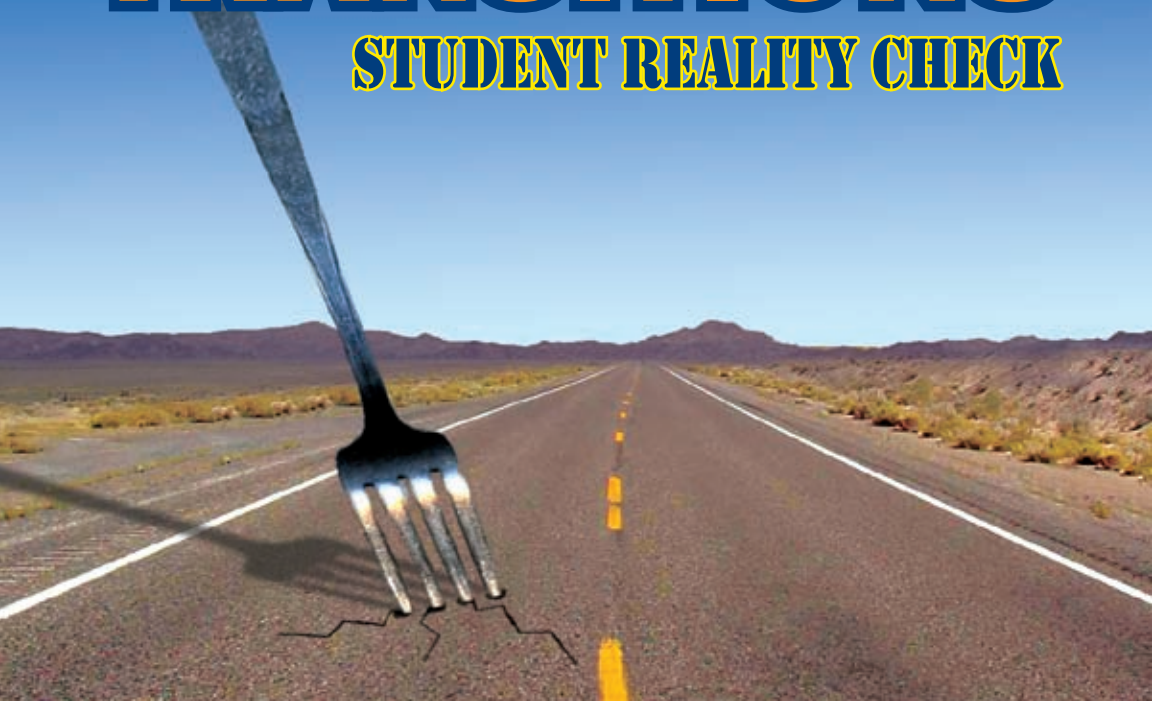


TRANSITIONS

STUDENT REALITY CHECK



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Dr. Stan Kutcher
(Stan.kutcher@dal.ca)



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Written and designed by:
Jacqueline Potvin-Boucher

Advisory Group:

Counselling Services, Dalhousie University
Student Academic Success Services, Dalhousie University
Counselling Services, Saint Mary's University
Student Counselling Services, Mount St. Vincent University
The Centre for Student Success, Nova Scotia Community College
Office of Student and Academic Services, NSCAD University

Edited by:
David Venn

Mental Health Reviewers:

Dr. John Aspin
Dr. Carlo Carandang
Dr. Stephanie Casey
Dr. Aidan Stokes
Dr. Normand Carrey

Student Participants:

Emily Atkinson
Marika Forsythe
Sarah Lefurgey
Laura McWilliam

Readers/Participants:

Andy Cox
Kelsey Grittner
Ricardo Salcedo
Magda Szumilas

Project Leader:

Dr. Stan Kutcher, MD, FRCPC,
Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health



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CONGRATULATIONS! YOU MADE IT INTO COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY!

You're about to go through a major life change, so prepare yourself to meet exciting new people, face new challenges and learn tons about your world and you!

As you become familiar with campus life you will quickly adjust to your schedule and see that college/university is quite different from high school. Classes will be larger, the work more complex, expectations will be higher and you will have more independence. Therefore you may need to adapt to new ways of thinking and working to achieve success. Whether you have entered college/university right out of high school or as a returning student, one of the keys to success is anticipating what challenges lie ahead and being prepared.

