

Mental Health Handbook for students



Office for Mental Health Support, Division for Counseling and Support
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(Health Service Center)

THE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO

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Introduction



The term “Mental Health” in the title of this handbook may cause some of you to be confused or determine it is not applicable to your personal situation. Ideally, you will have never needed to feel concern for your personal mental health; however in reality, as many as 10 to 20 percent of the population experiences some form of depression at least once during their lifetime, according to various reports.

With the ever increasing complexity of modern society and the mounting volume of information that individuals encounter daily, it is likely that maintaining your health without special attention to aspects of mental health as well will be an increasingly challenging task.

This handbook provides you with information that fosters the development of a lifestyle that promotes mental health and also offers specific steps you can take if you have mental health related concerns. If you currently have any concerns about your mental health, first check the table of contents of this handbook. The table is organized in such a way as to offer you guidance on improving various issues you may be having by simply reading it. You can also jump to parts of the handbook that seem relevant to you so as to glean more specific information. If you are not particularly concerned about your mental health at this time, we suggest that you start at any place and peruse the entire handbook. Gaining information about mental health while you are healthy is meaningful for not only maintaining your current mental health, but also building an optimal career path for yourself based on the understanding of your strengths and weaknesses. In addition, at some point in the future, you may also be in a position where you have concerns about the mental health of your colleagues, friends or family members. The knowledge this handbook provides will be of great benefit to you as you will be able to offer appropriate advice at that time.

Issues concerning mental health can occur in anyone at any time. It can afflict someone who lives a solitary life or someone who is thriving as the leader of a large organization. It may creep up slowly or strike suddenly. In other words, it is very common and there is no shame if you are struggling with these issues.

Unfortunately, some people still feel embarrassed about discussing their mental health concerns with others or visiting a medical facility for treatment. In many cases, symptoms of mental health conditions will continue to progress if left untreated, however, with proper counseling and treatment, most cases show improvement. It is highly regrettable that some individuals miss various opportunities in their lives when they choose not to utilize the tools that are available to improve their health and let their condition progress to stages where treatment is more difficult. This handbook is written to enable readers of mild and early stage symptoms of mental health conditions to greatly improve their conditions by simply heeding the recommended steps. If you feel that your condition is not mild, has passed the early stage, or has not shown improvement after a period of time, please consult a mental health professional without delay. You will be able to access tools that are appropriate for improving your condition. Please check the contact information for student mental health services offered at UTokyo.

- ⇒ Office for Mental Health Support, Division for Counseling and Support
<http://dcs.adm.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/>
- ⇒ Mental Health Services, Division for Health Service Promotion (Health Service Center)
<http://www.hc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/hc/en/>

Maintaining Your Mental Health

Everyday Tips for Preventing Depression

■ Characteristics of Depression

In recent times, there is great concern over the rapid increase of cases of depression in both the workplace and schools. If you have experienced the following symptoms continually for two weeks or longer, you may have depression or be in a depressive state: feeling blue, constant sadness, inability to fall asleep quickly, waking early in the morning, lack of appetite, feelings of fatigue and loss of drive, loss of interest in surroundings, dull headaches, inability to concentrate, and/or feeling anxiety and/or irritation. Symptoms of depression almost always improve when medication is taken properly. It is also believed that early-stage depressive symptoms can often be prevented from serious progression with lifestyle changes. As a reference material, there is a checklist provided at the end of this handbook to assess whether you may be in a depressive state. Please use the checklist if you feel you might have depressive symptoms.

■ Sleep as a Depression Prevention Tool

There are several techniques that you can routinely use to prevent depression. If you start to experience the symptoms described previously, the first step is to make a habit of sleeping at least eight hours every night and going to bed before midnight. Do not watch TV or read/send text messages on your cell phone just because you are unable to sleep. These activities will further your inability to sleep and may worsen your symptoms of depression. Even if you are unable to sleep deeply, darken your room and lie down. Please read the detailed information about sound sleep in the next section. If you have a decrease in appetite, try to eat three well-balanced meals a day if at all possible.

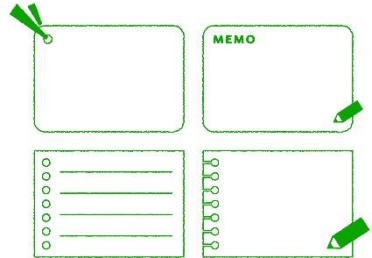
■ Abstinence from Alcohol Lessens Depression

Stop drinking alcohol. It may seem that alcohol allows you to fall asleep quickly. However, it makes your sleep shallow and causes frequent awakenings. Drinking

alcohol may appear to diminish your worries, but anxiety and depression will return with heightened intensity when you become sober. A recent study by the University of Tokyo found that there is a strong possibility that alcohol consumed to relieve stress actually reinforces unpleasant memories. Alcohol consumption and depression go hand in hand and worsen your mental health. Drinking alcohol while you are in a depressive state is also highly risky as you may be more inclined to cause harm to yourself.

