

MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS AND TREATMENT-SEEKING

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS & PARENTS



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Mental Health Needs and Treatment-Seeking of Massachusetts College Students

A Guide for Students & Parents

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Introduction

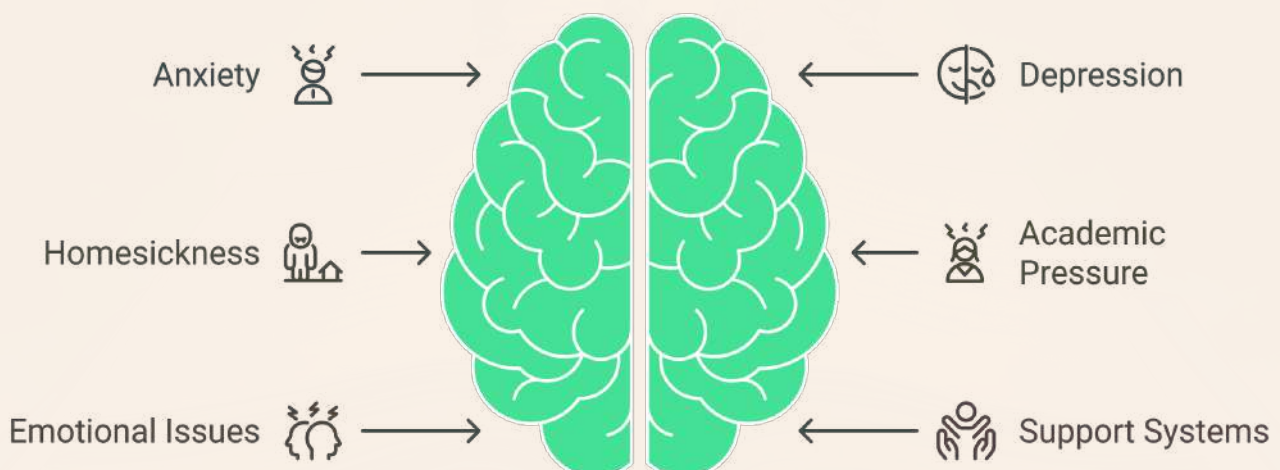
1.1 Why Mental Health Matters in College

College is a time of big change. You're stepping into a new chapter—living away from home, managing your own schedule, juggling classes, friendships, maybe even a job. It's exciting, but it can also be overwhelming.

Mental health plays a huge role in how students navigate this phase. More than 60% of U.S. college students report struggling with anxiety, depression, or similar challenges. It's not just a stat—it's a wake-up call.

Whether it's homesickness, academic pressure, or serious emotional issues, students deserve tools and support to help them stay healthy and succeed. The earlier someone gets help, the easier it is to manage symptoms and thrive.

Why Mental Health Matters in College?



1.2 Who This Guide is For

This guide is for **Massachusetts college students and their parents**.

If you're a student, we want you to know: what you're going through is real, valid, and manageable with help.

If you're a parent, this guide will help you better understand how to support your child—emotionally and practically—through their college journey.

This isn't a textbook. It's a clear, down-to-earth resource filled with tips, facts, and places you can turn for real support.



The State of Student Mental Health

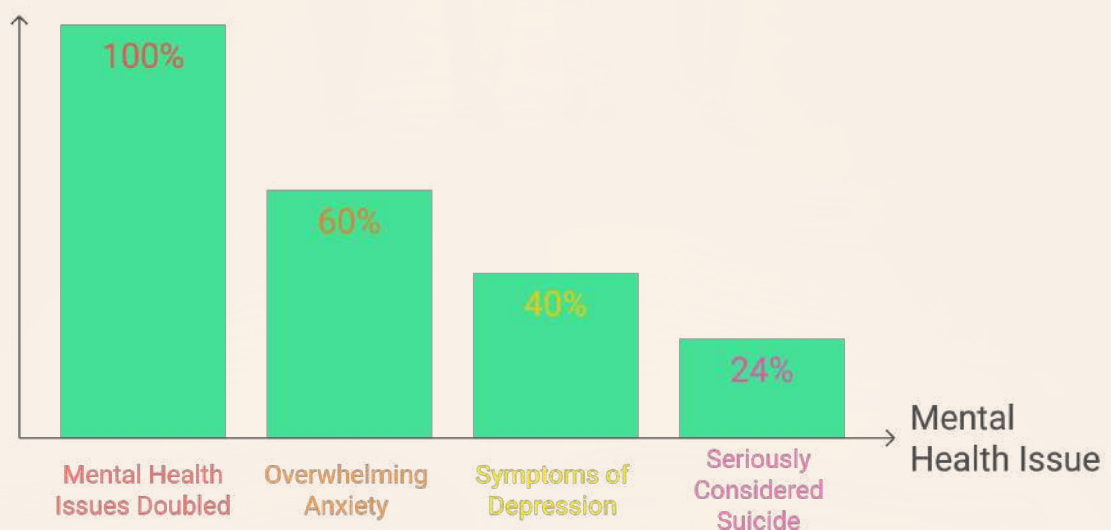
2.1 National Overview

Over the last decade:

- Mental health issues among U.S. students have doubled.
- 3 in 5 students experience overwhelming anxiety.
- 40% report symptoms of depression.
- 24% have seriously considered suicide.

