FULL BLOOM

Actor and comedy writer RACHEL BLOOM speaks out about anxiety and depression—and how she got help

Complimentary issue from the editors of WebMD Magazine brought to you by JED
Zzzs and $$$s
Think a good night’s sleep is a luxury you can’t afford? Consider this: It could make you feel like a million bucks. Well, quarter of a million. Researchers tracked 310,594 people ages 16 and up for five years. They regularly rated their happiness, their sleep duration and quality, and their use of sleep medications. Those whose sleep improved the most during the study—that is, more sleep, better quality, and fewer medications—also made gains in happiness equal to someone who won $250,000 in the lottery.

—Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs

Beware the Boost
When you’re munching through an endless lecture, an energy drink can give you just the boost you need. But when shaken or stirred into a cocktail, that boost can be dangerous. Energy drinks can mask the effects of alcohol and put you at greater risk for accidents and injuries, a new study says. Put simply, you might not realize just how tipsy you are. If you’re of legal age to drink, they become gummy and also make the cooking water cloudy. Stirring, not oil, keeps the noodles from sticking together. So skip the oil but add a little salt for flavor. Before you drain the pasta, add a spoonful of pasta water to your sauce, which will help it cling to the noodles. And never rinse the pasta—you’ll rinse away the starch.

—American Chemical Society

Pre-Meditation
Do you cram right up to the minute before the test? Those final moments might be better spent meditating. About 45 medical students learned a yoga-based meditation practice called mind sound resonance technique. Then each student took a test of their thinking skills before and after meditating and again before and after relaxing on their backs. When students meditated prior to the test, they got significantly higher marks than when they simply relaxed.

—Journal of Religion and Health

84% OF COLLEGE STUDENTS DESCRIBE THEIR HEALTH AS GOOD, VERY GOOD, OR EXCELLENT TOP THREE THINGS THEY GOT TREATED FOR LAST YEAR: ALLERGIES, BACK PAIN, AND SINUS INFECTIONS.

—American College Health Association

Your guide to the transition from high school to college and adulthood.

Preparing for college is more than just academics and testing. Being emotionally ready creates the greatest opportunity for success.

Here’s what you’ll need to know as you get ready to leave high school:

• College in Perspective: What’s the value of a college education? How do you find your best emotional and social college fit? Learn why emotional prep is just as important as academic prep.

• Basic Life Skills: Managing physical and emotional health, finances, personal time and belongings can be overwhelming. Learn strategies for self-care and independence.

• Social and Emotional Skills: Relationships and connections help us thrive. Learn how to manage emotions, make responsible decisions, set and achieve goals and maintain positive relationships.

• Mental Health and Substance Abuse Literacy: Emotional problems can become more prevalent during the late teen and young adult years. Learn about the issues and how to seek help.

• The Transition to College Life: Transition and adjustment issues are common in the first year of college. Learn how to prepare and manage any concerns.

Get Set to Go: settogo.org

WebMD Campus Life
(www.webmd.com/campuslife)

#trending now

Have you tried high-intensity interval training (HIIT)? The short bursts of high-intensity exercise, followed by quick rests, can help you increase your aerobic capacity while gaining muscle and losing fat—in less than 30 minutes a day. Before you start, make sure you’re healthy and strong enough. Trainers say HIIT might bring greater risk of injury. It might also cause burnout—trainers say some people like HIIT for a few months then move on.

—American College of Sports Medicine Health & Fitness Journal

Get Set to Go: settogo.org

WEBMD.COM
Actor and comedy writer RACHEL BLOOM speaks out about her life with anxiety and depression—and how getting help made all the difference.
Super-talented actor-singer-dancer-comedy writer Rachel Bloom is having a moment. Her television series, Crazy Ex-Girlfriend, which she co-created and stars in, is catching the attention of viewers and critics. The series premiered in 2015 and is revving up for its third season on the CW. Last year, Bloom scored two prestigious best-actress awards: a Golden Globe and a Critics’ Choice.

Bloom’s personal life is equally peachy. She recently married longtime beau and fellow television writer Gregor, who also writes for Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. They live in Los Angeles with their newly adopted terrier, Wiley.

