

Anxiety and College Students

By Isa Basche

A junior college student at Chapman University wakes up at 7:30AM in the morning to her alarm blaring. Shoot. She's going to be late to her 8AM.

She hops out of bed and immediately into the shower. By the time she is washed, dressed, and rushing out of her dorm it is 7:55AM. She's going to be late.

She rushes to class with her heart beating and a gross feeling in her stomach. What if her grade gets docked for being late? What if the teacher calls her out in front of everyone? What if everyone looks at her as she walks?

She makes it to class five minutes late and finds a seat. Class has barely started and no one notices as she walks in through the back. She takes a deep breath but can't get rid of the fear and anxiety sitting in her chest.

Class ends and she rushes to work. She works on campus as a tour guide. She begins talking to prospective students and their families, answering questions and listening to their concerns. Despite her smile and positive attitude, the anxiety is still there, sitting in her chest, weighing her down.

She continues with the rest of her day, running from work, to class, to work, still feeling the constant fear and stress. With barely enough time to eat, rest, or breathe, she keeps pushing up until midnight, when she finally gets home, brushes her teeth, and flops into bed.

Even though she is home and in bed, her anxiety is still there. She takes several deep breaths, trying to relax, but the constant stress from the day, and the fear of the days ahead are still weighing on her, inhibiting a restful, relaxing, and much needed sleep.

Her story isn't a unique one. In fact, the onset of an anxiety disorder is most likely to occur during college years. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, 75% of adults experience their first anxiety episode before the age of 22.

Why does the college experience, a period in life that is often talked about as being the best years of one's life, the cause of so much anxiety in young adults? The answer is simple. College students are faced with too much responsibility and too much pressure. In fact, "85% of college students reported they had felt overwhelmed by everything they had to do at some point within the past year" (<https://adaa.org/finding-help/helping-others/college-students/facts>). Just

like the women described above, students are expected to do more than simply go to class and get good grades. Students are going to school full time, working full time, involved in on-campus organization's, applying for internships, and attempting to have a social life. They are constantly being pulled in multiple directions, trying to overperform others, and competing to be the best, or simply just to stay afloat in this complex world.

If you are a college student facing similar anxiety issues, know that you are not alone and that there are plenty of resources available to you. Specifically at Chapman University, Student Psychological Counseling Services offers free, short term counseling for all full-time students. Students have the opportunity to attend eight counseling sessions over the period of the semester. For many students dealing with these psychological issues, attending counseling sessions can be very beneficial. Especially when students are going through transitional periods or high-stress times, having a skilled professional to help a student cope with their anxiety can be incredibly helpful.

Unfortunately, many students are afraid to ask for help as there is a negative stigma against mental health issues and asking for assistance. In fact, “40% of students with diagnosable mental health conditions did not seek help,” and, “concern of stigma is the number one reason students do not seek help” (<https://adaa.org/finding-help/helping-others/college-students/facts>). Many students fear judgement for experiencing these issues, despite an overwhelming majority of students also experiencing the same thing.

Mental health issues, specifically anxiety-based disorders, are a major problem facing college students today, experienced by students all over the country. Thankfully, there are ways students can reach out for help, we simply need to change the stigma felt by many and turn the discussion towards encouraging many to get help.

Lucky for the student mentioned at the beginning of this article, she had supportive and kind friends ready to help her and push her to get help from her campus’s psychological center. Now when she gets up in the morning, the weight on her chest isn’t as heavy. She isn’t hopeless and she knows her heart is filled with support and love.

<https://adaa.org/finding-help/helping-others/college-students/facts>

<https://www.chapman.edu/students/health-and-safety/psychological-counseling/index.aspx>

<https://www.csc.edu/bit/resources/statistics/>