Factors like academic pressure, financial stress, and social isolation have played a role. But more awareness and better reporting are also helping reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking.

Percentage of Students



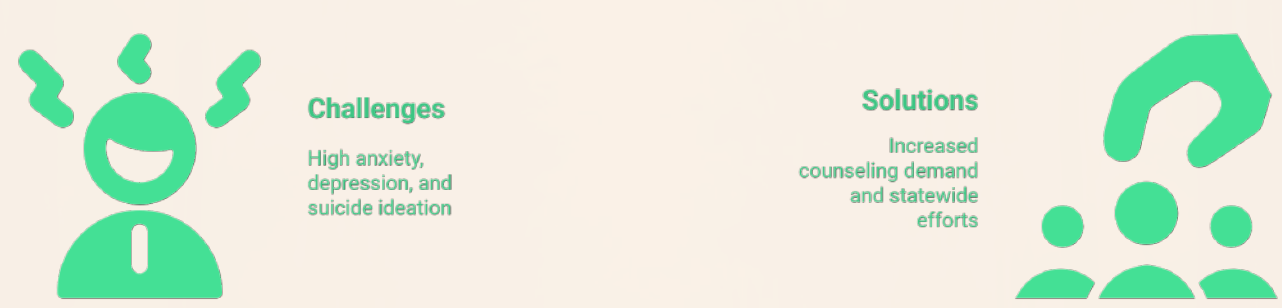
2.2 Massachusetts in Focus

Massachusetts students face similar—and sometimes more intense—mental health challenges:

- 60%+ report symptoms of anxiety or depression.
- Demand for counseling has doubled since 2015.
- Suicide ideation is rising.

Despite having good healthcare access, many students face long waitlists and gaps in culturally responsive care. Fortunately, statewide efforts and partners like **Forrest Behavioral Health** are helping bridge the gap.

How to address mental health challenges among Massachusetts students?



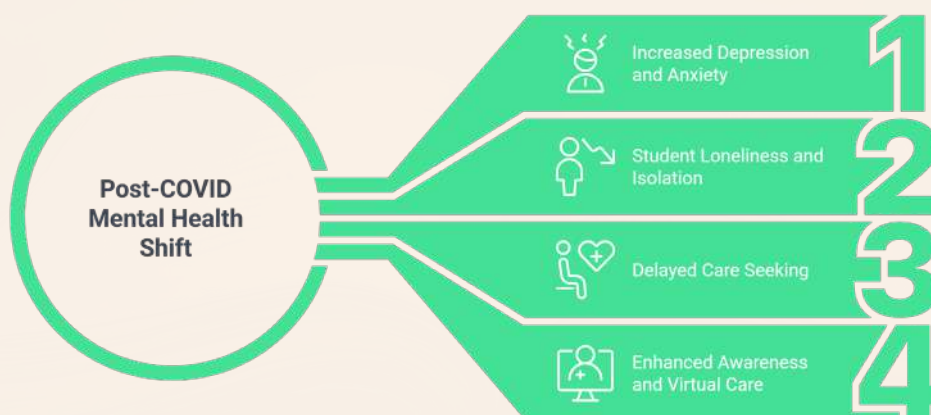
2.3 The Post-COVID Mental Health Shift

COVID-19 dramatically increased mental health concerns:

- Depression and anxiety rose over 30%.
- Students experienced greater loneliness and isolation.
- Many delayed seeking care due to confusion or inaccessibility.

But the pandemic also brought more awareness and expanded access to virtual care.

