

# Coping with college stress

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(HealthDay)—Stress and anxiety are common among new college students, but there are ways to cope, a doctor says.

"For incoming [college](#) freshmen, going away to school means leaving family and a familiar environment for a place with new people, new responsibilities, less support and a whole new set of [challenges](#)," said Dr. Jeffrey Borenstein. He is [president](#) and CEO of the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation.

"It's natural for people to experience some anxiety in the face of new situations, but there is a difference between nerves and the kind of overwhelming anxiety that affects a student's ability to succeed academically or socially," Borenstein said in a foundation news release.

"The temptations of the college lifestyle—lack of sleep, misuse of alcohol and poor eating habits—can exacerbate [anxiety](#) and affect a student's ability to focus," he added.

But there are a number of ways parents can help.

"Start by opening an ongoing dialogue about how your child feels about leaving for college... Let them know that you will be there for them. Stepping back is an important part of helping your child become independent," Borenstein said.

If your child is seeing a therapist, talk to the therapist about the best way to continue treatment during college.

New college [students](#) need to understand that most other freshmen are also anxious about meeting new people and making friends. Students should be encouraged to take part in activities and clubs where they can meet people with similar interests.

It's also important for them to be reminded to eat properly, get enough sleep, regular exercise and avoid overindulging, Borenstein said.

Students who feel overwhelmed by academic pressure should see their professor during office hours, get tutoring services, or seek peer academic support, he suggested.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [college health and safety](#).

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