



The College Years: Myths and Facts

The college years are times of significant transition and challenge for an individual. Transition simply means change. Higher levels of anxiety are always experienced by people who are in a state of transition regardless of whether the change is perceived as good or bad. Let's consider some of the other myths vs. the facts regarding the college experience.

Myth: These are the best years of your life! If you think its bad now wait until you get into the 'real world'.

Fact: How many times have you heard this! While the college years are memorable and enjoyable, they can also be among the most stressful and anxious times. You are faced with constant evaluation from your professors. Personal and parental expectations are always on your mind. Financial stress is often a way of life. Living in extremely close quarters with peers leaves you with little privacy. Career decisions, serious relationships and the move toward independence are common issues. Does the world get any more real than this? I think not. Making these the best years of your life involves developing an approach that is proactive and includes a support network.



Myth: Students experiencing stress and/or anxiety are unprepared to handle the rigors of college.

Fact: College and university environments are designed to be challenging academically, personally and socially. Stress and anxiety, among other emotions, are natural by-products of the accelerated pace of learning and growth. It is not a matter of whether or not we experience these unpleasant feelings but rather, it is a matter of how we manage these emotions.

Myth: A good student does not need assistance during his/her college or university experience.

Fact: Unfortunately, this myth has its roots in the high school. How many times did you hear well-intentioned high school teachers say something like, "wait until you get to college, you will have to do it on your own"? Many students come to college with the belief that to ask for help is a sure sign of inadequacy. Nothing could be further from the truth. Your college or university has an abundance of resources available to you. You are paying for these resources through tuition or fees. Become familiar with and make use of your campus resources. Consider the following hypothetical example: You walk into an automobile dealership to purchase a car. You tell the sales associate the make and model of the car you wish to purchase. The sales associate shows you two different versions of that make and model, one fully loaded with every available option and the other, a stripped down version with no options. The sales associate offers you your choice at the same price. Who among us would drive away with the stripped

down version? Not me. Consider your campus resources as the options. Now ask yourself, "which college version should I choose the one with all the resources or the stripped down version?" 'Nuff said.

Myth: I am the only one that doesn't have it all together.

Fact: As you walk the campus and observe other students it appears that everyone else is so sure of them self. Everyone else has friends. Everyone else has direction. Everyone else is confident. Everyone else is without troubles or hassles. This misperception is common among college and university students. It has its roots in one of our more powerful social norms. We all wear a 'public mask' to protect a certain social image. This 'public mask' communicates a sense of self-assuredness to those with whom we come in contact. It often belies the inner turmoil that we all experience from time to time. Think about it, how many people are truly aware of the issues troubling you? Probably very few. Tap into those resources on your campus.

Myth: Counseling is only for people who have experienced a severe emotional breakdown.

Fact: While counselors certainly work with students who have experienced an emotional breakdown, this represents only a small fraction of their counseling interactions. Counselors are available to help facilitate your personal growth and development. They have the professional expertise to help you better understand the personal issues you wish to discuss in a comfortable and confidential environment. If there are issues troubling you, become familiar with the counseling services on your campus and consider adding a counselor to your support network.

Source: Campus Blues.com. (2002-2004). The college years. Retrieved December 6, 2005 from <http://www.campusblues.com/art2.asp>.

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