Unveiling the Post-COVID Mental Health

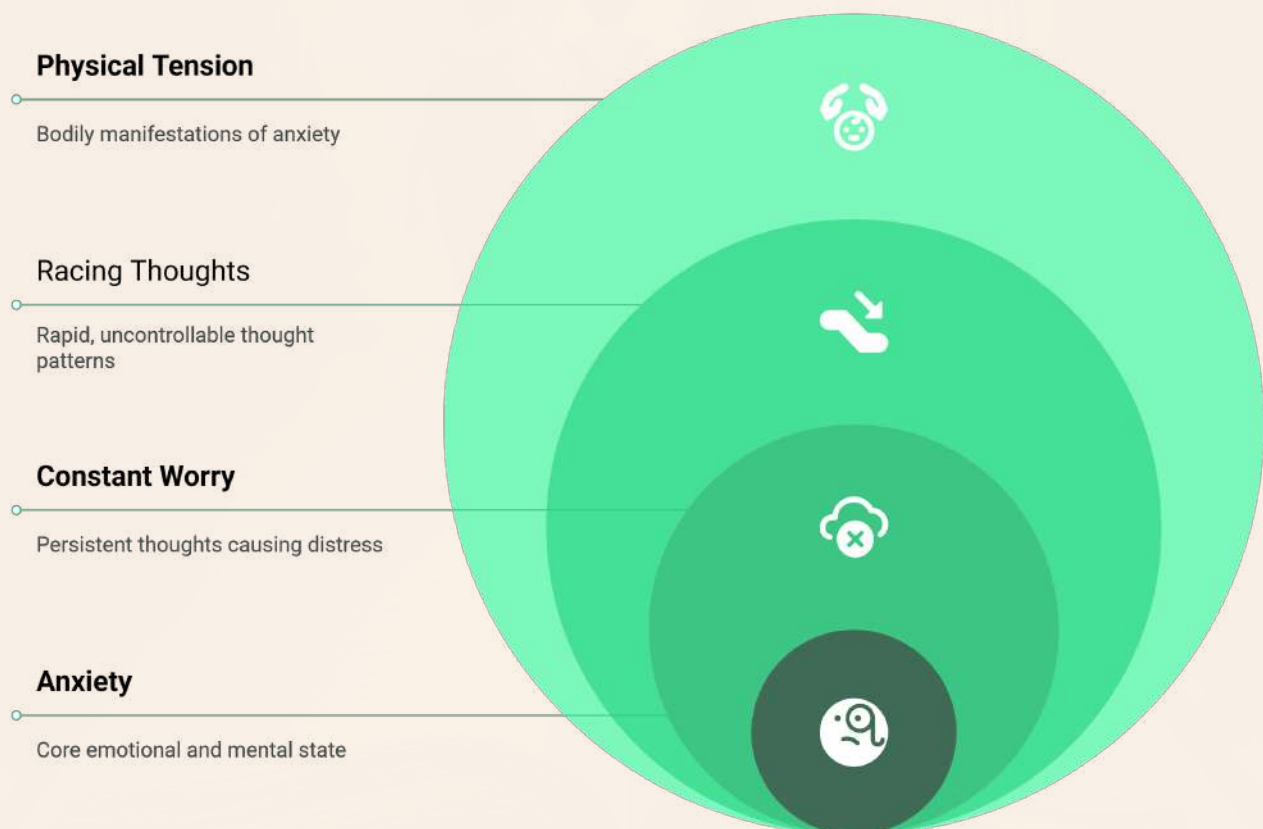


Common Mental Health Challenges in College

3.1 Anxiety Disorders

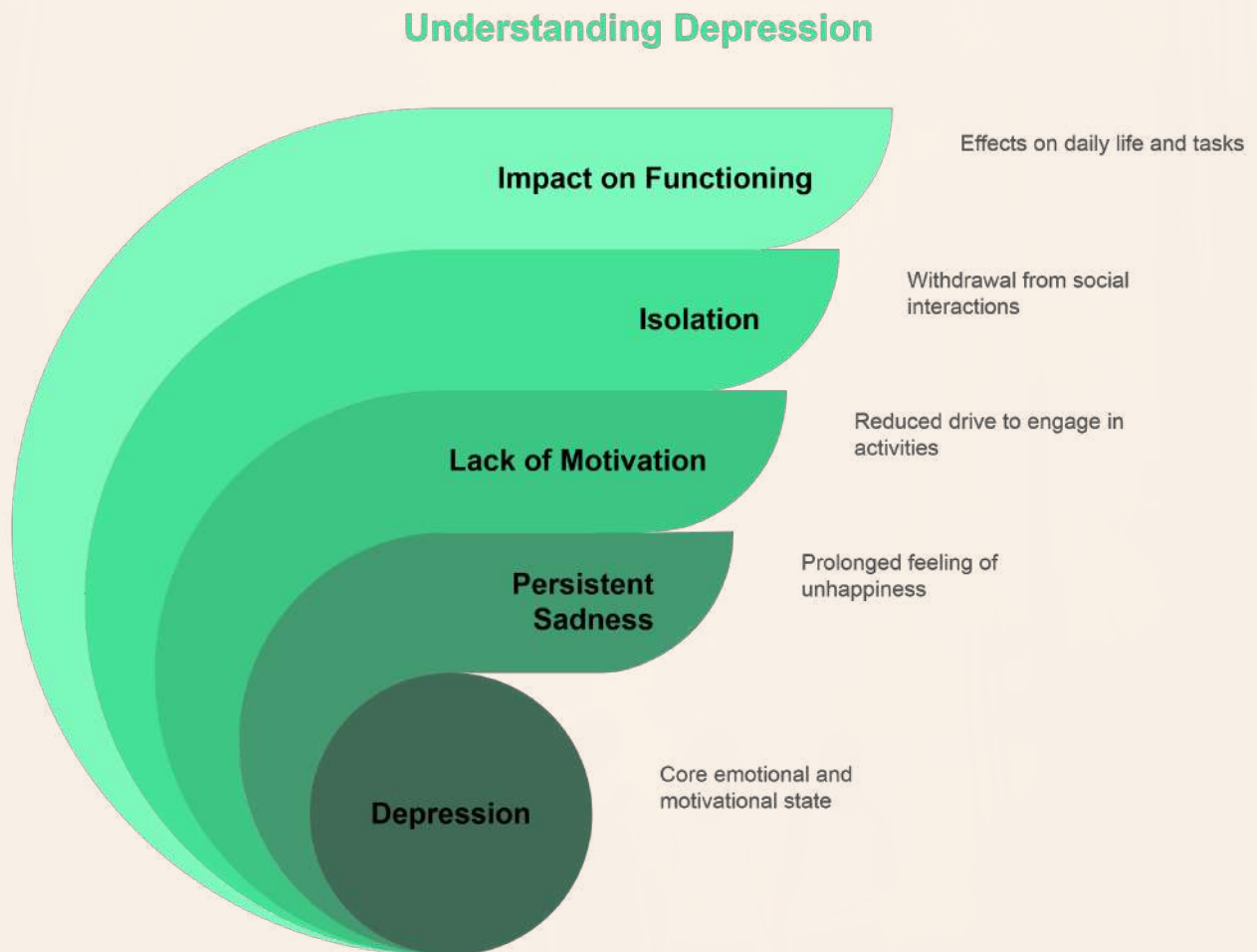
- Constant worry, racing thoughts, physical tension.
- Often worsened by school pressure or social stress.

