

Brown CS Health and Wellness Resources
(With love, from Sachin Pendse '17, Grant Fong '19, and Karen Tu '20)

Immediate Contacts and Resources

- **If in a life threatening situation** or need immediate medical assistance, call EMS at 401-863-4111 or 911.
- **If you are feeling suicidal**, call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255 or use [this online chat](#).
- **If you need urgent mental health care**, you can call Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 401-863-3476
- **If you are feeling unwell**, call Health Services at 401-863-3953
- **If you need support in the aftermath of a sexual assault**, call 401-863-6000
- **If you need accommodations for an assignment**, you can email a dean. You can also call (401) 863-3145 for the “Dean of the Day.” Some deans that have been good working with CS students ---
 - Dean Cohee --- gail_cohee@brown.edu
 - Dean Lee --- julie_lee@brown.edu
 - Dean Cohen --- carol_cohen@brown.edu
 - Dean Rome --- yolanda_rome@brown.edu
 - Dean Shipard --- betsy_shimberg@brown.edu
- **If you need general accommodations**, you can call Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863-9588 or email seas@brown.edu.
- **If you urgently need to talk to someone or think through an issue**, you can call the “Dean of the Day” at (401) 863-3145. You can also call this number to make an appointment for any non-urgent need.
- **If you need guidance on healthy eating habits or general health advice**, you can contact the Brown BWell Nutritionist at 401-863-2794 or use [this form](#).
- **If you need to evaluate your mental health**, use [this anonymous tool](#). Checking in with yourself is super important!

Table of Contents

1. [If you are feeling... \(a list of coping strategies\)](#)
2. [If you are concerned about a friend...](#)
3. [Supportive Quotes](#)
4. [Asking for Accommodations from Professors/Deans \(with template\)](#)
5. [Resources Available from CAPS](#)
6. [Recommended Area Therapists for CS Concentrators](#)
7. [Eating Healthy](#)
8. [Sleeping Well](#)
9. [Resources and Webpages](#)

If you are feeling...

- Anxious
 - If you have a general sense of anxiety, you can use several different kinds of grounding techniques to bring your body and mind to a calmer state. If you are able to, walk around the lobby of the CIT and see if you can count the number of mouses you see in use. If being in the CIT is triggering for you, take a walk outside (or through a different building) and try to count the number of people using a Mac computer. Doing a series of tasks that are structured but fairly simple can help ease anxiety.
 - Remember --- if you are having a panic attack, you cannot physically be in a state of panic for more than 20 minutes. Panic attacks are a natural bodily reaction that occurs out of context. It will soon end, but to speed up that process, you can use this technique. First, inhale through your nose for 4 seconds, then hold your breath for 7 seconds. Next, exhale through your mouth for 8 seconds. Repeat this process 2-3 times or however many times you need to before the attack is over. (This technique is called square breathing)
 - Oftentimes, writing out or discussing the immediate sensations you are feeling can be helpful to ease anxiety, for both general anxiety and for panic attacks. Grab a sheet of paper from the area by the printer in the Sunlab and non-judgmentally write out all of the sensations and thoughts you are experiencing. If and when you feel more calm and able, take a look at the fears you have had, and see if you can sort them into A. the situation, B. the thoughts/what am I telling myself, and C. how anxious do the thoughts make me. This can be a useful guide during therapy to identify anxiety triggers.
- Burnt out
 - Reach out to your support system (or alternatively, any of the people who made this guide). The emotions and experiences that cause burnout are complex, and discussing how stress is impacting your life and shifting your focus on the things you can enjoy through a conversation with another person can be very helpful. However, if you don't feel comfortable reaching out, then skip to the page in this guide entitled [Supportive Quotes](#). Burnout is not fun, but many people have experienced it during their time in CS at Brown, and it gets better.
 - It may not seem ideal, but taking a break from working and physically being in the CIT can be very helpful. If the weather is nice enough and you are able, leave the CIT and walk on Thayer in the direction of Andrews. As you walk, and as you become more conscious of your breath, see if you can count the number of people wearing any shade of blue. When you get to Meeting Street, stop and check in with yourself --- are you hungry? Thirsty? Sleepy? Rest and feed yourself accordingly, and begin work again when you feel recharged. And if you need extra time, use the templates below (under Asking for Accommodations from Professors/Deans).
 - You are much, **much** more than the work that you've accomplished! Begin by finding a sheet of paper (maybe from the Sunlab), and write down all of the

qualities you have that you are proud of, or that you love. Next, write down all of the things you have accomplished (in your entire life) that you are proud of. Next, write down three things you appreciate about the people, places, and experiences that have made you who you are.