This book will help you adjust to your new life and suggest strategies to help you succeed in your college/university career. It will be a resource for helping you to overcome common difficulties as you adapt to your new role. It will also provide you with tips on managing your new responsibilities and becoming a more confident, independent individual.

HOW TO DEAL WITH ROOMMATES

The keys to a successful living arrangement are communication and rules. If you are planning to live with others prior to signing a lease, it may be a good idea to interview potential roommates and make an agreement as to rules and responsibilities.

INTERVIEW POTENTIAL ROOMMATES

1. What are their expectations around household chores, bills and activities?
2. What are their habits around work, school and sleeping schedules?
3. Do they like to host parties? If so, what kind?
4. Do they smoke or use drugs (including alcohol)?
5. Will friends be staying overnight frequently?

MAKE AN AGREEMENT CONTRACT

When you do find a suitable roommate one proactive way to limit hassles is to make an agreement prior to signing a lease.



CHECK THESE OUT:

http://www.roommateclick.com/roommate_helpful_documents.htm

<http://www.canadarentals.net>

UNDERSTAND YOUR EXPENSES

Whether your parents are paying for your education or you have scholarships, grants or student loans, it is important that you understand what your expenses will be so that you can better manage your money.

STUDENT LOANS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Visit the registrar's office or the awards office at your school for a list of scholarships and bursaries to apply for. If you are applying for a student loan you will have to apply for funding through the province you resided in for the last twelve months.

Understand how interest works on your loan. You will not be charged interest while in school full-time. However, if you are studying on a part-time basis, payments and interest may have to be made while still in school.

Dropping courses may impact your student loan. Be sure to find out how many courses you are required to take to maintain full time student status.

TAKE OWNERSHIP OF YOUR LOAN!

The loan is in your name, so read and understand the terms and conditions.

BUDGETING

Preparing a budget is always a good idea. It may help you to have enough money to survive until the end of the term.

Consider how much funding you will have for the year, determine if it will be enough to pay for all of your expenses. If not you will have to figure out which expenses you can cut out or maybe you will need to take on a part-time job.



CHECK THESE OUT:

<http://www.scholarshipscanada.com/>

<http://www.canlearn.ca/>

<http://www.debtfreegrad.com/>

<http://moneymatters.dal.ca/>

<http://www.edulinx.ca/index.php>



TIPS TO STAY ON TRACK:

1. Determine your needs versus your wants.
2. Don't apply for credit cards while in school.
3. Do not carry around your debit cards.
4. Take out a budgeted amount of money each month; then do not touch your bank account.
5. Get a part-time job but make sure it doesn't affect your grades.
6. Walk, bicycle or take the bus.
7. Live with roommates. Sharing rent and utilities is a big help financially.
8. Shop wisely. Don't be embarrassed to use coupons as every dollar counts.
9. Skip the coffee shop and make your own coffee before you leave in the morning.
10. Keep a list of all expenses. If you find you're tight on cash review your list of where you spent your money and you'll be able to determine what expenses were unnecessary.
11. Take advantage of all student discounts. Carry your student ID with you. Many retailers have reduced student rates.

LEARN HOW TO MANAGE YOUR TIME

There is never going to be enough time in the day so you must learn to manage your schedule, set priorities and find a balance between work and play. Most universities or colleges provide student planners or day-timers at the beginning of the semester for free or low cost. Take advantage of this and use it to plan your week.

PROCRASTINATION

Are you constantly putting things off and making excuses?

Common reasons for procrastination & tips to help:

1. **Too challenging.** *Break down the task into smaller, easier steps.*
2. **Distractions.** *Take control of the situation! Find a private study space.*
3. **Too many projects on the go.** *Look at the bigger picture. Choose what is most important first. Remember - not everything that feels urgent is important.*

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDENT TIME MANAGEMENT



- **Identify Your Goals**
- **Set Priorities**
 - ↳ Prioritize your goals – high, medium or low priority.
- **Make a To Do List**
 - ↳ Create daily, weekly, monthly lists based on your priorities.
- **Allocate Adequate Time for Each Task**
 - ↳ Be realistic about how much time will be required for each task.
- **Schedule Time on Every Course Every Week**
 - ↳ Plan to review course material at least every week. Identify what you don't understand early on so you can clear up any confusion before it comes time for exams.
- **Choosing your Courses**
 - ↳ Keep the time of day in mind when picking your classes. Schedule the harder classes when you have the most energy in the day.



