Self-Care During Social Distancing

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WHERE'S WALDO?
SOCIAL DISTANCING EDITION

APOLGIES TO WALDO

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Bennett
Common Stressors

- Boredom
- Loneliness
  - May be far from family or unable to see other close friends or dating partners for an extended period of time
- Tensions with others in living situation (i.e., family, partners, roommates)
- Increased mess/disorderliness due to being at home most of the day
- Anger/irritability
- Lack of schedule
- Worry about the future/news
  - If graduating worrying about impact of economy
  - May have increased health anxiety
- Procrastination
- May have loved ones who are high risk or are sick
- If working in hospital, may have own worries about getting sick, burn out, or worry for coworkers
- Financial stress if have job impacted by COVID-19 precautions
How these are different from usual stressors

- Coping skills may be limited or in different forms
  - For example, can't go to gym and have to exercise at home or outside
  - Not able to see friends or family in person
  - Stuck in living situation with limitation places to go to escape
  - Limited options for groceries/supply shortages so may be relying more on take out
How these are different from usual stressors

- **Academics**
  - Adjustment to only online courses and pacing
  - May be harder to focus with extra worry/anxiety about news and being unable to see loved ones in person
  - Difficulties getting answers from instructors who may be overwhelmed with online teaching and evaluation format
  - Changes to clinicals / rotations may lead to worries about other not getting enough training in one's field

- **New situation with a lot of unknowns**
  - Hard to have an end date or known time that social distancing will end
Strategies for managing these stressors

- Keep to a schedule
  - Have a weekday schedule and weekend schedule; keep set times for classes, studying, and field/clinical work
  - Get dressed, shower, and take breaks to eat at consistent times
  - Walk around, stand up and get moving during your day
  - If possible, go outside at least once a day
    - If not, maybe open a window for some fresh air or stand on a porch or balcony
Strategies for managing these stressors

Avoid Unhelpful Habits

- Staying Informed from reliable sources:
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov
  - UMB: https://www.umaryland.edu/coronavirus
  - Maryland’s Department of Health: https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/

- Limit media exposure. Turn off the television and/or alert messaging on your phone if it is increasing your distress.
  - Exposure to media can be healthy or unhealthy, for some individuals knowing helps to feel a sense of control over the situation while for others it may reinforce anxiety and fear.
  - Research has shown that excess media exposure to coverage of stressful events can result in negative outcomes, use trusted resources to gather the information you need then turn it off if it's causing stress.
Strategies for managing these stressors

- Engage in Basic Self-Care
  - Eat a balanced and nutritious diet
    - Try to avoid snacking
  - Get enough sleep every night.
    - We know sleep is restorative reduces anxiety, helps learning, helps problem solving, and allows the brain to rest. Even short periods of sleep deprivation can be troublesome.
  - Engage in exercise as much as possible for overall good health and to help reduce stress too
  - Avoid too much substance use
Strategies for managing these stressors

- Social Contact
  - Make sure to stay connected to friends, partners, and family; limit how much time talking about COVID-19 or news if that is a stressor
  - Try watching a TV show together, doing a group exercise class together, or play video games together; have shared activities outside of just checking in
  - If you are being the primary support for other people, such as partner, kids, parents, set boundaries around how much and what type of support you can give
  - Quick side note about living with others...
How to live with roommates and partners during this situation

- Have your own “area”
  - If possible, have your own spot you can go when you need to be alone. For example, one person can go to the living room while another in the bedroom.

- Try to cut everyone some extra slack for minor annoyances

- Validate emotions but not behavior

- Communicate
  - When everything is good, maybe come up with a plan for how to handle when someone is annoyed or needs time and how to best communicate that.

Know that you do not have to spend time together when home together. You can spend time apart while both still being at home (but also, if you want and are not sick, try to spend some time together sometimes in order to alleviate the isolation effects of social distancing)
However...