■ Unload Yourself

When you feel there are too many things that need to get done and you become overwhelmed, make a list prioritizing the tasks and deadlines. Reduce the amount of work that needs to be done to the minimum necessary by postponing tasks that can wait. Give yourself rest first and foremost. You may also find after a while that some of the lower priority tasks no longer need to be completed.



If you are exhausted because you are overscheduled or agreed to take on too many tasks, get out of as many commitments as you can and unburden yourself. It is important not to completely fill your schedule. You should delegate as many tasks as you can to other people. If you have worries about the future, try not to think about them for the time being. You will likely come up with better solutions after you have improved your mental condition.

If your condition does not improve after taking these steps or if you do not know how to unburden yourself, be sure to consult a mental health professional as soon as possible and start treatment if needed. Seeking help will assist you in finding an appropriate solution to alleviate your symptoms.

■ Responding to Individuals with Depression

Common advice for those who are close to someone who is diagnosed with depression is not to give pep talks. You may think you are being encouraging when

you tell an individual with depression they should “try their hardest” because there are others out there who are preserving through difficulties as well, but these remarks actually have a negative effect because the depressed individual will blame themselves for not being able to work hard enough. Additionally, insisting that the individual go on a trip or attend a party is also inappropriate. The best thing to do is allow the person to rest and let them know their strengths and the improvements they have made.

Tips for Better Sleep



Sufficient sleep is the most effective and easy way to prevent depression and other mental health issues. Insufficient and irregular sleep can trigger a decline in mental health.

■ Delicate Rhythm of Sleep and Wakefulness

Our sleep and wakefulness are controlled by internal rhythms, or a biological clock. The intrinsic cycle of sleep and wakefulness is around 25 hours long—longer than the 24 hours that make up a day. The 24-hour rhythm of sleep and wakefulness is maintained with synchronization to daylight and darkness, combined with the 24-hour cycle of our social life. Our brains wake up when we get out of bed in the morning, are exposed to sunlight and begin our daily routines. Conversely, they prepare for sleep when we cease activities in the evening and shut out the lights,

thus our 24-hour rhythm is maintained. The following are the characteristics of sleep rhythms:

- (1) It is easy to delay sleeping or waking up, but it is difficult to make this timing earlier.
- (2) Waking up later in the morning causes difficulty falling asleep at night (i.e. falling asleep occurs later.)
- (3) The sleep-wakefulness rhythm is disrupted easily by failure to expose your body to sunlight in the morning, exposure to intense light at night, or staying active at night while being inactive during the day.
- (4) It takes a long amount of time to restore a disrupted rhythm.

People who constantly stay up late at night and get up late in the morning find it difficult to wake early just on special days (like the day of an examination.) If you habitually maintain a late sleep and wake schedule, you may not be able to return to an earlier time band that is necessary for attending classes. The days after the New Year's holiday and Golden Week holidays in May are typical examples. Every year, there are students who find themselves unable to make it back to school after the May holidays and then end up withdrawing completely. Some students suffer from chronic sleep deprivation by participating in social events such as parties in April, when the new school year starts.

■ Sleeping In and Nighttime Light as Causes of Disrupted Rhythms

Our modern life is inundated with sleep disrupting factors. Exposure to personal computer and cell phone screens, lighting from convenience stores that stay open 24 hours a day, and watching television in the late hours of the night all cause our brightness-darkness rhythms to break down, leading to disruptions of sleep-wakefulness rhythms.

Unlike in high school, it is fundamentally up to students themselves to attend their classes and labs. As a result, many students routinely stay up late and sleep in until later in the day. The irregular schedule of sleeping and getting up causes more than a small number of students to become unable to make it to campus. There are a number of courses that are difficult to keep up with unless students regularly attend them, and others in which attendance counts heavily toward grades. It is

not uncommon that these initial slip ups lead to a shortage of credits and the possibility of repeated years. It is essential to maintain awareness of this situation to prevent yourself from experiencing difficulties in the future.

■ Individual Differences in Required Sleeping hours

Some people think sleeping more than six hours a day is excessive, while others think it is possible to cut back on their required sleep time if they try. These ideas are completely mistaken.

In reality, there is great variation among individual sleep duration needs. These differences are determined by genetic and other factors. It is not possible to artificially alter an individual's need for sleep. Average adults need seven to eight hours of sleep daily, but some people need more for their brain and body to function efficiently. If these people attempt to sleep fewer hours, their physical and mental health suffers. It is important to be very careful as it takes years to recover from impaired physical and/or mental health. (It has been said that extroverted individuals tend to need fewer hours of sleep whereas introverted individuals are inclined to need more.)

Even if you think you can function well with short sleep, sticking to a regimen of extremely short nighttime sleep (around four to five hours a night) is not recommended. A significant number of individuals will negatively impact their health by the strain of continually sleeping short hours. In addition, this causes susceptibility to short temper, irritation, and diminished concentration levels. Some people may develop bipolar disorder as a result of extremely short sleep. It is very important to avoid long periods of extremely short nighttime sleep in order to maintain your physical and mental well-being.

