Mental and Emotional Well-Being During COVID-19

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*Adapted with permission of Jeffrey Ng, Psy.D.
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What to Expect: Individual and Collective Grief
What to Expect: Stages of Grief

**Denial**
- Shock; Avoidance; Disorientation; “This is not really happening!”

**Anger, Anxiety & Fear**
- Anger about imposed disruptions/restrictions and loss of agency/control
- Anger towards decision makers (politicians, health authorities, Villanova) and perceived source(s) of pandemic (China, Asians, Asian-Americans)
- Health and safety concerns for ourselves and others
- Worry about academics, internships, job market, finances, etc.

**Bargaining**
- Negotiating to change or circumvent the reality of the situation

**Depression**
- Sadness about abrupt and unexpected losses (milestones, celebrations, future plans, relationships, sense of safety, finances etc.)
- Loneliness, boredom and helplessness

**Acceptance**
- Reconciliation; Meaning Making; Pivoting; Planning; → Resiliency/Growth
What to Expect: Stages of Grief

The five stages of grief are tools to help us frame and identify what we may be feeling. But they are not stops on some linear timeline in grief. Not everyone goes through all of them or in a prescribed order.

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler
From On Grief and Grieving
Students Who Might Be More Vulnerable

- Students with pre-existing mental and behavioral health concerns, such as anxiety, depression and substance abuse/dependence.
- Graduating seniors who are grieving the abrupt loss and disruption of their anticipated "senior experience."
- Asian and Asian-American students who may be experiencing anti-Asian bias, stigmatization, discrimination, prejudice, stereotyping, etc.
- International students due to travel-related restrictions and potentially extended separations from family and friends.
- Students who experience being in school and campus life as protective factors.
- Students who struggle with loneliness and social isolation.
- Students who are returning to family or home environments that may compromise their mental and emotional health.
- Low-income students who may not have secure housing, food, Wi-Fi, or other essential resources for online and remote instruction.
Strategies for Coping and Protecting Mental Health

Practice Self-Compassion

- Be kinder, gentler and more patient with ourselves rather than judgmental, punitive or harsh
- Recognize and accept that imperfection and vulnerability are inevitable and part of the human experience
- Be flexible with expectations and goals
- Set reasonable boundaries for ourselves and with others

Limit & Monitor Social Media and News Consumption

- Reduces risk for vicarious trauma
- Increases likelihood that our emotional and behavioral responses are proportional to actual rather than hypothetical or sensationalized situations
- Stay informed, but not be flooded or overwhelmed

Sustain Social and Relational Connections

- “Social distancing” involves “physical distancing” not relational or emotional distancing
Strategies for Coping and Protecting Mental Health

- **Maintain Reasonable Structure & Routine**
- **Attend to Basic Needs** (sleep, nutrition, exercise, etc.)
- **Gratitude**: Research demonstrates that practicing being thankful enhances resiliency, happiness and well-being; counterbalances negative news
- **Accept Vulnerability**: Acknowledge, lean into and process negative emotions rather than denying, neglecting or suppressing them; healthy distractions, however, are okay as long as we return to the feelings; embrace uncertainty and impermanence
- **Get Outside**: While maintaining physical distancing
- **Strengthen Self-Care Practices**: Exercise, yoga, reading, journaling, art, video games, movies, cooking, music, etc.
- **Internal Locus of Control**: Focus on internal rather than external locus of control
I CAN CONTROL
(So, I will focus on these things.)

IF OTHERS FOLLOW THE RULES OF SOCIAL DISTANCING
THE AMOUNT OF TOILET PAPER AT THE STORE

THE ACTIONS OF OTHERS
How long this will last

PREDICTING WHAT WILL HAPPEN

OTHER PEOPLE'S MOTIVES

LIMITING MY SOCIAL MEDIA

MY POSITIVE ATTITUDE

TURNING OFF THE NEWS

MY OWN SOCIAL DISTANCING

FINDING FUN THINGS TO DO AT HOME

MY KINDNESS & GRACE

HOW OTHERS REACT

MY POSITIVE ATTITUDE

HOW I FOLLOW CDC RECOMMENDATIONS

LIMITING MY SOCIAL MEDIA

MY KINDNESS & GRACE

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TheCounselingTeacher.com

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Mindfulness Meditation

• Reduces anxiety and “fight or flight” response by deescalating autonomic nervous system arousal/activation.

• Promotes moment to moment awareness of internal experiences (feeling, thoughts, bodily sensations, etc.) while decreasing over-identification with those experiences.

• Cultivates equanimity or the mental capacity to relate to experiences non-reactively and with evenness, calmness and composure.

• Promotes living and being in the present moment.
Mindfulness Meditation

“If you are depressed, you are living in the past. If you are anxious, you are living in the future. If you are at peace, you are living in the present.”

- Lao Tzu
Recommended Mindfulness Resources

The Best Meditation Apps of 2019

The Mindfulness App  |  Headspace  |  Calm  |  buddhify  |  Sattva  |  
Stop, Breathe & Think  |  Insight Timer  |  10% Happier  |  Breethe  |  Omvana  |  
Simple Habit  |  Meditation & Relaxation Pro  

Helpful Links

- Top Meditation Apps for iPhone and Android
- Koru Mindfulness for College Students
- Free Guided Meditations
When to Seek Professional Help, Support and Consultation

- **Persistent** sadness, anxiety, anger, hopelessness, worthlessness, loss of interest in pleasurable activities, and/or feelings of being overwhelmed

- Significant impairments or changes in functioning, such as sleep, getting out of bed, appetite, concentration, and/or hygiene

- Impulsive, reckless or risky behaviors (substance abuse, self-injury, etc.)

- Thoughts or expressions about death, dying and/or suicide
Contact Us

Villanova Students may seek Counseling Center support by leaving a message and one of our psychologists will call you back.

If you are depressed and considering suicide, please call

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
800-273 -TALK (8255)

Our Hours
Monday-Friday: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Phone: 610-519-4050