

SEE YOUR DOCTOR

Depression: Prevalent On College Campuses “The Real World”—Chicago” Star Tackles Issue Of Awareness And Need For Hope Through Educational Campaign

(NAPSA)—It is estimated that approximately 1.5 million college students have been diagnosed with depression, and suicide has climbed to become the third-leading cause of death for young people aged 15 to 24. In addition, the National Survey of Counseling Center Directors found that 85 percent of college counseling centers noted an increase during the past five years of students with severe psychological problems.

These alarming statistics have prompted Cara Kahn, one of the stars of the popular reality show “The Real World”—Chicago,” to get involved in a national educational campaign to diminish the stigma and raise awareness about depression on college campuses. Living her life on-camera with six other roommates on the show’s 11th season, the charismatic 23-year-old became one of the show’s most popular characters. Good-natured and enthusiastic, Cara surprised her roommates and viewers when she revealed that she was being treated for depression.

“I felt exposed and embarrassed when it came out that I suffer from depression and take medication. But then I started to receive fan letters. Dozens of teens and college students from around the country saying they felt depressed, and others confessing that they take medication. I realized then that I have nothing to be ashamed of.”

Cara was diagnosed with depression in high school. With the help of her psychiatrist and her parents, Cara sought treatment with “talk” therapy and an antidepressant. Refusing to settle for anything less than the best possible improvement, Cara worked with her physician to find the treatment that helped her get back to being herself and enjoying life.

As a keynote speaker for the GOAL! Go On and Live! campaign, Cara is sharing her story at universities across the country, encouraging students to start talking about depression and to take an active



role in their health. The campaign, titled “Depression in College: Real World. Real Life. Real Issues,” is sponsored by the National Mental Health Association, Screening for Mental Health Organization, and Wyeth Pharmaceuticals.

Depression affects approximately 19 million Americans each year and interferes with the ability to work, sleep, eat, study, and enjoy once-pleasurable activities. Symptoms may include a persistent sad or anxious mood; feelings of hopelessness, guilt, or irritability; loss of interest in nearly all activities; low energy; trouble focusing, concentrating, or making decisions; difficulty connecting with friends and family; and, in severe cases, thoughts of death or suicide. Left untreated or under-treated, depression can have a major impact on a student’s academics and his or her social life. With the appropriate combination of talk therapy and medication, and the support of friends and family, young adults can address and resolve nearly all of the symptoms of depression and fully enjoy life once again.

For additional information about depression or the GOAL! campaign, visit www.GoOnAndLive.com or call toll free at 1-888-830-GOAL for a free brochure.

Tips On Dealing With Depression in College

Sometimes the multitude of life’s changes that occur during your college years can trigger serious depression. At this vulnerable time, the smartest thing you can do for yourself is to seek help. If your feelings of constant stress and sadness go on for weeks or months, you may be experiencing more than just difficulty adjusting to life’s changes. Seek assistance from a doctor or mental health professional, the university counseling service, or the student health center. While in treatment, there are a number of steps you can take to help you cope on your way to recovery.

- **Carefully plan your day.** Make time every day to prioritize your work. Prioritizing can give you a sense of control over what you must do and a sense that you can do it.

- **Plan your work and sleep schedules.** Too many students defer doing important class work until nighttime, work through much of the night, and start every day feeling exhausted. Constant fatigue can be a critical trigger for depression. Seven or eight hours of sleep a night is important to your well-being.

- **Participate in an extracurricular activity.** Sports, theater, fraternities and sororities, the student newspaper—whatever interests you—can bring opportunities to meet people interested in the same things you are, and these activities provide welcome change from class work.

- **Seek support from other people.** This may be a roommate or a friend from class. Friendships can help make a strange place feel more friendly and comfortable. Sharing your emotions reduces isolation and helps you realize that you are not alone.

- **Try relaxation methods.** These include meditation, deep breathing, warm baths, long walks, exercise—whatever you enjoy that lessens your feelings of stress and discomfort.

- **Take time for yourself every day.** Make special time for yourself—even if it’s only for 15 minutes a day. Focusing on yourself can be energizing and can give you a feeling of purpose and control over your life.

- **Work towards recovery.** The most important step in combating depression and reclaiming your college experience is to seek treatment. Your physician should communicate to you that remission of symptoms should be your goal and work with you to determine whether psychological counseling, medication, or a combination of both treatments is needed.