■ Be Careful of Summer Time Sleep Deprivation

Days are longer in summer and the sun rises earlier in the morning. Unlike traditional houses, few contemporary residences are equipped with storm shutters that shut out this light, and it can easily affect sleep time. Some people are

Maintaining Your Mental Health

awakened very early by the sunrise during summer months and suffer from chronic sleep deprivation, which leads to fatigue. Conversely, they may be full of energy during the summer months and rebound with high levels of fatigue in the autumn and winter. If this is the case, use of light blocking curtains or eye masks can be effective at preventing waking up early in the morning.

The following table summarizes tips to prevent sleep disorders and enjoy a restful night of sleep. We hope that you will find the suggestions useful.



Tips for Sound Sleep

1	Required sleeping hours: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Varies by individual and is determined by genetic make-up-Sleeping hours should never be artificially shortened
2	Importance of waking up at the same time each day: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Waking time determines if you can fall asleep quickly-Staying up late Friday nights and sleeping in very late on weekends will result in difficulties getting up Monday mornings
3	Regulate your sleep-wakefulness rhythms by controlling light: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Turn on your internal clock by exposing yourself to sunlight on waking in the morning-Use dim lighting at night and avoid TV/PC/cell phone displays late at night, especially after you turn out your room lights (This causes your pupils to dilate when the room is dark, allowing more light to enter your eyes)
4	Nap before 3 p.m. and only up to 20 minutes, if necessary: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Longer naps will result in entering a deep sleep stage, you will feel dazed after awakening and find performing tasks to be difficult-It is relatively harmless to take multiple short naps-Napping in the evening disrupts nighttime sleep
5	Develop a habit of eating three regular meals a day at the same time and exercising regularly: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Breakfast is important for waking up the body and mind-Regular exercising encourages deep sleep
6	Avoid stimulants before bed time and if necessary, find a relaxation method that suits you: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Stop caffeine consumption four hours before bed time and avoid smoking right before going to bed (Both caffeine and nicotine are stimulants)
7	Alcohol consumption causes insomnia: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Alcohol causes shallow sleep and induces irregular awakening during the night and early morning-Consuming a large amount of alcohol can induce daytime sleepiness
8	When excessive daytime sleepiness persists: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-The most frequent reason for daytime sleepiness is insufficient sleep (Chronic sleep deprivation cannot be compensated by sleeping for a day or two)-The second most frequent reason is sleepiness caused by chronic fatigue-Some cases of depression are accompanied by sleepiness or excessive sleep-If excessive sleepiness interferes with your everyday life even though you get adequate sleep every night, please consult a specialist-Be cautious when driving a car

Understanding Alcohol

■ Know Your Own Limits

Ethanol is converted to acetaldehyde, an intermediate metabolite that eventually decomposes to carbon dioxide and water. In that respect, alcohol is a substance that is harmless to human bodies in the short term, and as such, is not illegal to consume. Genetic differences are present in an enzyme that plays a role in metabolizing ethanol, creating what you might call *people who can drink* and *those who cannot*. People who *cannot drink* are individuals that are not able to metabolize acetaldehyde (a substance that causes hangovers and internal organ damage) efficiently. Fortunately, those who cannot drink face almost zero possibility of developing alcohol dependence. As long as they limit their consumption to just an occasional drink, they will be able to spend their entire lives free from alcohol dependence.



The problem is with people who *can drink*. If you find that you can drink a reasonable amount of alcohol without developing a serious hangover, you should understand that there is a risk of you developing alcohol dependence. This being understood, you will have to exercise self-control to keep from becoming an alcoholic.

■ Find Stress Management Techniques

Alcohol provides an instant effect of relaxation, such as the relief of anxiety, as the result of a biological response in the brain. Since it also induces sleep quickly, some people find themselves reliant on alcohol to fall asleep. People who can drink tend to rely on alcohol when their daily stress levels are high or when they are irritated. Consuming alcohol is a fast and convenient way to lower stress because it is easily obtainable. However, drinking every day can quickly progress to alcohol dependence because our brain neurons have a tendency to develop tolerance and become addicted to it. There are two types of dependence: psychological and

physical. Alcohol is a substance that induces strong physical dependence. Psychological dependence can be controlled to some extent with willpower. Physical dependency, however, is much more difficult to control with willpower because our bodies crave the substance in a primal way. Individuals with serious alcohol dependence can develop a generalized seizure if they are forced to stop drinking.

To protect yourself from developing an alcohol addiction, it is important to find other methods of relieving stress. Finding a hobby or exercise that is separate from any stress inducing work or relationships can help. Getting regular exercise has been found to be effective at preventing and treating depression in various studies and is highly recommended.

■ **Seek Medical Help Promptly If You Notice Symptoms of Dependence**

If you find yourself dependent on alcohol, consult a mental health professional as soon as possible. It should be noted, that there is no special method of treatment or particularly effective drug for treating alcoholism. It may not be easy to quit drinking even if you resolve to stop or if your family members and doctor order you to stop. Medical facilities have a great deal of experience treating alcohol dependence; it is highly beneficial to consult with an addiction specialist and devise a specific plan to recover from alcoholism.

