



Journey to College

By: **Rebecca's Dream**

Introduction

Congratulations on graduating from high school, an accomplishment to be proud of as this next journey begins. College brings new goals and opportunities to explore interests, learn, and grow personally. This step forward is meaningful, both individually and for the support systems along the way. A range of emotions often comes with this transition, and taking time to recognize and reflect on them can support overall well-being. The path through college is not always straight; challenges will arise, but they can also create opportunities for growth, self-discovery, and a clearer sense of direction.

Setting Expectations

This is a time to set goals while staying open to growth and change. Finding a balance between structure and flexibility will help you navigate this transition with greater confidence.

- 01 Set clear and realistic short and long-term goals.
- 02 Make a plan, take action, and celebrate progress.
- 03 Stay open to spontaneity and new opportunities.
- 04 Step outside your comfort zone.

The BIG Four: Behaviors Supporting Academic Success

Strong academic habits can make a big difference in how you adjust and succeed in college. Focusing on a few key behaviors can help you stay organized, engaged, and supported.

- 01 **Attend class regularly**
Showing up consistently keeps you on track and connected to course material.
- 02 **Manage your time effectively**
Plan ahead, stay organized, and balance academics with other responsibilities.
- 03 **Get to know your professors**
Building relationships with faculty can provide guidance, support, and opportunities.
- 04 **Seek help early**
Don't wait, use campus resources like tutoring, office hours, and support services early.



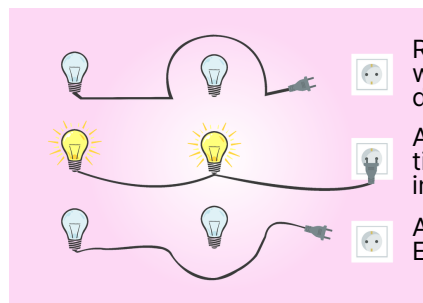
Be Prepared for the Unexpected

College is full of new experiences, and not everything will go according to plan. Learning to navigate change and uncertainty is an important part of the transition.

- Not everything will go as planned.
- Expect surprises and changes along the way.
- Stay flexible and adapt as you learn.

What if you don't reach your goals?

Setbacks don't define ability; they help shape it. Learning how to adjust and keep moving forward is an important part of growth.



Reevaluate what worked and what didn't.

Adjust goals and timelines, and put into action.

Accept that 'Good Enough' is okay.

About 30–33%* of undergraduate students change their major at least once; changing direction is a normal part of the process. These moments can lead to greater clarity, confidence, and a better understanding of what you want moving forward.

*National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2017)

Self-Care & Adjustment Tips

A range of feelings is normal and often temporary. Staying connected and building routines can help create a sense of being grounded and supported.

- Stay connected with home (schedule regular check-ins).
- Bring familiar items to school to make your space feel comfortable.
- Create new routines and traditions on campus.
- Plan visits home to stay grounded.
- Get involved in student life, avoid isolation.
- Take time to explore your new environment.

College Mental Health Checklist

Preparing for college includes building support systems, creating realistic self-care habits, and connecting with campus resources ahead of time.

- **Locate campus services:** Know where the counseling center is and how to access support.
- **Verify coverage:** Understand how many sessions are available and any associated costs.
- **Create a crisis plan:** Keep contact information for doctors, family, and support systems in one place.
- **Establish accommodations:** Register with disability or support services if needed.
- **Continue care:** If currently in therapy, plan for a transition to a provider near campus.
- **Know emergency resources:** Save campus safety and crisis hotline numbers in your phone.

STRESS vs. ANXIETY

STRESS	ANXIETY
A response to an external situation	A response that can persist beyond the situation
Triggered by a specific challenge or demand	May occur with or without a clear trigger
Short-term and situation-based	Can linger even after stress passes
Often goes away once the situation resolves	Becomes a concern when it is frequent, intense, or hard to control
<i>Example:</i> Upcoming exam, deadline, conflict	<i>Example:</i> Ongoing worry, racing thoughts, physical tension

KEY DIFFERENCE	
Stress = response to a situation	Anxiety = ongoing response that may outlast the situation

WHEN TO PAY ATTENTION	IMPORTANT TO KNOW
Anxiety may need support when it:	Stress is a normal and temporary experience.
Lasts for long periods of time	Anxiety is also common—but can become overwhelming without support.
Happens without a clear cause	Both are manageable with the right tools and support.
Is intense or hard to control	
Interferes with daily life (sleep, school, relationships)	



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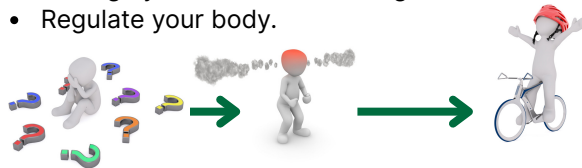


Sensory Overload:

Thoughts - Feelings - Actions

Sensory overload can happen when thoughts, feelings, and actions all feel heightened at once. Learning to recognize these moments by noticing triggers, tuning into feelings, and slowing down reactions can help create space to reset and respond in a more manageable way.

- Irrational thoughts.
- Heightened feelings.
- Choices and consequences.
- Tune into and experience your feelings.
- Trigger signs and body signals.
- Reframing expectations.
- Manage your irrational thinking.
- Regulate your body.



HELP

When to Get Help

It's important to recognize when additional support may be needed. Reaching out early can make a meaningful difference.

- Notice major shifts in mood/activity level.
- Binge drinking, drug use to self-medicate.
- Increased irritability, verbal or physical aggression.
- Talking of suicide or self-harm.
- Risky substance use or not caring about consequences.
- Anxiety so severe that it limits leaving your room or engaging in daily activities.
- Intrusive thoughts that are impairing your functioning.

Call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline)

Available 24/7 to connect with trained counselors. Support is available in English and Spanish.

Self-Advocacy

Where to get help

Support is available in many places on and off campus. Knowing where to go can make it easier to reach out when needed.

- Residence hall staff (RA or hall director).
- Campus health center or counseling services.
- Student services or career services.
- Fitness, recreation, or wellness centers.
- Center for faith and spirituality.
- Primary care physician.
- Trusted friends, family members, or mentors.
- Crisis lines (988) or texting support apps.