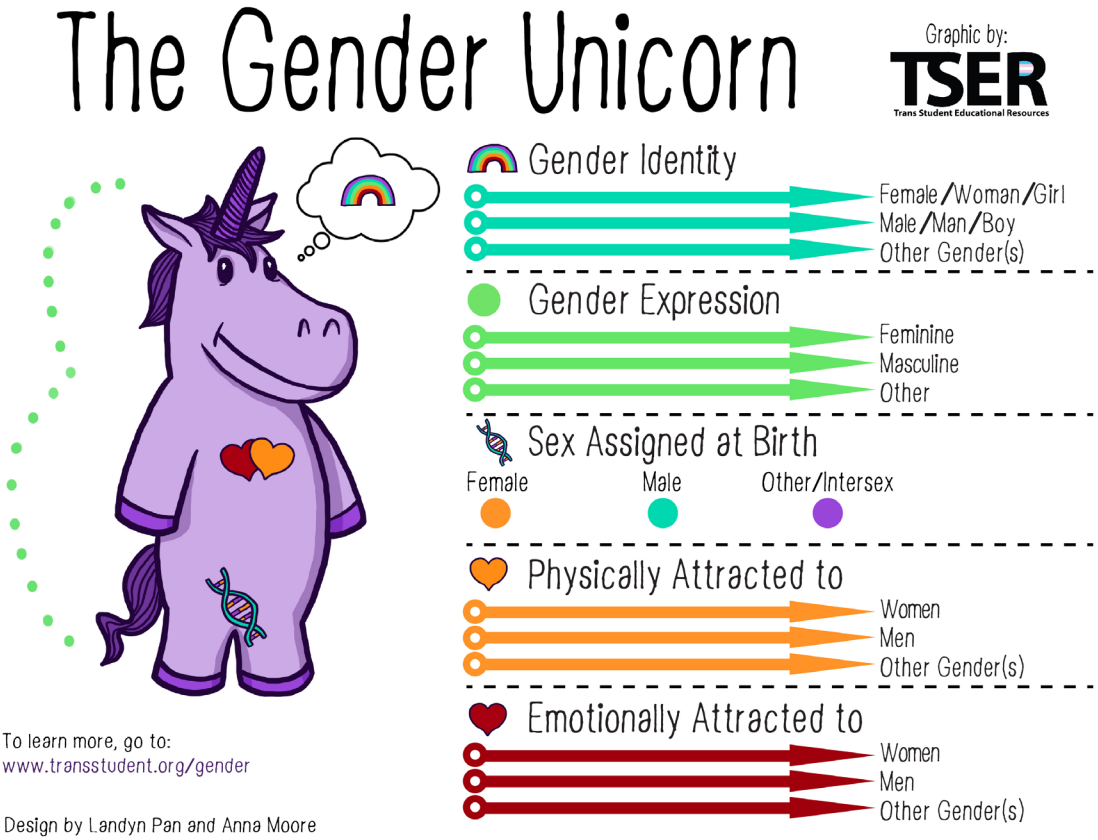
TIP *Don't spend so much of your time trying to "find yourself" that you forget to interact with the world around you. That is how you discover who you really are.*



Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity: Figuring Ourselves Out

Our experiences around sexuality and gender play an important role in our identity development. This sense of self can be complex and multidimensional; depending on where you may have grown up, your cultural or religious backgrounds, or messages you've received from media and your community. You may be comfortable or uncomfortable in some of these domains, and this level of comfort can change over time. For example, you might have certain ideas about what it means to be part of the LGBTQI community. Being LGBTQI is not wrong or bad. It just is. And, as you explore different parts of your sexuality and gender identity, it is okay to be uncertain. This is all normal. You will grow and develop as a person over time, and learn more about yourself. Keep listening to, and trying to understand, your feelings.

How will you know what sexual orientation /gender identity fits you best? That will be up to you. You get to choose what the best fit is, and what it is called. If you aren't sure yet, check this out:



When it comes to human sexuality and gender, we are all uniquely diverse. Sexuality and gender exist on a spectrum. Like the scales in the above graph, we could have very strong experiences with some feelings, and very little to none with others. The dot for each scale starts at zero, to indicate no strong feelings. The stronger your feelings or experiences, the more you slide the dot forward to the right.

With respect to yourself, how far to the right would you slide the dots for your gender identity, or your feelings and attractions towards others? Are some more intense than others?

If your gender identity is different than your sex, you may identify as transgender. If your attractions are toward the same gender or more than one gender, you may identify as gay, bisexual, pansexual or queer. If you have no attractions to others, you may identify as asexual. Please note, you could have more than one label that fits you! Everyone has a gender identity and a sexual orientation.

How do sex, gender identity and sexual orientation differ?

These terms can often be confused. Your sex is defined by your physical characteristics (i.e, what sex organs you have). Your gender identity is your deeply felt sense of gender, regardless of your physical characteristics (these don't always 'match' up!). Your sexual orientation is defined by who you are attracted to (romantically, emotionally, physically).

Terms/definitions:

- **LGBTQI:** Acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex". Used to be an inclusive term for the community.
- **Intersex:** A general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male.
- **Bisexual:** A person who is attracted to two or more genders.
- **Sexual Orientation:** Our attraction to others romantically, emotionally, physically and sexually.
- **Transgender:** A word to describe someone whose gender identity does not align with their anatomical sex (e.g: a person born with male anatomy, but whose internal sense of self has always been female). Some transgender people may take steps to align their anatomy with their identity, like hormones or surgery, but not every transgender person will do this the same way, or feel this is necessary. The important part is to respect how a transgender person self-idenfies.
- **Cisgender:** A word to describe someone whose gender identity and anatomical sex align (e.g: a person born with female anatomy, and whose internal sense of self is female).
- **Gender Identity:** Our deeply felt sense of our gender, of being female, male, or neither. Sometimes our gender identity aligns with our anatomical sex, and sometimes it does not.

- **Two-Spirit:** A modern umbrella term used by some Indigenous communities to describe gender-variant individuals. A two-spirited person may have a cultural and/or spiritual role that represents more than one gender or multiple genders. Someone Two-Spirit may also identify as LGBTQI, but Two-Spirit is a term that refers only to Indigenous peoples. It is also a way of reclaiming pre-colonial identities and traditions.

- **Pansexual:** A person who is attracted to people regardless of gender, physical body, or identity. This can be used to describe sexuality that is fluid.

- **Heterosexual:** A person attracted to an opposite sex. This is often referred to as straight.

- **Queer:** A term used by some in the LGBTQI community to refer to themselves. Historically, this term was used as an insult, and many LGBTQI people still consider it derogatory. It should be avoided unless a person identifies themselves as queer, and is used in a positive context.

- **Asexual:** A person who experiences little to no physical or sexual attraction to others. An asexual person may still want relationships of an emotional nature.

- **Lesbian:** A woman who is attracted to other women.

- **Gay:** A person attracted to the same sex. Men and women can identify as gay.

- **Homophobia:** The fear, hatred, ignorance and stigma towards people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual and queer.

- **Transphobia:** The fear, hatred, ignorance and stigma towards people who are transgender.

- **Biphobia:** The specific stigma bisexual people face in our cultures and communities.

Coming out and finding community

Coming out is the process of sharing your identity with others. This is a personal process, and different for everyone. You may choose to tell some people, but not others. You may choose which places and people feel safe, and which do not. This information should be yours to control. Share this information with people you trust, who respect and accept you. If you are not ready to talk about this, you may want to find a confidential support group to hear about the experiences of others, or find community.

