

Stressed out at college? Here are five essential reads on how to take better care of your mental health

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Nearly 70% of college students say they are experiencing emotional distress or anxiety related to the pandemic. That's according to a [January](#)

[2022 survey](#) that also found nearly 9 out of every 10 college students believe U.S. colleges and universities are facing a mental health crisis.

Below are five articles from the archives of The Conversation that highlight tips for college students to take better care of their mental health.

1. Prioritize your mental health

When students do poorly in a class due to [mental health issues](#), occasionally they might seek a medical exception that can withdraw them from the class instead of failing it. But students who get this exception often fail to seek the actual help they need to deal with the mental health issue that led them to do poorly in the first place.

That's according to Nicholas Joyce, a psychologist at the University of South Florida.

"In my experience, many students who get the medical exception return the next semester without addressing their mental health needs and end up failing more courses," writes Joyce.

Joyce recommends four ways college students can avoid having to seek a medical exception in the first place.

2. Seek campuses designed to boost your mood

When selecting a college to attend, students should look at whether the [campus](#) design benefits their mental health.

Two scholars from North Central College in Naperville, Illinois—Carly Drake, assistant professor of marketing, and Diane Bruce Anstine, Dean

of the school of business and entrepreneurship—write about five campus design features that benefit students' mental health.

"Campus design affects the college experience, and students can choose a campus or change their existing routines to support their mental [health](#)," they write. "Such consideration is especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic, when new rules and norms have left many students more anxious and depressed than normal."

3. Make a wellness plan

Before students even set foot on campus, they [should develop a wellness plan](#) to help them avoid major emotional distress. That's according to Sandra M. Chafouleas, professor of educational psychology at the University of Connecticut, who details what every [student](#)'s wellness plan should include.

"... personal wellness plans must be customized to meet each individual student's own needs," she writes. "And I believe that since it is unclear whether new college students will be on physical campuses this fall or learning online, these plans are more important than ever."

4. Avoid academic burnout

When college students suffer from [burnout](#), it often [leads them to experience](#) feelings of isolation, low accomplishment and depression.

Ryan Korstange, assistant professor of university studies at Middle Tennessee State University, writes about five tips on how [college students](#) can avoid exhaustion.

"The most effective way of preventing burnout is being sure you know

why you're in college to begin with," he writes. "Build your internal motivation by identifying the skills you need to develop and the experiences you want to have while you are in [college](#)."

5. Spend time with a therapy dog

Research has shown that spending just 10 minutes with a [therapy dog](#) can [reduce college students' stress levels](#). That's why Christine Kivlen, an assistant professor of occupational therapy at Wayne State University, recommends students seek out therapy dog programs on campus. Kivlen writes about the calming effects of spending time with a therapy dog.

"Among other benefits, therapy dogs can help students achieve a stronger sense of belonging and better deal with being homesick and lonely, while also lessening their anxiety and stress."

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