CHECK THESE OUT:

<http://www.academictips.org/acad/timemanagement.html>

<http://myguide.dal.ca/index.html>

<http://studygs.net/timman.htm>

<http://www.smu.ca/counselling>

MAXIMIZE YOUR LEARNING

Understanding your personal learning style can help you to reach your goals and succeed in school.

There are four common learning styles: visual, auditory, reading/writing and tactile. You may be a combination of all four, but generally one learning style will be more effective for you than the others.

SOME STUDY TIPS FOR YOUR LEARNING TYPE

Visual Learners:



1. The more pictures, charts and diagrams the better.
2. Study alone and highlight the key points.

Auditory Learners



1. Listen to speakers. Record class sessions and listen to them later.
2. Repeating information out loud will help you remember key points.

Reading/Writing Learners:



1. Written lists help.
2. Rewrite phrases using other words to mean the same thing.

Tactile Learners:



1. Take breaks often and find a way to incorporate movement into your studying.
2. Study while on the go - on the bus or while waiting in line.

YOUR FIRST EXAMS

Exams at this level are not like in high school; expectations are much higher. This is why it is important to take well organized notes throughout the year. Also, unlike high school it's best to start studying weeks prior to exams!

STUDY TIPS!

Organize yourself

Make a study plan

Create study notes

Highlight key points

Take breaks

Get 8 hrs. of sleep

No distractions

Join a study group

Do not procrastinate

EXAM DAY

1. Hopefully you got a good night's sleep. This is more important than "pulling an all-nighter". And don't be late for the exam!
2. Review your notes. Do not review new material; it may confuse you.
3. If you are feeling anxious go for a brisk walk.
4. Go to the bathroom. It may seem silly but often instructors will not let you take bathroom breaks during an exam - so go before!
5. Take your time and pace yourself. If you do not know an answer to a question move on and go back to the question later.



CHECK THESE OUT:

<http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp>

<http://www.studygs.net/>

<http://studytips.org/>

HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS

It may seem scary at first since you don't know anyone but don't freak out. Most first year students are just like you, hoping to make new friends too. However, if you are happy having quiet time to yourself and don't particularly want to surround yourself with many new people, there is nothing wrong with that as long as you are happy.

TIPS ON MAKING FRIENDS

1. Introduce yourself
2. Party responsibly
3. Don't hide out
4. Be open to new experiences
5. Show up early to class
6. Invite someone to go for coffee with you
7. Join a sports team or club
8. Get a job or volunteer



DATING

If you are interested in dating this may be the easiest time of your life to meet people. Go for it and have fun! However, you have to keep in mind how a relationship may affect your college/university career. Dating can get complicated, so think about what is best for you.


THE DREADED BREAKUP

Breakups hurt but we all have to go through them in life. Some breakups are mutual, while other times we may just get outright dumped. Either way they can totally hurt.

TIPS TO GET OVER A BREAKUP:

1. Cut off intimate contact with your ex.
2. Don't rush into a new rebound relationship.
3. Talk to your friends.
4. Write down your feelings.
5. Try new activities.
6. Get out & have fun.

*WHAT DOESN'T KILL YOU
ONLY MAKES YOU STRONGER!*





CHECK THESE OUT:

<http://www.facebook.com>

<http://www.student.com>

<http://www.colleges.com>

SEXUAL ACTIVITY - A PERSONAL CHOICE

Not everyone is sexually active. It's for you to decide when you wish to be sexually active. Deciding whether or not you are ready to be in a relationship takes careful consideration. Sexuality is a normal part of being human but you have to keep in mind what your values are. What are your goals and priorities in life at the moment? Ask yourself what intercourse means to you and if you are ready. Sexual activity is a personal choice and you need to do what is best for you.

If you do choose to be sexually active and enjoy the party nightlife one of the perks about being in college or university is you never have to go far to find a party! However, there are some things you should consider before you end up jumping into bed with a stranger.

HOOKING UP - THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

...So you go to a party with all your friends. You meet a really hot guy or girl and have an awesome time!

You want the night to never end!

So you ask yourself, *“Why not hook up with them for the night?”*

After all, you could have a full night make-out session or even hours of wild sex. How awful could that really be, right? I'm not suggesting you should or shouldn't go for it, but here are some **things to think about** before making any decisions.