Anxiety Disorders



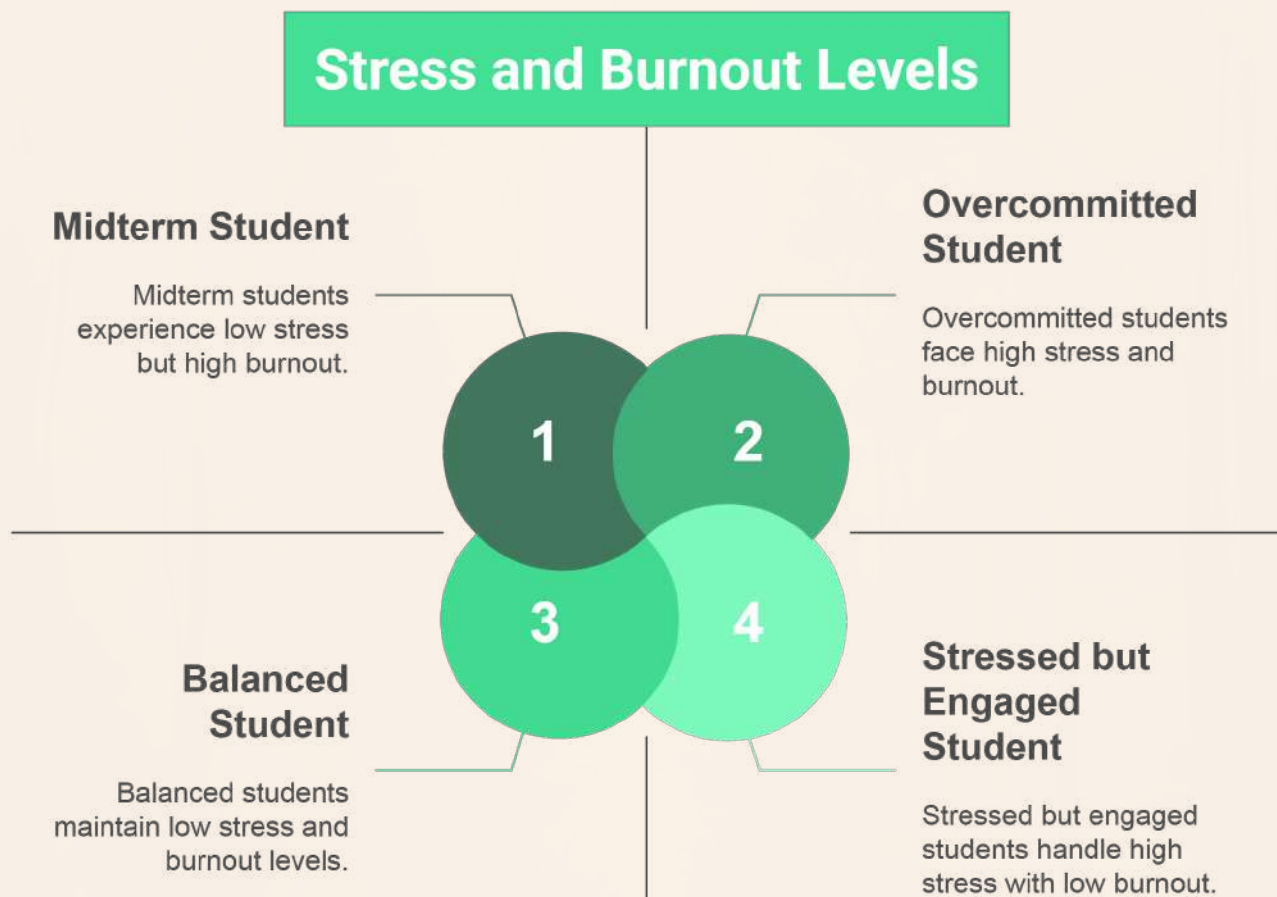
3.2 Depression

- Persistent sadness, lack of motivation, isolation.
- Can sneak up over time and impact daily functioning.



