

WHAT TO EXPECT: THE COLLEGE LIFE STRESSOR LIST FOR STUDENTS

FALL SEMESTERS

September Stressors

- Homesickness, missing family and friends.
- Fears of inadequacy or not fitting in.
- Getting to know new people.
- Maintaining long-distance romantic relationships.
- Adjustment to living with roommates.
- Learning to take care of daily personal needs without parental support.
- Challenges of managing freedom.
- Learning time management and dealing with the college work load.

October Stressors

- Academic demands increase.
- Consequences of poor judgment during early semester may arise.
- Colds, stress-related illnesses may occur.
- Mid-term grades are issued.
- First-year students may experience depression and increased anxiety because adjustment seems too slow.

November-December Stressors

- For first-year students, the novelty of college is wearing off.
- Roommate and social tensions may arise prior to vacations.
- Colds, stress-related illnesses increase.
- Financial strain because of planned holiday gifts and travel expenses.
- Between semester employment search begins.
- Extracurricular time strain: seasonal parties, social service projects, and religious activities divert student energies.
- Pressures increase as final exams approach and papers are due.
- Roommate and social tensions increase as all students are under stress.
- Romantic relationships: deciding how to weather the month-long separation.
- Pre-holiday worries, especially for those who have concerns for family, those who have no home to visit, and for those who prefer not to go home because of family conflicts.

SPRING SEMESTERS

January – February Stressors

- Readjustment to school and again being away from home security and friends.
- Seasonal depression and lethargy are at their peak due to weather, darkness, lack of outdoor activities, isolation. College has lost its novelty.
- Friends experience loss as some students don't return.
- Colds, flu, and snow days may interfere with academic performance.

March Stressors

- Social scene picks up; decisions increase about drug and alcohol use, morality, and time management.
- Academic pressure may begin to mount because of procrastination, difficulty of coursework, and lack of time. Stress exhaustion or depression may occur.
- Mid-term exams and term papers are all due at once.
- Roommate and social tensions may increase as all students are stressed.
- Spring Break decisions, money issues, job or peer trip plans must be made.
- Students want and need time to play or catch up academically. Spring Break provides needed relief.
- Determining whom to room with and where for the fall semester are of great importance and may cause stress. Roommate tensions may escalate.
- Mid-term grades are issued.

April Stressors

- Many students experience optimism because the second semester is perceived as on the “downhill slope.”
- Spring fever sets in: students want to play and socialize.
- Academic pressures continue to increase; papers and exams are piling up.
- Colds, allergies, stress-related illnesses increase.
- The full activities calendar invites participation and challenges time management.
- Summer job and housing pressures begin.
- Frustration and confusion may develop because of decisions necessary for choosing a major, pre-registration.

May Stressors

- Final exams begin; pressure to finish incomplete work.
- Plans for summer school, travel, work, housing, must be in place.
- Roommate and social tensions may arise prior to vacation.
- Sadness over leaving friends, deciding the destiny of romantic relationships for the summer.
- Worry over facing conflicts at home with family, making the transition back to living at home.
- End of the semester nears; sadness begins due to anticipation of separation from friends for the summer or due to graduation.

Excerpted from: West Virginia University Tech website “Parenting A College Student”, 2009.