

# AUM NIBUS

Chronicling the Campus Community and Beyond Since 1971

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## More Than College Blues

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Imagine having a huge, unbearable weight placed on your back everyday from the moment you woke up, one invisible to the rest of the world. Usually, you could manage to act completely normal around others as it anchored you down and caused you pain. After carrying it long enough, you steadily become numb and begin to ignore other feelings altogether. This is how depression affects people.

Depression is more than just feeling a little sad or down; it's a serious illness that affects your actions, thoughts and even health for a prolonged period of time. College is all about change. Students are in various stages of transition—living in a new environment, being surrounded by new people, or even receiving new workloads—and sometimes this leaves them in a very vulnerable state. Pressures, anxieties, financial struggles—there are many factors that can cause a student to suddenly feel overwhelmed. These are prime instances for depression to set in. Sometimes it comes in the form of extreme apathy or an empty feeling. In other instances, it can be a constant feeling of guilt or hopelessness. Whatever feelings depression triggers, it will not only impede on students' academics, but every aspect of their life as well. Luckily, an early diagnosis and treatment of depression can relieve and even prevent it from returning. Hence, it's vital that students immediately get the help they need.

AUM offers free advising to all enrolled students through its Counseling Center whose staff is committed to professionally helping students in a safe and confidential environment.



*AUM's Counseling Center offers free advising to all enrolled students. Courtesy of Time Magazine.*

Finding the roots of clinical depression isn't always simple: there are a number of causes as well as many different treatments. "Sometimes it goes further than just talking to someone," says Alicia Washington, the Student Service Coordinator for AUM Counseling Center. "It may be chemical imbalances where students may need to take drugs for it, but counseling is always the first step."

In counseling, students undergo steps to better understand behaviors, feelings, situations and relationships that may cause them difficulties and thus can help them identify the root of their depression. There are many aids available to self-assess yourself; however, the best approach is to speak with a professional.

"During the session we figure out if the student meets the criteria of depression," Washington says. "It depends on where the depression stems from. Sometimes a student is so overwhelmed for such a long period of time, the stress actually causes depression. A solution to that may be

better time management and figuring out some coping skills.”

There are ways to deal with depression. One is to stay active through exercise. Activities like joining a club or playing a sport can help one bring positivity into their life. In general, doing the activities you enjoyed before depression sets in is a good way to take control of your mood.

Another coping method for depression, and one of the most important, is practicing self-care. Some students may feel guilty or even selfish when focusing on their own well being and happiness, but doing so is the key in conquering depression.

“Self care is very important, especially to a student experiencing depression,” Washington says. “It’s always good to try and counteract those things whenever they know they’re falling down the path of depression again.” Making sure you get enough rest, have at least three meals a day and reach out to talk to loved ones are great ways to take care of yourself. Remember to take time out to indulge your senses as well, especially during times when you feel the signs of depression begin to emerge. Listening to music or white noise for a while, lighting candles, and treating yourself to candy or other rewards are helpful resources that make coping with depression manageable.

If you suspect you’re showing the signs and symptoms of depression or if you would simply like to learn more about it, the Counseling Center at AUM has a friendly staff and encourages students to take advantage of its services.

AUM Counseling Center is located in 319 Taylor Center. Walk-ins are welcome. You can also contact the staff at [counselingcenter@aum.edu](mailto:counselingcenter@aum.edu) or call 334-244-3469.