

Welcome to your new journey!

Being an international student is an exciting experience and takes courage! Many international students describe the experience as fun, challenging and have had to deal with parts of the experience that they were unprepared for. Some describe it as a bubble bursting. A study in the UK found that more than 60% of international students felt emotionally unprepared to cope with the challenges of studying in a new country. Here are a few tips to help you prepare and manage some of the more common issues experienced by most students. Know that you are not alone!

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Resources

Remember: You're not alone. There are resources at your school, in the community and culturally based services here to help you. Don't suffer in silence. Reach out!

- Text **HOME** to **686868** (Canada-wide)
- **Toronto Distress Centre:** (416) 408-HELP
- **Gerstein Centre** at (416) 604-2337
- **Kids Help Phone:** 1-800-668-6868
- **Good to Talk:** 1-866-925-5454
- Call **Telehealth** for free 24 hour, 7 days a week:
Toll Free: 1-877-280-8538
- Family Doctor to refer you to OHIP covered services or walk in services at your college
- **Sheltersafe.ca** - connect women to shelters around their area
- **iHEAL app:** A free & secure app to help Canadian women who have experienced abuse find personalized ways to stay safe and be well.
- **Assaulted Women's Helpline:** 1-866-863-0511 (toll-free, 24/7- multilingual service available)
- **Ontario 24/7 Community and Social Services Helpline:** 211
- **Talk4Healing 24/7 Helpline for Indigenous Women:** 1-855-554-4325
- **Victim 24/7 Support Line:** 1-888-579-2888
- Contact us at Shanti Psychotherapy
<https://www.shantipsychotherapy.ca/>
- **Amelia Rising Sexual Violence Support Centre** - 705-476-3355
- **Toronto Rape Crisis 24H Crisis Line** - 416-597-8808
- **SACHSS Suicide Prevention Helpline,** 988 - South Asian Canadians Health and Social Services
- **Indus Community Services** -
<https://www.induscs.ca/contact-us/>
- **Laadliyan** - <https://www.laadliyan.com/>



Quick Tips for International Students



Scan for our website and information on how to book a consultation!



Homesickness

You're not alone in this feeling. Homesickness is linked to feelings of loneliness, sadness, and anxiety.

- Keep in **touch** with family and friends back home through regular calls or messages. Let them know how you are feeling
- Bring a piece of **home** with you - photos, familiar foods, or traditions can help.
- Join **campus** cultural clubs, sports teams, activity based clubs to connect with people from similar backgrounds and to meet more students at your school

Intimate Partner Violence

As a female international student you are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence but that doesn't mean you are alone.

- Trust your **instincts** - if something feels wrong, speak up and tell a friend, family member or school staff.
- Seek **help** immediately if you feel unsafe. Most universities have confidential counselling services.
- Know your **rights** and local domestic violence hotlines, counselling and legal support.
- See **resource** page and add hotlines to your phone contacts.

Academic Pressure

Emotional distress impacts about 30-40% of students who reported struggling to focus on their studies due to acculturation stressors.

- Break **tasks** down into smaller steps and set realistic goals.
- Reach out to academic **advisors** or tutors if you're struggling.
- **Practice** time management by creating a study schedule and sticking to it.
- Practice **grace**; be kind, gentle and encouraging as school is a marathon not a sprint!

Seasonal Depression

Many international students miss the symptoms of SAD - **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)** which is a type of depression that occurs at certain times of the year, most commonly during the fall and winter months when daylight hours are shorter. It's associated with changes in light exposure, which can affect the body's internal clock (circadian rhythm) and serotonin levels, a brain chemical that regulates mood.

Seasonal Depression

Symptoms include:

- Persistent **low mood** or feelings of depression.
- Loss of **interest** in activities once enjoyed.
- **Fatigue** and low energy, even after sufficient sleep.
- Changes in **appetite**, often with cravings for carbohydrates or weight gain.
- Sleep **disturbances**, such as excessive sleeping (hypersomnia) or insomnia.
- Difficulty **concentrating** or making decisions.
- Social withdrawal or **isolation**.

Seasonal Depression

SAD typically begins in the late fall or early winter and subsides during the spring and summer months, but in some cases, people experience it during summer

- Get **outside** during daylight hours, even for a short walk.
- Use **light therapy** lamps to mimic natural sunlight during darker months.
- Stay **active** and eat a balanced diet to maintain your energy levels.
- Seek **help** before symptoms worsen. With help things can get better quickly!

Stress & Anxiety

Take time for yourself and manage your mental well-being. Our brains don't work well when flooded with stress hormones!

- Learn about the **stress cycle** - we must complete the body's stress cycle everyday and move into states of relaxation to improve your mood.
- **Track Joy**- It's just as important to talk about and notice stress as it is to note down moments of joy such as in a joy journal.
- Talk to a **therapist** if your anxiety feels overwhelming, many universities offer free services
- Track and limit your use of **drugs**, alcohol and caffeine. If you find yourself relying on these to cope it's time to reflect and make changes.

Sleep Issues

Sleep issues are a crisis and need immediate support from a doctor or therapist. 45% of international students reported getting less than 6 hours of sleep per night

- Stick to a sleep **schedule** - go to bed and wake up at the same time each day as much as possible.
- Limit vigorous **exercise**, caffeine and screen time before bed. Try a book or magazine
- Practice **relaxation** techniques such as deep breathing or meditation to calm your mind. Youtube has many free sleep meditations to explore and try!
- Stop **studying** at least an hour before bed, dim the lights, a warm cup of herbal tea - send those signals to your brain that it is time to rest so the "sleep chemicals" in your brain get released!

Guilt

Feeling like you're leaving family and friends behind for a better life can often bring up guilt. It's important to acknowledge that it is okay for you to move forwards, and it doesn't mean you are leaving people behind.

- Building connection - **affinity** is important, connecting with student groups can be really helpful
- Sports teams or **recreation** teams on campus
- Planning weekly or monthly activities for yourself such as **exploring** the city
- Finding club & groups associated with your **interests** and career