■ **Alcohol Dependence Is Found Among Students Too**

The term alcoholic may conjure up an image of a person who is hung over every day and unable to function in normal society. In actuality, students with seemingly ordinary campus lives also have the possibility of becoming addicted to alcohol.

Student “B” has been drinking about one liter of beer every evening for some time. He feels a bit sluggish in the morning but manages to attend his classes. When evening rolls around, however, he always feels down, irritated, and anxious. These feelings are alleviated when he has his beer at dinner time, so he always looks forward to the evening when he can drink.

The scenario presented above may not seem out of the ordinary, but it definitely depicts an alcoholic. The feeling of depression and irritation he feels each evening are symptoms that occur as the result of alcohol being eliminated from the body. (These symptoms are also known as “withdrawal symptoms.”) This is the same mechanism that causes hand tremors when abstaining from alcohol. The greater the amount of alcohol consumed relative to the drinker’s physical constitution, the more intense withdrawal symptoms they will experience. Some students become unable to get out of bed in the morning, missing classes and skipping lab work; putting graduation and their college degree at risk. In order to avoid getting into this type of situation, caution must be used. If the scenario above seems familiar, you should visit the mental health clinic for a consult as there are medicines available that can temporarily provide recovery from this condition.

■ Hidden Dangers of Using Alcohol to Unwind and Fall Asleep

One of the properties of alcohol is that it is decomposed rapidly in the body which results in only brief anxiety-reducing and sleep-inducing effects. Within about one to two hours of these effects dissipating, anxiety, irritation, and insomnia (i.e., waking up too soon) will rebound with even higher intensity than before the alcohol was consumed. The unwinding effect can also be problematic as it not only reduces anxiety, but can lead to unrestrained outbursts of anger. It is therefore very dangerous to use alcohol as an aid for tranquilization and sleep.

Column: Internet Communities as “Ibasho”

When people feel the need for comfort, they look for a place where they are accepted and feel safe (the Japanese word for this concept is “*Ibasho*.”) The desire is probably instinctive as animals and even insects do the same thing. An *Ibasho* can take many forms, including family, friends, extracurricular activities and hobbies. It can be any place where you can be yourself. What places would you consider to be your *Ibasho*? Take the time to recall all the way back to when you

were in elementary school. Some of you may have had a harsh experience of losing your *Ibasho* at school or at home.

You now have a new *Ibasho* at the University of Tokyo. We hope that you will feel welcome as you make new friends and participate in extracurricular activities during your time here. Old *Ibasho* bring back wonderful memories years later, and you may move physically away from them as time goes on, but they will stay in your mind as an eternal safe place. As long as you keep your old *Ibasho* in your heart, you will not feel lonely because you will feel like you always belong there no matter where you are, even if you are alone.

Within recent years, some students seek out an *Ibasho* on the Internet. It may be possible to find a community online that makes you feel accepted, but there are also some risks involved. The Internet is a highly useful source of information as long as you use it properly, and it is also a wonderful way to facilitate communication, but you must not use the Internet or someone you meet online as a substitution for the place that makes you feel safe. You should also avoid limiting your search for this comfortable place only within Internet communities. There are cases where people feel locked in or forced to make sacrifices in exchange for finding their *Ibasho* online. They may not be aware of what they are giving up.

If you find yourself facing a situation similar to that above, turn off your computer, unplug the network cable, and spend the next couple of days assessing the people and places that are around you. You may find an *Ibasho* where you least expect it. Once you have found a place where you feel comfortable in your current surroundings, you can plug your cable back in.



When in Trouble

When You Feel Demoralized or Endlessly Anxious

■ Avoid Chronic Fatigue

Many students experience a lack of motivation and difficulty studying. If something is worrying you, you become unable to concentrate as your attention is consumed by your troubles. Sometimes, you may lack adequate sleep over a period of time, which causes you to feel tired and become unable to accomplish many tasks. Usually, the problem goes away after you have been able to have a good sleep and relax. It is important to solve sleep deprivation within a few days and avoid chronic fatigue. If you know the reason for your depressed mood and negativity, talk to someone. Talking about it can help you on the way to resolving your problem, and as time passes your mood will improve.

■ Illness May Be at the Root of Recurring Feelings of Melancholy

Sometimes your motivation does not return and you suffer from a sustained feeling of melancholy and negativity for no particular reason. You lose interest in your hobbies and become unable to find joy. If these feelings persist for more than two weeks, you may have depression. If you have had similar experiences in the past, including when you were in elementary, middle or high school, you will need to be careful. When you are in a depressed state of mind, neurotransmitters in your brain are out of balance. Antidepressant medications and mood stabilizing drugs help with recovery by restoring the balance. We recommend that you consult a mental health professional before your difficulties interfere with your everyday routine.

