In a college atmosphere, stress comes easily. Tests and projects all seem to pile up at once and social obligations among friends, clubs and work keep students busy. Although some situations often create stress and anxiety, some individuals face more severe symptoms that stem from mental illness. Mental illness affects mental and emotional conditions and often needs treatment in order for improvement to be seen. Some mental health disorders include depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder and attention deficit disorder, all which affect individuals on a daily basis. Living with a mental illness can make daily tasks more difficult, but with the proper treatment and caregivers, many of these illnesses can diminish and allow the individual to begin living a less stressful life again. A common mental illness among college aged students is depression. This disorder often begins between the ages of 15 and 30, and encompasses a variety of physical and emotional symptoms that are difficult to control. 1 Sadness is often mistaken as depression, but an individual suffering from depression continues feeling depressed for weeks. Some symptoms of depression include feeling helpless, loss of interest in everyday activities, appetite/weight changes, problems sleeping, irritability, restlessness, loss of energy, self-hating and unexplained aches and pains. 2 When someone has these symptoms, it makes everyday tasks and social interactions more difficult. When a person suffers from depression, they often feel helpless, but there are ways to improve the symptoms. It is important to gain support from family and friends, as well as making healthy lifestyle changes. These changes could be eating healthy/exercising, maintaining a regular sleep schedule and managing stress. 3 It is also important to seek help from a doctor or therapist. With the right treatment and medication, illnesses like depression can be managed and everyday activities can become enjoyable once again. 

Individuals can also be affected by other illnesses that make everyday tasks more complicated. Many face anxiety, but there is a difference between normal worries and the worries of a person who suffers from anxiety disorder. Often, anxiety disorders cause worries that disrupts jobs, activities or social life. A person with this illness worries about all sorts of things and the worry is a constant battle every day for at least six months. 4 The physical symptoms include muscle tension, trouble sleeping, stomach problems and restlessness. 5 Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a challenging disorder that makes succeeding in school and work difficult and can often be detrimental to a person’s confidence. ADHD is commonly associated with children, but even adults face the challenges of dealing with multiple tasks at once or the ability to focus on certain things. 6 Another common disorder is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), where an individual has unwanted persistent thoughts (obsessions) and can also have the need to participate in repetitive behaviors (compulsions). 7 The agonizing persistence of OCD “rituals” only provide temporary relief, so these habits are performed consistently by individuals with OCD to release tension. 

There are many other mental health disorders that can be addressed and maintained similar to the ones previously mentioned. It is said that 26.2% of adults 18 and older are diagnosed with a mental disorder every year. 8 These disorders are common, and if you feel as if you may be suffering from any one of these or another not mentioned, be sure to seek treatment. On the CSULB campus, the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offer confidential counseling appointments to address any needs or concerns. To reach CAPS, call (562) 985-4001 for an appointment.

References:
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Lindsey Tucker

Living with Mental Illnesses by Lindsey Tucker
College Students and Sleep  
by Gerri Duru

Between tests, papers, social events, and work schedules, sometimes it’s hard to get the recommended hours of sleep. However, it is important to realize we need sleep to function properly and be healthy. Sleep does not only help us concentrate and boost alertness, but also helps our bodies recover from everyday stressors. Insufficient sleep not only leads to fatigue, but contributes to serious health issues.

While sleeping, we experience different stages that repeat throughout the night. Not getting enough of specific sleep stages affects how rested we feel during the day. Therefore, just falling asleep may not be sufficient. What is most important is getting a sufficient amount of sleep and uninterrupted stages of sleep. Some students may be accustom to sleeping only five hours, or less and feel as though they function properly. Evidence-based research indicates college students need about 7-9 hours of regular sleep each night to function at their best. Obtaining this amount of sleep helps promote better performance, mood, and health.

Sleep helps improve our cognitive abilities, including thinking clearly, quick reactions/responses and creating memories. Acquiring enough sleep actually helps students perform better on tests, as brain pathways that aid us in learning/remembering are active as we sleep. Students who cut back on their sleep may have problems focusing or responding quicker. Lack of sleep has also been connected to bad decision making, which can affect performance in school or at work. Another area that can be negatively affected by sleep is mood. Students who do not receive enough sleep may be easily annoyed, have problems with relationships, exhibit poor behavior or sense an increased susceptibility to developing depression. Additionally, health may be affected. Lack of sleep or poor sleep has been connected with heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity. While we sleep, hormones are actively released into the body. Some released hormones fight specific infections. Thus, getting a good night sleep fights off sickness and/or promotes recovery from an illness in order to regain and maintain a healthy body. It is clear that sleep is good. The Department of Health and Human Services offers steps for students to follow towards achieving beneficial sleep.