- Sad/Hopeless/Down
 - **It may not seem like it right now, but you are an awesome person who is deserving of love and you have a lot to offer the world.**
 - Find a sheet of paper (maybe from the Sunlab), and write down all of the qualities you have that you are proud of, or that you love. Next, write down all of the things you have accomplished (in your entire life) that you are proud of. Next, write down three things you appreciate about the people, places, and experiences that have made you who you are.
 - By spending a lot of time being frustrated and sad in the CIT, we can often subconsciously begin to associate the CIT with those negative feelings, which can impact our physical health, mental health, and mood. Feeling sad is okay, and like all emotions, is a part of the human experience. Taking a walk or changing your location might be able to help to ease these emotions quicker. Reading the [Supportive Quotes](#) page below may also help.
- Nauseous
 - I'm so sorry you're going through anxiety induced nausea, it is awful, and I hope you can find some relief soon. Hopefully this will help some, feel free to message us if you need more tips. ***I am not a medical professional, take this advice at your own liability***
 - Anxiety induced nausea, the quick and dirty --- ginger pills or dried/candied ginger have been really, really helpful for me, as well as mindfulness techniques (especially breath meditation --- i.e. say "I will get better" on the in breath, "This nausea will pass" on the out breath). You can get the candied ginger from Nuts.com or the ginger pills from Amazon or GNC on Thayer. But a quick warning, too much ginger can lower your blood pressure, which can also cause anxiety. I stick with max three pills a day, the recommended dosage, and always take on a semi-full to full stomach.
 - Check in with yourself and make sure you've eaten --- a little more of an explainer --- sometimes anxiety induced nausea happens because anxiety/stress causes acid production in the stomach, and that acid causes the nausea (it's the same reason that sometimes people will throw up acid in their mouth when they see something that disgusts them). Foods like graham crackers (I'm a fan of the chocolate Teddy Grahams personally) and dry wheat bread are really good at "soaking up" that acid, coating the stomach, and suppressing the nausea. I always keep a couple ginger pills and some graham crackers in my bag if I know I'll be in a situation that I might be anxious about, and that's worked really well for me.
- Lack of Appetite

- Often, skipping meals (especially breakfast) can cause a temporary lack of appetite. If you are unable to eat right now after having skipped a meal, that is okay. Try your best to eat something healthy (see the Eating Healthy section) and substantial at the next time you would typically eat a meal. And remember --- **health is important!** CS homeworks can wait longer than your body can --- health comes first!
- Drink plenty of water! Dehydration can often cause a loss of appetite. You can get free cups from the third floor of the CIT, and in my opinion, the purified water dispenser in the graduate student kitchen dispenses some excellent tasting water (maybe even the best at Brown, but who knows, we'd have to [hire a water sommelier](#)).
- If you are having a continued lack of appetite, this may be a sign of a more consistent health issue (which is not uncommon and can be managed with good treatment!). Check in with Health Services and CAPS by using the numbers at the top of this guide (under Immediate Contacts and Resources).
- Having trouble sleeping
 - If you get into bed and cannot fall asleep after 20 minutes, go to a different area of your room or dorm, and do something relaxing (such as reading, listening to music, or meditating). Lying in bed awake can create an unhealthy link between your sleeping environment and wakefulness. Instead, you want your bed to conjure sleepy thoughts and feelings only. Don't worry --- you will fall asleep!
 - Stay away from anything that has a screen, as the blue light from electronic screens stimulates/alerts the brain and makes it significantly more difficult to fall asleep. If you can, turn on "Night Mode" on your phone, and install f.lux on your computer. This dampens the stimulating effect of the computer screen's backlight.
 - [Try a breathing exercise](#) --- 1. Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge of tissue just behind your upper front teeth and keep it there through the entire exercise. You will be exhaling through your mouth around your tongue; try pursing your lips slightly if this seems awkward; 2. Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four; 3. Hold your breath for a count of seven; 4. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of eight; 5. This is one breath. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths. (This is called the 4-7-8 exercise)
- Physical Pain (i.e. wrist pain, backaches)
 - There are several exercises to help avoid the risk of carpal tunnel syndrome, here's one that can be easily done at your seat --- 1. Extend your arm in front of you with your palm up; 2. Bend your wrist, pointing your hand toward the floor; 3. With your other hand, gently bend your wrist farther until you feel a mild to moderate stretch in your forearm; 4. Hold for at least 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat 2 to 4 times.