3.3 Stress & Burnout

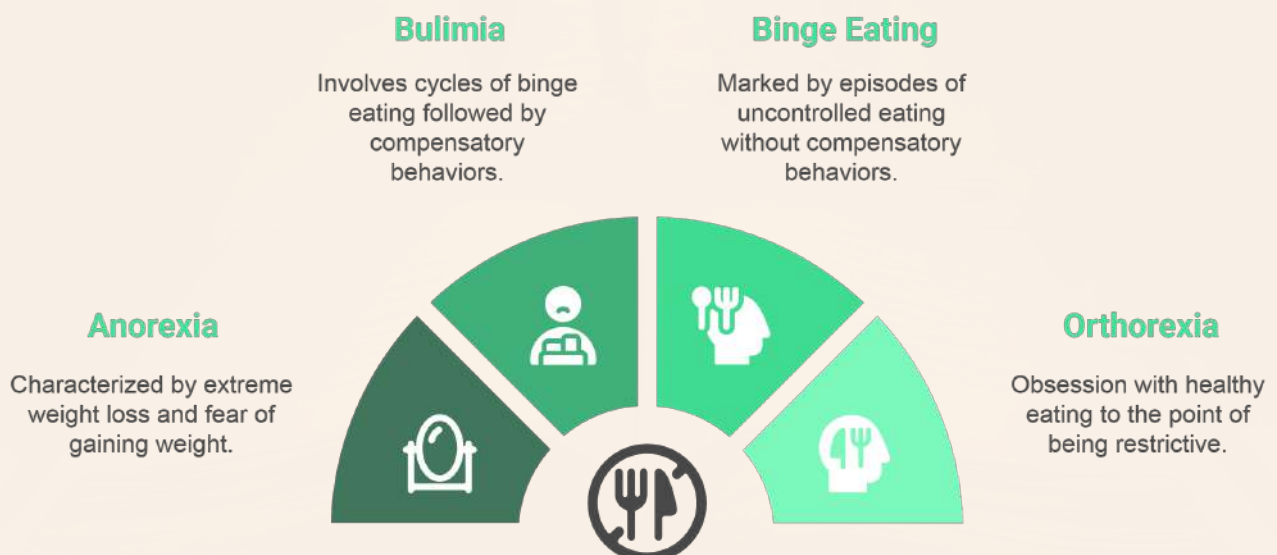
- Physical/emotional exhaustion, loss of interest, cynicism.
- Common during midterms/finals and among overcommitted students.



3.4 Eating Disorders

- Includes anorexia, bulimia, binge eating, orthorexia.
- Often linked to control, body image, and academic pressure.

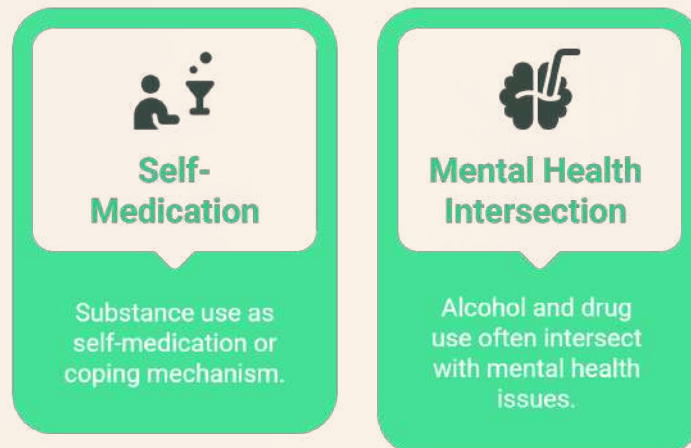
Understanding and Addressing the Complexities of Eating Disorders



3.5 Substance Use & Co-Occurring Disorders

- Substance use as self-medication or coping.
- Alcohol and drug use often intersect with mental health.

