



香港大學  
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG



cedars  
Centre of Development and Resources for Students  
學生發展及資源中心

# SUPPORTING TERTIARY STUDENTS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS



**SEN**  
SUPPORT

# SUPPORTING TERTIARY STUDENTS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS



## What is MI?

Mental illnesses (MI) involve changes in thinking, feelings or behaviours that cause dysfunction in students' daily activities. Common MIs among university students include Depressive Disorder and Anxiety Disorder. The course of illness ranges from episodic to chronic, varying from person to person. Generally, individuals suffering from MI can experience diverse symptoms and/or side effects of medications, some of which are:

### COGNITIVE

- ▶ Poor concentration
- ▶ Struggling with irrational or negative thinking
- ▶ Having delusions, paranoia or hallucinations
- ▶ Suicidal thoughts

### EMOTIONAL

- ▶ Feeling sad or down and/or having extreme mood changes
- ▶ Excessive fears, worries, or feelings of guilt

### BEHAVIOURAL

- ▶ Loss of interest and enjoyment
- ▶ Withdrawal from friends and activities
- ▶ Significant tiredness, low energy or sleep problems
- ▶ Excessive use of alcohol or unprescribed drugs
- ▶ Major changes in eating habits, appetite and weight
- ▶ Excessive anger
- ▶ Self-harming behaviours

# What support do students with MI need in university life?

Reasonable accommodations and support may enhance their learning and adaptation in different aspects of university life, examples of which include:



## LEARNING

- ▶ Allow recording of lectures to assist understanding and later review
- ▶ Arrange study place with less distractions
- ▶ Consider reducing course loading to keep stress at manageable level or to give time for treatments



## ASSESSMENT

- ▶ Extended time for assessments
- ▶ Special consideration for student's attendance and class participation
- ▶ Special exam schedule
- ▶ Allow extra time to complete assignments



## SELF-MANAGEMENT

- ▶ Eat healthily and exercise regularly
- ▶ Keep structured routines
- ▶ Learn ways to manage stress and practise relaxation exercises
- ▶ Learn ways to communicate with professionals effectively
- ▶ Seek help when necessary



# How can I interact with students with MI?



## TIPS FOR TEACHERS/TUTORS



Watch out for dramatic changes in mood, behaviours or academic performance (e.g. constantly skipped classes, failed to submit assignments on time or repeated failures in exams)



Check with the student to see if special arrangements are needed



Consult a professional when necessary



## TIPS FOR PEERS



Express your concern and care



Listen to them patiently and non-judgementally



Avoid minimizing their feelings



Encourage the student to seek help from counselling



## Your Support Makes a Difference



*Not until my friends encouraged me to seek assessment in the counselling service, I didn't even realize I had depression. After months of treatment, I can now handle my studies and emotions much better."*

**Student**



## Volunteer with Us

All HKU students can contribute to building an inclusive campus. Volunteer opportunities include:

- ▶ Offering academic support (e.g. note-taking, study skills coaching)
- ▶ Providing social skills coaching
- ▶ Organizing activities to promote inclusion and diversity
- ▶ Working with people in recovery of mental illness
- ▶ and many more!

Get in touch with us to find out more.



## Available Support for Students with MI

### **CEDARS Counselling and Person Enrichment (CoPE) Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support**

We are committed to supporting students with disabilities or Special Educational Needs (SEN) in overcoming barriers and achieving successful university education. The support provided is meant to “level the playing field” without undermining academic core requirements of a course.

The listed suggestions are not exhaustive and the support needed by students varies individually. Students with special needs are encouraged to meet with us for needs assessment and advice. Confidential, professional and free of charge counselling service is also available at CoPE. Come talk to our counsellors.

For enquiries, please contact us at:

📍 Room 123, 1/F, Main Building

☎ (852) 3910 3200

✉ cedars-SEN@hku.hk

🌐 <http://www.cedars.hku.hk/cope/sen>

For community resources available for students with SEN, please visit <http://wp2.cedars.hku.hk/sen-resources/>

To learn more about other types of SEN, please visit [www.cedars.hku.hk/cope/sen-leaflets](http://www.cedars.hku.hk/cope/sen-leaflets)