



Leaving home or starting and/or going away to college / university is an exciting time, but there are also challenges that can make this major life change stressful.

Three-quarters of all chronic mental illness are present by the age of 24. However, the 18-24 year old age group shows the lowest rates of help-seeking. Mental health conditions in young adults such as depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, substance abuse disorders and eating disorders, can be associated with feelings of hopelessness and increased risk of suicide.



Risk Factors

- Personal factors: being away from home for the first time, relocation to a new city, perfectionism, low self-esteem, sleep deprivation.
- Campus life: academic and/or athletic demands, pressure to fit in or look and behave a certain way, uncertainty or indecisiveness about future career.
- Social: pressure to communicate and socialise, information overload and exposure to inappropriate material via social media, bullying, sexual harassment or assault.
- Alcohol and drug abuse: peer pressure, experimentation, ADD/ADHD medication abuse, diet pills, bingeing, other legal and illegal abuse of alcohol and drugs.
- Financial strain: lack of money, money management skills, and self-control.



Assess

- **Feelings:** Do they feel sad, angry, guilty, overwhelmed, irritable, frustrated, unconfident or indecisive?
- **Physical:** Are they constantly tired, experience headaches, digestive issues, difficulty sleeping or sleeping all the time, weight loss/gain, self-harm, trouble concentrating or remembering things, speech disorganised, have their personal hygiene standards lowered?
- **Thoughts:** Do they think thoughts such as “I’m a failure”, “I’m worthless”, “life’s not worth living” or “people would be better off without me”? Has their thinking become confused or delusional?



Assess (continued)

- **Behaviour:** Has their behaviour changed? For example, have they stopped doing things they used to enjoy, do they avoid social settings and contact with family and/or friends, do they rely on alcohol and medication on a regular basis, do they overreact to criticism, respond irrationally to loved ones or have strange body positioning?



Reach Out

- Seek out someone the person trusts to speak with.
- Get help: early intervention is important and should be seen as a sign of strength, not weakness.
- Check out counseling options on campus (for college/university students).
- In some cases, dependents who no longer live at home may still have access to free sessions through the [Employee Assistance Program](#).



Need more information?

- National Alliance on Mental Illness
Starting the Conversation: College and
Your Mental Health:
www.nami.org/collegeguide.
- Reach Out:
<https://au.reachout.com/>.
- BeyondBlue:
www.youthbeyondblue.com/.
- RAINN (U.S.):
www.rainn.org/.
- Helplines Tip Sheet.