■ Find a Method to Eliminate Anxiety Ahead of Time

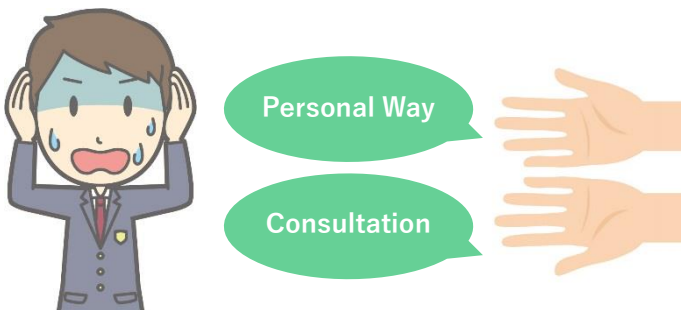
How have you dealt with anxiety in the past? Everyone has something they worry about, whether it be school work, personal relationships, or the future. Some people get rid of their anxiety by chatting with friends, playing a sport, taking a walk, or shopping. Others may calm themselves down by listening to music or reading a book alone in a relaxing environment. It is a good idea to find a personal way to distract your mind away from anxieties and cheer yourself up before problems develop, and to practice those techniques routinely. We suggest that you talk to

people even for a short while, write down your problems, or keep a journal before your problems magnify into more serious issues.

■ Symptoms of Anxiety That Require Treatment

Taking the actions mentioned previously along with the passage of time, should typically alleviate anxiety. In some cases, however, anxiety is never resolved or the vague feeling of anxiety persists without any apparent reason. If accompanied by physical symptoms like sudden palpitations, breathing difficulties, or hyperventilation, individuals may develop anxiety about going outside (a panic disorder.) In other cases, worries over various things, such as hygiene, locking doors and turning off burners, emerge rapidly and they may spend an inordinate amount of time engaging in activities to ease their anxiety, such as washing hands and checking locks (an obsessive-compulsive disorder.) These types of anxieties disrupt the everyday activities of those suffering with them.

Prolonged anxiety and intense anxiety can be treated to make daily life easier. Treatment options may include medication. With illnesses such as a panic disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder, symptoms can disrupt normal life if left untreated, and leaving home becomes a challenge. It is therefore important to start treatment as soon as possible. These problems do not need to be dealt with all on your own. We suggest that you consult a mental health professional as soon as possible so you can return to enjoying your college life.



When You Are Extremely Self Conscious or Highly Noise Sensitive

■ If Your Symptoms Started During Adolescence

Medically speaking, it is rare for these symptoms to start while in the preschool or early elementary school years. Some children are reserved or nervous while others are talkative and outgoing. Just because a child is shy and reserved with strangers does not mean they are ill. In many cases, this childhood shyness does persist into adulthood.

What is often the case is that a child begins to show symptoms of severe shyness at some point during the middle school or high school years. These symptoms can also start as early as the upper grades of elementary school. There does not seem to be much relation to whether the child was previously shy, and it can develop in some children who were outgoing when they were younger. In some instances, a change in the child's environment or an event, such as transferring to a new school or starting afterschool activities, can be a trigger. Naturally, there are cases in which divorce or other family issues caused upheaval in the child's life, but in a larger number of cases, people have no idea why their symptoms started.

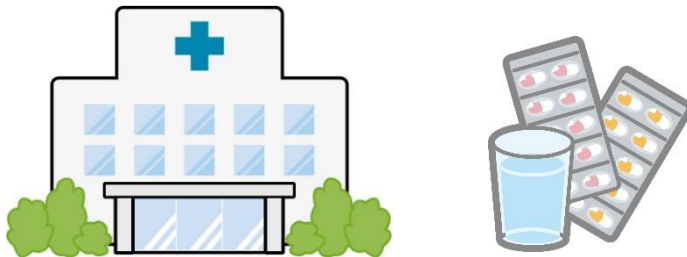
In some cases, there are reasons that this shyness is explained. For instance, someone may worry that his appearance is odd or that others are avoiding him because of his offensive body odor. In these cases, the sufferer is consumed with these thoughts. They may not be able to concentrate on their studies, and their daily life may be seriously impacted. Stutters and ticks are also frequent reasons that some people dislike being around strangers.

Whatever the case, students who have come to attend this university will have dealt with their symptoms in their own ways. The start of your new life on a college campus and becoming accustomed to your new relationships is likely to add additional stress to your life. Tackling this stress alone is like mountain climbing with a heavy load. When you feel burdened, do not hesitate to contact student services, including the Health Service Center and the Student Counseling Center. They will help you to lighten your load.

■ If Your Symptoms Emerged Recently and Unexpectedly, Seek Care Immediately

If you find that you have suddenly become acutely aware of people watching you and their attitude toward you and you never experienced these symptoms before, there is a good chance that your condition is medically different from that described above. In some cases, people feel they are disliked by others or feel cornered by believing there are rumors spreading about them. It is of course very difficult for them to determine whether such a rumor is actually circulating or if it is just imaginary. Even after later on concluding that it was just in their imagination, the rumor feels very real when they feel they are being talked about or people dislike them. In some cases, they may hear a voice that talks to them.