If you are comfortable with yourself, you may still want to find community and people of similar experiences, especially if you feel alone or like you are the only LGBTQI person you know. There is still a need for working together to fight homophobia and transphobia in our society. You may have local support groups, LGBTQI Pride events, or a school society in your area.

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Tips on … life

- Find LGBTQI media, books, and materials that represent you.
- Make sure your school or workplace has LGBTQI policies that protect you and others. If these do not exist, they should. Find out who can make that happen.
- You deserve to feel safe, like you can bring your whole self to your home, school, work and community.
- Build support: come out to the people you trust the most. As your supportive network builds, come out to others as you feel comfortable.
- Remember LGBTQI people are found in every race, culture, religion, level of ability and population across the world. The community is very diverse.
- Join an LGBTQI support group. If there are none in your community, there are many online.
- There may be people who do not accept you. This is not your fault. Those people have to work through their discomfort, stigma, homophobia or transphobia.
- You don't have to figure yourself out right away, and you may find new language that better describes who you are as you go. It's okay to change the way you describe your feelings.

You are not alone. Never doubt your own self worth.

For more information, check out the Getting Help section (on page 134).

Being LGBTQI and mental health

Historically and even today, LGBTQI people face higher rates of discrimination, judgment, and stigma. They could be treated badly by others because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. This could look like bullying, name-calling, physical violence, sexual harassment, or other forms of prejudice. This is also known as homophobia and transphobia. It is the fear, hatred and ignorance of different sexualities and gender identities. This can put a huge amount of stress on you. It can make people feel shame or guilt about their identity, even though there is nothing wrong with being LGBTQI.

It's important to know that in Canada, you have the right to live free of discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. If this is happening in your environment, it's important to seek help and support.

Having a gender identity that is different from your anatomical sex is not a mental illness. Neither is having a sexual orientation that isn't heterosexual.

Gender identity and mental health

Transgender people may feel significant distress and discomfort as a result of their gender identity not matching their sex, or because others fail to see or recognize their gender identity. This is known as gender dysphoria, and can sometimes be experienced as symptoms of anxiety, depression or difficulty interacting in society.

Some transgender people will address the dysphoria by taking steps to transition. Transition is the process of aligning the way you are seen and move through life with your already existing identity. This may include changing the name and pronouns that you use, or changing the way you express your gender (with clothing, hairstyles, etc.). Some trans people may undertake



medical intervention such as hormone therapy or surgeries to align their physical anatomy with their identity, or they may legally change their name or gender marker.

Transition is an individual process and each transgender person may undertake different steps, based on what they require to feel more comfortable, or help their dysphoria. It is important to remember that it is a person's self-identity that determines who they are, not what steps they have taken (or not taken) in their transition.

If you are experiencing gender dysphoria, it's important to reach out and seek support. If you know someone who is transitioning, you can be supportive by accepting their self-identity and validating their identity by using their chosen names and pronouns, or by shutting down transphobia from others.



Special thanks to The Youth Project for their assistance with this section.



5

Community

Relationships

You do and will have all kinds of relationships in your life – friendships, romantic relationships, professional relationships, family relationships, and passing acquaintances. Although the relationships themselves will differ, they all have one thing in common: Healthy relationships involve mutual respect. This means that not only should you treat the people in your life with respect – for their thoughts, ideas, and emotions, for their person, and for their privacy – but you should expect that same respect in return. If someone fails to treat you with the respect you give them, chances are that relationship is not very healthy and probably is not something you need in your life.

Friendships

Your friendships will change over the course of your life. You may still be close to some of your childhood friends or you may find that you have very little in common with those friends now and see them rarely, if at all. Both scenarios are completely normal. Friendships don't have to last forever, although some may last a long time. What you need from your friends will change as you as your life changes and your interests diverge. As a result, the people you choose to befriend may change.

Making friends

College and university are an ideal place to make friends – almost never again will you find such a large group of people who share your interests so easy to find. Check out page 123 for some hints you can use to help you in your social journey.

How to be social without drinking

The social scene on many college and university campuses can often feel like one big party, fueled largely by alcohol. If drinking isn't your thing, it may feel difficult to meet people unless you join in on the party. Fortunately, there are lots of places to meet people that don't involve drinking, including class, a part-time job, the library, clubs and intramural sports, and school events. Try some of the suggestions listed above if you're stuck on how to meet new people. And remember, just because you don't want to drink doesn't mean you can't go out with people who are drinking. Healthy relationships are about respect, and people who don't respect your decision not to drink may not be the right friends for you.

Romantic relationships

There are many different types of romantic relationships – from single encounters/one night stands to casual dating to committed relationships. There is no one right type of relationship – it just has to feel right to all of the people involved. Sometimes people will engage in relationships with very different expectations. What you expect and what the other person expects may be quite different. Be alert to that possibility and if you become aware that expectations are different, it is important to have a respectful and considerate conversation about those expectations.

Long-distance relationships

For some people, starting college or university can also mean being separated from their partner.

Whether you've moved away for school, your partner has, or you both have, learning to navigate this new relationship dynamic can take some work. It's not enough to rely on spending time together to keep you close because that's just not as possible as it was before.

Key components of a healthy long-distance relationship:

- Trust in each other's behaviour.
- Respect for each other's time.
- Honesty about your thoughts and activities.
- Clear expectations for how the relationship will work (including details as specific as how often you'll talk on the phone).
- Open and regular communication about your thoughts, emotions, life events, and daily routines.
- Familiarity and involvement (to some extent) with your new friends (e.g., they know the person exists and various details of their personality/life and vice versa).
- Face-to-face visits whenever possible (more than just regular video chats, which are also helpful!)
- An end goal. Do you plan to live in the same city when you're finished school? Are there future plans to be close geographically? If you don't plan to ever live in the same place as your partner, you may want to consider whether you want to invest the time into maintaining this relationship.

Breakups

Not every relationship works out. Breakups can be hard, even if you're the one who instigated the split. They are also common and normal. Most people experience one or more relationship breakups over their life. If you're struggling, cut yourself a little slack. Moving on can take some time – here are some tips that might help:

- Let yourself grieve. It's okay to feel sad about what happened. Regardless of who initiated the breakup, you're still experiencing a loss. Grief is natural. Give yourself a chance to imagine life without that person. That said, it's totally okay if you're not grieving – everyone (and every relationship) is different.
- Deal with the angry phase. It's totally normal to feel angry but letting it fester inside will only make you feel worse. Feel your anger. Express it in a reasonable manner. And then let yourself move on.

- Write down your feelings. After a breakup, your feelings can change pretty rapidly. Writing them down can be a good way to make sense of what it is you're feeling. You can even write a pretend letter to your ex, if you feel there are things you need to express and you can't say them face-to-face.

- Let yourself have time to think. Sometimes breakups are especially tough because we learn that the person we were dating is not who we thought they were. This can be up setting, but also liberating. Consider whether you actually miss your ex, or whether you miss who you wanted them to be. Having a realistic picture of your ex, flaws and all, can make moving on much easier.

- Avoid comparisons. Try not to worry about how your ex is handling the breakup; focus on yourself and what you need. Everyone has their own way of coping with loss (e.g., talking to a friend, focusing on work, partying) and you and your ex may deal with the breakup differently.

- Talk to your friends and family. Talking about how you're feeling to someone who cares about you can give you a chance to get your emotions out in the open or make sense of what happened, which may help you move on.