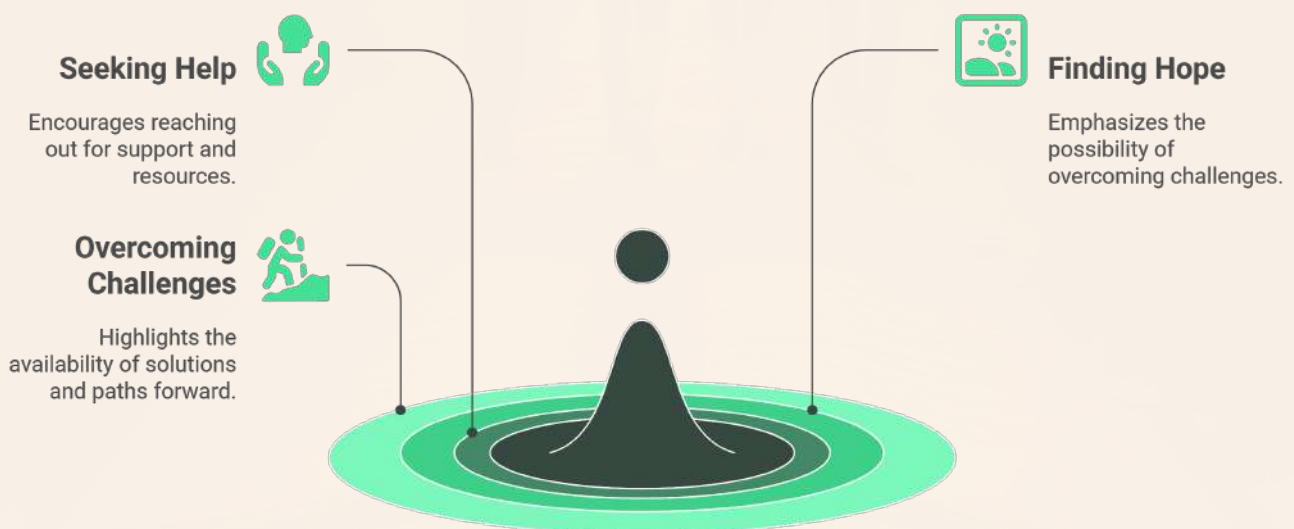
Aspects of Substance Use



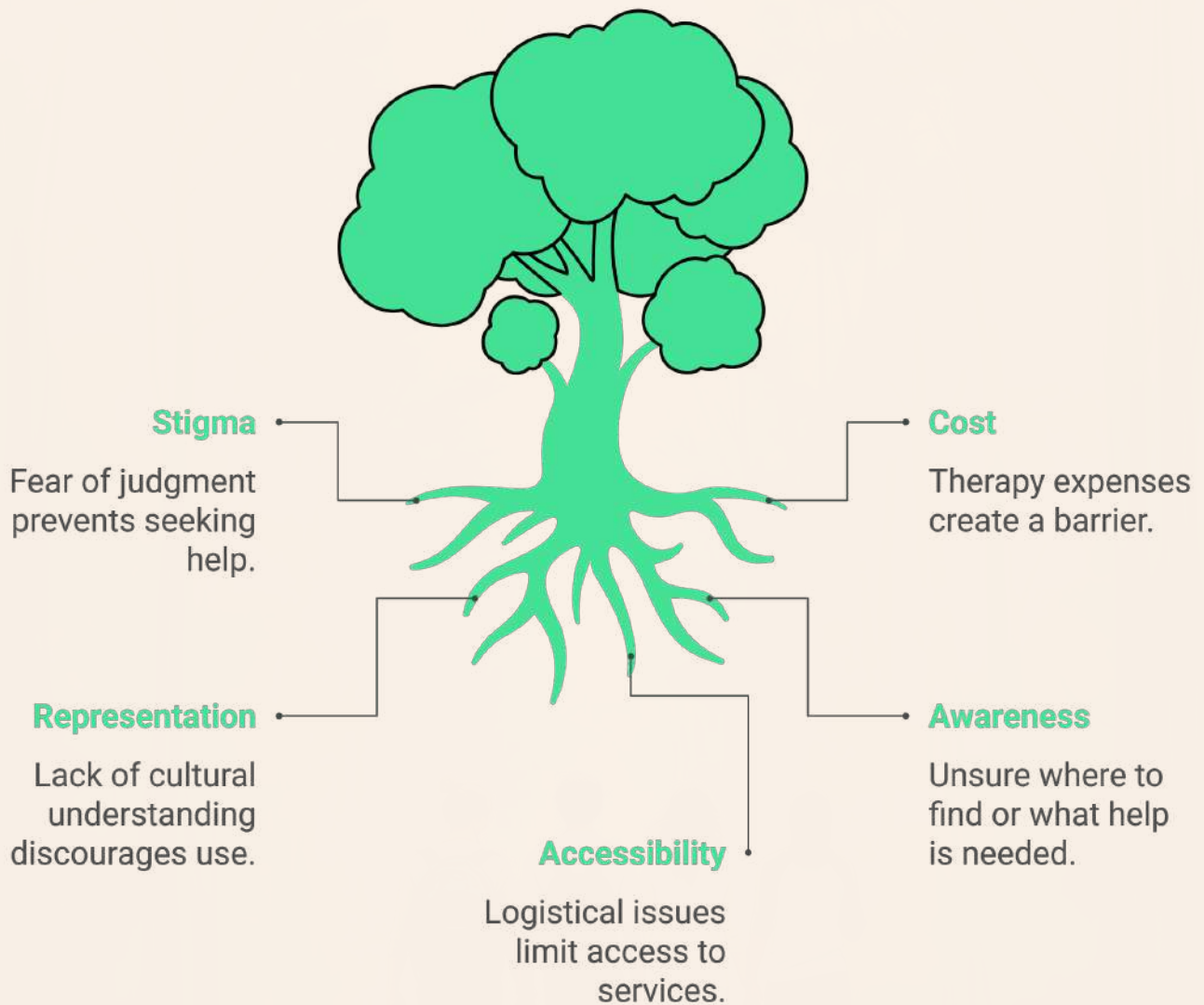
3.6 Suicidal Ideation & Crisis

- Thoughts of ending one's life, withdrawal, hopelessness.
- Always take seriously—resources are available 24/7.

Suicidal Ideation & Crisis



Students are not seeking mental health support



Chapter 05

Treatment Options and What to Expect

5.1 Campus-Based Resources

- Counseling centers offer short-term therapy, group support, workshops.
- Free or included in tuition.
- May refer out for long-term or specialized care

5.2 Off-Campus Options

- Private therapists, psychiatrists, and clinics.
- Longer-term or more personalized treatment.
- **Forrest Behavioral Health** is a key provider in MA.

