

You've decided to reach out for help from your school's counseling center—wonderful!—but the wait time for an appointment is longer than you anticipated or you are reaching the center's limit for sessions. What can you do?

- Contact the Student Assistance Program: It is available 24/7. You are eligible for three free counseling sessions per issue you present, and the SAP staff finds accessible clinicians for you. The free SAP Personal Assistant service can also lighten your load by doing research for you on resources and services for a range of other concerns (housing, finances, childcare, etc.) that may be causing you stress.
- Take advantage of drop-in hours: Some counseling centers set aside times for students to walk in for brief, unscheduled consultations. This may be useful if you just need a bit of face time with someone to stay on track for the day, or if you are sensing that you need help before your scheduled appointment.
- Consider group therapy if available: Group therapy can be helpful on its own or as a complement to individual therapy, and sometimes the wait time is shorter. Groups are facilitated by a trained clinician who will work on addressing the needs of each group member. Through the interaction with others, you can learn a lot about both your issues of concern and interpersonal skills.
- Find other campus clinics operated by clinical mental health education programs (counseling, psychology, etc.) or the university hospital. They often operate on a sliding scale basis for fees and actively seek clients for their trainees. Check other colleges nearby if such clinics are not available at yours.
- Ask your center for referrals to off-campus mental health clinicians who take insurance or charge fees on a sliding scale, or to low/no-cost community agencies.

The following are not a substitute for therapy, but may be helpful:

- Seek out resources from centers dedicated to specific issues of relevance to you: Campus offices and community organizations that focus on gender and sexuality, religious life, multiculturalism, domestic/interpersonal violence, sexual assault, drug and alcohol use, and other experiences can provide information, emotional support, referrals, and sometimes counseling.
- Engage in wellness and health promotion programs on campus: These can teach you about coping strategies, mindfulness, stress management, positive health behavior, and other skills, and may offer physical and social activities that promote wellbeing. Some schools have an office dedicated to student wellness.
- Participate in support groups: These differ from group therapy in terms of formality of goals and structure, and can be facilitated by a variety of professionals and members of the community. These groups can provide comfort and encouragement from other people who understand your situation.
- Connect with national health advocacy organizations: Websites for these organizations typically include health information as well as hotline numbers for immediate help. Some will also offer tools for finding in-person help in your local area. Links for numerous organizations are available here: <http://greatist.com/grow/resources-when-you-can-not-afford-therapy>
- Get involved in campus advocacy organizations: These can provide concrete opportunities to team up with others to improve the climate around mental health at your school. Active Minds is one major organization committed to reducing stigma and increasing awareness and support: www.activeminds.org
- Explore apps and other self-help resources: These can assist you in monitoring your feelings and maintaining healthy, soothing practices. Your counseling center may provide a list of suggestions. Several are also listed here: <http://greatist.com/grow/resources-when-you-can-not-afford-therapy>