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# RECOVERY HAPPENS COUNSELING SERVICES

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## College Students' Psychological Problems Increase

In a 2002 national survey, more than 80 percent of 247 directors of counseling centers said they thought the number of students with severe psychological disorders had increased over the previous five years. In addition, a study conducted at the counseling center of Kansas State University found that between 1989 and 2001, the percentage of students treated for depression and the percentage of suicidal students doubled. More than two times the percentage of students are taking prescription medications for their mental health issues.

The study was based on forms filled out by therapists after treating more than 13,000 students between 1989 and 2001.

Other findings showed that problems related to stress, anxiety, learning disabilities such as attention deficit disorder, family issues, grief, and sexual assault increased also. More traditional complaints from college students; separation from home, romantic relationships, and career choices likewise increased.

The lead author of the study, which is the largest of its kind, is, Dr. Sherry A. Benton. She is the assistant director of training at the counseling center in Manhattan, Kansas. Dr. Benton, referring to the study, stated, "What we are seeing is people with multiple problems, and some of those are significantly more serious".

Mental health professionals at other colleges across the United States said the study established their belief that students are struggling with more serious issues and distress than in the past.

Dr. Benton and her colleagues cannot cite a clear reason for the dramatic increase. However, there are contributing factors to help explain this phenomenon. One such contributing factor is the greater awareness of mental illness coupled with the easing of the stigma attached to seeking therapy. *(Continued)*

## 10 TIPS for Family Recovery

Recovery from chemical dependency for the family involves becoming educated about the disease, adjusting to the sobriety of the chemically dependent member, overcoming the negative effects of chemical dependency, and developing new, healthy behaviors to replace old ones that ultimately caused pain (such as enabling).

Family recovery is a gradual process. There are no shortcuts, easy answers, or magic cures. It takes commitment, a willingness to work hard, and openness to let others help you.

The following is a review of some useful recovery tips. Employ any or all of them to help your family.

**1. Help yourself before you try to help others.** Once you take care of your own needs, you will be in a better position to help others in your family. Take care of yourself by making your personal recovery a priority, committing to attend an appropriate "twelve-step" meeting on a regular basis, and by seeking professional counseling. Taking care of your self also means giving proper attention to your physical health.

**2. Talk with others and share your feelings, conflicts, problems, and concerns.** This will provide relief and prevent you from stuffing your feelings and letting them build-up. Anger, resentment, bitterness, guilt, shame, and other hurt feelings can be worked out more easily if you share them with another person, especially if they are recovering from family chemical dependency issues.

*(Continued)*

**(College Students)**

Other factors include the pressure placed on students to succeed academically and the breakdown of family support systems.

*This study illustrates the extreme importance for young adults with alcohol and drug abuse issues, entering or currently attending college, need to be established and secure in recovery before leaving home.*

***My experience has been that a minimum of six months of sobriety is essential for a person to be prepared to be successful in college. This time allows them to mature emotionally, and socially; necessary due to the stifling caused by alcohol and drug abuse and addiction. This time also allows a person to become versed in seeking out and engaging in support groups and to gain confidence in themselves and their ability to remain sober. Moreover, it gives them time to experience many of the positive aspects recovery brings, thus reinforcing the desire to remain in recovery.***

In addition, applying the coping mechanisms and other tools learned in recovery will assist one in avoiding the trappings associated with the psychological woes pointed out in Dr. Benton’s study.



Recovery Happens Counseling Services specializes in providing outpatient treatment for adolescents & young adults and their families with drug use and dual-diagnosis issues.



For additional addiction and recovery information, visit my website at [www.recoveryhappens.com](http://www.recoveryhappens.com)

**(10 Tips)**

**3. Improve your attitudes and thinking patterns.**

Since these affect your emotions and the way you act, try to identify negative thought patterns. Once you do, you can practice changing these to thoughts that are more positive. It is not easy to change how you think, just keep trying. You will be glad you did.

**4. Change your behaviors.** Once you identify behaviors that you need to change, try your best to change them. Ask for help if you are having trouble identifying unhealthy behaviors or if you are struggling to find replacement behaviors.

**5. Involve others in your family in recovery when possible.** This helps them heal from the emotional wounds one experiences being a member of a chemically dependent family. In addition, it helps them to support the chemically dependent family member’s recovery.

**6. Be active with friends and social activities.** Do not isolate yourself from others. If you have given up friendships or fun activities because of family chemical dependency problems, make an effort to regain these or work at developing new friendships or leisure interests.

**7. Read recovery literature to improve your understanding of chemical dependency problems and recovery.** There are many books in publication that will aid your recovery.

**8. Use your religious beliefs or “Higher Power” to find strength.** A benefit of involvement in recovery is a growth in spirituality and love. Explore your spirituality will help with many recovery ideas. It is also beneficial to every other aspect of your life

**9. Support the efforts of your chemically dependent family member to recover.** Encourage him or her to keep recovery their first priority. Give them space to recover and support the time he or she needs to spend away from you or the family.

**10. Credit yourself for all efforts and improvements you make.** When you work hard at your recovery, give yourself a pat on the back. When you make positive changes, however small, acknowledge them.

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