Mental Health Resources for Students



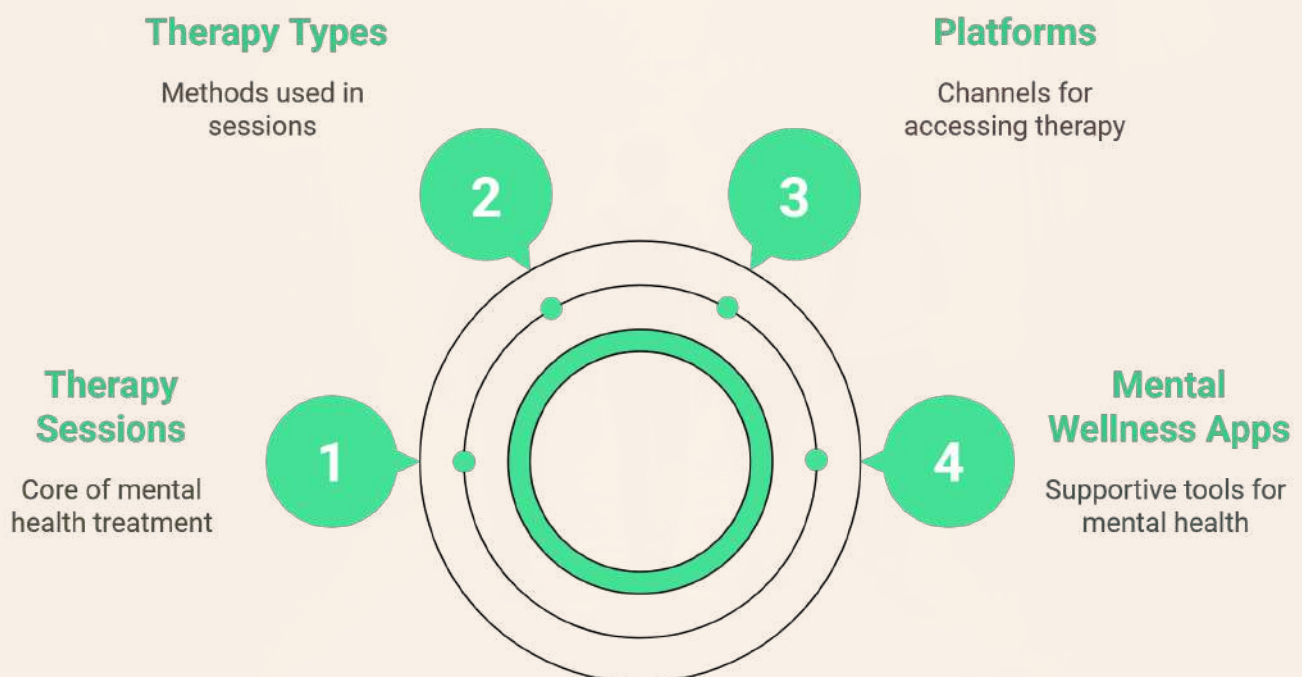
5.3 Telehealth and Online Services

- Convenient, flexible, and often cheaper.
- Platforms: BetterHelp, Talkspace, and school-based virtual therapy.
- Mental wellness apps like Headspace, Moodfit, Sanvello.

5.4 What Treatment Looks Like

- First session: intake interview.
- Weekly/biweekly sessions (talk therapy, CBT, DBT, group, etc.)
- Students can "shop around" for a therapist who feels like a good fit.

Mental Health Treatment Structure



How to Find Help

6.1 For Students

- Start by naming what you're feeling.
- Talk to someone you trust (friend, RA, advisor).
- Use your campus counseling center or call a hotline if in crisis.

6.2 For Parents

- Check in without pressure.
- Normalize mental health support.
- Offer logistical help like finding providers or booking appointments.

How to address mental health concerns?

Students



Parents

Focus on self-awareness and seeking support from trusted individuals or campus resources.

Provide support by checking in, normalizing mental health, and offering logistical help.

6.3 Key Resources

Crisis Support

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline – Call/Text 988
- Crisis Text Line – Text HOME to 741741
- Samaritans MA – 877-870-4673

Massachusetts & National

- Massachusetts Behavioral Health Help Line
- NAMI Massachusetts
- Forrest Behavioral Health ☐
- Psychology Today – Therapist Finder

Mental Health Resources



Tips for Ongoing Mental Wellness

7.1 Self-Care That Works

- Prioritize sleep and nutrition.
- Move your body daily (even short walks).
- Set screen boundaries.
- Find your go-to stress relievers (journaling, music, art, etc.)

7.2 Build Your Mental Health Toolkit

- Identify personal coping tools.
- Keep a list of trusted contacts and helpful apps.
- Have a "bad day" plan ready for tough moments.

7.3 Stay Connected

- Build friendships, join clubs, find community.
- Talk to professors and advisors.
- Volunteer or get involved in causes that matter to you.