But life hasn’t always been roses for Bloom. Growing up in Southern California, this emotional, analytical woman—more East Coast than West, in her opinion—felt at odds with her peers and her sunny surroundings. “I had always been made fun of in elementary school, but middle school got really bad. Suddenly you’re around all these blonde kids who surf, and you’re the weird kid who likes musical theater and correcting people’s grammar,” says Bloom, now 30.

THE BIG SHIFT

When she hit puberty, Bloom developed symptoms of anxiety, which she describes as continuous, looping thoughts and worry that wouldn’t relent. “Mental illness runs in my family,” Bloom says. “Related to that, or not related to that, I was a very emotional kid. I was so depressed and anxious.”

High school was a smidge better, she says, but the emotional fallout of puberty remained. Fast-forward to college: Bloom enters New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts (East Coast!) as a theater major and life looked promising. She discovered comedy writing and joined the sketch comedy group Hammerkatz. After a bumpy dating history—high school she was “desperately in love” with a guy she rejected her—she suddenly started attracting attention from men.

Then, sophomore year, things took a nose dive. “I basically got in the middle of a love triangle with a couple of older guys in the group,” she says. There were flirtations, dates, breakup. Disaster ensued. Both guys broke it off with Bloom, then ousted her from her post as group director.

Her world spun on its axis. Entrenched in a negative sleep pattern, she stayed up late, slept during the day, and walked around in a haze. Distracting herself by spending endless hours online added fuel to the fire.

Soon Bloom spiraled into depression, which she remembers as feeling like something one died. She didn’t sleep, lost her appetite, and was consumed by thoughts of her exes. Sophomore and junior years were rough. But senior year, she saw a therapist, who gave her strategies to cope with her feelings. Around the same time, other pieces of her life fell into place. She became co-director of the comedy group and forged a healthy relationship with her now-husband, Gregor. In 2009, she graduated with a BFA in theater.

THE SPIRAL

Fast-forward to 2009, she graduated with a BFA in theater. Growing up in Southern California, this emotional, analytical woman—more East Coast than West, in her opinion—felt at odds with her peers and her sunny surroundings. “The stuff I hadn’t dealt with had come to the surface,” she says. “That’s when I finally saw a psychiatrist.”

Naturally, she was nervous. She couldn’t network executives. “Meditation is really great. It shows you how to be present in the moment. It’s living with yourself and living with your body.”

THE SPIRAL

When she hit puberty, Bloom developed symptoms of anxiety, which she describes as continuous, looping thoughts and worry that wouldn’t relent. “Mental illness runs in my family,” Bloom says. “Related to that, or not related to that, I was a very emotional kid. I was so depressed and anxious.”

High school was a smidge better, she says, but the emotional fallout of puberty remained. Fast-forward to college: Bloom enters New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts (East Coast!) as a theater major and life looked promising. She discovered comedy writing and joined the sketch comedy group Hammerkatz. After a bumpy dating history—high school she was “desperately in love” with a guy who rejected her—she suddenly started attracting attention from men.

Then, sophomore year, things took a nose dive. “I basically got in the middle of a love triangle with a couple of older guys in the group,” she says. There were flirtations, dates, breakup. Disaster ensued. Both guys broke it off with Bloom, then ousted her from her post as group director.

Her world spun on its axis. Entrenched in a negative sleep pattern, she stayed up late, slept during the day, and walked around in a haze. Distracting herself by spending endless hours online added fuel to the fire.

Soon Bloom spiraled into depression, which she remembers as feeling like something one died. She didn’t sleep, lost her appetite, and was consumed by thoughts of her exes. Sophomore and junior years were rough. But senior year, she saw a therapist, who gave her strategies to cope with her feelings. Around the same time, other pieces of her life fell into place. She became co-director of the comedy group and forged a healthy relationship with her now-husband, Gregor. In 2009, she graduated with a BFA in theater.

THE SPIRAL

When she hit puberty, Bloom developed symptoms of anxiety, which she describes as continuous, looping thoughts and worry that wouldn’t relent. “Mental illness runs in my family,” Bloom says. “Related to that, or not related to that, I was a very emotional kid. I was so depressed and anxious.”

