



# Health and Wellness

## Health is Priority One

Your first priority should always be your own health, safety, and well-being. Vivek will never intentionally ask you to compromise your health. If you think that a request from Vivek might do so, let him know as soon as possible and he will make other arrangements.

## Overview

No research activity -- a paper, a proposal, a presentation -- is more important than your physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Graduate students and postdocs are often placed under [a variety of stress factors](#). The resulting consequences can be extremely severe.

If you feel you may be facing mental health challenges, you're not alone! Quoting from an [Inside Higher Ed report](#) on [a Nature Biotechnology study](#) on graduate student mental health:

Several studies suggest that graduate students are at greater risk for mental health issues than those in the general population. This is largely due to social isolation, the often abstract nature of the work and feelings of inadequacy -- not to mention the slim tenure-track job market. But a new study in *Nature Biotechnology* warns, in no uncertain terms, of a mental health "crisis" in graduate education.

"Our results show that graduate students are more than six times as likely to experience depression and anxiety as compared to the general population," the study says, urging action on the part of institutions. "It is only with strong and validated interventions that academia will be able to provide help for those who are traveling through the bioscience workforce pipeline."

In [economics](#),

In one unspecified program, 10 percent of students had moderately severe or severe depression symptoms. Twelve percent had severe anxiety symptoms. Four percent of respondents had both moderately severe or severe depressive symptoms and severe anxiety. About 13 percent of the sample was in treatment for anxiety, and 13 percent for depression. The five students suffering from

moderately severe or severe depressive symptoms were not in treatment. One-third of the students with severe anxiety symptoms were getting treatment.

The authors of the economics-department study found that "contrary to social stigma, seeing a mental health professional is not the same thing as having poor mental health. Many of those who seek help are doing better than those who do not." You should never feel shy about seeking help if you're at all worried about your mental health.

## Staying Healthy

Our group will do everything possible to support lab members and ensure a healthy work-life balance. You will never be expected to respond to work communications or do work on your personal time or vacation, [which you should set aside](#), and you should not, and will never be expected to, work unsustainable hours. If you have to work particularly hard one week, try to take additional time off the week after, so you maintain, on average, a roughly balanced schedule. Let Vivek know as soon as possible if you're unable to meet some deadlines or have to back off your work intensity, and he will work with you to help manage your workload and stress level.

Some other tips include:

1. **Stay home while sick:** This is an expectation: your recovery is important, and we want to avoid the risk of getting others sick. If you don't feel well enough to work, you shouldn't! Your first priority is to regain your health. Just let Vivek know and he can cover for you if necessary.
2. **Maintain a healthy sleep schedule:** We all have different rhythms and sleep needs. Make sure that you're getting enough sleep. If that means some work doesn't quite get done that night, no big deal! As stated above, your health is the most important thing, and sleep is an essential part of maintaining it.
3. **Pursue hobbies outside of work:** Your work is not, and should not, define you or be your life. Engage in activities that relieve stress, and let your mind wander away from work. Letting your brain focus on something else might actually benefit your research or classwork!
4. **Develop a support network among your peers:** Whether they're inside or outside the group, your peers can relate to whatever stresses you're facing. It's helpful to have a group you can confide in and get support from.
5. **Take advantage of mental health resources:** Vivek is always here to provide moral support and guidance (and you should never feel shy about asking!), but he is not a trained counselor. Cornell offers [mental health care](#)

and [counseling](#). You should never feel ashamed to reach out for help if you're at all worried about your mental health.

**6. *If you are worried about someone else in the lab group, let Vivek know:***

We all have to look out for each other. If you're concerned that stress may be getting to another member of the lab group, let Vivek know and he can work with that member to ensure that their health is prioritized.

 **Danger**

If you or someone you know may be considering suicide, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

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