# Mental Health: Strategies to Support Students

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## Key Areas We will Cover

* What data says about mental health in college students
* Signs of stress and distress
* How instructors can help
* Supportive strategies and connecting to resources
* Explore scenarios

# The Data

Results from the American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment Fall 2022 Report ([Reports Page](https://www.acha.org/NCHA/ACHA-NCHA_Data/Publications_and_Reports/NCHA/Data/Reports_ACHA-NCHAIII.aspx)) indicated that

* 31.7% of college students diagnosed with anxiety
* 23.2% diagnosed with depression
* College students
* 38.9% treated for stress

Results from the 2022 annual [Healthy Minds Study](https://healthymindsnetwork.org/publications/) indicated that

* 28% of students reported intentionally injuring themselves within the past year.
* 15% reported suicidal ideation.
* 6% had planned a suicide.
* 2% had attempted suicide.

1,100 completed suicides on college campuses per year (American Foundation of Suicide Prevention, 2013)

As many as 75% of students are reluctant to seek help ([College students and depression - Mayo Clinic Health System](https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/college-students-and-depression))

Mental health can lead to students dropping out of school ([Higher Education Today/American Council on Education, 2021](https://www.higheredtoday.org/policy-research/student-support-success/college-student-mental-health-well/))

* A study published in the Journal of Abnormal Psychology found that the prevalence of mental health disorders has been increasing among college students.
* prevalence of depression increased from 23% in 2009 to 41.6% in 2019

anxiety increased from 19% to 36%.

(Source: Eisenberg, D., Hunt, J., & Speer, N. (2013). Mental health in American colleges and universities: Variation across student subgroups and across campuses. Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 201(1), 60-67.)

## The Signs

* Changes in academic performance
* Attendance and punctuality issues
* Emotional and behavioral changes
* Physical appearance changes
* Communication pattern changes
* Social isolation
* Expressions of distress

Discussion

What examples of observations pertaining to signs in your experience with students would you like to share?

## How Instructors Can Help

* Practice flexibility and understanding
* Recognize that students may face mental health challenges that impact their ability to fully engage in coursework
* Be open to accommodating students who may need additional support, such as flexible deadlines or alternative assignments
* Encourage self-care and stress management
* Share strategies like practicing mindfulness, maintaining a healthy work-life balance, getting enough sleep, and seeking social support
* Invite students to take breaks as need during class sessions
* Communicate with empathy
* Be mindful of the impact your words and actions can have on students' mental well-being
* Provide advance notice when addressing potentially sensitive material
* Invite students to connect with you if they need assistance or support

Discussion

What are some examples of strategies you have implemented to support mental health wellness?

## Inclusivity and Resources

* Foster a supportive and inclusive classroom environment
* Incorporate discussions or educational activities related to mental health and well-being into your curriculum to help reduce stigma, increase awareness, and provide students with valuable knowledge and skills to manage their mental health effectively.
* Create an atmosphere where students feel comfortable expressing themselves and seeking help when needed
* Encourage respectful dialogue
* establish clear expectations for behavior and participation
* If you notice any concerning signs, reach out to the student privately to offer support or refer them to appropriate resources
* Share information about mental health resources available on campus, such as counseling services, support groups, or wellness programs
* Consider incorporating mental health resources and referrals into your syllabus or course materials.

## Scenarios

* Students in high school have been accustomed to getting A’s, and having the opportunity to retake tests to improve their scores. Not so in our classrooms.
* Some of our students are ‘suffering’ through accounting enroute to the business classes they want to take. They sometimes manage to convince themselves that they just aren’t numbers people. So they start to self-alienate themselves from the course.
* Throughout all four years of school, we encounter students going through all sorts of life’s challenges.

## Additional Resources

The Jed Foundation is a leading nonprofit organization focusing on mental health and suicide prevention among college students. Their website provides valuable resources and statistics related to mental health in college students.

[www.jedfoundation.org](http://www.jedfoundation.org).

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is organization that offers support, advocacy, and education on mental health issues.

[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org).