High school was a smidge better, she says, but the emotional fallout of puberty remained. Fast-forward to college: Bloom enters New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts (East Coast!) as a theater major and life looked promising. She discovered comedy writing and joined the sketch comedy group Hammerkatz. After a bumpy dating history—high school she was “desperately in love” with a guy who rejected her—she suddenly started attracting attention from men.

Then, sophomore year, things took a nose dive. “I basically got in the middle of a love triangle with a couple of older guys in the group,” she says. There were flirtations, dates, breakup. Disaster ensued. Both guys broke it off with Bloom, then ousted her from her post as group director.

Her world spun on its axis. Entrenched in a negative sleep pattern, she stayed up late, slept during the day, and walked around in a haze. Distracting herself by spending endless hours online added fuel to the fire.

Soon Bloom spiraled into depression, which she remembers as feeling like something one died. She didn’t sleep, lost her appetite, and was consumed by thoughts of her exes. Sophomore and junior years were rough. But senior year, she saw a therapist, who gave her strategies to cope with her feelings. Around the same time, other pieces of her life fell into place. She became co-director of the comedy group and forged a healthy relationship with her now-husband, Gregor. In 2009, she graduated with a BFA in theater.
It's therapeutic for me to talk about this stuff and turn it into objective facts, rather than something that's inside my head that I'm shameful about."

Now she feels like a different person. She sees her psychiatrist regularly, takes a low dose of Prozac, meditates daily, and prioritizes sleep. It's not the end of her struggles, but it's different now—better—because she has tools to manage them.

Older and Wiser

When you talk to Bloom it's clear her TV alter ego, Rebecca Bunch, who ditches a plumb New York City law firm gig to move clear across the country and pursue an old boyfriend, is a reflection of her.

"It's a show about a girl who is fundamentally mentally ill and looks for external forces to distract her from that," she says. "That's me in college."

Bloom wishes she knew then what she knows now about managing her mental health. But she wouldn't sweep her experiences under the rug. If not for the comedy-guys drama in college, Gregor Ex-Girlfriend probably wouldn't be a thing. Her writing style wouldn't have what it is. Maybe she wouldn't have embraced the respectful, supportive partner she found in Gregor.

"A fundamental way I live my life is: Nothing's meant to be. You are in control of your fate," Bloom says. "But there's a way to be like, 'I used to be this way. But now I've learned—and I can use these experiences for the better.'"

Another lesson learned: Talking openly helps. "It's therapeutic for me to talk about this stuff and turn it into objective facts, rather than something that's inside my head that I'm shameful about," she says. If others benefit, too, that's icing on the cake. "I think a lot of people go through what I'm talking about," she says. "If others benefit, too, that's icing on the cake."

When you talk to Bloom it's clear her TV alter ego, Rebecca Bunch, who ditches a plumb New York City law firm gig to move clear across the country and pursue an old boyfriend, is a reflection of her.

"It's a show about a girl who is fundamentally mentally ill and looks for external forces to distract her from that," she says. "That's me in college."

Bloom wishes she knew then what she knows now about managing her mental health. But she wouldn't sweep her experiences under the rug. If not for the comedy-guys drama in college, Gregor Ex-Girlfriend probably wouldn't be a thing. Her writing style wouldn't have what it is. Maybe she wouldn't have embraced the respectful, supportive partner she found in Gregor.

"A fundamental way I live my life is: Nothing's meant to be. You are in control of your fate," Bloom says. "But there's a way to be like, 'I used to be this way. But now I've learned—and I can use these experiences for the better.'"

Another lesson learned: Talking openly helps. "It's therapeutic for me to talk about this stuff and turn it into objective facts, rather than something that's inside my head that I'm shameful about," she says. If others benefit, too, that's icing on the cake. "I think a lot of people go through what I'm talking about," she says. "If others benefit, too, that's icing on the cake."
Avoid First-Year Fails
Beat the freshman blues and make the most of your first year with these expert tips

By Lisa Marshall
Reviewed by Patricia A. Farrell, PhD, WebMD Medical Reviewer

With all those standardized tests and application essays finally behind you, you probably envisioned an idyllic first year on campus: Frisbee games on the quad, weekend parties with new friends, and classes far less boring than the ones in high school. After all, that’s what the brochures promised. But like any big life transition, it can be a wonderful time. But I also see a lot of students who feel really alone and isolated and are disappointed by the gap between expectation and reality.”