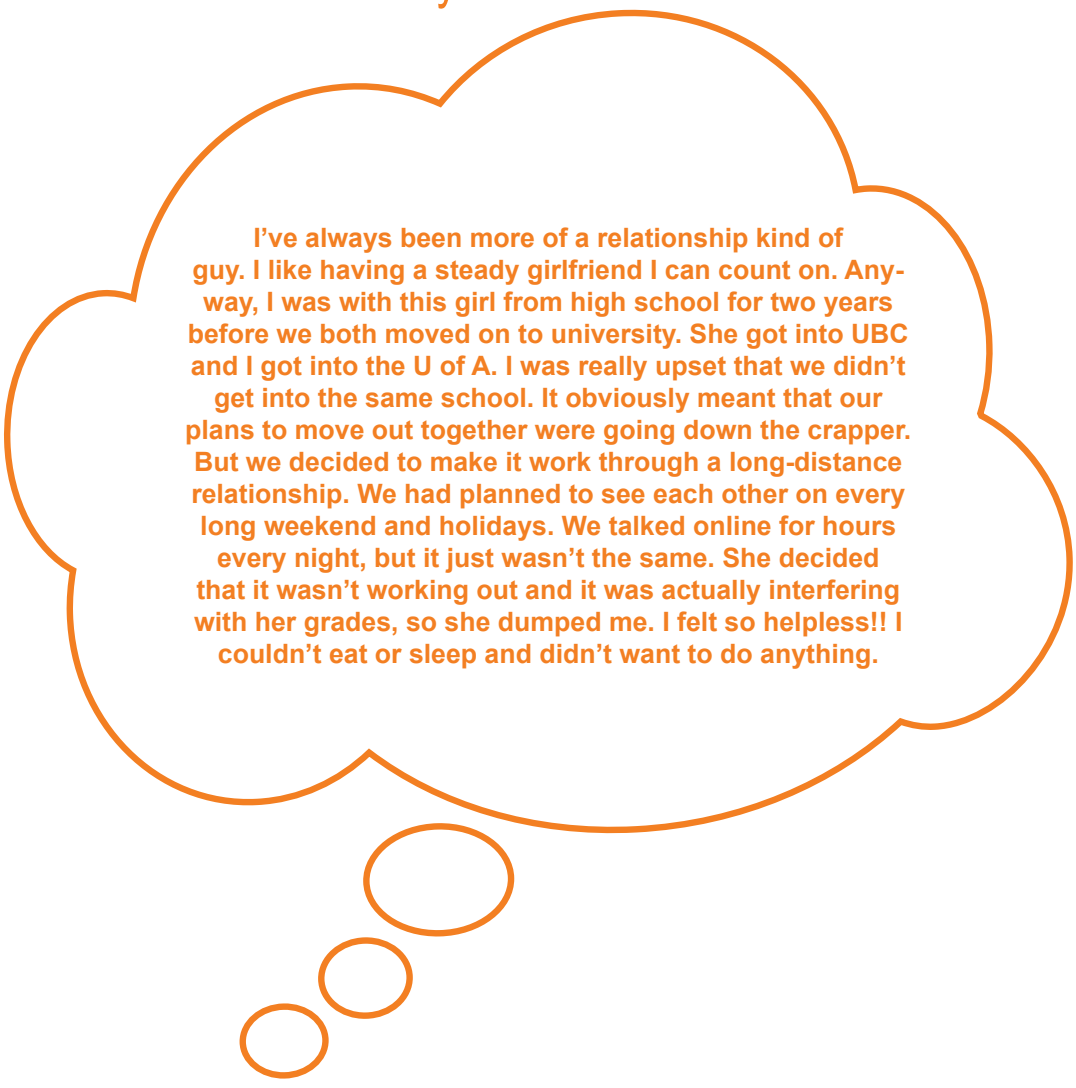
- Get out! Hiding away may only make you feel worse. Getting out of your house or apartment can have a major impact on your mood - whether you're going for a walk, going out with friends, or playing a sport.

- Try not to use alcohol or drugs for support. You might feel better in the short-term, but when you come back down, you'll probably feel worse.

- Get to know YOU. Take this time to get to know yourself better. It's easy to get caught up in being "we" and forget about "me." Figure out what you enjoy. A breakup is a great time to try something new. Launch yourself into a new hobby or sport that you've always wanted to try!



Learn from Josh's story



What changed the situation?

My roommates were on an Ultimate Frisbee team and as they headed for practice one night, one of their team members called with a broken leg and had to pull out for the rest of the season. I really wasn't interested in playing at all but my roommates said if I covered for their missing team member they'd pay for groceries for the next week. Although I hadn't been eating much lately, I figured they must really need me to make an offer like that. So I went to practice with them that night. Surprisingly, I didn't even think of my ex-girlfriend for the entire evening. After the next practice I was really starting to have fun. We went to a pub after practices and I started to learn how much more fun it was hanging out with friends without needing a girlfriend by my side. In fact, girls were the furthest thing from my mind for a while!

My advice to someone going through a breakup

You can't force someone to want to be with you. We all have different priorities. If someone doesn't want to be with you, why would you want to waste your time wanting to be with them? There's more to life, so get out and have fun.

Abusive relationships

Abusive relationships occur when one partner controls the other partner with violence, intimidation, and/or threats. Although movies and television shows suggest that abuse only happens to meek submissive women at the hands of aggressive men, research indicates that abuse can happen to almost anyone. Although the most common form of abusive relationship is heterosexual, with the majority of violence directed at the woman, anyone can be violent or emotionally abusive or the target of violence or emotional abuse. People in their late teens and early twenties may be at the highest risk for partner aggression. Abuse can take many forms, and although physical abuse probably gets the most media attention, abusive relationships often involve financial, emotional, or sexual abuse. Abusive relationships don't happen overnight. At first, the signs may be subtle and you may hope it will get better but usually abusive relationships worsen and become more violent over time.

Warning signs of abuse:

- Your partner is violent and may yell at you, push you, or hit you.
- Your partner isolates you, limiting your time with family and friends.
- Your partner is very jealous and accuses you of things you did not do.
- Your partner tries to control many or all aspects of your life (e.g., your decisions, your finances, your clothes, your friends, etc.)
- Your partner demands that you have sex, even if you say no.
- Your partner threatens to hurt themselves, you, or your friends/family if you do not do what they want.
- You feel you have to always act a certain way to please your partner (i.e., walking on eggshells).
- Your partner blames you for their actions.
- Your partner uses intimidation to make you feel afraid.
- Your partner criticizes you to make you feel ashamed.
- Your partner calls you names and ridicules you.
- Your partner makes jokes to demean or humiliate you in front of others.

If you experience any of these warning signs, speak to someone you trust. People often feel ashamed to admit that they are being abused. Know that this isn't your fault. No one deserves to be abused. It's tempting to make excuses for your partner when you care about them. Unfortunately, those excuses won't make the abuse stop. Leaving an abusive partner can be really frightening. It may also be risky for you, especially if you live together. Have someone (e.g., a friend or family member) with you and consult the police, a shelter for domestic violence, or help line, if you decide to leave.



If you are leaving an abusive relationship, it is most important that you get out safely. Plan for the immediate future (next week), not for the long-term. Take the minimum that you need, you can arrange for others to get the rest of your belongings later. Make sure you have someone with you when you go.

If you realize that you have acted in an abusive way towards your partner, counseling is important. Resist the temptation to be ashamed and ignore the problem. There are completely confidential organizations that can help you work through your issues. Never physically attack your partner. Domestic violence is a criminal offence and conviction could leave you with a criminal record that could impact the rest of your life. It's never too late to get help and admitting that you have a problem is the first step to solving it.