Regardless if these are truths or not, every day is painful if you feel cornered and desperate. You might even consider taking your life as a way to relieve the pain. We encourage you to not hold the pain to yourself and see a health professional. It is understandable to worry that the first time you meet them they may not understand you or may not like you, but you need to trust mental health professionals. They can help you. Some of you may have hesitations about taking medication, but even a small amount of medication is very beneficial to alleviate your pain and anxiety. In some cases, medicine will allow you to be able to manage your condition by yourself. Think of using a psychotropic medication just as a symptomatic remedy similar to using cough medicine for a cold. Doctors are knowledgeable about the efficacy and adverse effects of such medications, so do not hesitate to ask any questions you might have.



When You Are Frequently Not Able to Get Out of Bed in the Morning

■ Struggling in the Mornings

It may not be unusual for you to occasionally struggle to get out of bed in the morning or feel reluctant to go to school. However, if you have a number of successive days when you fail to go to classes, it can become a problem. It becomes increasingly less enticing to attend class when you have not gone to campus for several days already. Every year, we have students who fail to come to campus for several months, or in the worse cases, even years. When their family notices what has been happening, they bring the student to the Health Service Center. What can be done to avoid being in this situation?

■ Find the Cause of Your Struggle with Getting Out of Bed

The reasons for these problems can be broken down roughly to three types. The most frequent reason is undesirable lifestyle habits. If you are on the Internet until late at night or go out drinking frequently, you naturally end up going to bed late, and have difficulty getting up in the morning. The second most frequent reason is mental health issues, such as depression. This type is characterized by lethargy especially in the morning, a drop in motivation, and intense melancholy. There has been a rise in recent years of students with depressive symptoms that are accompanied by an escapism tendency. These students become unable to bring themselves to go to campus and avoid doing what needs to be done even though their melancholy is not particularly severe. The third type of case involves anthropophobia (pathological shyness.) These students become tense when encountering other people, and avoid going to campus so that they will not have to interact with others.

■ Go to Bed Early, Get Exposed to Morning Sunlight and Eat Breakfast

If undesirable lifestyle habits are the cause, the first thing to do is to improve your life rhythm. Set a limit on Internet and television use and avoid accessing them

When in Trouble

after midnight. Being exposed to sunlight in the morning and eating a breakfast regularly also help rectify your internal clock and improve your life rhythm. It is also helpful to purposefully make plans to meet with others or go out in the morning. It is important that you get up in the morning and go to bed at night at the same time. If you sleep in until almost noon on weekends, it will become harder to get up on Monday mornings. If you sleep during the daytime and stay awake at night, try to stay awake during the day even if you feel sleepy and go to bed early at night for the following few days.

Regarding the second and the third reasons, administration of proper medications is highly effective. Cognitive behavioral therapy and other psychological therapies may be effective in some cases. Please refer to the chapter on “When You Feel Demoralized or Endlessly Anxious” regarding depression, and the chapter on “When You Are Extremely Self Conscious or Highly Noise Sensitive” regarding being nervous around strangers for relevant information. It’s best to start treatment as soon as possible before you face serious difficulties such as failing to earn class credits because of your inability to get out of bed in the morning.

When there are occasional days that you cannot get out of bed and fail to attend classes, you may think that there is nothing to worry about because you will be able to go to class again soon. In many instances, however, students keep failing to go to class. Should you find yourself in a similar situation, please contact the Health Service Center promptly. We will be able to devise a plan to assist you with resolving this issue.



When You Have Problems with Classes, Lectures, and Labs

■ When You Are Stymied by Creativity- and Planning-Based Assignments



During your high school years and when/if you took college entrance exams, you would have been familiar with the type of assignments in which you were given a question and expected to provide an answer. Once in college, you encounter fewer and fewer assignments of this type, especially as you progress to upper years. Instead, you will receive an increasing number of research paper-style assignments. When you reach your senior year, you are assigned to a lab if you major in science based fields, or will participate in a seminar if you major in arts and humanities. You will be asked to select a research topic, plan necessary steps to conduct the research and implement it on your own. The requirement to plan and implement is even more substantial if you advance to graduate school. These assignments significantly differ in quality from the “write-answers-to-provided-questions” type of assignments you encountered during high school. It is not surprising that many students find these new assignments to be baffling. One of the easiest solutions to this problem is to ask instructors, upper level students, or classmates for advice. It is a simple but excellent way to solve the problem.

Some individuals, however, are very reluctant to approach others for help or unable to decide what topic to select or plan necessary steps even after they obtain advice. One thing you can do if you find yourself in this situation is to consult a mental health professional. We can work on finding a solution together. There is absolutely no need to be embarrassed about this type of difficulty. Everyone encounters these issues at some point in the life. It is important not to keep the problem to yourself and withdraw from the outside world.

On the Komaba campus, a service called “learning support” is available (for undergraduate students) at the Student Counseling Center. You can ask questions about class materials that you need further assistance in understanding. The

service covers mainly engineering, science, and math subjects. Graduate students who major in these subjects will answer your questions. We highly recommend taking advantage of this service.