Self-care strategies

Sleep and Nutrition

Prioritize getting enough sleep and eating well. These are fundamental for well-being.

Daily Movement

Move your body every day, even if it's just a short walk. Physical activity improves mood.

Screen Boundaries

Set limits on screen time to avoid overstimulation. This helps with focus and relaxation.

Stress Relievers

Find activities that help you relieve stress. Examples are journaling, music, or art.

Coping Tools

Identify personal coping tools that work for you. These can help manage difficult emotions.

Trusted Contacts

Keep a list of trusted contacts and helpful apps. These provide support and assistance.

Bad Day Plan

Have a "bad day" plan ready for tough moments. This provides a structure for managing difficult days.

Build Friendships

Build friendships, join clubs, and find community. Social connection is important for mental health.

Talk to Advisors

Talk to professors and advisors for guidance. They can offer support and resources.

Volunteer

Volunteer or get involved in causes that matter. Helping others can boost your own well-being.

Final Thoughts

8.1 It's Okay to Not Be Okay

Struggling doesn't mean something is wrong with you—it means you're human. Mental health challenges happen, and there's no shame in that.

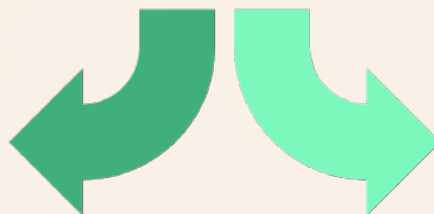
8.2 You're Not Alone

Thousands of students across Massachusetts are going through the same thing. Help is out there—don't be afraid to reach for it.

How to address mental health challenges?

Accept Struggles

Recognizing struggles as a normal part of being human can reduce self-blame and encourage self-compassion.



Seek Help

Knowing that others are experiencing similar challenges and that help is available can empower students to reach out.

8.3 Resources Recap

Crisis Lines

- **988** Suicide & Crisis Line
- **741741** (Crisis Text Line)
- **877-870-4673** (Samaritans MA)

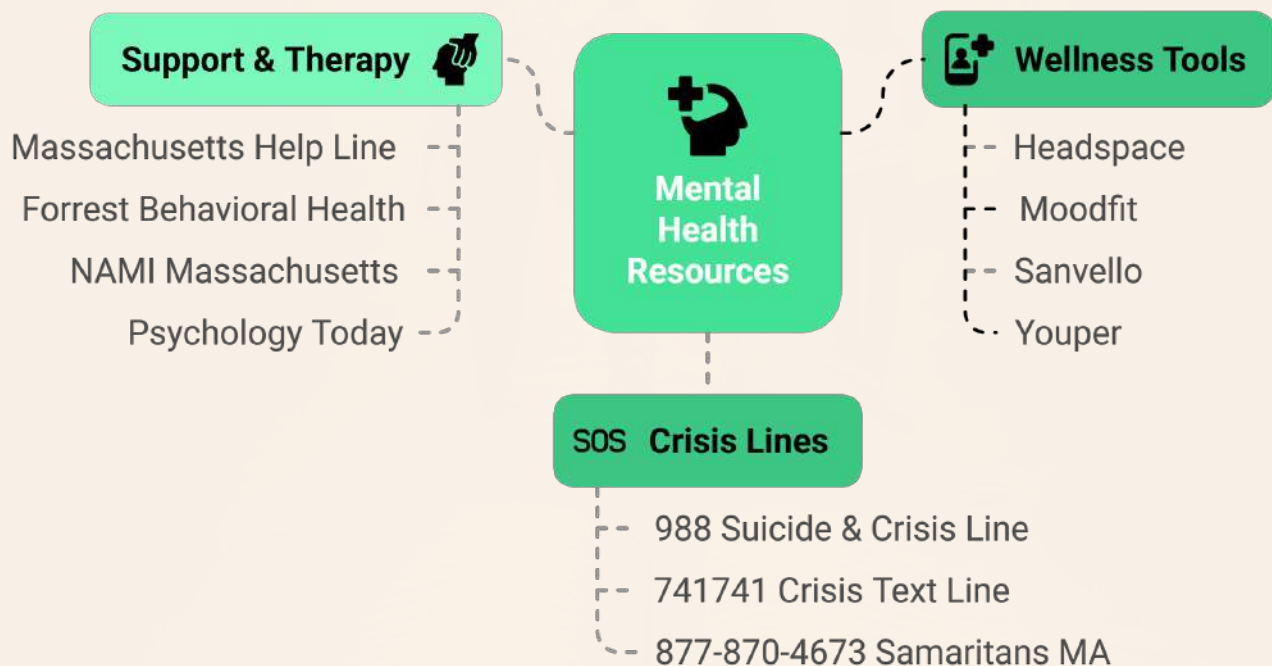
Support & Therapy

- Massachusetts Help Line
- Forrest Behavioral Health
- NAMI Massachusetts
- Psychology Today

Wellness Tools

- Headspace, Moodfit, Sanvello, Youper

Mental Health Resources in Massachusetts



Final Word

You don't need to have it all figured out. Just take it one step at a time. Whether you're reaching out for help or helping someone else, **you're making a difference—and that's enough.**