Leaving an abusive relationship

Making the decision to leave an abusive relationship can be really difficult. Your partner may apologize and promise you that it won't happen again. Unfortunately, research has found that it usually does, and often the abuse gets worse over time. Although you may still love your partner, making your decision even harder, you don't deserve to be abused. If you stay in an abusive relationship, it's very unlikely that it will improve. Keep in mind that leaving an abusive relationship should never be done alone. It may be hard or embarrassing to tell friends or family what is happening, but the safest thing is to have someone with you when you leave or to move home while you transition out of the relationship.

Tips to get out of an abusive relationship if you are living together:

- Contact a local domestic violence shelter. They will be able to help you prepare a plan to safely get out.
- Make sure you prepare a safety plan and know the best time to leave (when your partner is not home).
- Have a friend or family member with you and make sure someone knows where you are at all times.
- Store important documents in a safe place so that you can grab them quickly when you need to leave.

- Prepare an emergency suitcase with everything you may need for the immediate term.
- Know exactly where you are going and how to get there.
- Call the police to help you if you are concerned about possible violence.
- Warn your friends and family not to give out information about you. The abuser may threaten them or harass them to try to find you.
- Be aware that the abuser might have access to your e-mail and banking information, so change all passwords and notify your bank. It also may be a good idea to change your phone number as most cell phone companies are not able to block a single number.

If you break up with an abusive partner and are living in residence or on-campus, it is very important to let residence security know if you fear for your safety. It might be hard to tell people what has happened, but at the very least, the people in your life should know that the relationship has ended. That way, your friends or residence advisor will know not to tell your ex where you are or what you are doing. Provide campus security with their picture so they are prepared. Report any threats or violence to the police.

If you are living off campus, make sure that your ex cannot enter your apartment. If you don't feel comfortable telling your roommates what happened, make sure they understand that your ex is absolutely not welcome in the apartment, nor should they be invited to any social events. Don't let anyone make you feel guilty for ending the relationship. If you feel like you cannot get away from your ex among your group of friends, consider taking a break, a vacation, or staying somewhere else for awhile. You can also consider a peace bond or restraining order, which can be obtained from the court house or by contacting local police services.

Once you are out safely, consider seeking counseling to deal with the emotional and physical fallout of the relationship. You do not want to fall back into an abusive relationship again, and the best way to make sure that doesn't happen is to educate yourself about the patterns of abuse and what it means to be in a healthy relationship.





Learn from Sarah's story

I was in love with this guy for three years. Then he was kicked out of school for selling drugs on campus and everything changed. He got really mean. I felt that I had to do whatever he wanted. He started calling me names and pushing me around. I told myself that he was just going through a bad stage, and that things would improve. I didn't complain because I didn't want him to break-up with me.

What changed the situation?

He had this "thing" about me not answering the phone in our apartment. One day when my boy-friend was in the shower the phone rang and I answered it. He came running out of the shower and ripped the phone right out of the wall and gave me a fat lip. A couple of days later I told my friend what had happened and her reaction was a reality check! I realized my relationship was NOT normal! So I left. It was not easy. He bought me flowers and called me constantly. I actually felt sorry for him and almost took him back, but I knew in my heart that he needed help and it was his problem, not mine. So I cut him off completely, which was really hard. But I am glad I did it.

My advice to someone in an abusive relationship

Get out! It will not get better and it may get worse. Don't make excuses or feel guilty about their behavior. You have the possibility of a good life and healthy relationships in your future. Focus on where you can go, not where you have been.



For more information on dating violence, visit: https://www.breakthecycle.org/



If you are afraid that you might be at risk for violence, please call 911.

Healthy conflict resolution

In every relationship – from family to friends to romantic relationships – you're going to sometimes have conflict. Conflict is not the end of the world and can even be healthy, provided you deal with it in respectful ways. Here are some suggestions:

- Listen. Listen to what the other person is saying. Really listen. Pay attention to what they're saying verbally and nonverbally. Don't spend the time the other person is talking thinking about your own response. Consider why they're upset or why they may have acted the way they did.
- Don't interrupt. Let the other person express his or her thoughts without jumping in or jumping to conclusions. Ask the same in return.
- Be aware not only of what you say but also of how you say it. Often other people are more aware of how we say something than they are of our actual words.
- If the other person's reaction seems out of proportion with the situation, ask them if anything else is going on. Our experiences shape how we interpret information and it may be that the other person is reacting to something that happened earlier that was either triggered by something you said or just has not yet resolved for them.
- Acknowledge their feelings. People are more likely to feel that you have heard what they are saying if their feelings are acknowledged.
- Speak clearly. Pause before you respond to ensure that what you say is actually what you want to say. It's easy to get caught up in the heat of the moment and blurt out something you don't really mean or later wish you hadn't said.
- Try to understand the other person's perspective. What has happened to make them interpret the situation in a particular way?
- Give reasons. Explain why you feel the way that you do. Giving someone reasons helps them understand where you are coming from and with time, they may understand your point.
- Listen to their reasons. If you expect someone to listen to your side of the argument, you must also be willing to listen to theirs.
- Stay calm. Raising your voice will only encourage the other person to raise their voice, which does nothing to further productive conversation.
- Allow each other to cool down. After the argument is over, give each other a little space. This is especially important if the other person did not get what they were hoping for out of the argument – they may need some space to calm down and deal with their frustration.



- Take a break if things get too heated or if the conversation keeps going in circles.
- Remember, conflict isn't about winning. "Winning" an argument is not the goal. Solving the problem is the goal. Conflict resolution often requires compromise.
- What did you learn from the experience? When things have cooled off, consider what triggered the argument and what you learned from what happened. Now that you know that, consider if or how you will change your behavior in the future.

For more information, check out the Getting Help section (on page 134).

Living Situation

Your living situation may change as you begin this new phase of life. Regardless of whether you're living on or off campus, with or without roommates, there will be aspects of your living situation that you'll need to navigate. Even if you continue to live at home, your relationship with your family members is likely to shift as you become more independent.

Life with roommates

Whether you decide to share a living space with an old friend or someone brand new, there may be conflict and strain on your roommate relationship. Someone who is fun to hang out with doesn't always make for a good roommate so giving careful thought to who you live with can help ensure your home is more supportive than stressful.

The KEY to a successful living arrangement is COMMUNICATION.

Prior to signing any lease, there are critical issues that should be addressed as part of the roommate selection process. If you can't agree on these issues ahead of time, you may need to consider finding a different roommate.

Questions to ask potential roommates:

- How do they rate their level of household cleanliness and what are their expectations about household chores?
- Will you cook together or share groceries?
- How will you split utilities, phone and cable bills, along with other living costs?
- What are their schedules and habits for work, school, and sleep?
- Do they want to share kitchen duties (e.g., washing dishes)? Or do they want each roommate to look after their own mess?
- How do they feel about playing music or watching TV in common areas?
- Do they like to host parties? If so, guidelines about advanced notice, limits, and other party details should be discussed.
- Are they a morning person or a night owl? How do you feel about the possibility that they might come home late at night and wake you up or that they are up early with the radio blasting in the kitchen?
- Do they smoke? Will they be smoking in the apartment? Remember that even if someone only smokes outside, their clothes and belongings often still smell like smoke.
- How does their use of drugs and alcohol compare to your own?