- If you are ever unsafe in your current situation, please call the police or 911.
- Tensions are high but that does not justify abuse and/or threats
- Please call for help or, if possible, leave to go to a safe place (e.g., friend’s or family’s home, shelter, etc.)
  - House of Ruth: 410-889-7884
  - Other places are also listed on our website under Crisis Resources
Strategies for managing these stressors

Emotional Management Strategies

- Emotion Validation
  - “I feel ___, and it’s okay to feel this way”
    - Or “I’m allowed to feel this” or “This is a natural human emotion”, etc.
  - Every emotion you are feeling related to this is valid. You might feel angry, anxious, upset, happy, or even neutral. All of these are valid and it is important to recognize and validate them.

- Recognize what you can and cannot control
I CANNOT CONTROL
(So, I can LET GO of these things.)

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

My Positive Attitude

How I Follow CDC Recommendations

Turning Off the News

Limiting My Social Media

Predicting What Will Happen

Finding Fun Things to Do at Home

Other People’s Motives

How Others Will React

My Kindness & Grace

How Long This Will Last

Clipart: Carrie Stephens Art
TheCounselingTeacher.com
Strategies for managing these stressors

- Use of positive coping strategies
  - Journaling / affirmations / gratitude
  - Creative hobbies such as playing an instrument, cooking, crafting/drawing/doodling (*more in a few slides*)
  - If able to volunteer or donate (be of service)
  - Spend more time with pets
  - Attend virtual religious service
  - Meditation or prayer
  - Practice mindfulness
Mind Full, or Mindful?
Mindfulness

- Mindfulness is a non-judgmental and purposeful awareness of the present moment.
- It is a way of experiencing life and can be done in a variety of situations.
**STOP** - How to be Mindful

- **S**top and pause
- **T**ake a deep breath
- **O**bserve what is going on with your thoughts, feelings, body
- **P**roceed mindfully with awareness and kindness towards yourself and others
How to Practice Mindfulness

1. Take a seat. Find a place to sit that feels calm and quiet to you.

2. Set a time limit. If you’re just beginning, it can help to choose a short time, such as 5 or 10 minutes.

3. Notice your body. You can sit or kneel however is comfortable for you. Just make sure you are stable and in a position, you can stay in for a while.

4. Feel your breath. Follow the sensation of your breath as it goes out and as it goes in.

5. Notice when your mind has wandered. When you get around to noticing this—in a few seconds, a minute, five minutes—simply return your attention to the breath.

6. Be kind to your wandering mind. Don’t judge yourself or obsess over the content of the thoughts you find yourself lost in. Just come back.

7 Things Mindful People Do Differently

1. Approach everyday things with curiosity—and savor them

2. Forgive their mistakes—big or small

3. Show gratitude for good moments—and grace for bad ones

4. Practice compassion and nurture connections

5. Make peace with imperfection—inside and out

6. Embrace vulnerability by trusting others—and themselves

7. Accept—and appreciate—that things come and go

By Mindful Staff

List created by Elisha Goldstein, Ph.D., psychologist, author of The Now Effect

Create a routine / schedule

Call and talk with friends / Try a virtual hangout

Start a journal / writing


Cooking and baking (YouTube can help with teaching)

Video games
- Many different types of games, including RPGs, action, adventure, etc.
- Visual novels (like choose your own adventure books)
- Play an online game with friends / Online party games: https://jackboxgames.com/

Arts and Crafts
- Coloring, painting, drawing
- Sewing, knitting, crocheting
- Sculpting
- Jewelry making
- Graphic designing

Music
- Play music
- Practice an instrument (YouTube can help with teaching)
- Watch a concert live stream

Listen to new podcasts

Try a new (and free) online class: https://www.coursera.org https://www.classcentral.com/collection/ivy-league-moocs

Indoor gardening or balcony gardening

Stream zoo live feed / Watch animal videos http://cincinnatizoo.org/home-safari-resources/ https://www.earthcam.com/events/animalcams/

Spring cleaning or rearranging your living space

Watch a new TV series or some new movies
- Google chrome extension (Netflix Party) will sync up Netflix so you can watch with friends: https://www.netflixparty.com/

Learn a new language: Duolingo app (free): https://www.duolingo.com/
Thanks!

Please check our website for more information and resources: https://www.umaryland.edu/counseling/