- Backaches can often be the result of not great posture. [Here's an exercise](#) to ensure that you are sitting with healthy posture --- 1. Sit at the end of your chair and slouch completely; 2. Draw yourself up and accentuate the curve of your back as far as possible. Hold for a few seconds; 3. Release the position slightly (about 10 degrees). This is a good sitting posture; 4. Keep your feet flat on the floor and relax.
- Stretching can be helpful, and the 3rd and 5th floors of the CIT have wide open spaces for you to stretch.

If you are concerned about a friend:

- If you are asking yourself, "Should I be concerned about this?" start by reading the section about signs of distress. People reveal their inner distress in different ways, and you may be picking up on subtle changes that concern you or seeing extreme behavior that is frightening -- or anything in between.
- [Signs of distress](#)
- [Considerations regarding suicide](#)
- [What can you do?](#)
 - **Seek consultation and advice:** When possible, consult with others who may help you think about what you are observing and weigh the options about what to do -- or who can take action to contact the student you are worried about.
 - **Talk with the the student personally:**
 - **Express care:** Often people who are having a difficult time feel isolated and alone; an expression of concern is helpful in itself. Choose a location and time that both respects the student's privacy and keeps your own safety in mind, and start by sharing with the student what you have observed (or what was reported to you) that has led you to be concerned.
 - **Use language that is non-judgmental and specific/descriptive.** Examples include: "I noticed you [description of behavior witnessed] a few minutes ago," "I've noticed that [indicate change in behavior that raised concern], "You seem more [description of behavior observed] than usual," "Someone who cares about you shared with me his/her concern that you [describe behavior] recently."
 - **Ask an open-ended questions,** or make a general statement that will allow the student to respond ("I would like to be helpful in some way," "Can you tell me how things are going?").
 - **Give the student time to respond.** You do not need to solve his or her problem, but it is important that you try to listen carefully. Reflect back what you hear both to communicate to the student that he/she was heard and that you have understood them correctly. As appropriate, express empathy, concern, and you care for the student ("What you just shared sounds really challenging.")
 - **Refer the student to resources:**
 - **Offer a few resources.** When you have the opportunity, tell the student about [appropriate resources](#) and suggest he/she might benefit from connecting with these resources.
 - **Have a phone number written down.** If you believe that it is very important for the student to contact one of these offices, it is helpful to have the phone number of the office with you before you begin the conversation.
 - **If you need immediate help:** If you believe the student should see someone immediately or very soon (i.e., today) or that additional

assistance will help the student overcome any barriers to actually taking advantage of the resource, you can also walk a student over to **Counseling and Psychological Services** (located on the 5th floor of J. Walter Wilson) or **Student Support Services** (located on the 4th floor of Graduate Center E). You can also call **Student Support Services (401-863-3145)** to ask that a dean to meet you and the student where you are. However you make the connection, be sure the office knows the reason for your concern, even in the presence of the student, unless it is not appropriate for some reason.

