

Quick Guide

Mental Health and The Move to College

Tools for Your Student and Everyone in Their Corner



 **WellWithAll**
Foundation™

**Grounded in clinical knowledge,
tailored for real people.**

This resource was reviewed by Dr. Stephanie Pinder-Amaker, PhD, a licensed clinical psychologist, Harvard Medical School professor and Director of the McLean College Mental Health Program. Her feedback helped ensure this content is both accurate and empowering for real-life use.

Why This Guide Matters

The move to college is a big shift — for students and for families. New freedoms, new pressures, and new questions about identity and belonging all come at the same time. The transition can feel like a mix of excitement, worry, and hope.

This guide is designed to walk alongside you and your student with real-world tools, honest reminders, and conversation starters to make the journey a little smoother. It's about giving them a strong foundation to thrive in this new chapter, while reminding them that they don't have to figure it all out alone.

Disclaimer: Your health is unique, and the information in this guide is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for personal medical advice. Consult with a healthcare provider or registered dietitian to create a plan that is right for your specific health needs and goals.



1. Start the Conversation Now

Replace self-judgment with self-compassion



You Good?

Don't wait for move-in day. Casual talks now make it easier for them to open up later.

Real Talk



Gen Z is comfortable talking about mental health, but they may not bring it up with you unless they feel safe.

Try This:

Relieve the pressure and keep it real with ongoing conversations. These conversations don't have to be deep or perfect. They just need to be relatable and repeated.



Keep it Chill:

“I’m here for you — not just for grades or groceries, but for how you’re feeling.”



Meet Them Where They Are:

“Did you see that post / video where [celebrity] opened up about therapy? What did you think?”



Check the Vibe:

“What’s one thing you’re excited about, and one thing you’re nervous about?”

2. Spot Signs of Struggle and Avoid a Spiral



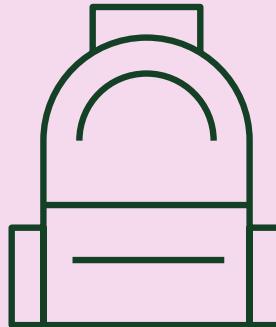
You Good?

Every student faces stress in their first year — it's part of adjusting to college life. What matters is noticing when stress stops being temporary and starts weighing them down. You don't have to diagnose; you just need to notice patterns so you can respond with care and support, not panic.

Real Talk



Even exciting changes (like making friends or starting new classes) can feel overwhelming. From the outside, it's not always obvious. That's why listening closely matters.



1 in 3 college students

Face a mental health challenge their first year.

Source: World Mental Health International College Student Initiative

Try This:

You may not see their daily routines, but you can hear when things aren't adding up. That's why it's important to listen for patterns.

Your Check-In Checklist

If three or more of these show up in your conversations, encourage your student to connect with campus resources like counseling, peer groups, or cultural/identity centers.

- They talk about sleeping all the time — or not at all
- They skip meals or mention not having an appetite
- They seem scattered, unfocused, or say they “can’t think straight”
- They stop calling/texting or pull away from friends and family
- They mention failing tests or skipping class
- They sound sad, worried, or irritable more often than not

Why This Matters

Noticing shifts in your student's mood, routines, or energy — even through a text or quick call — can help them get support before small struggles become bigger challenges. It's not about fixing everything for them; it's about showing you notice, you care, and that support is always within reach.

3. Know Where to Go Before Support is Needed



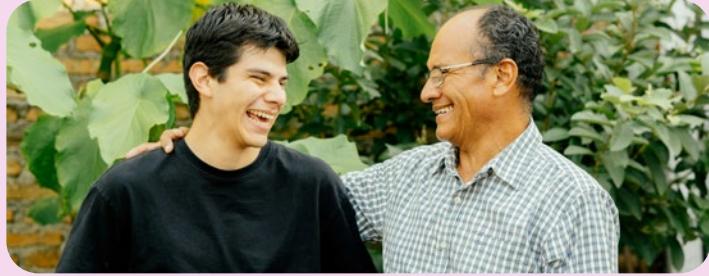
You Good?

Everyone needs help sometimes. The key is knowing where to find it.

Real Talk



Students who know where to go for support are more likely to reach out sooner instead of waiting until things feel overwhelming.



