

Depression and anger can plague recent university graduates: Study

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The post-university years can start out tough. The good news: it gets better. A new University of Alberta study of almost 600 of its graduates (ages 20-29 years old) tracked mental health symptoms in participants for seven years post-graduation and looked at how key events like leaving home and becoming a parent were related to depression and anger.

Graduates showed a significant decrease in depressive symptoms over the seven years. Expressed anger also declined over time after graduation, suggesting improved mental health.

The researchers also found that while home may be a haven for young people in the early years of adulthood, the longer they stay at home, or if they return home, the more likely they are to experience symptoms of depression. Previous research has found that more than half of students under 25 in four-year university programs lived with their parents.

In this study, it was shown that younger participants were more depressed at times when they lived on their own, while older participants were more depressed while they lived with their parents.

“Some key events, such as leaving home, may throw emerging adults a little off kilter, depending on the timing of the transition,” said Nancy Galambos, University of Alberta psychology professor. “Leaving home too soon can be challenging in ways that have the potential to affect mental health.”

It was revealed that women were more depressed and angry at the start of the study than men. Also, anger increased when participants became parents.

“Although we generally welcome parenthood as a positive experience, we found that people who became parents became angrier, and this was especially pronounced for mothers,” said Harvey Krahn, University of Alberta chair of sociology. “The transition to parenthood produces a new set of demands on the couple that may be difficult to cope with as parents have to negotiate a whole new set of family responsibilities.”

Source: University of Alberta

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