

### What to do when you recognise these signs/symptoms in yourself or a friend:

- Seek help from a close family member, student counselling services on campus or in your residence. Reaching out for help is a sign of strength.
- Remember that we all have challenging times in life when we need to lean on someone for support.
- Save the contact details of campus mental health services/emergency services on your phone and make sure that you know how to access these services.
- Talk to your friends if you recognise these symptoms in their behaviour.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

[www.mentalhealthsa.org.za](http://www.mentalhealthsa.org.za)

### Important numbers

Your university's Student Support and  
Counselling Department

Akeso Psychiatric Helpline 0861 435 787

Lifeline 011 728 1347

SADAG Suicide Line 0800 567 567

SADAG 24 hr Helpline 0800 12 13 14

Rape Crisis 24 hr 021 447 9762

Mental Health Information Centre of SA  
021 938 9229 or [mhic@sun.ac.za](mailto:mhic@sun.ac.za)

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**MENTAL HEALTH  
INFORMATION CENTRE**  
Southern Africa



STUDENT MENTAL  
HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Attending university is an exciting time that allows for greater independence and memorable experiences. It is also a key developmental period during which students are at increased risk for emotional and behavioural problems.

By learning more about the signs and symptoms of mental health problems, you'll be better equipped to know what to do if you or a friend is in need of help. It is important to maintain self-care and find ways to manage stress.

### **Stressors that may affect students' mental health and wellness:**

- Financial difficulties
- Academic pressures
- Relationship breakups
- No or a limited support structure
- Medication, drug and alcohol use
- Inadequate sleep

These stressors may be associated with symptoms of anxiety, depressed mood and other mental health symptoms, which may all affect several life domains, including academic performance. Building strong connections with others and knowing where to get help, can go a long way to helping students find their feet on campus.

### **Common warning signs of mental health conditions that should be taken seriously:**

- Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks
- Sudden overwhelming fear that gets in the way of normal functioning
- Repeated and excessive use of alcohol or drugs
- Drastic changes in mood, behaviour or personality
- Not eating or binge-eating, vomiting or other excessive measures to lose weight
- Insomnia or oversleeping
- Restlessness and difficulty concentrating
- Seeing, hearing or believing things that are not real
- Loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyed
- Persistent physical symptoms such as headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain
- Trying to harm oneself or thoughts of suicide

### **To prevent mental disorders from developing, balance your lifestyle by doing the following:**

- Eat healthy foods
- Exercise
- Get enough good quality sleep
- Set aside time for self-care
- Avoid alcohol, drugs, smoking, caffeine
- Seek support from family, friends or peers
- Create to-do lists and tackle items one by one
- Explore time management strategies