Ben Locke, executive director of the Center for Collegiate Mental Health at Penn State, believes a more competitive environment at a younger age (via club sports, more advanced placement classes, and so on) may be driving anxiety among students who arrive on campus feeling pressure to maintain the academic, athletic, or social status they had in high school. Technology also plays a role, he says. Texting can tether new students to friends and family back home, distracting them from new relationships and exacerbating homesickness. Meanwhile, social media can foster a feeling that their college experience is subpar. “People put on social media an ideal version of the life they want the world to see, and these students end up comparing themselves to that unrealistic slice of life,” says Locke.

In reality, the first year of college is, by nature, uncomfortable for almost all students, says advice columnist Harlan Cohen, author of The Naked Roommate: And 107 Other Issues You Might Run into in College. “When you come from a community where you have had the same friends and lived in the same environment for years and suddenly you have to start all over—that can be hard on anyone.”

To prevent a rough start or turn it around if you’re already having one, heed this advice:

**get centered**
- **FIND YOUR PLACES** Either before you go or when you arrive, identify three places—campus clubs, spiritual groups, athletics organizations—where you can do things you enjoy and connect with like-minded people. Don’t rely exclusively on one source (like a fraternity, sorority, or sports team).
- **FIND YOUR PEOPLE** Identify five people who can help you if you get stressed or blues. These could be student ambassadors, residence hall advisors, teachers, spiritual leaders, or trusted friends. If you had mental health concerns before leaving for school, line up a counselor before you go.
- **BE PATIENT** It could take a few semesters for you to get past the initial discomfort.

**unplug**
- **TURN OFF OR TONE DOWN TEXTING** Schedule an occasional time in the evening to connect with parents and friends from home, preferably by phone, rather than staying connected via text throughout the day.
- **LIVE REAL LIFE** Use social media to stay updated on happenings at clubs at school or to initiate connections with new people (the president of an organization, a coach, a teammate). After that, try to connect in person when possible. Facebook should not be a substitute for real-life relationships.
- **LOOK UP** Keep random perusing of status updates to a minimum. “College life should not mean living with your head buried in your cell phone,” says Cohen.

**soothe yourself**
- **TAKE THE LONG VIEW** If you feel anxious all the time, shift your mindset from one in which you feel like you must succeed in the short run to one in which you recognize the life lessons you’re learning for the long run. Getting a B or C—or even a D—today is not going to ruin your life, stress Cohen: “There is this sense of immediate gratification among a lot of students—that you have to get it right away or it will be a catastrophe. Realize that setbacks are a part of growth.”
- **STOP AND FOCUS** Breathe deep 10 times and try not to think about anything but your breathing. If your mind wanders, start over and try again. “Center yourself in the moment, quiet your mind, and has a measurable impact on your body,” says Locke.
- **DO WHAT YOU LOVE** Feeling depressed? Even though you may not have the energy, make an effort to do the things you know make you feel better, whether that’s playing an instrument, running, or a spiritual practice, says Locke.
- **KNOW WHEN TO SEEK HELP** If after three weeks, your blues or anxiety don’t let up, make an appointment with the campus counseling center.

**exercise people skills**
- **MAKE ROOMIE RULES** Make a rule with your roommate that if you’re uncomfortable with something you will share it with each other within 48 hours or not share it at all (and no badmouthing your roommate to others on the floor), says Cohen.
- **BE REALISTIC** Your roommate does not need to be your best friend. “Roommates are people who share space. Friendship is a bonus,” says Cohen. If your irreconcilable differences affect your health or schoolwork, consult your residence hall advisor to find a workable solution.
- **LEAVE YOUR DOOR OPEN** This invites neighbors to pop in to say “Hi,” ask for help with homework, or invite you to join them for dinner, says Cohen.