- Are their religious and political views similar to your own? If not, is this likely to cause strain between you?
- What friends, partners or family members will come visit and how often?
- Do they have boyfriends or girlfriends who are likely to spend a lot of time at your place? Discuss whether their significant others will contribute to resources they use frequently (i.e., hot water, food). Remember that choosing to live with one person may also mean you are choosing to live with their significant other much of the time.
- Will they respect your privacy? What kind of boundaries do they have? (I.e., Are they likely to borrow things or come into your room without asking?)
- What type of relationship are they looking for in a roommate? (E.g., A friendship? A sibling? Someone they occasionally pass in the hallway?)
- How quiet or loud are they?
- If your potential roommates are your friends, have you considered the strain it may put on your friendship?
- Do they have jobs and if so, what kind of work do they do?
- Have they lived on their own before or had roommates before? If so, what was that experience like?
- Are they responsible? Are you sure they're going to pay their portion of the rent/ bills every month? Do you need to have a written agreement with them to en sure this happens?

Written agreements/contracts

Avoid serious conflict by making a written agreement with your roommates before you move in together. This is separate from signing a lease and would be an agreement you make with each other instead of with your landlord. Doing this will make sure that all parties put their needs on the table. These can then be discussed and addressed, before conflict arises. You can even make this process fun by having dinner together and spend-ing the evening figuring out how the next few months together as roommates will work.

Your written agreement should include:

- Who is responsible for each bill. Usually one person's name is on the bill and that person will be held accountable if it is not paid.
- Standards around cleanliness and chores.
- Clarification around food: whether or not you will share groceries or buy your own.

- Cupboard and fridge space allotment.
- Restrictions on music, noise or party time, especially during exam periods.
- Plan for how you will handle potential overnight guests or partners - it's no fun to bump into an unexpected stranger in the hallway at night on your way to the bathroom.
- Information about allergies, religious observances or special needs that need to be respected by everyone in the home.

What some students are saying:

My first roommate turned out to be an extremely messy person and it drove me nuts. Next time I move in with someone I'm going to make sure they are just as tidy as me.

I'd say it's critical not to move in with someone you haven't met first, or into an apartment you haven't been able to visit. Lots of apartments are available online but sometimes looks can be deceiving.

Instead of moving into residence I decided to move out with some friends who choose to work rather than go to school. It started out great but then I found they always wanted to have people over but I had too much studying to do. I started to feel like they weren't respecting my workload and I often ended up leaving to go to the library. Next time I will definitely live with other students rather than friends with 9-to 5 jobs.



Having a roommate(s) can be one of the most enjoyable and growth-promoting experiences you will encounter in campus life. They may even become life-long friends. Enjoy it; just remember to think carefully about how you and your roommate(s) can learn to live together in a way that is good for everyone.

Living at home

If you've made the decision to live at home while you go to school, you may think that your living situation hasn't changed at all. Depending on the relationship you have with your family – that may be true! But for many families, their dynamics shift when someone starts university or college. This shift can make adjustments necessary for everyone.

Building trust with your parents

As you get older, the way you relate to your parents changes. You're no longer as dependent on them for food, shelter, safety, or guidance. These changes can be hard on your parents and hard on you. It's easy to get frustrated and feel like your parents are trying to be too involved in your new life. Your increased independence means that you don't need your parents as much as you used to and it's not always easy for them to let go. For some parents who have spent much of their time pushing obstacles out of their children's way or frequently intervening to help their child succeed, the expected autonomy that comes with university/college life can be a huge change. Your growing up can feel like a loss to them. Here are some ways you can make the process easier for both of you:

- RESPECT - If you want them to respect you, then you have to respect them. Check out the Conflict Resolution tips below for some suggestions.
- TALK - If you have something you need to talk about, tell them. Trust is built on open communication.
- FOLLOW THROUGH - If you agree to do something, do it and do it well. This builds trust and helps your parents see you as a responsible and competent adult.



For more information on dealing with your parents, check out: http://teenmental-health.org/product/teen-parent/

Commuting to campus

Whether they're living at home or just off campus, many students choose to commute to school rather than live there full-time. Some students are fortunate enough to be within walking distance but more often than not, students need to either drive or take public transit to get to class.

Driving (or bicycling) to campus

If you're planning to drive to campus, there are a few things you'll likely want to consider before classes start. First, where will you park? Is there a parking lot (or a bike rack) for students? How much does it cost? Are there reserved spots or is it first-come first-serve? If the spots are assigned, how early do you need to arrive to make sure you can get a spot? If there is no specific lot, is there parking nearby? Remember that street parking (with or without meters) is often for a limited amount of time – will that length of time allow you to attend your classes? Or will you have to pop out mid-class to feed your meter? Sometimes residential streets around a university or college put time limits on their street parking that are intentionally shorter than typical class length so that students can't monopolize the street parking. Other aspects to consider when driving include how long it will take you to get to campus; whether your classes will conflict with rush hour traffic; and how much gas, parking, and car maintenance will contribute to your overall expenses. It's a good idea to do a "test run" of your route to campus before your classes start, so you understand how long it will take, where you should park, and what problems you might encounter. Just make sure you coordinate your "test run" with the time you'll actually be heading to class.

Public transit

Public transit is a popular and often affordable way to get to class – although your options depend on where you live. If you're new to the area where you'll be attending university or college, it's a good idea to research the transit system ahead of time rather than assuming that it's similar to where you lived previously. Many smaller cities may only have a bus system (compared to larger cities with subway lines, streetcars, and more) and some small towns may have no public transit



system at all. Questions you should ask include: What type of transit exists? Are there access points near my school? Are there access points near where I'll be living? How long will my commute be from home to school and back? How frequently do the buses, etc. run? Do they run at times that work with my schedule? Is the bus usually on time or frequently late? How expensive is it to use as a student? Is there a student rate or maybe a student pass? It's a good idea to do a "test run" of your transit ride to campus before your classes start, so you understand how long it will take and what problems you might encounter. Just make sure you coordinate your "test run" with the time you'll actually be heading to class.

Making friends and getting involved

For people who live on campus, there are built-in potential friends just next door. When you live off campus, it can take a little more effort to meet new people and get involved. Here are a few things you can try:

- Get involved in welcome week activities – Whether your school calls it Welcome Week, Frosh Week, Orientation Week, or something else, most universities or colleges have time set aside at the beginning of the school year for social activities designed to help people adjust to campus life. Even if it doesn't seem like something that would typically interest you, it's a great way to meet other people who are just starting out on campus too.

- Get out – Consider frequenting a common area such as your department lounge, the library, or a local coffee shop to do your homework between classes. You might run into a classmate or someone interested in what you're studying.

- Speak up – Participate in class discussions or ask your classmates about assignments.

- Join a sports team or a club – This is the easiest way to meet people with similar interests to you. Most colleges and universities have noncompetitive intramural leagues, which are also a great way to keep fit.

- Get a job – Although many students need to work to help pay their bills, consider getting a part-time job even if you don't need the extra income. Jobs, especially ones on campus, are a great way to meet other people.

- Show up early to class – It's easier to break the ice when there are just a few people waiting for class to start.

- Invite someone to go for coffee with you – A lot of classes allow breaks, so go with the crowd or ask someone who seems friendly to go with you for a coffee or snack.

- Be interested in people and ask about them – This might seem obvious but it's important. When you meet someone new, don't just talk about yourself; make sure the conversation is balanced. Ask questions about the other person – you never know what you might find out.