- 1.** Have you been drinking? Are you really capable of making decisions that you won't regret in the morning?
- 2.** Will you be cheating? If you already have a boyfriend/girlfriend ask yourself if this one night of hooking up is worth risking a good thing.
- 3.** Do you know this person? Are you sure they don't have a girlfriend/boyfriend? If so, do you really want to get involved with them?

4. What are your expectations? Are you hoping this will develop into a relationship or are you both understanding that this is just a one-night stand?
5. Think about your values and who you are. Will hooking up change the way you look at yourself?
6. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Remember, when you sleep with someone you sleep with everyone else that he/she has slept with. Protect yourself.

UNPLANNED PREGNANCY

You just found out you are pregnant. You may experience feelings of shock, anger, sadness, anxiety, confusion or happiness. It's important you first sort through your emotions in order to start thinking realistically and considering your options.

Making a decision is not going to be easy! Trying to do this on your own is very difficult. We suggest that you contact your student health clinic and student counselling office as soon as possible to get the help and support you may need.



CHECK THESE OUT:

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-gs>

<http://sexualityandu.ca/adults>

http://www.mtv.com/thinkmtv/sexual_health

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIS)

*WOULD YOU JUMP OUT OF AN AIRPLANE WITHOUT A PARACHUTE?
NOT LIKELY...., SO WHY WOULD YOU HAVE SEX WITHOUT A CONDOM?*

STIs are common during college/university years. Therefore, over the next four to five years you are at higher risk. So communicate with your partner, discuss the risks and decide together how you can best protect one another. This way you can talk, take your time and enjoy the foreplay!

SAFE SEX TIPS:

- Try flavored condoms for oral sex.
- Never touch a genital sore caused by a sexually transmitted infection, even if for a short period of time. Infection can sometimes be carried on your hand to your partner's genitals.
- If you use sex toys, don't share them unless you wash them first or use condoms on them.
- If you have crabs (pubic lice) remember they have a way of getting from one person to another during any close contact. Condoms are not going to prevent them so keep your clothes on.
- A single committed partner decreases the risk of getting an STI.



CHECK THESE OUT:

<http://www.reachout.com.au/>

<http://www.sexualityandu.ca/>

MANAGE STRESS & RECOGNIZE DEPRESSION



Everyone gets stressed. The secret is not to try to avoid stress (that will never happen) but to learn how to deal with it effectively.

How do I know if I'm depressed or if I'm just having a bad day?

Everyone has bad days. However if your sad mood persists over longer periods of time and starts affecting your daily routine you may be depressed. If you think you or a friend may be depressed it's a good idea to make an appointment with your school health clinic or counseling office to get help.

10 SIGNS OF DEPRESSION:

1. **More emotional than usual** – sad, lonely feelings, and often tearful.
2. **Feeling of worthlessness** – harsh self judgment; blaming yourself.
3. **Changes in sleeping patterns** – sleeping too little or too much.
4. **Appetite or weight changes** – no appetite or eating more than usual.
5. **No energy** – very tired or lazy feeling.

6. **Unable to concentrate** – everything seems hazy; you just can't focus and make decisions.
7. **Loss of interest** – can't be bothered; bored very easily.
8. **Negative attitude** – very hard to be optimistic.
9. **Feelings of helplessness** – just feeling like you have bad luck and things will never get better.
10. **Thinking about suicide or hurting yourself** – at this point seek help immediately.

TIPS TO HELP FIGHT STRESS & DEPRESSIVE FEELINGS:

1. **Go outside** – staying inside can drain a person. Just getting out and enjoying the sun may lift your spirits.
2. **Exercise** – force yourself into some daily physical activity.
3. **Be social** – get out there! Don't isolate and feel sorry for yourself. Even if you're not in the mood you may surprise yourself by how much fun you will have.
4. **Stop thinking so much** – too much over analyzing and obsessing will lead to exaggerated feelings and drag you down.
5. **Talk** – don't bottle up your feelings. Talk to people you can trust who will understand what you are going through.
6. **Relax** – take time for yourself. Consider trying yoga or meditation.

7. **Eat healthy** – eating a well-rounded balanced meal gives your body the fuel it needs to combat stress. Don't skip meals and stay away from junk.
8. **Stay away from booze** – alcohol and drugs are depressants and may contribute to your depressive feelings.
9. **Laugh** – rent a funny DVD and watch it.
10. **Problem solve** – take control and plan out solutions to your problems instead of feeling hopeless. Ask others for advice.
11. **Structure your day** – give yourself some tasks to do. This helps keep you busy and your mind active.

