

# MENTAL HEALTH & COLLEGE STUDENTS

NATALIE SANDBULTE, PSY.D.  
ELEVATE THERAPY + ASSESSMENT

KRISTI FULLER, DRAKE UNIVERSITY

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## Mental Health Overview

- Mental illness is no different from Physical Illness
  - Chemical imbalance in the brain . . . just harder to see/"test" for
  - Treat it the same!
  - Encourage treatment/doctor's notes
- Overview of Mental Health categories - DSM-5
  - The "Bible" of mental health
- Statistics
  - Depression and Anxiety most common
  - 2021 survey
    - 30% Anxiety
    - 27% Depression
    - 8 % Trauma
    - 7% Neurodevelopmental or ID
    - 4 % Eating Disorders



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## Anxiety Disorders

- Persistent worry, tension, fatigue, difficulty concentrating
- Panic Attacks
- Can result in:
  - Poor academic performance
  - Isolation
  - Difficulty with task completion
  - Attentional deficits
  - Trouble sleeping

ANXIETY



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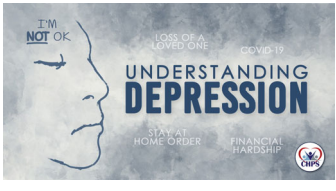
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## Depression

- Persistent feelings of:
  - Sadness
  - Loss of pleasure in things once enjoyed
  - Fatigue
  - Changes in appetite/weight
  - Difficulty concentrating
  - Feelings of worthlessness or hopelessness
  - Suicidal ideation



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## Suicidal Ideation

- Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among young adults
- Up to 13% of college students might struggle with SI
- Risk Factors:
  - Depression
  - Hopelessness
  - Substance Use
- Red Flags for Suicide:
  - Talking about wanting to die; being a burden to others
  - Feeling empty, hopeless, trapped
  - Extremely sad, more anxious, agitated, full of rage
  - Changing behavior (withdrawing, saying goodbye, giving away important items)
  - Extreme mood swings
  - Increased use of drugs or alcohol

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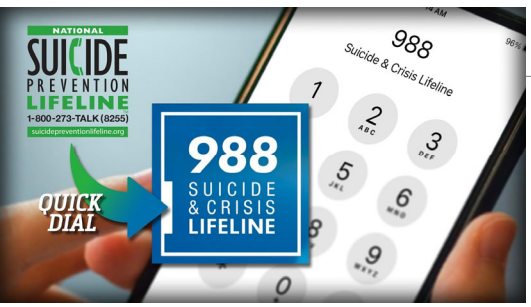
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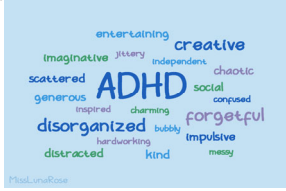
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## Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)



- Onset in childhood; Half of cases persist into adulthood
- Up to 8% of college students have been diagnosed
- Associated with:
  - Poor academic performance
  - Social difficulties
  - Increased risk for alcohol and drug use



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## Autism Spectrum Disorders



- Generally involve problems with:
  - Socialization
  - Communication
  - Behavior
- Up to 2% of college students



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## What Do I Say?



- Show empathy and be willing to listen
  - "Can you tell me more about what's been going on for you? I'm sorry to see that you've been struggling."
- Response . . .
  - Can be firm yet empathetic
    - "I'm so sorry that you are struggling with depression. That must be really difficult for you. We'd like to do everything we can to help on our end. The first step is having you get us some documentation from either your doctor or therapist confirming your diagnosis."
    - "Would you like us to help you find someone to talk with further who could help you with your mental health?"
  - If symptoms are obvious in your office . . .
    - Ask if there is someone you can call to help them or refer to campus counseling center

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**5 Action Steps for Helping Someone in Emotional Pain**

- ASK**  
"Are you thinking about killing yourself?"
- KEEP THEM SAFE**  
Reduce access to lethal items or places.
- BE THERE**  
Listen carefully and acknowledge their feelings.
- HELP THEM CONNECT**  
Save the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number 1-800-273-8255.
- STAY CONNECTED**  
Follow up and stay in touch after a crisis.

For more information on suicide prevention:  
[www.nimh.nih.gov/suicideprevention](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/suicideprevention)

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## Recommendations as an Employee

- Become familiar with your campus counseling center teams!
- Have a plan in place for responding to mental health appeals. A uniform "policy" will remove the "gray" areas of how to respond to specific appeals.
- You can be empathetic while enforcing a policy. Nothing you say/do will make a person's mental health worse or be the factor that pushes them "over the edge."

**PLAN**

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## Questions?

- Natalie Sandbulte, Psy.D.  
• Elevate Therapy + Assessment  
Milford, Iowa
- Kristi Fuller  
• Drake University  
Des Moines, Iowa

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