International students

As you start to settle into your new surroundings, you may find that things are very different than at home. Remember that adapting to a new environment may take time and that there will be some challenges that you may not have thought about before you arrived. Most campuses have an international student advisor who can help you with your transition to life in a new country. They will be able to help you with questions you may have about local laws and customs and the rights to which you are entitled. They may also help you understand the culture and social environment, which may be quite different than you are used to. Many schools have international student organizations that organize social activities with people who are also new to this environment. Just don't get caught up spending all your time doing things you would do at home and forget to explore your new country/culture! This is a great opportunity to make friends from around the world!

What is cultural adaptation?

Cultural adaptation is the process you go through when you experience a culture other than your own for a prolonged period of time.

5 Stages of Cultural Adaptation

Although every person's path through cultural adaptation is unique, there are a number of steps on this journey that you may share in common with others.

Stage 1 – The "Honeymoon" Stage:

- You feel optimistic, fascinated, excited and adventurous.
- You are detached from the unfamiliar because you are still in your identity from home.

Stage 2 – The "Hostility" Stage:

- You feel hostile, inadequate, disappointed, and alienated.
- As the novelty wears off, you experience withdrawal, loneliness and depression.
- Your new identity begins to emerge and the differences between your home and host culture are more noticeable.
- You feel a sense of failure and try to avoid the cultural differences.

Stage 3 – The "Adjustment" Stage:

- You feel self-assured, independent and in control.
- Although you have a tendency to stereotype and make generalizations about the host culture, you can also laugh at the differences and you no longer let them get you down.

Stage 4 – The "Interdependence" Stage:

- You feel comfortable and accepted.
- Differences no longer dominate your identity and you trust your new environment and those around you.
- You understand the meaning of actions in your surrounding cultural context.
- Your ultimate goal is to achieve a bicultural or multicultural identity. Note that very few people actually achieve this stage and you should not consider yourself a failure if you do not develop a bicultural or multicultural identity. The journey is what's import ant.

 (Stages of Cultural Adaptation: Government of Canda, http://educanada.ca/explore-explorer/, 2canada/leave-partiraspx?lang=eng#sec3_3, 2017)

Stage 5 – The "Re-entry" Stage

- Upon returning to your home country you will experience re-entry shock, also known as reverse culture shock.
- You are excited about your experiences and frustrated when no one understands.
- You will realize that you have changed.
- You will glamourize your time abroad.

Cultural adaptation tips

To help make adapting to a new culture a little easier, here are some things you can try:

- Keep active. Get out in the community around you and interact with others. Not only will this help you better understand the way of life in your new environment, you may find aspects of your new environment that you prefer to the life you came from.

- Read. Pick up local magazines, newspapers, or local tourism information guides to find out what is happening in your community. Attend those events that interest you.

- Be friendly. Introduce yourself and ask questions about the lives of people that you meet. Many people find other cultures fascinating; so don't be afraid to share yours with others.

- Contact your family. Don't lose touch with your family back home. Display pictures of them and call, email, or contact them regularly.

- Join a sports team. This is the easiest way to get to know people and keep healthy. Exercise helps clear the mind of stress, is good for your physical health, and gives you an opportunity to meet people with similar interests.

- Join a club. You can also join clubs or societies on campus that match your interests – many schools have a listing of all the available clubs and societies online or have a "club/society fair" toward the beginning of the year where you can get to know the different clubs/societies and what they do.

- Learn the language better. Languages are full of unique phrases and slang. Listen to how locals talk and ask what something means if you don't understand it. Most people will be happy to help you navigate the subtle meanings of the local language.

- Maintain contact with your own social/cultural/religious group. Introduce yourself to other students of similar background, or other international students. They may be going through the same challenges that you are. Once people find out you're from the same place, it makes getting to know them much easier. Just make sure you don't only hang out with people who share your background, even if it might feel easier. Part of the fun of studying somewhere new is meeting people you wouldn't have the chance to meet at home!

- Be patient and keep an open mind. Although it's definitely an adjustment, studying abroad can be an amazing learning experience and can help you learn more about who you are as a person.

Learn from Gayesha's story

I'm from Sri Lanka and I decided one year to do a student exchange for a semester in Canada. I was curious to see what Canada was like and improve my English. Before I left Sri Lanka, I figured everything would work itself out and I was more excited than anything. After a few weeks, however, reality set in and I felt so alone and lost. I began to regret the exchange trip and considered going back to Sri Lanka.

What changed the situation?

I remembered why I wanted to come to Canada and I decided to force myself out there and try to appreciate this new culture. I visited the student services office and asked them if there were any other exchange students from Sri Lanka. They directed me to a multicultural group of students. I went to one of the meetings and quickly met 20 other international students going through the same thing as me. I no longer felt alone. I learned something about myself and Canadian culture, but I also had a new appreciation for all sorts of cultures and gained friends that I think will last forever.

My advice to someone adapting to a new city

Don't isolate. You have to get out in order to take advantage of this opportunity. There are so many students going through the same thing as you. Don't give up. Keep an open mind and you'll be glad you did.



If you are a Canadian student, explore the possibility of making friends with someone who has arrived from another country. Your campus international student office may have programs that will introduce you to students from other countries and cultures. Get to know them. Your life can be enriched by this cross-cultural interaction.


DAYS
ROSES

Feeling homesick

One of the most difficult parts of the transition to university or college that students report is feeling homesick and alone. Being separated from your family and friends can be really difficult – especially if you haven't yet been able to form a support system at school. While this can be a cause of stress, remember that it is totally normal to feel this way – even if you expected to love living away from home. Going away to school is a big change but it is these kinds of big changes in our lives that help us develop into who were really are. Here are some things you can do to help:

- Think about the positive. While you may be feeling stressed, instead of labeling your stress-response as a negative emotion, consider it to be a signal that you need to establish a new network of friends. How exciting! How horizon-expanding!

- Stay in touch with the people at home. Whether it's regular weekly phone calls with your mom or dad, a group chat with your best friends, or in-person visits when you can afford it – try not to lose touch or get so swept up in your new life that you forget your old life. Keeping the people who have been your support system up until now in the loop about your daily activities, your ups and downs, and the new experiences you're having, can help shorten the emotional distance between your old and new living situations.

- Think about what you loved about your old life and find something similar in your new life. Was it your grandmother's homemade cinnamon buns? Maybe she can send you a care package (or better still, the recipe!). Was it pickup basketball games with your friends after school? Consider joining an intramural league on campus. Was it the culture and history of your hometown? Try exploring local museums and historic sites in your new city. You may find that you're able to carve out a little piece of home wherever you are if you're able to pinpoint some of the things you miss most.

- Remind yourself that relationships take time. Depending on where you lived before you came to university or college, you may have had years to create meaningful relationships. Expecting to have those same types of relationships right away with people you've just met may not be realistic. Instead, seek out people who seem interesting to you and invest time into building strong and meaningful relationships with them. Spend time, try new things, and ask questions of each other. No, they won't seem as close right away as your friendships at home, but with time the right friendships for you will emerge and you'll have a new support system you can rely on.

- It's okay to feel sad and alone sometimes. And as much as it might feel like you're the only one who feels this way, rest assured that you definitely are not. Everyone feels alone at times, even if they seem like they have scores of friends around. Allow yourself to feel your feelings – but then put yourself back together, get out, and explore your new home. These homesick feelings don't need to be permanent and the ability to change how you feel is completely within your control.



One of the important skills that we learn in life is how to be alone in a way that helps us grow. Think about this time as an opportunity for you to learn those skills. You may want to check out the book Solitude by Michael Harris about the value of spending time alone.