If these tips don't help – **DO NOT tell yourself it's hopeless; you have not failed!**
Visit the student health clinic or the student counselling office.

TIPS FOR HELPING YOUR FRIEND

If you think your friend may be depressed or suicidal go with them to the student counselling office.



CHECK THESE OUT:

<http://www.canadian-health-network.ca>

<http://www.nami.org>

UNDERSTAND ANXIETY DISORDERS

Anxiety disorders are quite common and include panic disorder and obsessive compulsive disorder. Although anxiety disorders can be difficult to deal with, the good news is they are very treatable.

TIPS TO COPE WITH AN ANXIETY DISORDER

Whether you are just having normal anxiety or you have an anxiety disorder these tips can help you cope:

- ⇒ **Exercise** - Exercise helps your body release pent-up stress.
- ⇒ **Relax** – Breathe deeply and consider trying yoga or meditation.
- ⇒ **Sleep well** – Try to get 8 hours of sleep a night.
- ⇒ **Learn to laugh** – Challenge negative thinking.
- ⇒ **Limit alcohol consumption** – Alcohol is a depressant.
- ⇒ **Eat a well-balanced diet** – Stay away from junk food.
- ⇒ **Add variety to your life** – Take up a hobby or a sports activity.
- ⇒ **Create a support network** – Talk to friends you can trust.
- ⇒ **Learn to manage your time** – Don't put things off and overwhelm yourself.
- ⇒ **Stop being a perfectionist** – Chill out; praise yourself for trying.

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND

People who struggle with anxiety disorders need more than just counselling and medication; they need supportive friends like you.



CHECK THESE OUT:

<http://www.cmha.ca>

<http://www.nami.org>

BE AWARE OF EATING DISORDERS

There are three main types of eating disorders:

Anorexia nervosa – Characterized by severe weight loss due to starving oneself or going to the extreme of eating as little as possible. Anorexia nervosa is often accompanied by excessive exercising and obsession with body image.

Bulimia nervosa – Characterized by being normal weight or overweight with frequent binge eating followed by self-induced vomiting. Other symptoms include abuse of laxatives and diet pills.

EDNOS (Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified) – Eating disorder that does not meet the full criteria of Anorexia or Bulimia. An example would be binge eating, which is characterized by episodes of compulsive overeating to comfort oneself during stressful times, often followed by extreme dieting.

*SOME
SECRETS KILL!!*

If your eating disorder is a big secret,
you can't overcome it until you admit you have it.

Because eating disorders are complex problems a range of professional treatments including medical treatment, nutritional counselling and psychological therapy may be important for successful recovery.

I HAVE AN EATING DISORDER - WHAT DO I DO?

If you are struggling with an eating disorder you are not alone. Do not feel ashamed of asking for help - it doesn't make you a failure. With the support of your friend you should seek professional help from your family doctor or counsellor.

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND

If you suspect your friend has an eating disorder you should encourage him/her to seek professional help. Don't nag them about eating or focus on their preoccupation with food. Try to get your friend to open up and talk about their feelings. Let them know you are concerned, without forcing anything on them or laying blame.



CHECK THESE OUT:

<http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org>

<http://www.nami.org>

YOUR PARENTS

Your parents are interested in you. For many people parents are an important source of support. Just because you are in university/college does not mean you need to ignore them! Keep the lines of communication open.

DRUGS & ALCOHOL - KNOW THE RISKS

DRUGS

College/university is an exciting time and if you choose to attend an all night dance party or rave you will be exposed to drugs. You need to ask yourself if experimenting with drugs is worth the risks.

HOW TO REDUCE YOUR RISKS

1. Don't do hard drugs such as cocaine, heroin, LSD etc. And don't hang out with people who do use them.
2. If you do use drugs such as alcohol or marijuana, use them only in moderation and within limits of the law. Never drive after using alcohol or drugs.
3. Friends who pressure you to use drugs/alcohol are not looking out for your interests. If you don't want to use drugs/alcohol - don't!
4. Don't get into a car with someone who is driving after taking any drugs/alcohol.
5. If you are using drugs/alcohol more days than not, or if you are having financial, personal or school problems while using drugs/alcohol, you may have a problem. Get help before things get out of hand.