- **Follow Up:** If you referred the student to a specific person or office, call that person or office to let them know you have referred a student to them.
- If there is an emergency, the first step is to call DPS at 401-863-4111

Supportive Quotes

- “But **it gets so much better everyone**, never tell yourself that one company, one job, one class says anything about your abilities. Being good or bad at interviews is not at all a reflection of your worth, your CS skills, or your likelihood to succeed in industry. It's really just an arbitrary thing.” - Christine Chapman
- “Being an HTA was so difficult, and not just in terms of organizing TAs/deadlines. Having the weight of "having to know everything" on you is really tough. I felt like I was constantly relearning stuff I should have learned as a student, and as a TA the previous year. So much love to all my TAs/HTAs for making the department work smoothly, and for being confident enough to be a source of knowledge and help. **And love to everyone who's struggling and feels like they can't do it. Even if it looks like someone has it all together, they probably don't. Everyone struggles, and that's okay! Surround yourself with people that love you and don't worry. The future will turn out okay**” - Dylan Gattey
- “The only advice I can give is **its ok to struggle!** Coming to terms with the fact that everybody struggles, that everybody has things they can't do or don't understand, helped me get it through it all. Things are better now - I'm a TA for a class I really enjoy, I love my classes, and I'm starting to be ok with the fact that sometimes, things don't work out. Focus on the positives, on all the things you've achieved and made and learned, and surround yourself with people that love and support you, and hopefully, it will all work out” - Arun Das
- “I read this sense of "would I have gotten here on my own?" in a lot of these posts and was thinking about that sentiment. The thing is, none of us would have gotten anywhere 'on our own.' **Everyone has been helped by others, whether it's their mathematician father, an encouraging soccer coach, a dedicated advisor, a generous mentor, or a TA as awesome as you.** I think it's nice to remember that no one is doing it on raw academic talent alone, and being about to succeed by incorporating your social skills is one benefit that you have while other people have other skills or experiences that benefit them.” - Paige Stoermer, in response to Louisa Conwill
- “The best piece of advice I've gotten at work is the following: Do NOT compare other people to yourself, it's not a competition. **Instead, focus on what your strengths are and all the amazing things you've done and value you provide. It's hard not to compare yourself, but being aware of it being unhealthy is 90% of the battle.**” -Andy Chen
- “As an HTA and industry interviewer, I've also frequently been on the rejecting side. I've never rejected a candidate with 100% confidence, and in retrospect some decisions I've made have been flat-out mistakes. I've rejected TA candidates who have gone on to HTA the same course later. I've rejected industry candidates who have gone on to be amazing engineers at other companies. **Sometimes when you get rejected, it ends up being a blessing in disguise. And sometimes it just sucks and is wrong and you really truly honestly should have gotten the job. But it's never a true reflection on you, because interviewing and hiring is always a little bullshit.**” - Jessica Liang

- I somehow got involved in teaching what little I knew about Unix to local companies whose staff knew even less. Every time I taught a Unix course I feared I'd be found out, that I really didn't know even as much as the people I was teaching. But this fear pushed me to learn more. Unfortunately, as I learned more, the ante kept increasing until I was teaching Unix internals to the people who were developing the latest Unix systems at top companies. **I'd learned a lot, but still felt that each time I taught such a course, I was going just a bit beyond my abilities**, and it was terrifying. All this gets us only into the late 80s. I'm not going to relate all anxiety-producing activities I've found myself involved in since then, but there have been a fair number, and I've often felt if I really don't belong here. **I've made my share of blunders, both professionally and socially. One has to regret them, and one has to move on.** I'm proud of the accomplishments made by the many students who've taken classes from me -- that's what keeps me going. - Tom Doepner
- “That was the second time I'd taken linear algebra, and it ended up being the second time I took an NC in linear algebra. I finally passed on my third attempt this fall. I also dropped out of 169 at the end of my sophomore spring because I was close to failing. I simply couldn't keep up with the pace of developing Weenix. I was really upset when I had to tell Tom I was dropping his class, because I thought there was no way I'd be allowed to TA 33 if I failed out of OS. **I took 167 again my junior spring and it was one of the most rewarding class experiences I've had here. There's always a second chance at Brown. Or a third.**” - Ian Reardon