Being independent

Another area that can be difficult for new students is learning how to be independent; how to stand on your own two feet. Although some students have had to be independent and self-reliant for years, for others, this will be their first taste of real independence. You may now take on many new responsibilities, including paying your bills, buying groceries, making your own meals, cleaning your apartment or dorm room, and even just getting yourself to class on time. This can feel like a burden, especially if you haven't had to do some of these things before. You'll probably make mistakes as you start to navigate the complexities of this independence and that's okay. Each mistake is an opportunity to learn and grow – it means that next time you're in a similar situation; you'll know what not to do. Talk to your family members, friends, or other trusted people about how they navigated some of these tasks and look to other areas of this resource for additional advice.



No one becomes an independent adult without making many mistakes along the way. Every mistake is a lesson and there will be many lessons in life. When you make a mistake, ask others who have been there before you for their advice. We learn to become independent with the support of others.



For more information, check out the Getting Help section (on page 134).

Life Online

So much of our lives are lived online today. All of these advancements in technology, unfortunately, also come with threats to our personal and financial security. Understanding how to keep yourself safe electronically is essential.

Cyber security

Privacy invasions and data theft

Using the internet can lead to invasions of your privacy and even data theft. This includes others gaining access to your email, social media accounts, and online banking information. Personal information stolen from you, including your Social Insurance Number, can be used by criminals to obtain other legal documents of yours. This breach of your personal information can lead to serious consequences, such as financial losses and even identity theft.

You can minimize your risk of data theft by:

- Not giving out unnecessary information to anyone (especially if they've contacted you first, rather than you contacting them).
- Logging out of all accounts/devices once you are done using them.
- Choosing complex passwords for your online accounts.
- Not visiting suspicious websites or clicking on unknown links.

For more information about privacy invasions and data theft, visit: http://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/digital-issues/cyber-security/cyber-security-spam-scams-frauds-identity-theft

Bullying

Cyberbullying involves the use of communication technologies like the internet, social networking sites, websites, email, text messaging and instant messaging to repeatedly intimidate or harass others.

According to the RCMP, cyberbullying includes:

- Sending mean/threatening emails or texts.
- Posting embarrassing or explicit photos of someone online
- Pretending to be someone else online.
- Tricking someone into revealing personal information and sharing it with others.

For more information visit: http://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/digital-issues/cyberbulling/cyberbullying-law

If you or someone you know is being bullied online, reach out for help. In Canada, cyberbullying can be addressed under civil or criminal law.

Sexting

Consensual sexting can be fun and part of a healthy intimate relationship, but sometimes it's easy to forget that this information can be electronically saved and potentially available to people you may not want to share that information with. Both texts and photos that you send to someone can also be forwarded and shared with others. Consider these potential consequences before engaging in these activities. Although sometimes difficult to do, there are places you can turn if things go wrong. Visit www.needhelpnow.com if you need help removing unwanted information. You can also request to have photos or posts removed from various social media platforms by stating that they violate the site's terms of service.

Remember: Sexting can have consequences that range from embarrassment to criminal prosecution. There can be serious consequences if you share or possess sexually explicit images of or with someone under the age of 18, even if you think that the person has given you permission to have that material by sending it to you.

Spending money online

Whether you're living at home or have moved out on your own, this may be the first time that you are dealing with your own finances, paying bills, and buying things online. Money that you spend online is the same as that you spend offline – try to not overspend, and stay within your budget! Make sure that your credit card information is out of the device's memory after completing online purchases, and only make purchases on a secure and private internet connection.

If you are online gambling or spending money on online games, make sure that you decide ahead of time how much you want to spend and stick to that.

If you are worried about you (or a friend) misusing online gambling websites, visit the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's Problem Gambling website for help: http://www.problemgambling.ca/gambling-help/HomePage.aspx



How to protect yourself online:

- Think before you post. It's so important to think ahead about your future when you are developing your online self now. Keep in mind that your future employers may search for information online to learn more about you when the time comes, so try to keep your online presence appropriate and true to your character. Posting certain party pictures or voicing negative thoughts online in the heat of the moment can have long-term consequences.

- Educate yourself about privacy settings. Take charge in protecting yourself online by understanding privacy tools and settings – make sure you're only sharing information with the people you choose. Keep in mind that privacy settings may fail or be breached, so try to be careful about ALL of the content that you publish.

- Be socially responsible. It is helpful to keep in mind that you should behave online as you would face-to-face. Don't take advantage of the anonymity of the internet in a negative way.

- Understand potential consequences. The way you behave online may lead to offline consequences - with your peers, social circles and beyond. You can be held responsible under the Criminal Code of Canada for engaging in illegal activity online.

Remember, if you are not comfortable with what you put online appearing in your local newspaper, it may be a good idea to reconsider what you are about to post.

For more on living online, check out: http://mediasmarts.ca/

For more information, check out the Getting Help section (on page 134).



6

Getting Help

Getting Help

Postsecondary education can be a really exciting – and sometimes stressful – time in your life. If you feel overwhelmed, or like you might be experiencing a mental illness, it's so important to seek help as soon as you can.

Why?

Most problems you are facing can be resolved with the right combination of support and/or treatment (if you have a mental illness). Mental illnesses are often very treatable with psychological interventions and sometimes medications. Problems such as academic difficulty in class can often be resolved with extra work, office hours, and tutoring. Relationship problems can often be resolved through introspection and good communication/conflict resolution. Nothing is ever hopeless – it's just a matter of knowing where to turn for support and getting the help you need as quickly as possible.

When?

Whether your problem is academic, emotional, or something else entirely, the sooner you seek help, the less impact the issue is likely to have on the rest of your life. Avoiding problems almost never makes things better. Your issues aren't likely to fade away, but rather, may get worse as time passes and they go unresolved. Seek help as soon as you suspect there might be a problem.



Where you seek help depends on the kind of problem you're experiencing. Check out the flow chart on pages 138 and 139 to figure out your next steps.



If you have a mental disorder, it's important that you receive the best evidence-based treatment to help you get well and stay well. This means seeing a qualified health care provider who has expertise in treating people who have a mental disorder. Asking questions of your health care provider can help ensure that you are getting the quality of care that you need and deserve.



Check out this brochure for what to ask: http://teenmentalhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/EBM_Brochure_for_Youth_Final.pdf

Helping a friend

If you notice a friend is struggling, you may be inclined to help. Although this is valuable and appreciated, it's important to remember to set healthy boundaries so that your friend's challenges don't overwhelm your own coping resources. On an airplane, they tell you that you need to put on your own oxygen mask before helping someone else with theirs – you'll be no help to anyone if you're passed out. This is also true for supporting a friend. Make sure you're looking after yourself first and foremost.

Signs of Concern:

- Sudden changes in behaviour.
- Extreme emotions.
- Lack of interest in activities or events that used to excite them.
- Feelings of hopelessness ("There's no point. Nothing will change.")
- Failing to meet responsibilities (e.g., going to class or work, handing in assignments).
- Talking about suicide or that life is not worth living.

If your friend is experiencing typical mental distress, then your support may be all they need to cope effectively. If, however, you suspect that something more serious is going on, it is not something that you can handle yourself. Suggest that your friend speak to their doctor or counsellor, or refer them to this book. Depending on what is going on, they may be initially resistant to getting extra help. Be supportive and present, but remind them that there are people who can help them navigate what they're going through and that you'll still be there for support. If you're friend is expressing thoughts about suicide go with them to the couselling office, health clinics on campus or the local hospital / community health clinic.