48.9% Percentage of first-year students who have difficulty with roommates

60% Percentage of students on college campuses who felt overwhelming anxiety in the past year

71.4% Percentage of first-year students who feel homesick

75% Percentage of students who are engaged in college life

80% Percentage of students who feel connected to their school

85% Percentage of students who are satisfied with their choice of college

90% Percentage of students who are interested in their major

95% Percentage of students who are excited about their future

100% Percentage of students who have difficulty adjusting to college

100% Percentage of students who feel overwhelmed with all they have to do, according to a 2016 survey of 19,000 first-year students by UCLA researchers. During the past five years, students’ use of college counseling centers has skyrocketed by 30%, studies show, driven in part by a spike in the number of students seeking help for anxiety—now the top complaint—and depression, a close second.

“People put a lot of pressure on themsev-selves that college has got to be the best years of their life,” says Gregory Zells, PhD, director of counseling and psychological services at Cornell University. “It can be a wonderful time. But I also see a lot of students who feel really alone and isolated and are disappointed by the gap between expectation and reality.”

“People put on social media an ideal version of the life they want the world to see, and these students end up comparing themselves to that unrealistic slice of life,” says Locke.

“College life should not mean living with your head buried in your cell phone,” says Cohen.

“There is this sense of immediate gratification among a lot of students—that you have to get it right away or it will be a catastrophe. Realize that setbacks are a part of growth.”

“Center yourself in the moment, quiet your mind, and has a measurable impact on your body,” says Locke.

Even though you may not have the energy, make an effort to do the things you know make you feel better, whether that’s playing an instrument, running, or a spiritual practice, says Locke.

If after three weeks, your blues or anxiety don’t let up, make an appointment with the campus counseling center.

**TAKE THE LONG VIEW** If you feel anxious all the time, shift your mindset from one in which you feel like you must succeed in the short run to one in which you recognize the life lessons you’re learning for the long run. Getting a B or C—or even a D—today is not going to ruin your life, stress Cohen: “There is this sense of immediate gratification among a lot of students—that you have to get it right away or it will be a catastrophe. Realize that setbacks are a part of growth.”

“Center yourself in the moment, quiet your mind, and has a measurable impact on your body,” says Locke.

**DO WHAT YOU LOVE** Feeling depressed? Even though you may not have the energy, make an effort to do the things you know make you feel better, whether that’s playing an instrument, running, or a spiritual practice, says Locke.

**KNOW WHEN TO SEEK HELP** If after three weeks, your blues or anxiety don’t let up, make an appointment with the campus counseling center.
Finding My Place
How I learned to fit in, make lifelong friends, and enjoy college

I grew up in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, and wanted a college experience away from home but still in the area. I decided to go to Montclair State, not too far from my hometown.

During the summer, I chatted with a girl I met on the college’s Facebook page, and we met up and were placed together as roommates. I was really excited. But soon after my parents dropped me off, I realized that it didn’t matter if I was an hour and a half or 12 hours away, I was living on my own now and had to make good choices.

Things turned out differently than I expected. My roommate would go out every night, even during the week, and invite people over at all times without respecting my wishes. She’d never invite me out and barely talked to me. I felt very uncomfortable.

I’d just go to class and go back to our room. At the dining hall, I’d often eat by myself because I didn’t have any friends I could text to meet up with.

I was so lonely I’d often cry myself to sleep. I went home every weekend and didn’t feel like going back. But my mom, who’d gone Greek in college, said, “You should give Montclair another try, maybe go out for a sorority.”

I knew I had to do something to see if I could find my home at college. It took a lot of guts, but I put myself out there and went to all the sorority events. It was very awkward at first. I didn’t know anyone and was talking to strangers. But I ended up getting a bid, finding my roommate (who also joined the sorority) for the following year, and making friends with people like me.

I could talk to my sorority sisters about everything, go to a party, or just watch a movie. We didn’t have to go out and party all the time. I also learned how to budget my time, which is really important for transitioning to college successfully. We did a lot of community service work, like making sandwiches for the homeless or raising money for kids at the hospital, and, in order to participate, I had to get my schoolwork done on time.