Asking for Accommodations from Professors/Deans

- If you are experiencing a crisis or are not able to perform to your full abilities, it is **completely** okay and normal to ask for accommodations from professors or from a Dean.
- Types of Accommodations
 - Extension --- This is a short term accommodation made by a professor to give you more time on an assignment. It can be granted by a professor without the intervention of a Dean or Dean's Note.
 - Dean's Note --- This is a longer term accommodation. It will also give you support to get accommodations from professors who may be unaware or unwilling to be considerate of a crisis you are experiencing. To get a Dean's Note, you can email or call any of the Deans listed under Immediate Contacts and Resources.
 - SEAS Accommodations --- This is a long term accommodation that can only be granted by the Office of Student and Employee Accessibility Services (SEAS). If you have any kind of disability, medical condition, or health issue that necessitates extra time on assignments or other accommodations, SEAS can accommodate you and make your professors aware that you need accommodations (while still keeping the reasons for your accommodation confidential).
- If you have were unable to complete all of your coursework by the end of the semester, that's also okay and very common! There are several different types of accommodations for you to be able to finish your remaining coursework for the previous semester.
 - Incompletes --- Incompletes can be granted by the instructor of a class, and do not need a Dean's Note or permission. If you obtain an incomplete, your grade in the class will appear as an INC on your transcript until you finish up remaining coursework.
 - Excused Absence --- If you are not able to take a final exam but have completed most of the work for a class, Deans Gail Cohee, Carol Cohen, Christopher Dennis, or Yolanda Rome are all able to grant exam excuses. If you obtain an exam excuse, your grade in the class will appear as an ABS on your transcript until you take the final. Your replacement final exam will be taken during the second week of the subsequent semester.
- Template for Professor Extension:
Hello Professor [Insert Name Here],

I hope that you are having a good day. My name is [Name] and I'm a student in your [Class Name].

[Describe the reasons why you need the extension --- don't be afraid to get personal]

[Explain how what you are experiencing is making it difficult to perform to the best of your abilities in class]

With all of this in mind, I was wondering if it would be possible for me to get an extension of [Insert time period here --- several days, a week, etc.] for [Insert assignment name here]. I will work as hard as possible once this situation is better to make sure I get my work accomplished. I am sorry that this has happened, but I really appreciate your guidance and compassion.

Best,

[Insert your name here]

- Template for Dean's Note:

Hello Dean [Insert Name Here],

I hope that you are having a good day. My name is [Name] and I'm a student in your [Class Name].

[Describe the reasons why you need the extension --- don't be afraid to get personal]

[Explain how what you are experiencing is making it difficult to perform to the best of your abilities in class]

With all of this in mind, I was wondering if it would be possible for me to meet with you to discuss my situation and hopefully obtain a Dean's Note. I am sorry that this has happened, but I really appreciate your guidance and compassion. Thank you so much for your time!

Best,

[Insert your name here]

Resources Available From CAPS

- Seeing CAPS --- CAPS can be a useful resource for a variety of things, from Academic Stress to Identity Issues to Depression. It is straightforward to schedule a meeting, and has no cost to the student. If you are on the fence about going, don't hesitate to make the call and go!
- Any student can schedule an appointment with the Counseling and Psychological Services by calling 401-863-3476 or by visiting J. Walter Wilson Room 512 anytime Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. CAPS offers many services, including the following:
 - [Need help now lines](#)
 - Crisis Assistance
 - Appointments with Therapists
 - After Therapist, schedule with staff psychiatrists
 - Support/Referrals to community providers
 - [Group Therapy](#)
- After an initial consultation, students can be counseled on a variety of strategies to manage their mental health, as well as get referrals to psychiatrists.
- While CAPS can provide important resources, it is important to note that there are some limitations:
 - Long Term Therapy: While the 7 session limit was recently removed, CAPS still encourages long term therapy to be with an outside therapist or psychiatrist.
 - It is important to note their [confidentiality terms](#). While CAPS places an emphasis on confidentiality, there are times when they are legally required to disclose information.
- [Learn More about CAPS](#)

Recommended Area Therapists/Psychiatrists for CS Concentrators

- [Young Adult Behavioral Health Clinic at Rhode Island Hospital](#)
 - The Young Adult Behavioral Health Program at Rhode Island Hospital is intended to help 18- to 26-year-olds struggling with mental illness, and is good for full coverage with almost **all insurance plans**. At the clinic, there is full access to psychiatrists and psychotherapists trained in a variety of therapy disciplines (CBT, ACT, DBT, etc).
- [Betsy Singer-Cable](#)
- [Joseph Trunzo](#)
- [Meesha Ahuja M.D.](#)
 - Dr. Ahuja is a psychiatrist, which means that she can prescribe medication. She is also a member of the Young Adult Behavioral Health Clinic at Rhode Island Hospital.

