



# Parenting for the Summer Before College and Beyond

## Mental Health

*Beverly Pierce, MA, LCSW, CASAC, CPP  
Director, Mental Health Services  
Student Assistance Services Corporation*

## Mental Health Issues Affecting College Students

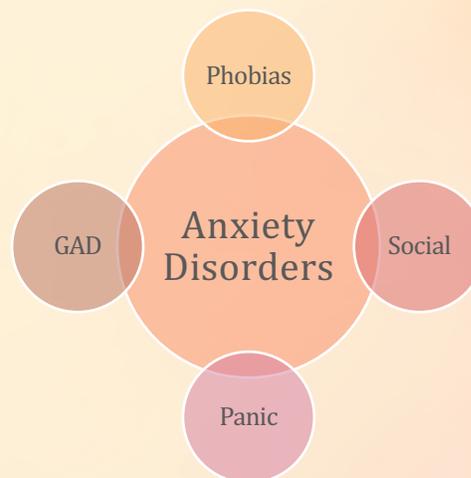
- Introduction
- Common Mental Health Problems
  - Anxiety
  - Eating Disorders
  - Depression
  - Suicide
- Other Serious Mental Illness
- Impact of AOD on Mental Health
- What Parents Need to Know

## Introduction

- Mental health problems are common.
- Mental health treatment is effective.
- Early identification & accurate diagnosis aid recovery

## Anxiety Disorders

- Most common mental illness
- Characterized by physical and emotional symptoms
- Many effective treatments available



## Eating Disorders

- **Anorexia**
  - Restricting intake, intense fear of gaining weight, disturbance of body image
- **Bulimia**
  - Recurrent binge-eating, recurrent compensatory behaviors to prevent weight gain, self-evaluation unduly influenced by body shape and weight
- **Binge Eating Disorder**
  - Recurrent episodes of binge-eating accompanied by a sense of lack of control, marked distress and at least 3 of the following (rapid eating; eating until feeling uncomfortably full; eating large amounts of food when not feeling physically hungry; eating alone because of embarrassment; feeling disgusted with oneself)

## Depression

### Signs & Symptoms

- Persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, or pessimism
- Irritability
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities
- Decreased energy or fatigue
- Moving or talking more slowly
- Feeling restless or having trouble sitting still
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight changes
- Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts
- Aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems without a clear physical cause and/or that do not ease even with treatment

## Suicide

- 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death in the U.S. for those aged 15-24
- Rates for males are more than triple that for females
- Loneliness & Isolation are among the top 3 contributing factors
- 80% – 90% of college students who died by suicide had not received services from their college counseling center.
- Overall, suicide rates among college students are lower in comparison to their peers who are not in college

## Serious Mental Illness

- **Bipolar Disorder**
  - Characterized by unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, concentration, and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks.
- **Schizophrenia**
  - Hallucinations, delusions, disorganized thinking, lack of motivation, diminished emotional expression

## Impact of Alcohol and Other Drug Use

- Substance abuse and mental health disorders are closely linked
- Abusing substances can increase underlying risks of psychiatric symptoms
  - Abusing marijuana can cause prolonged psychotic reactions
  - Alcohol can increase symptoms of anxiety & depression

## Tips for Parents

- Notice the signs your child may be struggling
- Keep the lines of communication open
- Prioritize getting help

## Summary

While mental health problems are common, the signs can be subtle. Pay attention and recognize the signs early and don't delay in getting help.