Step 1: Set a sleeping schedule and keep it. Go to bed at the same time and wake up at the same time every day.
Step 2: Avoid caffeine and nicotine. These substances are stimulants and their affects can last up to eight hours.
Step 3: Avoid major eating and drinking late at night. Large meals may cause indigestion.
Step 4: Avoid naps after 3 p.m. Naps early in the day provide an energy boost. Naps after 3 p.m affect your ability to fall asleep later. Limit naptime to less than an one hour.
Step 5: Relax before bed. Try quieting your mind and body with activities such as reading or listening to light music.
Step 6: Have a good sleeping environment. Eliminate sleep disturbances in the bedroom (televisions, bright lights, computers or an uncomfortable bed).

If following these steps does not bring about improved sleep, consult a clinician. The inability to snooze may be a symptom of a sleeping disorder. Therefore, take the appropriate actions because students deserve a good night’s sleep!

References

Gardasil Vaccine

The Gardasil Vaccine prevents the four most common types of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) which cause 90% of genital warts and 70% of cervical cancer. HPV is the most common STI in the U.S., affecting 1 in 2 people. Gardasil is a series of three injections over a 6-month time period. The vaccine is now available for both men and women.

You could receive all three shots for free if you qualify! This is a value of over $400! The vaccine manufacturer is offering this program to uninsured, low income females and males, less than 26 years old. Please call (562) 985-2727 or (562) 985-4609 for more information.

Substance Use by Jillie Green

Historically, college students are known to experiment with mind altering substances at some point in their academic career. Some reasons could be due to peer pressure, the need to maintain grades, and experimentation resulting from a sense of freedom from their parent’s reign. Some students may use alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes in the pursuit of making friends and belonging to a group. In the struggle to maintain good grades, some students may take prescription stimulants for nonmedical reasons. Although the motives for taking these substances may seem positive for the user, there are negative and serious side effects that one needs to assess before using. College can be a stressful time for many young adults, so getting to know the signs and symptoms of abuse increases your chances of avoiding and preventing harm before it interferes with your academic career.

According to recent surveys, alcohol is the primary drug of choice in the United States. It is also commonly used and abused on college campuses. Sometimes at these events, students may engage in excessive drinking. Students refer to outrageous consumption as heavy drinking, binge drinking, or both. Some may be surprised to know that research indicates heavy drinking is defined as when a woman consumes more than one drink per day or a man consumes more than two drinks per day on average. Binge drinking is when a woman consumes four or more drinks or a man consumes five or more drinks in a single occasion. One drink is defined as “any drink that contains 0.6 ounces of pure alcohol” and is generally equal to one shot of 80-proof distilled spirits or 12 ounces of regular beer or wine cooler.

Tobacco use is also common among college students. The four reasons college students gave for their smoking was less supervising free time, stress, and amount of friends who smoke. Additionally, cigarettes may be legal, but this does not mean they are harm free. Most tobacco products contain nicotine which can be highly addictive. Smoking can lead to serious health problems such as cardiovascular disease and cancers. Quit Now is a smoking cessation program offered through the Health Resource Center. If you are interested in quitting, call (562) 985-2520 to speak to someone about achieving your goals.

The Health Resource Center offers a program called ATOD which stands for alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs which strives to educate students about substance abuse. If you or someone you may know has a substance abuse problem, contact the HRC located in Room 268 of Student Health Services at (562) 985-4609.

References

BEACH BALANCE

Steps to balance in the new Student Recreation and Wellness Center (RWC) and offers a variety of programs to provide balance to your healthy lifestyle. Some of the programs are:

- Nutrition Counseling
- Body Fat Measurements
- Biofeedback
- Online Assessments
- Workshops

The Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) and Disabled Student Services (DSS) share the area on the 2nd floor with the Student Health Services (SHS). Check out the ASI SRWC website for updates on workshops!