■ When You Find It Difficult to Feel Comfortable with Members of Your Class

First-year and second-year undergraduate students at the University of Tokyo are assigned to a “class.” With the exception of some required courses, students all take different courses. This “class” is greatly differs from the system of a Japanese high school class where all students in that class take the same courses together. Some students who are not good at communicating with others, or students who repeat the same grade may especially find it difficult to adapt to their class. If this happens, do not struggle on your own. Please visit student mental health services. If you notice someone in your class who seems to be having difficulty adapting, please offer them assistance. In particular, it is especially helpful to assist them with obtaining information that is shared among classmates, like information on exams. There are many people who may need this knowledge, but are too shy to ask for it.

■ When You Are Unable to Adjust to Your Labs and Seminars

When you become a fourth-year student or a graduate student, you usually become a member of a relatively closed and small community called a lab or a seminar. Each lab has its own routines and culture. Everyone, including the instructor, has his/her personal characteristics. You may find some aspects of this culture and these personal characteristics confusing or frustrating to deal with. When you encounter problems, talk with the other students and help each other. You can also visit student mental health services for support. We believe we will be able to work together to find a solution.

When You Have Symptoms of Physical Ailment

■ Inseparable Mind and Body

Most believe that poor mental health means there is a problem with the mind. That is a common misunderstanding. Quite often, mental health issues are caused by problems that affect our bodies, such as fatigue, sleep deprivation and drinking. It may be accompanied by physical symptoms, including autonomic nervous symptoms. Depression lowers immune functions and often delays recovery from colds and other ailments. Disorders of the mind and those of the body are inseparable. You must not simply brush aside mental disorders as problems stemming from a lack of willpower.

■ Physical Symptoms Caused by Mental Disorders

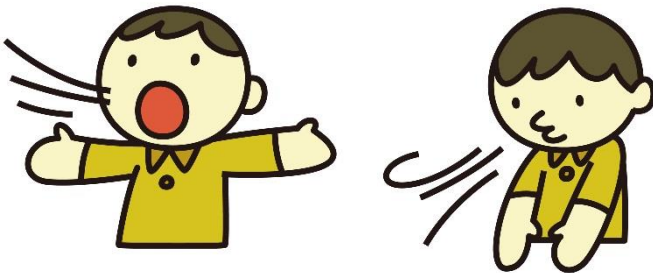
It has been known that a significant percentage of people who visit doctors and complain about physical problems are actually suffering from mental health related issues, such as depression. Depression and other types of mental disorders are often accompanied by reduced motivation and ability to focus, changes in sleep patterns and appetite, as well as chronic fatigue, shoulder stiffness, headache, feelings of something stuck in the throat, dizziness, diarrhea, and constipation. Some people are more aware of these physical symptoms than their mental symptoms, such feelings of depression and anxiety. In all cases, physical symptoms need to be examined closely. If no problems are found, the possibility of a mental health issue such as depression should be considered.

■ Mental Disorders Accompanied by Palpitations and Shortness of Breath

Rapid heartbeat and shortness of breath are commonly seen symptoms. They can occur often as symptoms of panic disorder or other mental health issues. Panic disorder is quite prevalent, afflicting more than two percent of the population. The main symptoms are intense palpitations and difficulty breathing, cold sweats, the feeling of blood rushing to the head and numbness that are accompanied by strong

When in Trouble

anxiety. These episodes last from several minutes to much longer, and tend to occur when a person has been fatigued over an extended period of time. Having a cold, being sleep deprived, or consuming alcohol also contributes to the onset. Among women, symptoms often worsen during the luteal phase preceding menstruation. It has also been found that situations that invite feelings of oppression and closed-in spaces, such as crowded trains, classrooms and theaters, and when having treatment at beauty parlors or the dentist, increase the possibility of triggering an episode. When these episodes occur multiple times, due to anxiety, the sufferer sometimes becomes unable to visit these places or use public transportation. Depression and bipolar disorder can also follow. It is therefore very important to receive proper treatment. You should be aware that symptoms similar to those of panic disorder can be triggered by a rapid pulse resulting from arrhythmia, as well as by endocrine secretions, such as from a thyroid disorder. For this reason, you should receive a proper screening before the diagnosis of panic disorder is made and treatment is started.



Conclusion

Ancient military strategist Sun Tzu's words were that if you know your enemy and yourself, then you will win one hundred battles without a loss. When it comes to mental health, it is surprisingly difficult to know yourself, or objectively grasp the health condition of your mind. Knowing your enemy, which in this instance means gaining accurate information about mental health and mental disorders, is much easier in comparison. Having this correct knowledge makes it relatively easy for you to understand the health condition of your mind. If in the future you have any concerns regarding your mental health, please re-read this handbook; it covers major mental health issues that often develop in adolescence along with their prevention and early-stage treatment options. Since all of you are bright students, you must already understand the preventative measures you can take. In short, make sure to sleep well at night, take things easy and unburden yourself if needed, refrain from heavy drinking, enjoy activities that relax you, and if you still have problems, please do not hesitate to consult a mental health professional.

You should promptly see a doctor if any of the following events occur: you hear voices even though there is no one around; you feel very uneasy and think you are being laughed at; you feel melancholic and have a strong desire to end your life; or you have insomnia that lasts for days.