Try This:

Having resources on deck — saved in your phone or bookmarked online — isn't planning for failure, it's planning for resilience. Think of it like saving your go-to playlist before a road trip. Explore these common campus resources together before your student needs them:

Support Resource

What It Offers

Counseling & Psychological Services or CAPS

Short-term therapy, crisis intervention, mental health referrals

Academic Support Centers

Tutoring, writing help, study skills, time management

Cultural & Identity Centers

Safe spaces, mentorship, and programming for multicultural, LGBTQIA+, and first-gen students

Student Health Services

Medical and mental health care in one place

Disability/Accessibility Services

Accommodations for mental health conditions (like extended time to take tests or housing adjustments)

Dean of Students / Student Affairs

Help with personal, financial, and medical challenges beyond school work

Residence Life

Housing-related support and referrals in case of conflict or concern — not direct mental health counseling

Why This Matters

Knowing where to turn ahead of time makes it easier for your student to ask for help — and shows them that reaching out is part of thriving, not failing.

4. Help Build Your Student's Support Squad

Real Talk

Having a trusted circle makes it easier for students to reach out when things get tough.



You Good?

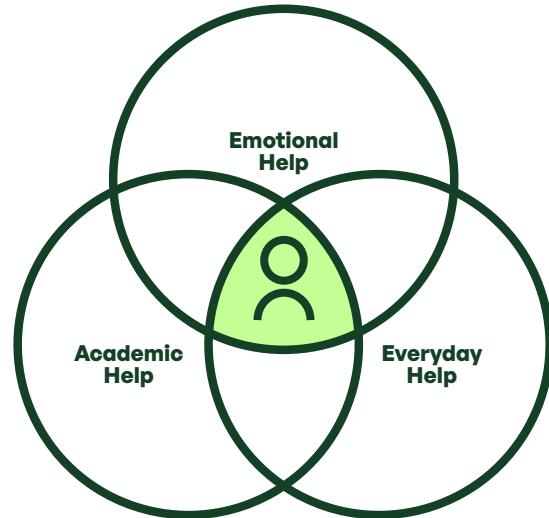
Independence doesn't mean going solo. You all can find comfort in building the right support team.



Who's in their Corner?

Identify your support team in these three areas:

- Emotional Help** › encouragement, someone to vent to
- Academic Help** › study partners, tutors, professors
- Everyday Help** › rides, meals, navigating campus life



Try This:

You can make it easier for your student to ask for help by encouraging them to name their go-to people (friends, mentors, relatives) — letting them choose who belongs in their circle. When students know exactly who they can turn to (and how), they're less likely to isolate during tough times.

Name Your Support Squad

“Who can you call for encouragement or advice?”
“Which friend makes you laugh on hard days?” “Who would you text first if you a shoulder to lean on.”

Build a Routine You can Stick With

“When do you want family check-ins? How do you want to connect (daily texts, weekly FaceTime, group chat, quick memes, etc.)

Set Supportive Boundaries

How can you ask for space and help when you need it?

Why This Matters

Having a plan reduces guilt, hesitation, and uncertainty in moments of overwhelm.

5. Crisis Planning and Resources

Real Talk



When stress spikes, knowing what to do next is everything.



In Case of Emergency

We don't expect a fire, but we still keep a fire extinguisher. Crisis planning works the same way: a tool you hope you never need, but one that saves lives when you do.



Resources to Know:

Support for students can be just a call, text, or click away. Having this list at your fingertips means you don't waste time searching, and your student sees that help is real, reachable, and built for them.

Support During Crisis

Emergency: 9-1-1

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:

Call or Text 988

General Resources:

- + Active Minds
- + The AAKOMA Project
- + BIPOC Mental Health
- + Black Mental Health Alliance
- + Center for Native American Youth Resource Exchange
- + McLean College Mental Health Program
- + NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
- + National Alliance for Hispanic Health
- + The Jed Foundation
- + The Steve Fund
- + The Trevor Project
- + Therapy for Black Men
- + Therapy for Black Girls

Why This Matters

College isn't just about academics — it's about belonging, identity, resilience and growth. The best support you can give is to stay connected, listen without judgment and remind your student that they're never in it alone.