Where should I go?

To figure out what kind of help you need, you first need to identify what kind of problem you have. Flip to the next page to figure out your next steps.

What kind of problem are you having?

Academic/ School

- **Difficulty writing papers or assignments?**
  - **Step 1:** Check out the papers and assignments section under School
  - **Step 2:** Academic Writing Centre (on campus)
- **Specific Class**
  - **Step 1:** Office hours (check out the section on how to talk to professors/instructors under School)
  - **Step 2:** Consider whether course is right for you. Talking to an academic advisor can help
- **Learning Problems**
  - **Undiagnosed?** Talk to Disability Services (or similar department) about how to get assessment
  - **Already diagnosed?** Talk to Disability Services (or similar department) about accommodations in class
- **Exam-Related Stress Response**
  - **Step 1:** Check out the section on how to write an exam under School
  - **Step 2:** Talk to Student Services and/or University Counselling Centre

Social/ Relationships

- **Roommate Conflict**
  - **Step 1:** Did you create a written agreement before moving in?
    - **Yes:** Consult the agreement and stick to what you agreed to.

      No: Check out the section on healthy conflict resolution under Relationships
  - **Step 2:** If your conflict still isn't resolved, you may need to involve a lawyer or mediator, depending on the severity of the issue.
- **Friendship**

  DIFFICULTY MAKING FRIENDS?
  - **Step 1:** Check out the section on making friends under Living Situation

    Remember: *It takes time to develop relationships. Be patient and keep trying!*

Social/ Relationships *Cont.*

- **Friendship** *Cont.*

  FIGHT WITH FRIENDS
  - **Step 1:** Check out the section on health conflict resolution under Relationships.

    Step 2: If your conflict still isn't resolved, consider what could have gone differently and whether that person actually needs to be in your life.
- **Romantic Relationship**

  LONG-DISTANCE:
  - **Step 1:** Check out the long distance section under Relationships

    Step 2: If you're still struggling, consider whether this relationship is right for you, or whether your current location is right for you

    Step 3: If you decide that you need to let go of this relationship, check out the section on breakups under Relationships.

  BREAKUP:
  - **Step 1:** •Check out the tips for getting past a break-up under Relationships

    Remember: *Lean on your friends and family for support if you need it – they can be a great resource.*

  ABUSIVE:
  - **Step 1:** Read the section on abusive relationships under Relationships. If you think this applies to your relationship, follow the tips for leaving an abusive relationship

    Remember: *The support and involvement of family and/or friends is essential for your safety at this time.*

    Step 2: When you're ready to leave, call 911, a women's shelter or clinic, a counselling centre, or go to the ER if you are hurt.
- **Family**

  HOMESICK:
  - **Step 1:** Check out the section on feeling homesick under Living Situation

    Remember: *It's very normal to feel homesick and need an adjustment period. Sometimes the only thing that helps is time. Work on expanding your local support system through the tips on making friends in the Living Situation section.*

  INDEPENDENCE:
  - **Step 1:** Check out the section on becoming independent under Living Situation.

Possible Mental Illness

- **Already Diagnosed?**
  Talk to Disability Services about accommodations available. Talk to your Health Clinic or Student Counselling Centre about accessing treatment. Look into available support groups on campus or in the community.
- **Undiagnosed?**
  Go to your Health Clinic to speak with a doctor about what you've been experiencing.
  - **Were you diagnosed with a mental illness?**
    No: Seek support from friends/family. Work on developing healthy coping strategies (check out the section on Managing Stress)
    Yes: See "Already Diagnosed?" section above.

Physical Illness

- **Step 1**
  Go to the student health clinic or your family doctor.
- **Step 2**
  If necessary, meet with Disability Services to develop supports.

Harassment/ Assault/Violence

- **Step 1**
  Talk to a friend or family member you trust.
- **Step 2**
  Call the police, campus police, 911, your campus or community sexual assault centre, or go to the emergency room.

Financial

- **Step 1**
  Check out the Money section of this book.
- **Step 2**
  Talk to the Financial Aid Office.
- **Step 3**
  Meet with a Personal Banker (possibly one who specializes in student finances).

Sexuality/ Gender Identity

- **Step 1**
  Check out the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity section of this book.
- **Step 2**
  Look into local support groups or alliances where you can meet people with similar experiences.
- **Step 3**
  If necessary, consider going to the Student Counselling Centre for support processing your thoughts and emotions.

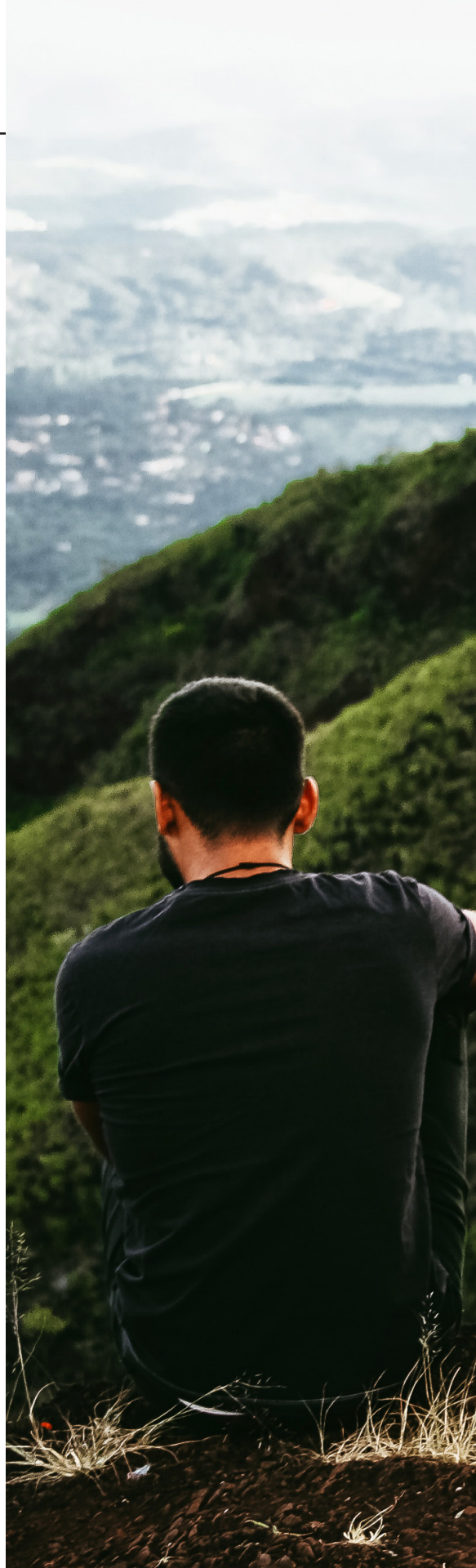


7

Conclusion

Conclusion

University and college can be a very exciting time in your life. By knowing what to expect and having a resource to help you navigate the ups and downs, you're setting yourself up for success over the next several years. We hope that you'll return to flip through this resource whenever you have questions and that these next few years will help you create the basis for a happy and fulfilling life.






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.org

Teen Mental Health

Transitions is the first evidence based publication of its kind. It provides information designed to help you be successful on campus, including time management, relationships, identity, finances, sexual activity, mental illness, suicide and addictions. It also includes tips on how to help yourself and recommendations of where students can go to get additional help, if needed.

Transitions is available in PDF format free of charge on teenmentalhealth.org and can be purchased in hard copy.

95%
like the materials

40%
discussed them with a friend

16%
sought help for mental illnesses because of what they learned