Today I’m a senior getting ready to graduate, find a job, and transition to adulthood. I’m so glad I decided to give my college another try. I wouldn’t have made lifelong friends, or had those amazing experiences.
Just a few simple healthy habits can help you take on the challenges of college life

By Matt McMillen
Review by Brinilda Nazario, MD
WebMD Lead Medical Director

In college, take care of your health first. The rest will follow.

Healthy habits, like a good night’s sleep and eating well, support both your brain and your body, says Jennifer Edman, MD, MPH, a physician at Reed College’s Health and Counseling Services in Portland, Ore. And those habits will play an essential role during your school years and beyond. “The habits you learn in college will help you throughout your life,” she says.

For the best sleep, try the following:

➤ WORK OUT Exercise will improve your sleep, but do it at least two hours before bedtime so you’re not still wired from your workout.

➤ POWER DOWN Shut off your phone and other devices at least 30 minutes before lights out. Bright screens mess with the brain and eating well, support both your brain and your body, says Ebling: “Otherwise, you will feel—and be—more in control.

For the best sleep, try the following:

➤ WORK OUT Exercise will improve your sleep, but do it at least two hours before bedtime so you’re not still wired from your workout.

➤ POWER DOWN Shut off your phone and other devices at least 30 minutes before lights out. Bright screens mess with the brain

➤ NIX THE SNACKS Eat a healthy breakfast and limit the fatty foods. Edman recommends that students serve themselves on small plates. That makes it easier to exercise restraint and prevent weight gain. “You want to limit portion sizes,” she says.

➤ BEDTIME You should also prepare for the inevitable miscalculations. If you have a fridge in your room, load up on fruits and veggies, egg whites, and high-protein dips to go with them, like hummus, Greek yogurt, and nut butters. Foods like these give you lasting energy for long study sessions. Sugary sodas and candy bars, on the other hand, give you a quick boost, followed soon after by a crash.

➤ TALK IT OUT Lighten your load by sharing how you feel with your friends, who likely have similar struggles. It helps to know you’re not the only one under pressure.

➤ MAKE AN APPOINTMENT If you struggle to find the time, shave off two hours of your workout by going all out. Intense interval training requires only 10 to 15 minutes a day, says Edman.

➤ TALENTS Find a hobby or activity to take your mind off academics. Volunteer off-campus, sign up for an art workshop, or write for the student newspaper.

➤ BUILD A ROUTINE Keep a calendar and schedule study sessions, social activities, free time, even sleep. With your days structured, you will feel—and be—more in control.

➤ TALK IT OUT Lighten your load by sharing how you feel with your friends, who likely have similar struggles. It helps to know you’re not the only one under pressure.

➤ BRANCH OUT Find a hobby or activity to take your mind off academics. Volunteer off-campus, sign up for an art workshop, or write for the student newspaper.

➤ BUILD A ROUTINE Keep a calendar and schedule study sessions, social activities, free time, even sleep. With your days structured, you will feel—and be—more in control.

➤ TALK IT OUT Lighten your load by sharing how you feel with your friends, who likely have similar struggles. It helps to know you’re not the only one under pressure.

➤ BRANCH OUT Find a hobby or activity to take your mind off academics. Volunteer off-campus, sign up for an art workshop, or write for the student newspaper.

➤ BUILD A ROUTINE Keep a calendar and schedule study sessions, social activities, free time, even sleep. With your days structured, you will feel—and be—more in control.

➤ TALK IT OUT Lighten your load by sharing how you feel with your friends, who likely have similar struggles. It helps to know you’re not the only one under pressure.

➤ BRANCH OUT Find a hobby or activity to take your mind off academics. Volunteer off-campus, sign up for an art workshop, or write for the student newspaper.

➤ BUILD A ROUTINE Keep a calendar and schedule study sessions, social activities, free time, even sleep. With your days structured, you will feel—and be—more in control.
EMOTIONAL HEALTH IS THE BIGGEST ISSUE AFFECTING TODAY’S YOUTH AND THEIR STRESSORS CAN BE INTENSE.

MAKE TIME TO TALK ABOUT IT.

Learn how to help yourself, a friend or family member.

jedfoundation.org