

# Depressed, Stressed or Simply Blue? Coping Tips for Grad Students

The pressures of graduate school can take a toll on every part of your life. You learn to live with stress, and even thrive on it. But for some people, taking on multiple challenges becomes too much, triggering a bout of depression. Here are some clues to help you discern whether you might be at risk.

“By the time they get into graduate school, students have lived with pressure for a long time,” says April Stein, Ph.D., Director of the COMPAS Program for Young Adults at The Menninger Clinic. “There’s academic pressure, career pressure and family pressure. It can seem never-ending — there’s always one more deadline looming.”

Stein is an Assistant Professor in the Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Baylor College of

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Medicine in Houston. She recalls the intense focus of her own graduate years.

“The more you push yourself to get through a graduate program, the less likely you are to be paying attention to your own physical and emotional well-being,” she says. “Students get so used to working toward a specific goal that they dismiss symptoms or deny there’s a problem. There can also be a tendency to find excuses for ourselves — saying we haven’t been sleeping well because we’ve had papers to write or exams to study for. It’s one of those things we tell ourselves we’ll take care of later.”

But the time to take care of yourself isn’t later, it’s now. Highly educated people aren’t immune to depression, and the consequences for graduate students can be devastating if it’s left untreated.

“Students should be aware of depression and its potential effects on them, their studies, their careers and their families,” says Stein.

# HELPS

Health Enhancement for Lifelong Professional Students

“Grad school can create the kind of stress that at some point everyone is going to say, ‘I can’t stand it!’ It’s normal to feel anxious and sad and sorry for ourselves sometimes.”

But temporary sadness is not depression. True depression is a potentially deadly disease that affects one out of four people at least once in a lifetime. It can prevent them from accomplishing even basic activities, and at its worst, it can kill. A significant number of people with depression either attempt or succeed at suicide.

“People with untreated depression can have a hard time getting to class, and they are at higher risk for drinking and using drugs,” says Stein. “They may take time off from school and never go back. They can lose relationships when they need them most. That estrangement can have a profound impact.”

Depression doesn’t typically go away without

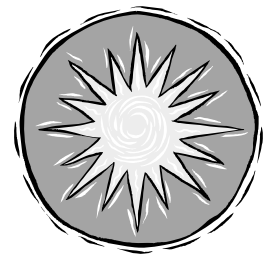
## Symptoms of Depression

- Persistent sad, anxious or empty mood
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities
- Decreased energy, a feeling of fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Restlessness or irritability
- Inability to sleep or over-sleeping
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Source:  
[www.mentalhealthscreening.org](http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org)

treatment, says Stein. “There’s still a stigma about mental illness that can deter people from seeking the help they

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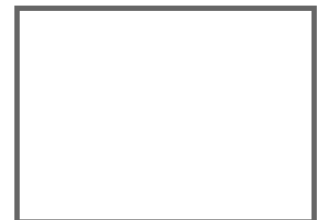
**HELPS 24-hour**

## *Money Matters: What's On Your Credit Report?*

Add this to your required reading this semester: your credit report. If you have a credit card, consumer loan, student loan or any other form of personal credit, you have a credit history. You may also have a credit history

if you have rented an apartment or have a telephone. Most companies now report the payment histories of their clients to authorized credit reporting agencies. Your credit report should

be viewed as your financial transcript. The report will list the credit you have obtained and how you have managed that credit. Your financial transcript is maintained by any authorized credit reporting agency and is sent to potential creditors when they request it.



## *Depressed, Stressed or Just Blue? Coping Tips*

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need. But it's important for everyone to know that depression is a medical and psychosocial problem, not a weakness. It's nothing to be ashamed of. It is treatable

and there are many different ways to get help. Hospitalization is definitely not the only option. Some people benefit from individual or group therapy, and there are medications that can

be prescribed by psychiatrists." While it's often a student's tendency to throw themselves fully into their school work, Stein emphasizes balance.