Lastly, we are surrounded by an abundance of superstitions and erroneous information about mental health. Various message boards and websites circulate untrue but common beliefs, and despite being established members of society, some individuals firmly believe that medicine should not be taken. Before you believe any information, make sure to verify the source. You need to be able to distinguish between reliable information that is backed by science and statistics, and that which is not. To be safe, you should only trust information and literature that originate from professionals who have engaged in research, education, or treatment at reputable universities and other public research institutes.

It is our sincere wish that you will be able to lead a healthy and happy life by applying the knowledge you gained from this handbook.

Appendices

Checklist of Depression Symptoms

- You have difficulty concentrating, paying attention or making decisions.
- You have trouble thinking clearly.
- You feel that you are hopeless and have lost confidence in yourself.
- You feel that you are to blame for everything and that you are worthless.
- You have lost hope for the future. Your views are pessimistic.
- You are unable to enjoy hobbies and have lost interest in other activities that you used to enjoy.
- You have thoughts of ending your life or you have already tried to end your life.
- You have insomnia. (You have difficulty falling asleep or wake up too early.)
- You have great difficulty getting out of bed every morning.
- You have been fatigued over a prolonged period of time.
- You have intense irritation and anxiety, or extreme mood swings.
- You have lost your appetite.

If some of these symptoms continue for two weeks or more, you may be experiencing depression. Please visit a medical facility as soon as possible. Even if these symptoms occur only intermittently, you should see a medical professional if it begins to interfere with your college life.

On-campus Mental Health Services

■ Office for Mental Health Support

The Office for Mental Health Support is an Organization in the division for counseling and support. We have psychiatrists and psychologists who can help students and staff at the University of Tokyo continue their academic and personal lives with a healthy state of mind.

The Office for Mental Health Support can provide the following:

1. Medication and follow-up with a psychiatrist, when necessary
2. Counseling and psychological testing by a psychologist
3. Consultation
4. Annual mental health checkup for students
5. Mental health education
6. Clinical analysis of improvement

Mental Health Services at Health Service Centers

We provide personal and confidential medical management of common mental health concerns, including anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and sleep disorders. Our skilled and sensitive therapists will help you choose the treatment option best for you.

Appointments

All student visits to the Health Service require an appointment in person. Please come directly to the reception area for psychiatry at the Health Service Center (show below) to schedule a preclinical interview with a nurse or psychologist. At that time you will complete a preclinical assessment form and then make an appointment to see a psychiatrist. After the first interview with a psychiatrist, you can make subsequent appointments either at the reception or via internet. For a medical certificate, you must see a psychiatrist. Please come to reception to make this appointment.

NO Health Insurance is required.

There are fees for medicine, examinations and the medical certificate and we do ask payment in full for medication.

Mental Health Services are available ONLY to registered students and staffs at the University of Tokyo.

⇒ The Division for Counseling and Support of the University of Tokyo, Office for Mental Health Support

<http://dcs.adm.u-tokyo.ac.jp/mhs/en/> (accessed 2017-03-08)

Division/Office	URL
Division for Counseling and Support	http://dcs.adm.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/
Office for Mental Health Support	http://dcs.adm.u-tokyo.ac.jp/mhs/en/
Student Counseling Center	http://dcs.adm.u-tokyo.ac.jp/scc/en/
Communication Support Room	http://dcs.adm.u-tokyo.ac.jp/csr/en/
Nandemo-Sodan (One-Stop Resources) Office	http://dcs.adm.u-tokyo.ac.jp/nsc/en/
Peer Support Room	http://dcs.adm.u-tokyo.ac.jp/psr/en/
International Center Advising Room	http://www.ic.u-kyo.ac.jp/ic/index_j.html
International Center Komaba Office	http://www.globalkomaba.c.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/inbound/support/advising.html
Division for Health Service Promotion (Health Service Center)	http://www.hc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/hc/en/

Reference

■ TELL

TELL website says, “TELL is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing world-class, effective support and counseling services to Japan’s international community as well as helping to address the country’s growing mental health care needs.”

⇒ <http://telljp.com/>

■ Tokyo Metropolitan Medical Institution Information

Health and Medical information/Emergency Translation Services

⇒ <http://www.himawari.metro.tokyo.jp/qq/qq13enmnl.asp>

■ Dept. Neuropsychiatry, Graduate School of Medicine, the University of Tokyo

⇒ <http://npsy.umin.jp/en/>


■ IMAS

Inbound Medical Assistance Service for International Students at UTokyo

⇒ <http://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/current-students/imas.html>

Mental Health Handbook for Students

- Office for Mental Health Support, Division for Counseling and Support
Psychiatry, Division for Health Service Promotion
The University of Tokyo, 7-3-1 Hongo Bunkyo-ku Tokyo, 113-0033, Japan
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Takafumi Shimada, Masaaki Nishioka, Kei-icthro Watanabe
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Office for Mental Health Support, Division for Counseling and Support
Mental Health Services, Division for Health Service Promotion
(Health Service Center)

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