Eating Healthy

- **Why it's important** --- healthy eating habits are often overshadowed by the need to eat a fast meal. However, good nutrition is essential to not just being physically healthy, but also mentally. A [study](#) found that there is a positive correlation to the amount of fruits and vegetables an individual consumed and their well-being, curiosity, and creativeness.
- **What makes a healthy meal** --- while there are different schools of thought regarding what optimal nutrition is, there are a few well supported suggestions
 - Eat breakfast
 - Don't skip meals (Plan for meals)
 - Make nutrition a priority
- **Eating Healthy at CS Events** --- if you are organizing an event, here are some of Brown CS's vendors (which are usually picked from the [Brown First Vendor List](#)) and some suggestions for orders
 - Bagel Gourmet
 - Breakfast Sandwiches, Salads, Falafel Wraps
 - Kabob and Curry
 - Saag Paneer, Tikka Masala, Rice, Naan
 - Pizza Gourmet
 - Pizzas, Sandwiches, Salads
 - Shanghai
 - Japanese, Chinese, and Thai dishes
- **Resources:**
 - [How does nutrition affect productivity?](#)
 - [Resources for Eating Disorders](#)

Sleeping Well

- **[Sleep is important!](#) It prevents chronic illnesses, helps with healthy brain functioning, and a lack of sleep can make almost all tasks (except sleeping) more difficult!**
- **Set a regular bedtime:**
 - Going to bed at a regular time helps your body reinforce its sleeping and waking schedule
 - Helps you go to sleep faster and wake up more refreshed
 - BUT: If trying to force yourself to sleep doesn't work because it's making you more stressed, try to get up and do something relaxing for a couple minutes before trying again.
- **De-stress before sleeping:**
 - Try powering off your devices an hour before you go to bed
 - Don't work in bed: reserve that space for sleep
 - Avoid a lot of vigorous exercise or fast-paced activity right before going to sleep
 - Destress by:
 - Showering
 - Journaling or sketching
 - Listen to some music
 - Stretch or meditate
- **Regulate your eating and drinking habits:**
 - Try cutting caffeine from your diets (at least during the afternoon)
 - Avoid highly processed foods that contain a lot of sodium
 - Eat dinner at least 3 hours before you plan on going to bed - eating later will force the muscles in your digestive system to work harder
 - Have a cup of (decaffeinated) tea! I'm a fan of rooibos and turmeric ginger tea!
- **Resources**
 - [Tips to Sleep Better](#)

Resources and Webpages

- [CAPS](#)
 - Counseling and Psychological services can provide one on one counseling sessions with therapists, medication, as well as group therapy sessions.
 - [Resource sheet](#)
- [SEAS](#)
 - Student and Employee accessibility services can provide accommodations for physical and mental disabilities. These range from preferential housing accommodations to extra times on exams.
- [Zencare](#)
 - A website where one can find peer recommended therapists in the Providence Area
- [LETS:](#)
 - A student group that provides Peer to peer Mental health advising through their PMHA program.
- [Active Minds:](#)
 - A student group that is working to reduce the stigma around mental health.
- [Students for Samaritans:](#)
 - An on campus organization dedicated to suicide prevention and raising awareness of mental health on campus.
- [Brown Bwell: Nutritionist](#)
 - Students can set up appointments with the Bwell nutritionist to discuss eating concerns regarding themselves or others.
- [WICS:](#)
 - Women in Computer Science provides a variety of resources for Women in CS such as networking events, workshops, and mentorship.
- [Mosaic+:](#)
 - Mosaic focuses on helping underrepresented minorities succeed in Computer science. They host events, workshops, and have their own mentorship program.