● SIGNS OF A DRUG OVERDOSE

- Loss of consciousness which can lead to a coma
- Chest pain
- Heavy sweating
- Delusions and/or hallucinations
- Faster breathing
- Seizures or uncontrollable twitching
- Overheating
- Racing or irregular heartbeat
- Cold or pale skin

**KNOW
THE SIGNS!**

CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY!

NICOTINE

Remember that nicotine is a drug. Smoking is a huge health risk. If you are smoking, now may be a good time to quit. Get help. Visit your campus health clinic.

ALCOHOL

Depending on the number of drinks you have had, your age, gender, weight, metabolism and tolerance, the effects of alcohol vary. Alcohol is one of the most common drugs of addiction so drink responsibly.

TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND

- **Eat before drinking.** Food slows down alcohol absorption.
- **Safe consumption.** You should generally have no more than two drinks a day.
- **Know when to stop.** If you are at a party and have had more than a few drinks and are starting to feel woozy, know when enough is enough and stop.
- **If you're on medication don't drink alcohol.** Some prescription drugs or even over the counter drugs can be deadly when mixed with alcohol.
- **Stay safe.** If you feel you've had too much and are about to pass out-get somewhere safe. You don't want someone to take advantage of you.
- **Don't drive.** Four Canadians are killed every day and just fewer than 190 Canadians are injured each day from impaired driving. So get a ride with someone else! (For more information visit www.madd.ca) Note that 49.9% of car accident fatalities among people aged 20-25 in 2003, were alcohol related.



• **SIGNS OF ALCOHOL POISONING**

- Loss of consciousness
- Slow or irregular heartbeat
- Vomiting
- Seizure
- Low body temperature
- Pale or bluish skin

CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY!

WHAT DO I DO IF I THINK SOMEONE HAS ALCOHOL POISONING?

- Know that a person who has passed out may die.
- Call 911 for help.



CHECK THESE OUT:

<http://www.collegedrinkinglevention.gov/>

<http://www.canadianhealthnetwork.ca>

GUIDELINES FOR SAFER GAMBLING

Many people are able to gamble without experiencing problems. However an increasing number of students are going to casinos and gambling online in hopes to win big and pay their way through school. This may lead to big debt. If you are gambling and have the following warning signs you may have a gambling problem. Get help before it gets out of hand.

WARNING SIGNS

- Ongoing money problems associated with gambling.
- Constantly borrowing from friends.
- Broken promises & missed commitments with no explanation due to gambling.
- Relationship problems or avoids friends who they may owe money to.
- Secretive or deceitful about gambling.
- Constantly talking about gambling or gambling alone.



CHECK THESE OUT:

<http://www.mooddisorderscanada.ca/findinghelp/gambling/index.htm>

<http://www.camh.net/>

UNDERSTAND SUICIDE

Suicidal thoughts or actions should always be taken seriously as it is one of the leading causes of death among young people. If you hear someone talking about suicide it may be a call for help.

WHY WOULD SOMEONE COMMIT SUICIDE?

People commit suicide because their problems seem so overwhelming that they feel there is no way out.

Some common problems that may lead to suicide include:

- Feelings of hopelessness
- Major depression
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Feelings of worthlessness

WARNING SIGNS

- Suicidal thoughts or plans
- Preoccupation with death
- Talk about what it will be like when they're gone
- Loss of interest in regular activities
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Intense hopelessness or sadness

I THINK MY FRIEND IS SUICIDAL

If you think someone is suicidal it is important that you listen to them without being judgmental. Ask if he/she is thinking about committing suicide. This will show you care and your friend will likely be relieved that you asked, knowing that he/she is not alone. If he/she is suicidal take them to the counselling office or emergency room.



CHECK THESE OUT:

<http://www.cmhs.ca>

<http://www.canadian-health-network.ca>

WHERE TO GET HELP

If you have other questions pertaining to:

Depression

Peer Pressure

Self Confidence

Grief & Loss

Psychosis

How to Deal with your Parents

Career Counselling

Rape or Sexual Abuse

Visit the **counselling services office** at your university/college for information. That's what they're there for.

For further help on the above issues, get your copy of the companion version to the student reality check book, available at the student services office or counselling office at your school. All sources of information are referenced in the companion version.

✓ REALITY
CHECKED

