Early Identification of Common Mental Health Concerns

Mental health concerns are common among college students. Taking steps to address them early can help students achieve academic success and have a more positive college experience.

- 1 in 4 college students have a diagnosable mental health issue
- 80% feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities
- 50% have felt so anxious they struggled in school
- 1 in 5 women, 1 in 17 men, and 1 in 2 transgender students experience sexual assault

Important Contact Information for any Mental Health Concern:

- University of Denver Health and Counseling Center: 303-871-2205, du.edu/hcc
- University of Denver Center for Advocacy, Prevention, and Empowerment: 303-871-7841, du.edu/CAPE
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255), suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- Colorado Crisis Services: 844-493-TALK (8225), coloradocrisisservices.org

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Disordered Eating

Possible symptoms of disordered eating:

- Distorted or poor body image
- Excessive exercise
- Irregular heartbeats
- Dehydration
- Guilt or shame around eating
- Feeling like eating is out of control
- Fear of eating in public
- Constantly making excuses for eating habits

Self-Assessment Questions

- Do you refuse to eat food or skip meals?
- Do you fear eating in public with others?
- Do you count calories out of a need for control?
- Do you have strict eating habits that you feel guilty and ashamed for breaking?
- Do you find yourself eating large amounts of food and then purging or making yourself vomit?
- Have you noticed excessive hair growth on your arms and face, or if female, loss of your menstrual cycle?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, or are experiencing any of the above symptoms, please explore the following resources:

1. National Eating Disorder Association: www.nationaleatingdisorders.org
2. National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Distorted Disorders: www.anad.org
3. Eating Disorder Hope: www.eatingdisorderhope.com

Suicide

Possible warning signs related to suicide

- Severe depression, negative change in mood, sense of hopelessness
- Extreme physical and emotional pain
- Avoiding friends or social activities
- Sudden calmness after a long period of depression
- Anxiety and devastation from a broken relationship or lost loved one
- Significant drop in academic performance
- Feelings of failure
- Persistent thoughts of death or dying

Self-Assessment Questions

- Are you withdrawing from friends, peers, and activities you used to enjoy?
- Have you ever thought or talked about killing yourself?
- Have you experienced feelings of worthlessness or guilt?
- Have you recently begun to use/abuse drugs or alcohol?
- Have you made arrangements/preparations (i.e., given away prized possessions, gotten your affairs in order)
- Have you researched, made plans for, or rehearsed how to end your life?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, or are experiencing any of the above symptoms, please explore the following resources:

1. National Alliance on Mental Illness: www.nami.org
3. The Trevor Project: LGBTQ focused support services: www.thetrevorproject.org
5. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

If you answered “yes” to having thoughts of suicide, please call 1-800-273-TALK for the National Suicide Hotline and/or go to the nearest emergency room.

Self-Assessment Questions

- Have you begun to use/abuse drugs or alcohol?
- Have you made arrangements/preparations? (i.e., given away prized possessions, gotten your affairs in order)
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**Anxiety**

Possible symptoms of anxiety:
- Feelings of stress and apprehension
- Irritability
- Trouble concentrating
- Fearfulness
- Sweating and dizziness

Self-Assessment Questions:
- Do you live in constant fear of failure, academically or socially?
- Are you having worrisome thoughts on a daily basis?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, or are experiencing any of the above symptoms, please explore the following resources:
1. Anxiety and Depression Association of America: [www.acdca.org](http://www.acdca.org)
2. Social Anxiety Association: [www.socialphobia.org](http://www.socialphobia.org)

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**Depression**

Possible symptoms of depression:
- Fatigue, loss of energy, sleeplessness
- Feelings of guilt or anger over past failures
- Trouble concentrating, indecisiveness

Self-Assessment Questions:
- Have you experienced extreme sadness or hopelessness?
- Does your family have a history of depression?
- Have you turned to heavy drinking or drug use to relieve feelings of hopelessness?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, or are experiencing any of the above symptoms, please explore the following resources:
1. Ulifeline: [www.ulifeline.org](http://www.ulifeline.org)
2. The Jed Foundation: [www.jedfoundation.org](http://www.jedfoundation.org)

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**Addiction**

Possible symptoms of addiction:
- Need to use more of the substance to obtain same effects
- Frequently get into fights or trouble with the law
- Fearful, anxious, or paranoid for no apparent reason

Self-Assessment Questions:
- Have you ever ridden in a car driven by someone (including yourself) who was “high” or had been using alcohol or drugs?
- Do you ever use alcohol or drugs to relax, feel better about yourself, or fit in?
- Do you ever use alcohol/drugs while you are by yourself?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, or are experiencing any of the above symptoms, please explore the following resources:
1. National Institute for Drug Abuse: [www.drugabuse.org](http://www.drugabuse.org)
4. Self Help Groups: Smart Recovery, Local 12-Step Groups: [www.smartrecovery.org](http://www.smartrecovery.org)

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**Gender-Based Violence**

(Including sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking)

Possible effects of gender-based violence:

**Physical Effects**
- Feeling on edge
- Jitteriness
- Disrupted sleep patterns
- Appetite disturbances
- Muscle cramps or spasms
- Problems with sexual intimacy
- Aching at injury site

**Mental Effects**
- Inability to concentrate or focus
- Checking out
- Depression
- Denial or excusing/defending offender’s actions
- PTSD (nightmares, flashbacks or avoidance)
- Aching at injury site

**Emotional Effects**
- Feelings of stress and apprehension
- Irritability
- Trouble concentrating
- Fearfulness
- Sweating and dizziness
- Shortness of breath
- Irregular heartbeat
- Muscle pain and tension
- Headaches
- Frequent upset stomach or diarrhea

Self-Assessment Questions:
- Do you experience panic attacks?
- Do you avoid everyday social activities because they cause you anxiety?

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1. The Blue Bench: [www.thebluebench.org](http://www.thebluebench.org)
2. Survivors Organizing for Liberation (SOL): [www.coavp.org](http://www.coavp.org)
3. RAINN: [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

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